

Research was conducted by the BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel and in partnership with Back in Motion Rehab Inc.

## BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel



The focus of the BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel (Task Force) is to foster the supply and retention of a diverse workforce in the face of significant labour shortages predicted over the next ten years for the exploration, mining, and aggregate industries. It provides labour market information; engages with youth at all levels (i.e. K to 12 and post-secondary); initiates projects that provide a “brand” of the mining, exploration and aggregate industry that is accurate, compelling and communicates the extensive job opportunities available (over 120 career opportunities); and focuses on enhancing the participation of broad sectors in society, i.e. women, Aboriginal peoples, and new Canadians.

## Back in Motion Rehab Inc.



Back in Motion Rehab Inc. (Back in Motion) is dedicated to helping people overcome barriers and reach their full employment potential. Back in Motion delivers flexible and accessible interdisciplinary rehabilitation, disability management and employment services that recognize the uniqueness of each person. With a staff of over 250 dedicated, enthusiastic people, Back in Motion serves ten communities across Metro Vancouver.

### For more information, contact:

BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel

[www.acareerinminingbc.ca](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca)

c/o Association of Mineral Exploration British Columbia

Suite 800 - 889 West Pender Street

Vancouver, BC V6C 3B2

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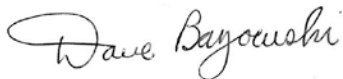
## Letter from the Chair

As an Industry (BC mineral exploration, mining, stone, sand and gravel industry), our most valuable resource is our people. This resource is becoming harder to find as other industries and jurisdictions are competing for the same talent. New Canadians will be required to fill up to one-third of the expected one million job opening in BC in the next decade at a time when our Industry is facing significant skill shortages. We run the risk of overlooking an important pool of resources. It is relevant and timely to explore why Skilled Immigrants (Immigrants who have arrived in Canada in the last ten years, with a SIN number and with related training (on the job or post-secondary) in the 'mining, exploration and aggregate industry' or transferable industries) are currently under-represented in our Industry and to support the development of Industry best practices.

The BC HR Task Force: Mineral Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel (Task Force) has brought together Skilled Immigrant and Industry expertise to perform a needs analysis and develop recommendations that will enhance the recruitment and retention of Skilled Immigrants. This pilot initiative, Skilled Immigrant Recruitment and Retention for the BC Mining Industry: Phase 1 Project (the Project), engaged Skilled Immigrants employed in the Industry, Skilled Immigrants not employed in the Industry and Industry representatives in order to better understand the barriers and potential solutions to engage more Skilled Immigrants in our Industry.

The findings of the Project identified key barriers to Skilled Immigrants being gainfully employed in the Industry and developed recommendations to mitigate these barriers. The Project recommendations are intended to support Industry, Skilled Immigrants, current Skilled Immigrant provincial service providers, and the mining, exploration and aggregate communities of BC.

Acquiring skilled personnel is fundamental to the success of any business. There are Skilled Immigrants residing in BC who are available to work and are willing to upgrade soft and hard skills to be industry relevant. To have a healthy workforce that can continue to ensure our Industry remains a center of excellence, we need to create support mechanisms to identify skilled people, to provide solutions to overcome barriers and to integrate all sources of skilled people, including New Canadians into the Industry's workforce.



Dave Bazowski,

Chair, BC HR Task Force: Mineral Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel

## Executive Summary

Employers within the BC exploration, mining, stone, sand & gravel Industry (the Industry) have indicated significant challenges related to the attraction, recruitment and retention of skilled immigrants. Currently, immigrant<sup>1</sup> participation in the Industry is considerably lower than the provincial average. In BC, immigrant workers make up 18% of the total BC Industry labour force, as compared to 28% participation of the total BC labour force.

By 2022, the Industry will need to hire between 13,000 and 20,000 workers, depending on economic conditions. Juxtaposing this labour skills shortage is the fact that there are immigrants with relevant transferable skills that are not accessing these employment opportunities.

With more than one million job openings forecasted in BC over the next decade, and an estimated third of these job openings to be filled by immigrants, improving economic alignment with immigration programs is critical<sup>1</sup>. There are indications that federal programming initiatives may not align with provincial labour needs, resulting in a skills mismatch between Skilled Immigrants within the province, and the skills needed by employers<sup>1</sup>.

As Skilled Immigrants enter the Canadian Labour Market, the Industry must compete with other sectors and provinces for their participation. Currently, Skilled Immigrants represent a large under-utilized labour source, as many foreign-trained immigrants are not gainfully employed or working in the occupations for which they have been trained.

## Project Objectives and Research Methodology

This Project utilized immigrant-specific expertise and industry-specific expertise to understand employment barriers facing Skilled Immigrants and developed recommendations to enhance the recruitment and retention of Skilled Immigrants into gainful employment in the Industry.

Building from the initial research conducted by Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia (IEC-BC) and the British Columbia Immigration Task Force, this Project also sought to gain further information on:

- Skilled Immigrants' perception of the Industry in British Columbia,
- Perceived employment barriers as experienced by Skilled Immigrants currently working in the Industry, and
- Perceived Industry employment barriers for Skilled Immigrants.

This research was conducted through a multi-phased approach that included surveys and focus group sessions that were tailored for three specific target groups;

- Skilled Immigrants who **were not** currently working in the Industry
- Skilled Immigrants who were currently working in the Industry, and
- Employers in the Industry.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Immigrant' Persons residing in Canada who were born outside of Canada, excluding temporary foreign workers, Canadian citizens born outside Canada and those with student or working visas. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010004/def/immigrant-eng.htm>

## Identifying Barriers to Employment

Through the initial surveys and focus groups, employment barriers were identified. It was acknowledged that Skilled Immigrants may lack:

- Canadian experience,
- Understanding of the Industry, what skills are required and where to find the jobs,
- Industry specific training or experience,
- Industry network,
- Understanding of the culture and ability to interact seamlessly with others in the work setting,
- Education/skills transferred into the Canadian equivalents, and
- Language and communication skills.

The identified causes of the barriers include:

- Lack of Industry awareness from Skilled Immigrants,
- Lack of an Industry specific strategy on hiring Skilled Immigrants,
- Disconnect between Industry employers and Skilled Immigrant service providers,
- Disconnect between immigration and regional and provincial employment demands,
- Difficulty in the validation of foreign experience and foreign credentials, and
- Recruitment and retention challenges in remote Industry working environments.

To increase the attractiveness of employment within the Industry, efforts to improve career awareness amongst Skilled Immigrants must be balanced with improving Industry awareness of the value of hiring Skilled Immigrants. To ensure qualified Skilled Immigrants are gainfully employed and bring value to the employer, there must be fair and transparent validation of credentials and experience. Additionally, as the Industry is uniquely located in many remote locations in the province, the sector must support and improve the relocation process and must advocate a culturally inclusive environment within their organizations and the communities in which their organizations operate. Lastly, the Industry and Skilled Immigrants must work together to identify training opportunities that enhance skill development and integration into the industry culture as well as creating an Industry culture that values the skills, experiences and knowledge of Skilled Immigrants.

## Recommendations and Strategy

The Project comprised of surveys to gather baseline data, focus groups to further explore key initiatives and strategy sessions. The first focus group sessions provided participants an opportunity to identify the key employment barriers facing Skilled Immigrants within the Industry. In the second focus group sessions, the participants were provided with a summary of all barriers identified by the different target groups, and asked to identify and discuss potential mitigation strategies and recommendations. In the final focus group sessions, the different target groups were asked to evaluate all of the recommendations and solutions presented and to prioritize the most

important initiatives. From the final focus group consultations, the following recommendations and potential courses of action were developed<sup>2</sup>.

**Employment Barrier: *Lack of Industry Awareness from Skilled Immigrants***

**Recommendation: *Build Career Awareness of Industry Employment for Skilled Immigrants***

- Develop a targeted career awareness strategy for Skilled Immigrants.
- Develop communication tools to increase Skilled Immigrant career awareness of the Industry. Potential tools include:
  - Web based career information & brochures (dissemination in Welcome BC bags, employment centers, etc.),
  - Bureau of Industry Speakers, and
  - Videos of Skilled Immigrant Industry success stories.

*“While it is somewhat difficult to break in - once you are in, BC Mining is a close community network making it easy to move about. I believe we should be more supportive of potential employees trying to break in, even if over skilled – as, in my experience, a lot of strong candidates are overlooked and we lose this potential with them moving to other industries.”*

*-Skilled Immigrant Working in the Sector-*

**Employment Barrier: *Lack of Industry specific strategy on the hiring of Skilled Immigrants***

**Recommendation: *Develop broader Industry awareness of the value of hiring Skilled Immigrants***

- Review current Industry hiring practices for hiring bias and discrimination.
- From the results of the hiring assessment, develop tools for employers to enable fair evaluation of potential hires and build awareness of the value of Skilled Immigrant hiring. Potential tools:
  - Build and disseminate Industry specific business cases for hiring Skilled Immigrants,
  - Develop an Industry Toolkit that addresses employment barriers and builds more inclusive employment practices within Industry, and
  - Support cultural sensitivity training for Industry.

**Employment Barrier: *Disconnect between Industry employers and Skilled Immigrant service providers***

**Recommendation: *Build Industry Partnerships with Skilled Immigrant service providers***

- Improve Industry career outreach and communication with Skilled Immigrant service providers,
- Develop an Industry specialist/Industry liaison within Skilled Immigrant service providers,
- Create more opportunities for Industry and Skilled Immigrants to connect through;
  - Skilled Immigrant and Industry Networking Events,
  - Skilled Immigrant and Industry Mentorship,
  - Industry Volunteer positions for Skilled Immigrants,

<sup>2</sup> For a complete list of strategies and recommendations please consult the full report.



- Internships or Co-op positions for Skilled Immigrants, and
- Create and support a BC Mining Skilled Immigrant Group (similar to Women in Mining).

**Employment Barrier: *Disconnect between immigration and regional and provincial employment demands***

**Recommendation: *Support policy initiatives for a more demand-driven immigration system***

- Advocate for better services to support immigrants in rural and remote regions of the province - near Industry projects.
- Support improvements in the timeliness and dissemination of BC labour market information nationally and internationally. Profile current Industry job opportunities as they arise.
- Support current policy initiatives to update the point system for Skilled Immigrants applying to Canada to be more relevant and responsive to Industry needs, and advocate for a more demand-driven immigration system.

**Employment Barrier: *Validation of foreign experience and foreign credentials***

**Recommendation: *Improve Foreign Credential and Experience Recognition***

- Assess current processes of credential recognition to identify Industry specific skills gaps
- Support Industry relevant professional associations and advocacy groups in the streamlining of application processes and removal of barriers for qualified Skilled Immigrants (ex. partnerships with APEGBC, SITE-BC).
- Support the development of competency based hiring tools (ex. Northern Lights College EIF project).
- Provide Industry support and advocacy for Skilled Immigrants interested in assessment and registration with the Canadian Mining Certification Program and the ITA Immigrants in Trades Training initiatives.

**Employment Barrier: *Remote nature of mining and exploration working environment***

**Recommendation: *Increasing relocation support for Skilled Immigrants and employers***

- Increase employer efforts and partnerships with employment service providers in remote regions to provide suggested supports.
- Develop cultural sensitivity training for current employees and communities that are home to migrating Skilled Immigrants.

The Project was to perform a needs analysis and prepare a strategy report. The needs analysis performed during this Project has dispelled some myths and identified key barriers facing Skilled Immigrants' ability to gain employment in the Industry. The strategic analysis provided recommendations that were vetted by immigrant-specific expertise and industry-specific personnel. The next logical step to mitigate the Industry's labour shortage and to support Skilled Immigrants in finding gainful employment is to focus on finding ways to implement the recommendations provided. The execution of the recommendations in Phase 2 of the project would make a positive change in Skilled Immigrants' lives, and provide the Industry with an additional source of skilled workers.

## Acknowledgment

The BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel wishes to thank and recognize the dedication, commitment and leadership of those individuals that together undertook new research, debunked myths, discovered new opportunities, and provided recommendations to ultimately better support the Skilled Immigrant community as well as the BC mineral exploration, mining and aggregate industries.

Special thanks to the Skilled Immigrant Recruitment and Retention for the BC Mining Industry Subcommittee who offered guidance for the project and is comprised of:

- Dave Bazowski – BC HR Task Force: Mineral Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel
- Glen Campbell – Teck
- Sherry Campbell – Sierra Systems
- Mona Forster – Entrée Gold
- Megan Halkett – Patio Social
- Brent Mulhall – Back in Motion
- Victoria Pazukha – Resource Training Organization

The Project was facilitated by:

- Courtnay Hughes – Independent
- Camille McMillan-Rambharat – Back in Motion
- Carly Parrett – Patio Social
- Jill Tsolinas – RODOS Consulting

The Project needs analysis and recommendations would not be applicable and relevant if not for the focus group attendees who volunteered their time and shared their experiences and knowledge. Focus group attendees included Skilled Immigrants who are not currently working in the Industry, Skilled Immigrants currently working in the Industry, and Industry representatives.

The report was written by Courtnay Hughes, with strong input from Camille McMillan-Rambharat and Jill Tsolinas and reviewed by the Project Subcommittee, and the BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel.

Industry in-kind support was also supplied in formatting of the report, provided by Back in Motion, and technical editing, provided by Sierra Systems. The Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia and Back in Motion hosted focus groups and provided their office space for project meetings.

## About Us

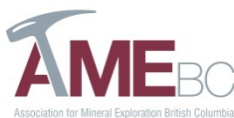
### BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand & Gravel

The BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand & Gravel (the Task Force) was initially formed in 2007 to evaluate and address a potential labour shortage facing the mining, exploration and aggregate industries (the Industry) in BC. The Task Force quantified the looming shortage (10,000+ new hires by 2021) and undertook initiatives to inform, assist and guide Industry stakeholders about the shortfall in available workers. The Task Force expanded its mission to include planning, development and implementation of pilot programs to ensure the Industry in BC has the human resources needed to support continued and sustained growth of the sector. The Task Force provides labour market information; engages with youth at all levels (i.e. K to 12 and post-secondary); initiates projects that provide a “brand” of the Industry that is accurate, compelling and communicates the extensive job opportunities available (over 120 career opportunities); and focuses on enhancing the participation of broad demographics in society, i.e. women, Aboriginals and New Canadians.

The Task Force initiatives are funded and supported primarily through the Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. Additionally, funding is provided by industry sponsorship and in-kind contributions.



The Task Force includes the three main Industry associations representing the majority of Industry employers in the Province. These are the Association for Mineral Exploration BC (AME BC), the Mining Association of BC (MABC), and the BC Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (BCSSGA). AME BC additionally provides in-kind administrative support to the activities of the Task Force.



The Task Force is a multi-stakeholder partnership with members from 21 organizations. Members come from Industry, Industry associations, First Nations, employee groups, education and training organizations (elementary, secondary, and postsecondary) and the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. Participants in the Task Force include:

- Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia
- BC Stone, Sand & Gravel Association
- British Columbia Aboriginal Mine Training Association
- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association
- Christian Labour Association of Canada
- Entrée Gold
- Finning Canada

- International Union of Operating Engineers Local 115
- Mining Industry Human Resources Council
- Mining Association of British Columbia
- New Gold
- NovaCopper
- Northwest Community College
- Procon Mining
- Province of British Columbia
- Resource Training Organization
- Rio Tinto Alcan
- School District 27 – Cariboo-Chilcotin
- Teck
- United Steelworkers of America
- University of British Columbia

*\* Additional organizations participate in the Task Force's subcommittees; to see an exhaustive list of participants please visit the website at [www.acareerinmining.ca](http://www.acareerinmining.ca).*

## Back in Motion

Based in British Columbia, Back in Motion is an employment services and healthcare company with a 20-year history of dedication to quality and the highest professional standards.

Back in Motion's credo is: Helping People Work. Helping People Live.

Back in Motion is the second largest Employment Services provider in BC, with 5 Employment Program of BC (EPBC) contracts throughout the Lower Mainland. It offers services in 7 communities in the Lower Mainland; 3 of these communities are home to the largest, fastest-growing newcomer populations in Canada. Back in Motion has 250 employees, with 139 employees dedicated to employment services. Employees have extensive experience supporting Immigrants in job placement, the credential evaluation process, professional licensing, and education upgrading. For example, Back in Motion's Skills Connect for Immigrants (SCI) Program has served over 4000 clients and since 2006 has achieved a 68% placement rate. From 2012 when the EPBC contracts started, Back in Motion has served an additional 8800 Clients, 2300 of them Immigrants.

Back in Motion values partnerships that build community capacity for the benefit of all stakeholders. Its' coordinated, accessible services recognize the uniqueness of each Client and customize solutions to maximize individual potential.

## Project Background

Employers within the Industry have indicated significant challenges in the attraction, recruitment and retention of immigrants. Currently, Skilled Immigrant participation in the Industry is considerably lower than the national average. Nationally, immigrant workers make up over 20% of the national workforce but represent only 12% of the Industry sector<sup>3</sup>. In BC, immigrant workers make up 18% of the Industry labour force, as compared to 28% participation of the total BC labour force.

By 2022, the Industry will need to hire between 13,000 and 20,000 workers, depending on economic conditions. Juxtaposing this labour skills shortage is the fact that there are immigrants with relevant transferable skills that are not accessing these employment opportunities.

Despite the labour shortage, employers have identified specific challenges in the hiring of Skilled Immigrants. A recent study conducted by the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) included sector specific focus groups which identified barriers employers are facing in the recruitment and retention of immigrant workers. The following is a summary of the perceived barriers articulated by the mining employer focus group:

- Mining companies are having an extremely difficult time in recruiting and retaining the skilled workforce they require.
- A majority of employers meet their labour demands by using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). However, there is an enormous frustration with the approval timelines for the TFWP.
- While not specifically targeting in-country immigrants, mining employers are prepared to hire immigrants if they have the required skills and qualifications.
- Immigrants may not be that willing to re-locate to remote, rural areas where mining operations are located.
- Australia is regarded by mining employers as a significant competitor in the global war for mining talent and also has clear best practices that Canada can learn from<sup>4</sup>.

Building from the IEC-BC findings, this Project investigated the sector specific employment barriers through consultation and partnership with Skilled Immigrants not currently working in the Industry, Skilled Immigrants currently working in the Industry and Industry representatives. Ultimately, this Project sought to identify recruitment and retention solutions that will increase the number of qualified Skilled Immigrant workers accessing employment opportunities in the Industry.

### Opportunity for improvement

*Mining and exploration companies were absent from the list of “Top 100 Employers for New Canadians 2013.”*

<http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.mihrc.ca/en/resources/Hiring\\_Requirements\\_Available\\_Talent\\_10\\_year.pdf](http://www.mihrc.ca/en/resources/Hiring_Requirements_Available_Talent_10_year.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.iecbc.ca/sites/default/files/IEC-BC\\_BCEmployerConsultationReport\\_Spring2012\\_0.pdf](http://www.iecbc.ca/sites/default/files/IEC-BC_BCEmployerConsultationReport_Spring2012_0.pdf)

## Project Purpose and Objectives

This Project utilized immigrant-specific expertise and industry-specific expertise to understand the barriers facing Skilled Immigrants<sup>5</sup> not working in the Industry and to develop a strategy to enhance the recruitment and retention of Skilled Immigrants into gainful employment in the Industry.

The Task Force set the following goals for the successful completion of the Skilled Immigrant Recruitment & Retention for the BC Mining Industry: Phase 1 Project (“the Project”).

### Primary Objectives:

- Utilize immigrant-specific expertise and industry-specific expertise to understand the barriers for Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry.
- Conduct a needs analysis and develop a strategy for Industry to enhance the employment of Skilled Immigrants.
- Develop and communicate key messages that are tailored to target audience groups.

### Secondary Objectives:

- Be Industry-led, Industry-driven, and support Industry needs as identified by employers.
- Identify strategic approaches to strengthen employer and immigrant community partnerships.
- Identify strategic approaches that support employers to enhance their capacity to attract, hire and retain new immigrants.

## Project Definitions

**Skilled Immigrants:** Immigrants who have arrived in Canada in the last ten years, with a SIN number and with related training (on the job or post-secondary) in the 'mining, exploration and aggregate industry' or transferable industries.

**Immigrants:** Persons residing in Canada who were born outside of Canada, excluding temporary foreign workers, Canadian citizens born outside Canada and those with student or working visas.<sup>6</sup>

**The BC Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand & Gravel Industry (the Industry):** For the purpose of this study, the Industry definition is consistent with prior research conducted by the Mining Industry Human Resources Council on behalf of the Task Force, and includes all phases of the mining cycle: exploration, development, extraction, processing, and reclamation. The Industry is inclusive of exploration, mining and aggregate businesses.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See definition 'Project Definitions'

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010004/def/immigrant-eng.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666\\_a\\_exec\\_web\\_0.pdf](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666_a_exec_web_0.pdf)

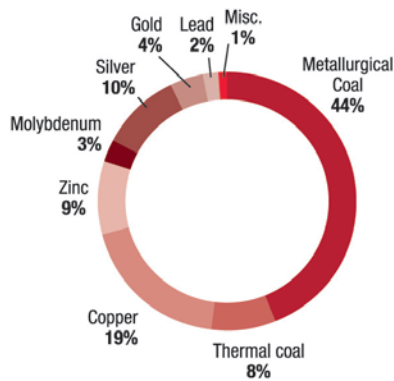
## BC Industry Overview

British Columbia is a province rich in natural resources. Socially and environmentally responsible development of these resources is fundamental to the economic future of the province. The Industry has been recognized as one of the eight key growth sectors by the provincial government within the BC Jobs Plan, and there exists strong government support for the development of future mining projects.

The BC Jobs Plan Progress Report identifies continued efforts in reduction of permitting backlogs and expanded support for addressing skilled labour gaps within the sector.<sup>8</sup>

*“First, the Ministry is working to create eight new mines and expand nine existing ones by 2015. If this is achieved it is estimated to increase mining revenue by \$1.6 billion, create 7,000 jobs, and generate over \$150 million per year in government revenues”. (BC Jobs Plan)*

**Figure 1– Revenue by Product in BC 2012<sup>9</sup>**



BC Industry has become viewed as a center of excellence. It has robust regulations, a diverse set of commodities and numerous suppliers. It has a diverse set of minerals, precious metals, base metals, metallurgical coal, aggregates, etc. In 2012, BC’s gross reported mining revenue was approximately \$9.2 billion<sup>11</sup>. This was a drop from 2011 reported gross revenues of \$9.9 billion and reflective of weakening commodity prices. With particular reference to the specific commodities, metallurgical coal continues to dominate the commodity mix within the province with 44% of production, followed by copper which accounted for 19% of total production as indicated in Figure 11.

## BC Exploration, Mining and Aggregate Labour Demographics

*“As the mining sector struggled through the first half of 2013, companies encountered reduced access to financing and limp commodity pricing. The economic climate has created a challenging business environment where mining organizations are forced to take cautionary steps to stay competitive. Some companies have reacted by pressing pause on exploration projects, while others are shedding assets, reducing production targets and in some cases downsizing, as they look toward leaner operations”.<sup>10</sup>*

Despite forecasts of softening job growth in the sector, the Industry is anticipating substantial labour shortages as a result of impending retirements. As retiring baby boomers leave the sector,

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.bcjobsplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCjobsplan\\_24mo\\_progressreport.pdf](http://www.bcjobsplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCjobsplan_24mo_progressreport.pdf)

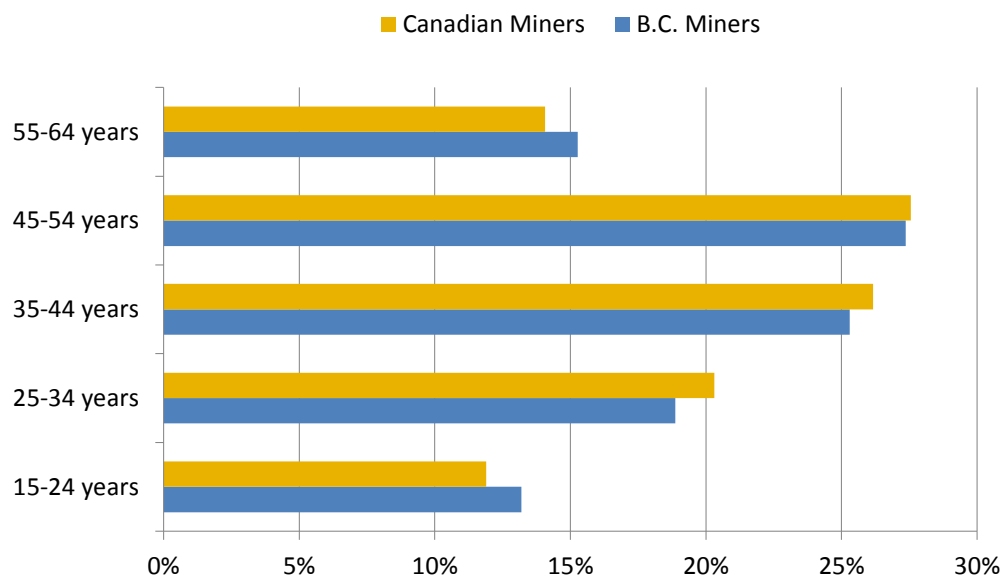
<sup>9</sup> See on page 12 of <http://www.pwc.com/ca/en/mining/publications/pwc-mining-survey-bc-2013-04-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://magazine.cim.org/en/2013/September/columns/HR-Outlook.aspx>

the shortages will be significant even if the economy dips or remains relatively stable. When we consider a higher growth scenario with the approval and commencement of major projects in central and northern BC, approval of LNG projects, and further Oil Sands development, these shortages will only intensify. Addressing the current and anticipated labour skills shortages is imperative to the long-term sustainability of the Industry and has been identified as a key strategic priority within the BC Jobs Plan.

In British Columbia, the Industry labour force is both older and younger than the Canadian Industry workforce. As illustrated in the following figure, there are slightly more workers in the 55-64 age group than the rest of Canada, and slightly more workers in the under 24 category. The absence of skilled workers in the mid-career range is characteristic of the sector but more acute in BC.

**Figure 2 – Age Profile of Workers in BC Mining and Exploration Occupations<sup>11</sup>**



This mid-career labour gap is commonly attributed to the massive layoffs that were a result of the downturn in the 1990s. Subsequently, a generation of professionals left the Industry sector and in many cases, did not return<sup>12</sup>. With previous experience and expertise gained in careers outside of Canada, Skilled Immigrants represent a potential labour source to fill transferable mid-level employment opportunities in the sector.

Compounding the age-related demographic challenge is a lack of workforce diversity within the Industry. Broader cultural and gender representation in organizations provides measurable impacts to a company’s return on investment. The Canadian workforce has become increasingly more representative of diverse groups, and in order for the Industry to benefit from this diversity the sector must attract and retain skilled workers from all labour sources. Currently, the sector has high levels of under-representation and under-utilization of workers from diverse groups; including,

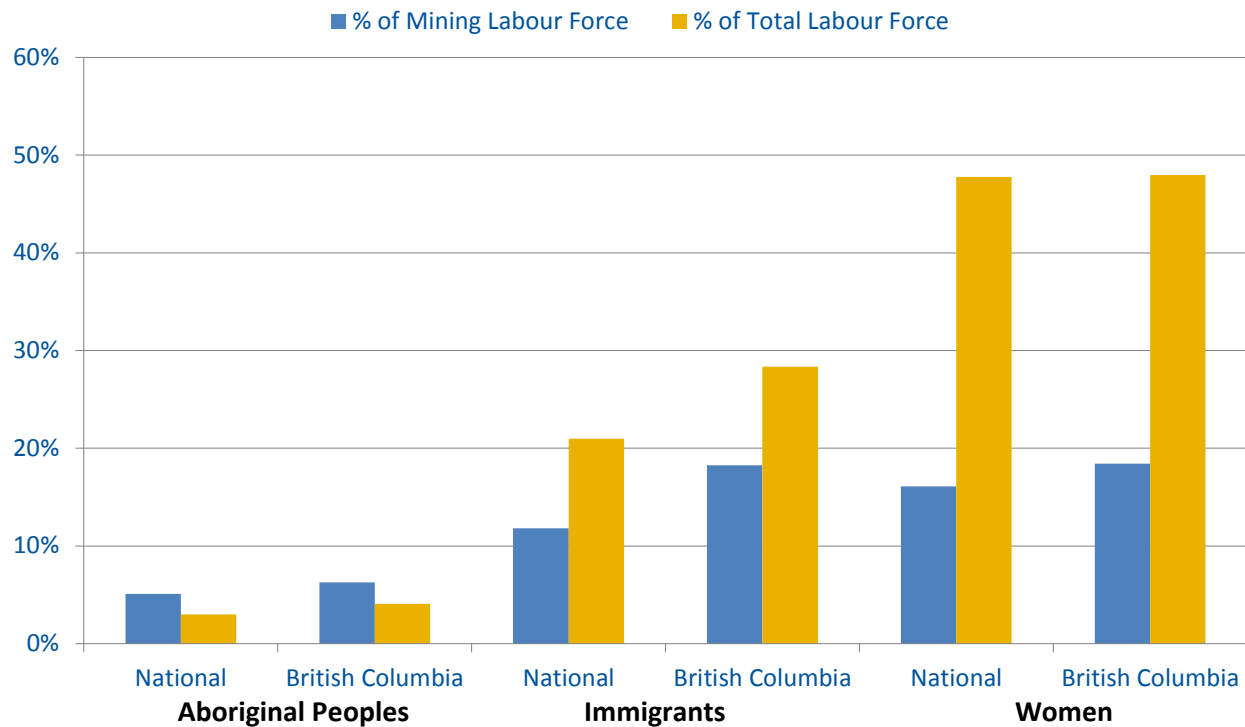
<sup>11</sup> [http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666\\_b\\_bc\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666_b_bc_report_web.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.mining-technology.com/features/feature129194/>



Aboriginal peoples, Immigrants, women and youth. The under-representation can largely be attributed to a legacy of exclusionary hiring practices, poor community relations, and negative perceptions of careers within the sector. Many individual organizations, and Industry partnerships, have done significant work to increase stakeholder engagement and shift policies and Industry practices for greater inclusion. Current demographics indicate that continuing efforts for inclusion are needed for greater impact on the demographic mix of the Industry.

**Figure 3 – Demographics of BC Mining, Exploration and Aggregate Sector<sup>13</sup>**



With specific reference to immigrant workers, the mining sector is lagging other industries in diversification. In British Columbia, immigrant workers account for 28% of the total labour force, but represent only 18% of the current BC mining sector workforce.

### BC Mining Labour Forecast

Depending on the economic conditions, the Industry will need to hire between 13,340 and 19,860 employees by 2022.<sup>14</sup> As illustrated in Figure 4, the majority of the cumulative hiring is the result of replacing retiring workers. Even in a contractionary economic environment, where net employment is forecasted to be negative, the Industry will still have a cumulative hiring requirement of over 13,000. In a more robust economic scenario the labour pressures will only increase.

<sup>13</sup> MiHR, 2012 complete report available at [http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666\\_b\\_bc\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666_b_bc_report_web.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666\\_a\\_exec\\_web\\_0.pdf](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666_a_exec_web_0.pdf)

**Figure 4 – BC Cumulative Hiring Requirement Forecasts by Scenario 2012 – 2022<sup>15</sup>**

	Net Change in Employment	Replacement Requirements		Cumulative Hiring Requirements
		Retirement	Non-Retirement	
Contractionary	-2,160	8,910	6,580	13,340
Baseline	350	9,450	6,960	16,770
Expansionary	2,570	9,950	7,330	19,860

Source: Mining Industry Human Resources Council

\*Note that numbers may not add perfectly due to rounding.

\*\*Note that hiring requirements do not translate to new job growth, but rather reflect net change in employment and replacement requirements.

## Occupations in Demand

From the BC Mining Labour Forecast completed in 2012, additional information on the specific occupational needs and talent gaps was performed. This work highlighted the key occupations in which the sector will face the most significant labour pressures.

The occupations with the greatest forecasted difficulty in finding available talent are:

- Central control and process operators, mineral and metal processing
- Drillers and blasters – surface mining, quarrying and construction
- Machine operators, mineral and metal processing
- Supervisors, mining and quarrying
- Production and development miners
- Geological and mineral technologists and technicians

Other occupations with forecasted supply challenges include:

- Heavy equipment operators (except crane)
- Heavy-duty equipment mechanics
- Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics (except textile)
- Industrial electricians<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> MiHR, 2012 complete report available at [http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666\\_b\\_bc\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/71666_b_bc_report_web.pdf)

## Skilled Workers and Technology

Outside of the demographic challenges that are facing the sector, the Industry is also coping with a significant shift in the skill sets that are required for operational success. The Industry is in transition and it is no longer characterized by low-skilled laborious work<sup>16</sup>. New technologies, increasing automation, challenging and remote environments, and growing social, environmental and legal expectations require a highly skilled workforce to ensure competitiveness within the broader global sector. Today, Industry employers are reliant on a workforce with breadth and depth of skills, knowledge and ability to navigate the new Industry environment<sup>17</sup>.

## Workforce Mobility

Mining and exploration companies with corporate headquarters and operations in British Columbia have a growing global presence, and workers within the sector are increasingly mobile. This mobility has resulted in workers who have expanded their operational experience within and outside of Canada. This increasing mobility of highly skilled workers, combined with the need for a more mobile workforce to meet labour demands, has resulted in a greater need for consistent and fair validation of credentials and worker competency. The recent study '*British Columbia Underground Miner Occupational Analysis*' conducted by the Taskforce, confirmed the need for further alignment of current underground training in the province with the National Occupational Standard to ensure employer's needs are addressed in training curriculums through to the progression of skills recognition within the Canadian Mining Credential Program (CMCP). Initiatives such as the CMCP and improved foreign credential recognition improve the Industry's ability to communicate hiring requirements and candidates' ability to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities.

### **What is the CMCP?**

*The Canadian Mining Certification Program is a nationwide initiative through which Industry workers can earn credentials that are recognized by Industry employers throughout the country. Credentials provide workers with an indisputable way to demonstrate—and employers to verify—their skills in several occupational areas of the mining industry. They also help ensure all key Industry players—employers, workers and educators—understand and consistently use the same terms when discussing and considering specific job requirements and worker abilities.*

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.mihrc.ca/en/resources/ManagingSkills\\_eng.pdf](http://www.mihrc.ca/en/resources/ManagingSkills_eng.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/a\\_study\\_on\\_the\\_career\\_advancement\\_and\\_retention\\_of\\_highly.pdf](http://www.acareerinminingbc.ca/sites/default/files/a_study_on_the_career_advancement_and_retention_of_highly.pdf)

## Skilled Immigrants

### Overview of Canadian Skilled Immigration Process

As Canada grapples with a looming skills shortage, driven predominately by the mass departure of retiring baby boomers, the importance of attracting and retaining skilled workers has become paramount. Current national policy outlines the definition and process for the immigration of skilled workers. As defined by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, skilled immigrants are people who are chosen as permanent residents based on their ability to prosper in Canada<sup>18</sup>.

The application process for Skilled Immigrants is governed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and applications are assessed on the following factors:

- at least one year of continuous and paid (full-time or an equal amount in part-time) work experience
  - in a single occupation,
  - within the last 10 years,
  - at skill type 0, or skill levels A or B of the 2011 edition of the Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC), and:
    1. have this work experience in one of the eligible occupations, OR
    2. have a valid offer of arranged employment, OR
    3. are international students who are enrolled in a PhD program in Canada (or who graduated from a Canadian PhD program within the past 12 months) and meet these criteria<sup>18</sup>.

Additional provincial policy measures have been taken to remove hiring barriers faced by BC employers. The Provincial Nomination Program (PNP) Skills Immigration stream is “intended for people with the skills, experience and qualifications needed by BC employers. This stream is designed for individuals who would like to live and work in BC and become a permanent resident of Canada.”<sup>19</sup> Through the PNP, an offer of full time employment by a BC Employer and subsequent nomination of support for permanent residence allows individuals to apply for permanent residency to Citizenship and Immigration Canada under the Provincial Nominee Class<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who.asp>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate/About-the-BC-PNP/Skills-Immigration.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/immigration\\_task\\_force/docs/Immigration\\_Task\\_Force\\_WEB.PDF](http://www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/immigration_task_force/docs/Immigration_Task_Force_WEB.PDF).

## Employment Programing for Skilled Immigrants

There are programs, associations and companies that support Skilled Immigrants. Back in Motion has several publicly-funded employment programs across the Lower Mainland for Immigrants. These include Employment Programs of BC (EPBC) also known as WorkBC Employment Centres – funded by the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, as well as the Skills Connect for Immigrants (SCI) program funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training.

EPBC offers specialized services to unemployed and under-employed job seekers resident in BC. Services include workshops and training, one-on-one individual job search support, and specialized support for Immigrants requiring specialized services.

SCI provides Skilled Immigrants with the support they require to bridge the gap between their previous careers in their home country and the potential jobs in their field in Canada. In order to access Skills Connect services, immigrants must be permanent residents, have immigrated within the last 5 years, and have work experience in a profession that is covered by the SCI program. Through Skills Connect, eligible clients can access resources for credential evaluation, career planning, skills enhancement training, mentorship, and work experience.

WorkBC helps clients find jobs, explore career options, and upgrade or improve their skills. The program connects with employers looking to fill vacancies and provides a wealth of resources for job seekers.

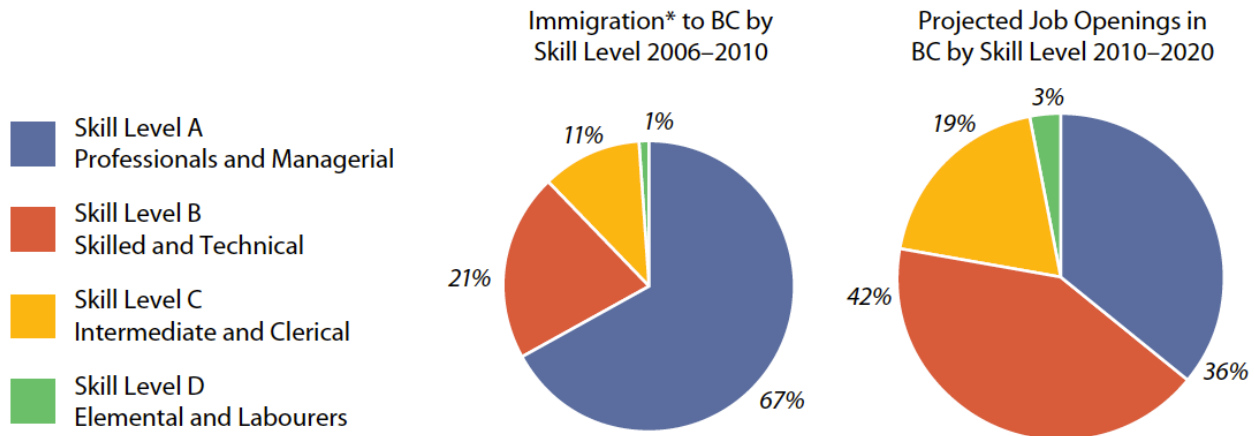
## Skilled Immigrants – Identifying Barriers to Employment

With more than one million job openings forecasted in BC over the next decade, and an estimated third of these job openings to be filled by immigration, improving economic alignment with immigration programs is critical. The British Columbia Immigration Taskforce was established as part of the BC Jobs Plan to review the economic immigration system and make recommendations to improve the current outcomes of federal and provincial programming<sup>24</sup>. As illustrated in Figure 5, it was noted in the British Columbia Immigration Taskforce Report that some federal

programming initiatives are not currently aligned with provincial labour needs, and this has resulted in a skills mismatch between Skilled Immigrants within the province, and the skill needs of hiring employers<sup>24</sup>. This can largely be attributed to the unique regional labour needs within the province.

***The BC Labour Market Outlook 2010 forecasts the demand for workers will exceed supply by 2016.***

**Figure 5 – Immigration to BC and Projected Job Openings by Skill Level<sup>21</sup>**



*\* Immigrants age 25–64 at arrival with skills assessed — primarily economic class principal applicants.  
Based on intended occupation in BC.*

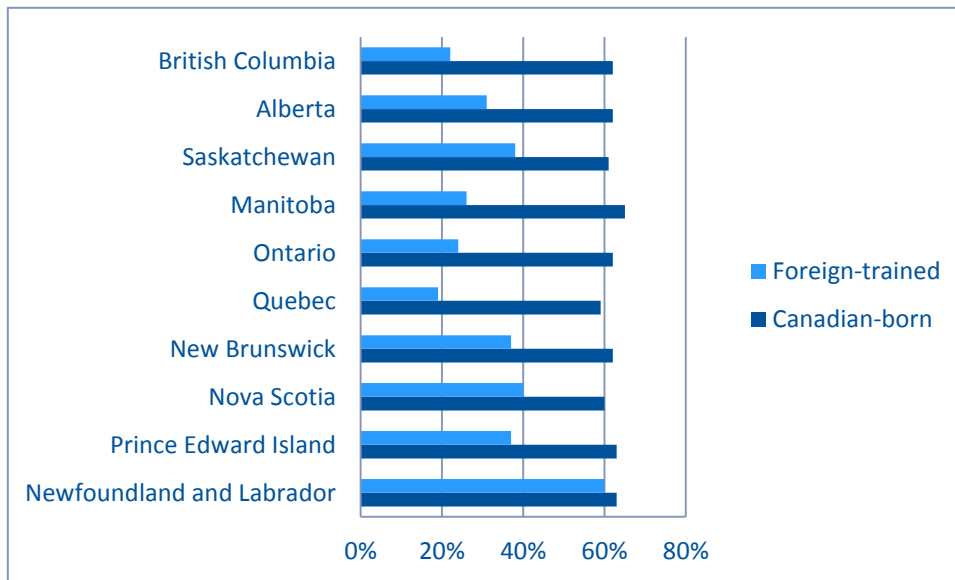
As Skilled Immigrants enter the Canadian Labour Market, the Industry must compete with other sectors and provinces for their participation. Currently, Skilled Immigrants represent a larger under-utilized labour source, as many foreign-trained immigrants are not working in the occupations for which they have been trained.

This is particularly glaring in the provinces and markets in which immigrants are most likely to live – namely, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. As outlined in the following figure, only 22% of foreign-trained immigrants were working in an occupation that corresponded with their knowledge and training, as compared to 62% of Canadian born workers. British Columbia had the second worst ‘match rate’ in the country, second only to Quebec. By comparison, Newfoundland and Labrador led with near parity<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/immigration\\_task\\_force/docs/Immigration\\_Task\\_Force\\_WEB.PDF](http://www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/immigration_task_force/docs/Immigration_Task_Force_WEB.PDF)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010102/article/11121-eng.htm>

**Figure 6 – Match rate of foreign– trained immigrants working in a corresponding occupation in Canada<sup>23</sup>**



In Canada, the foreign-born population is on average more educated than across Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, with 52% of the foreign-born population considered highly educated as compared with 31% across OECD countries<sup>24</sup>. Despite levels of education, immigrant<sup>25</sup> household median income is 21% lower than Canadian-born households and 23% of persons living in an immigrant household live with income below the poverty line, compared with an average of 17% across OECD countries<sup>26</sup>.

The discrepancy between immigrant skills and education and their employment within Canada represents a substantial opportunity for employers to access a relatively untapped source of labour potential. In 2012, the IEC-BC released the *BC Employer Consultation Report: Recruiting and Retaining Immigrant Talent*. This study investigated the recruitment and retention challenges facing Skilled Immigrants as experienced by BC employers to identify where solutions could be implemented to bridge the labour discrepancy. Figure 7 identifies the key discovery themes as they were presented within the IEC-BC report:

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010102/tables-tableaux/11121/tbl004-eng.htm>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/migration/integrationindicators/keyindicatorsbycountry/name,219003,en.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Definitions for ‘immigrants’ and ‘skilled immigrants’ can be found in the project definition section of this report.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/migration/integrationindicators/keyindicatorsbycountry/name,219003,en.htm>

**Figure 7 – IEC – BC Key Themes Employer Consultation Report April 2012**

<p><b>Government policies, programs and processes</b></p> <p>Many BC employers are frustrated with the Federal Immigration Points System and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program process. The Provincial Nominee Program was seen as positive, although some employers were concerned about backlogs and other shortcomings. Employers also want to see streamlining of the Federal Skilled Worker Program as well as improved pre-immigration screening in source countries.</p>
<p><b>English language proficiency</b></p> <p>The lack of English language fluency was one of the top two issues raised by employers. In addition to general English proficiency, employers need immigrants to have business and sector/occupation specific English and to be able to apply their language skills in various work situations.</p>
<p><b>Foreign credential assessment and recognition</b></p> <p>The difficulties of translating, evaluating and assessing the equivalency of foreign credentials and qualifications were noted by many employers, particularly for regulated occupations. Facilitation of the recognition of qualifications by professions is also seen as part of this challenge.</p>
<p><b>Importance of Canadian experience</b></p> <p>Employers view a lack of Canadian work experience as a clear impediment to hiring more immigrants, primarily because they see a cost associated with training and mentoring.</p>
<p><b>Awareness and information</b></p> <p>Most employers have bought into the value proposition for immigrant hiring but do not know how to navigate the plethora of information and resources. “One-stop” resources and effective packaging and distribution of information to employers are critical – resources and packaging must be user-friendly and accessible.</p>
<p><b>Geographic differences among employers</b></p> <p>Employers in some rural BC communities felt they have little opportunity or capacity to attract immigrants and their families. Rural employers called for support to help them participate in immigrant attraction and recruitment, and incentives to immigrants to land or re-settle in rural areas. Employers in regions outside Greater Vancouver do recognize they need to “onboard” immigrants into their communities – not just into their workplaces – if they want them to settle and stay.</p>



<p><b>Coordination of service providers</b></p> <p>Employers would like to see better coordination of service agencies that work with immigrants and improvements in their capacity to interface with and support employers. Employers see service providers as almost solely focusing on the needs of the immigrants, without much consideration or focus on demand-side requirements.</p>
<p><b>Employer capacity- building support</b></p> <p>Employers indicated they need easy access to other supports such as on-line tools/tool-kits for employers (e.g. recruiting plans, in-house mentoring, etc.) that are immigrant-specific. Employers feel that chambers, industry associations and other employer groups are best positioned to facilitate this in conjunction with a provincial regional resource.</p>
<p><b>Employer best practices in recruiting and retaining immigrants</b></p> <p>Employers identified a number of domestic and international best practices that they feel have the potential to be replicated and/or expanded.</p>
<p><b>IEC-BC profile and role</b></p> <p>While employers knew little about IEC-BC, once advised about its mandate and services, many identified it as an appropriate resource to provide much needed employer (and service provider) support and coordination. Employers offered some specific ideas on IEC-BC’s role as a “connector” and “solution-developer”.</p>

Many of the challenges listed in the IEC-BC report are universally experienced across sectors. There are unique aspects of the Industry sector in BC which presents further challenges for immigrant recruitment, namely, the remote nature of Industry operations and exploration projects. As many immigrants initially locate into urban centers, relocation into smaller more remote communities may present additional challenges.

In addition, the Industry relies heavily on the expertise and skills of professional and technical workers; occupations such as geologists, engineers, and tradespersons are a significant component of the Industry workforce. These professions and occupations are governed by provincial professional associations and regulatory bodies, and the recognition of foreign credentials or experience can present significant challenges to employers in the hiring of Skilled Immigrants.

## Bridging the Gap – Case Studies

The following case examples highlight local, global and alternative sector initiatives that have been developed to remove employment barriers, and bridge the employment gap for immigrant workers.

### Industry Training Authority – Immigrants in Skills Training

This program removes barriers to employment facing immigrants who are under-employed or unemployed and low-skilled to enter the trades. Starting with a comprehensive skill and experience assessment, this program provides Skilled Immigrants with hands-on experience, financial assistance, safety training, English courses, and career counseling to help them start a career in

the trades. The program has provided training and support to over 1300 immigrants since its inception in 2008/2009.<sup>27</sup>

### **Geoscientists Canada – Competency-Based Standards Protocol**

Geoscientists Canada has initiated a project to develop a competency based assessment process for evaluating individuals desiring to be qualified as a professional geoscientist (P.Geo.). This pioneered method of assessment, steers away from a written exam concept and encapsulates evaluating the individual's expertise through practice tasks and determining levels of proficiency. The project has completed its first phase of identifying what competencies are needed for the various skill sets. Future phases will include getting approval from geoscience regulatory authorities across Canada of the required competencies and development of the assessment tools.

### **Health Care: Hiring Fair – Skilled Immigrants**

At a recent health care industry hiring fair at the Richmond Skills Connect office, Skilled Immigrants had pre-screening job interviews, networked with health care industry representatives, and gathered valuable job search information on the industry. 36 Skills Connect clients attended the health care industry hiring fair, 33 had a pre-screening interview, and 6 were hired into health care positions.

### **Northern Lights College – Competency-Based Hiring Assessments**

Northern Lights College provides skills training for Northern BC, serving Northern British Columbians in an area that covers over 324,000 square kilometers<sup>28</sup>. In partnership with Industry, Northern Lights College has launched a project to develop trial competency assessments and toolkits for non-trades occupations in Oil & Gas and Mining Sectors. The Northern Lights project will focus on two occupations namely; 'Oil and Gas Operator' and 'Underground Miner', and utilize the National Occupational Standards as a foundation for the development of the hiring assessment tool. Once piloted and reviewed, it is envisioned that this hiring assessment toolkit will support Industry employers in their ability to assess the skills, knowledge and abilities of immigrants and enhance current hiring practices.

### **BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association**

The BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association (BC AMTA) is a federally registered charity devoted to preparing Aboriginal candidates for sustainable careers within the BC mining industry. BC AMTA attracts, recruits and prepares Aboriginal candidates to meet employer needs through preparation and skills upgrading. BC AMTA partners with industry, governments and educators, to provide training and support services to Aboriginal participants through a formal process of personal and professional development.

### **S.U.C.C.E.S.S – Business Immigration Integration Support**

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Business Immigrant Integration Support (BIIS) provides enhanced business and settlement services for immigrants who are interested in pursuing business ownership or

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.itabc.ca/corporate-reports/labour-market-agreement-report/immigrants-in-trades-training/#sthash.cEBNdpZF.dpuf>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.iecbc.ca/our-initiatives/employer-innovation-fund/eif-funded-projects#NLC>

entrepreneurial opportunities in British Columbia. The objective of the BIIS is to accelerate the settlement and economic integration process of entrepreneurial immigrants. BIIS provides workshops, short-courses, business mentoring and one-on-one business counseling for new immigrants interested in starting a business in British Columbia.

### **Australia – SkillSelect**

The Australian ‘SkillSelect’ program is an online service that enables skilled workers and business people interested in migrating to Australia to record their details to be considered for a skilled workers visa through an Expression of Interest (EOI)<sup>29</sup>.

Instead of a points based system, SkillSelect utilizes a third party service to assess prospective immigrants’ skills and credentials<sup>30</sup>. Once they are assessed, prospective migrants can be found and nominated for skilled visas by Australian employers or state and territory governments, or they may be invited by the Australian Government to lodge a visa application. “Employers can browse lists of workers, and if they find an employee they want to hire, they can apply to bring them over within a year, rather than the typical five-year wait list for the skilled-worker program”<sup>31</sup>.

### **Mining Immigration Reference Guide – MiHR**

In 2009, the Mining Industry Human Resources Council developed a guide for Industry employers to provide information on the temporary foreign worker, immigration, and settlement processes in Canada. The guide was developed to assist employers in navigating the provincial and national immigration processes in efforts to bridge the skills gap with the recruitment and retention of immigrant workers.

### **Royal Bank of Canada**

The financial sector is recognized as a leader in the hiring of skilled immigrants. A recent profile of the Royal Bank of Canada’s work in hiring skilled immigrants highlights key diversity initiatives and metrics that have resulted in their success in attracting and retaining skilled immigrants. These include: cross cultural training for front-line staff and managers, voluntary diversity census and employee language skill list, and language training.<sup>32</sup>

The Industry is not isolated in its need to manage labour shortages, and as competition for skilled labour intensifies within and between sectors, it is important to review the practices and initiatives that are being developed within and outside of the Industry.

## **Research Methodology**

In order to address the project objectives, this Project included both primary and secondary research. Initially, a scan of the current literature on the barriers to employment facing Skilled Immigrants and the labour requirements for the Industry was conducted. Building from the initial

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.immi.gov.au/skills/skillselect/index.htm>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/04/24/land-of-misfortune/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/04/24/land-of-misfortune/>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIORBCCaseENWEBFinal.pdf>

research conducted by IEC-BC and the British Columbia Immigration Task Force, this project also sought to gain further information on:

- Skilled Immigrants perception of the mining sector in British Columbia,
- Perceived employment barriers for Skilled Immigrants as experienced by Skilled Immigrants currently working in the Industry, and
- Perceived Industry employment barriers for Skilled Immigrants who had not worked in the Industry.

The findings from the secondary research were validated through the primary research (survey and focus groups), consultation with the project subcommittee, and a review of the project results and recommendations.

This research utilized a multi-phased approach that included both surveys and focus group sessions that were tailored for three specific target groups;

- Skilled Immigrants who **were not** currently working in the Industry, exploration and aggregate industry,
- Skilled Immigrants who were currently working in the industry, and
- Industry Employers.

## Survey

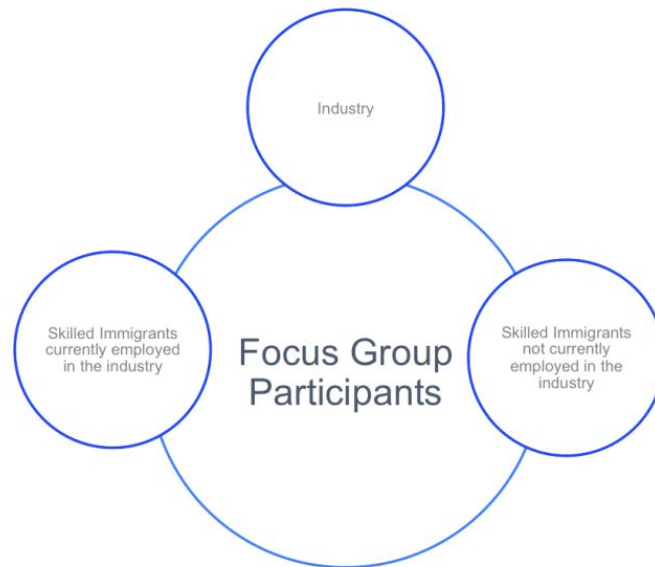
Using a web-based platform, surveys were developed for each of the target groups. Figure 9 outlines the different surveys that were prepared for the research, the purpose of these surveys and the overall response rate. In addition to the objectives listed, the surveys were useful in generating awareness about the research work and identifying interested participants for the focus groups. Most importantly, the surveys initiated a basic needs analysis from each of the stakeholder groups, and identified key barriers and potential solutions that would be investigated more thoroughly through the focus group sessions that followed.

## Focus Groups

In addition to the surveys, a series of focus groups were conducted to more deeply assess the results of the surveys and provide an opportunity for the respondents to discuss their experience and perspective on employment barriers facing Skilled Immigrants. In addition, these focus groups built stakeholder awareness about the issues identified and developed potential courses of actions for Industry employers and Skilled Immigrants in efforts to remove these barriers.

Through multiple focus groups from each of the different target groups, participants were able to both define the issues at large and then review and revise findings from the previous focus group sessions. This approach allowed each focus group to build on previous sessions' findings and develop strategies that were informed by the information discovery process.

**Figure 8 – Focus Group Participants**



The target stakeholder group sessions were distributed as follows:

- Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (6 focus group sessions),
- Skilled Immigrants currently working in the Industry (3 focus group sessions), and
- Industry employers (3 focus group sessions).

With regards to the Skilled Immigrants Not Working, the focus group sessions were held at the Surrey, Richmond and Coquitlam 'Skills Connect' locations to reduce travel and transportation barriers for participants. The participants that were invited to participate in the focus groups were currently enrolled in 'Skills Connect' and 'Avia' programs and were selected by the Back in Motion employment counsellors based on the transferability of their skill set to the mining sector and their interest in participating. To do this, the respondents' experience and qualifications were cross-referenced with the list of 120 occupations<sup>33</sup> that comprise the Industry.

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<sup>33</sup> Mining Industry Human Resource Council (MiHR)

## Survey and Focus Group Communication Strategy

To engage Industry and Skilled Immigrants working in the sector, the survey and focus group information was communicated through the following avenues

- The BC HR Task Force: Exploration, Mining, Stone, Sand and Gravel and its subcommittees, and
- Industry networks (AMEBC and MABC).

To connect with Skilled Immigrants not currently working in the sector, information regarding the survey and focus group participation was sent to Back in Motion. Through the network of contacts at Back in Motion, 1,097 immigrants were contacted in July 2013.

## Bias and Limitations

It should be noted that there is inherent bias in the function of both survey design and facilitation of focus group discussion. The findings in this research are based on perceptions articulated by the respondents of the surveys and focus groups. Efforts by the project team were made to ensure focus group participants were available for the subsequent sessions; however, not all participants were available to attend all of the sessions. Subsequent recommendations for strategy and policy development should be reviewed and considered within this context.

## Results and Analysis

### Survey Results

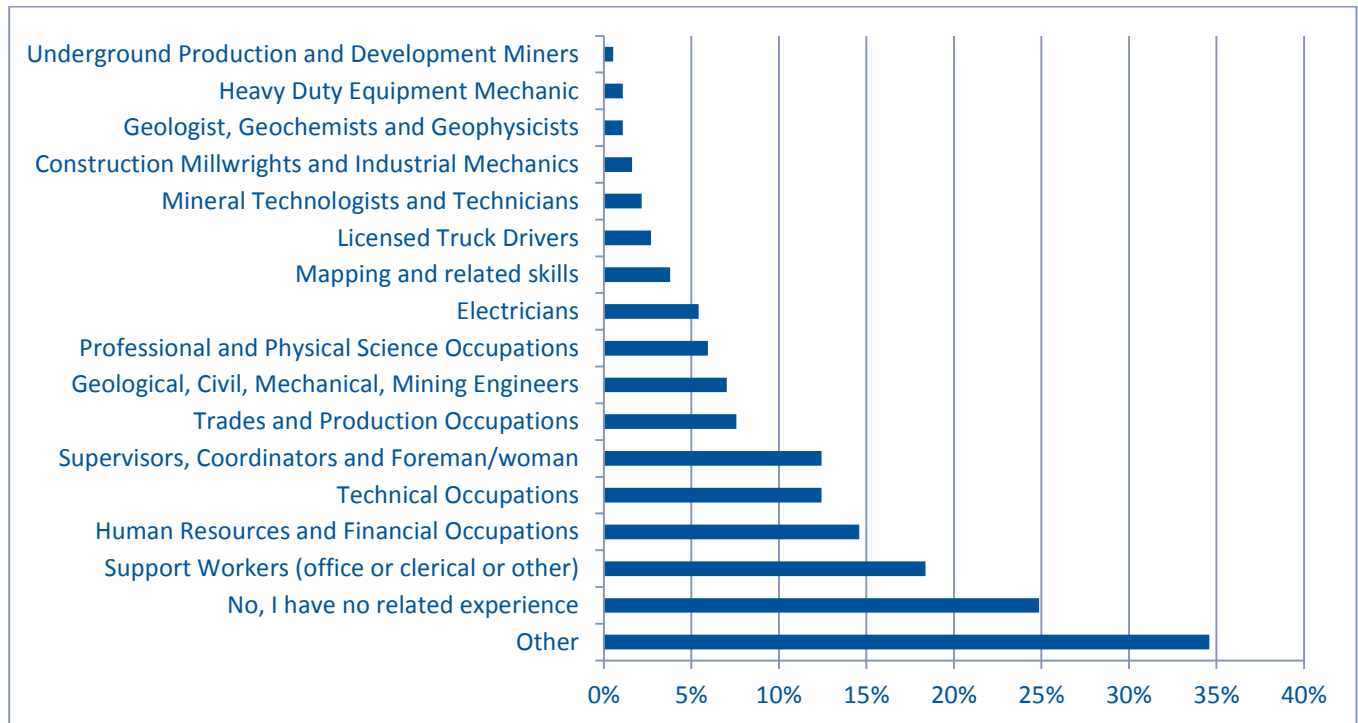
The following figure outlines the survey responses for each of the targeted surveys that were disseminated.

**Figure 9 – Skilled Immigrant Project Research Survey Summary**

Stakeholder Group	Survey Objective	Total Responses
Immigrants connected to Back in Motion programing	Sent to contacts within the Back in Motion programs to identify Skilled Immigrants with relevant transferable skills for Industry careers. From this survey, Skilled Immigrants that met the research definition and had transferable skills for the Industry sector were then contacted for further research initiatives.	185
Skilled Immigrants Working in the Industry	Identify Skilled Immigrants working in the sector for focus group participation and gather perspectives on barriers to employment	11
Skilled Immigrants Not Working in the Industry	Identify perceptions and career awareness of the Industry from Skilled Immigrants who were not working in the sector	31
Industry	Gather Industry perspectives on employment barriers facing Skilled Immigrants. Investigate if employers have a targeted strategy to hire Skilled Immigrants.	7

To identify participants that would be well suited for the focus group discussions, the Skilled Immigrants who were not currently working in the Industry were asked to identify their occupational backgrounds and experience. Figure 10 shows the occupational experience of the respondents, and highlights the occupations that are relevant to the Industry. As illustrated, of the 185 Skilled Immigrants who responded to the survey, over 75% of these respondents indicated occupational experience and/or training that is directly relevant to careers within the Industry.

**Figure 10 – Occupational Backgrounds of Skilled Immigrants Not Working in the Industry Survey Participants<sup>34</sup>**



### Focus Group Results

The following figure illustrates the number of participants who attended the focus groups sessions.

**Figure 11 – Skilled Immigrant Project Focus Group Attendees**

Focus Groups	Industry	Skilled Immigrants working in the Industry	Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (Surrey)	Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (Coquitlam)	Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (Richmond)
Session 1	5	5	3	5	9
Session 2	6	7	3	10	7
Session 3	4	3	9*		

<sup>34</sup> Survey responses were from 185 participants.

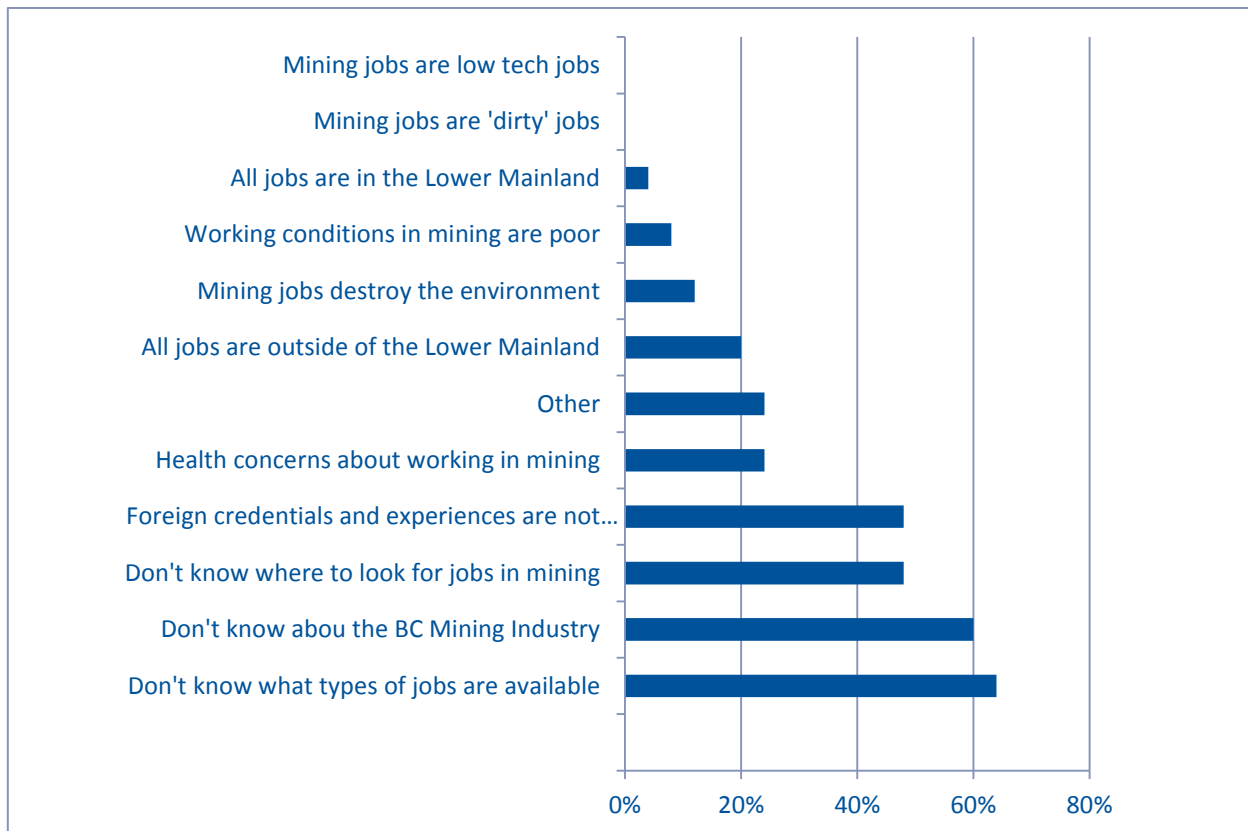
\*All Skilled Immigrants not working were invited to one central focus group for the third session located in Richmond, BC – WorkSafe BC office.



## Barriers to Employment

Identifying the Industry specific employment barriers facing Skilled Immigrants was a central component of the research. Initially Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry, Skilled Immigrants working in the Industry and Industry representatives were asked to identify employment barriers facing Skilled Immigrants through the surveys. The following chart outlines the barriers reported by the Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry.

**Figure 12 – Barriers Perceived by Skilled Immigrants Not Working Survey Participants<sup>35</sup>**



The key barriers identified through the surveys were summarized and shared with the focus group participants for further development. The following figure outlines the barriers identified by each of the focus groups and ranked in order of importance as determined by the stakeholder groups.

<sup>35</sup> Survey responses were from 25 participants.

**Figure 13 – Identification of Employment Barriers Facing Skilled Immigrant Workers by Focus Group Attendees**

Barriers to Employment (ranked in order)	Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (Richmond)	Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (Coquitlam)	Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry (Surrey)	Skilled Immigrants working in the Industry	Industry
1	Language and communication skills	Lack of skills in the Industry	No Canadian experience	Overqualified and no Canadian experience	Culture
2	Not sure of what skills are required; Lack of network	PEng. is impossible to get without Canadian experience	Don't have the industry networks	To have previous experience – considered as valuable as the local experience	Language and communication Skills
3	Don't know where to find a job	Not familiar with the Industry	Over-qualification/Transferability of education or professional qualifications; No specific training or experience; resume wording; Costly courses for training; No one replied to my applications	English - communication skills	Interactions with others/'fit' with company
4	Lack of Canadian experience; No Industry experience but transferable skills; Remote location; Dependent on the family situation	Not having Canadian experience in the Industry	Don't know where to find jobs; Don't know about the Industry	Don't know about the Industry – lack of Industry knowledge	Education requirements
5	Not knowing what jobs are available	Lack of Industry network	Don't know what types of jobs are in the Industry; Mines location	Commuting to the job	Frame of reference and risk (known vs. unknown; not knowing what to expect)
6	Relevant experience, professional designations	Location is too remote	N/A	Lack of network	N/A
7	Not the right age	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Not aware of the supply side of the business and the businesses involved; not knowledgeable	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

## Communicating Job Opportunities and Industry Awareness

Industry employers and Skilled Immigrants identified different preferences for where to “post a job” and where to “search for jobs”. When skilled immigrant participants were asked ‘where they searched for job opportunities?’ - the most commonly used methods were government job banks, and multi-sector job banks (ex. Monster). In comparison, Industry employers were more likely to post their openings initially on their company website, and then sector specific sites. During the focus group sessions, Industry participants from larger employers clarified that they did in fact use multi-sector job banks for recruitment, where smaller employers indicated a tendency to use company website and sector specific job sites.

**Does your company currently hire and employ skilled immigrants?**

*100% of Industry Employers surveyed said yes – but only 28.6% had a targeted recruitment strategy for skilled immigrants.*

**Figure 14 – Disconnect Between Where Employers Post Jobs and Where Skilled Immigrants Search for Jobs**



Industry employers also indicated a preference for employer referrals, as one Industry participant stated, “we use all recruiting methods; the ones that are most successful are through employee referrals.” One Industry participant indicated that employee referrals have become a part of their ongoing business process referred to as ‘retained intelligence’; this includes a one-one interview with each of their employees to build out a detailed contact list of the people that their employees would recommend for future employment opportunities. One Industry participant indicated that they use monetary rewards for employee referrals, the amount is greater the more senior the position in the company, but managers are not eligible for this reward, and employees only receive the monetary reward if the employee hired completes their probationary period. For Skilled Immigrants who may not have a network within the Industry, preference for employee referral recruitment may present additional barriers to employment.

Skilled Immigrants’ lack of awareness of Industry does not occur in isolation. In the focus groups with Skilled Immigrants who were not currently working in the industry, it was indicated that the

attractiveness of employment within the sector is largely influenced by experience and awareness of mining in other countries. Within the focus group sessions, there were discussions about corruption, poverty, poor safety standards and employment discrimination within the global sector.

## Canadian Experience

Skilled Immigrants both within and outside of the sector voiced their frustration with employer insistence on Canadian experience. One participant said: “it should not matter if they have Canadian experience, the most important thing is if you have experience and you have engineering knowledge” – “this is not national knowledge it is professional knowledge”. One participant added, ‘if you want to be at the level that you were at in your home country – this is not realistic, but you should be able to work in your field’. There was discussion on the need for training on professional practice in Canada as there are different provincial standards to consider, health and safety regulations, and each company may have different expectations.

Industry participants were also asked to clarify the meaning of ‘Canadian Experience’. Specifically, focus group participants were asked “*How much and what type of experience is needed to meet the Canadian experience qualification?*” Multiple Industry participants expressed that it depends on the level of the position and agreed that the greater the work responsibility the greater need for Canadian experience. As voiced by one Industry participant: “If you are running the project - you need to have a clear understanding of the way business is run in Canada – particularly, if you are overseeing people in our Industry, there are risks involved in safety and culture.”

There may also be distinct needs for tradespeople to have specific Canadian experience. As one Industry participant indicated: “if we hire a tradesperson, in order for them to be certified their work experience must happen in Canada”. Another participant added: “there are language differences, cultural differences, education pathway differences. For example [a Skilled Immigrant] may have great language and cultural skills; by comparison, you have someone who has language challenges that would require some time to really get established in Canada.”

Another participant indicated: “It is difficult to say. Someone who gets a geological degree from outside of Canada – they may advertise themselves as a geoscientist – but when they come into Canada the association that provides certification may determine the candidate doesn’t have the skill level for professional designation within the province and that they may need to pick up a few courses or more experience.”

It was also indicated that “Canadian experience” can be very specific to the geology, climate and regulatory environment within the sector. “In our case, we need candidates with permafrost experience or arctic experience. If they are hiring into a regulatory or environmental position, foreign experience may not be that transferable. You need to know the Canadian laws.”

## Hiring Bias and Work Environment within the BC Mining Sector

Skilled Immigrant participants not working in the sector questioned the Industry participant's identification of culture as a key barrier to employment in the sector. However, there was an indication of differences in work culture and work settings. One participant indicated that in their home country as an Engineer he/she did not use the computer and had staff to complete reporting or data entry on his/her behalf. This was acknowledged as considerably different than the work process for engineers in Canada.

A participant added: "I think a big thing for immigrants is flexibility. You can't come to a new country and expect things to be the same – you need to change yourself first. Are we flexible enough to change our direction or even level within an organization? [You can't just] hope that there is a welcoming community – you need to go there and create that." Another participant added: "Most immigrants go to another country – you are ready to adopt – you have already prepared yourself – you know that things will be different. You may not know what the culture is, but as you learn it in order to blend in or to fit in with the group, you are willing to make changes".

One participant felt that technical knowledge can remove barriers: "As an immigrant I worked in many different cultures. Initially, maybe there was a language barrier, but as an engineer whether you are from Japan or Canada when you speak in technical terms you almost bond over this – there is no difference". One participant experienced a working cultural difference that resulted in termination from his/her Canadian employment. The participant shared an experience where they were fired from a job site for interrupting a conversation with a supervisor who was speaking with a customer. In the participants' home country, this would have been acceptable communication but the employer explained that this was not acceptable in the Canadian work environment. There was concern from within the Skilled Immigrant focus groups with the employer's identification of "cultural difference" as an employment barrier. As stated by one Skilled Immigrant participant: "I think the word culture should be changed to stereotyping about immigrants".

Industry employers may need more information on how to recruit and retain Skilled Immigrants in the sector, and greater awareness about hiring bias and discrimination. One Industry participant suggested there are unique characteristics about the sector employment culture, but discrimination is also still an issue "Once [Skilled Immigrants] get over the cultural norms and understand any differences with regards to safety and standards [in the Industry] there is still the awareness of being different [...] a lot has changed recently in the Industry and it is a more accepting culture – but the mining culture is still not that inclusive of anyone who is different as seen with both women and immigrants".

Another Industry participant indicated hesitation with regards to hiring Skilled Immigrants, as they noted experiences where immigrants have stated they have experience or skill in something they do not. "Where people say yes I can do this because they think they are supposed to know how to do this –this makes me weary – I don't think that they are trying to lie about it, but there may be cultural difference and a need to be 'agreeable'". Industry participants agreed that determining skill and experience is more challenging with applicants who have not worked in the sector within Canada.

Additional aspects inherent of the Industry may present barriers for those who have not worked in the sector including both Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO) operations and sensitivity around sector stakeholder

***"You need to know how to do things together when you do something in your work field. Identify and understand the working culture, the industry culture, and the professional culture".***

***-Industry Employer-***

relationships, “we want to be very careful. If they are going into a FIFO operation, there is a lot more on the line. In addition, we vet people out based on their ability to be respectful of the local Aboriginal cultures”.

Industry participants also suggested that the cyclical nature of the Industry can be difficult to understand and cope with for new immigrants. “We need new immigrants to understand that this isn’t a permanent job, there is a finite life to our projects”.

As one participant articulated, “this may be a simple case of the known versus the unknown”. Another Industry participant added “I have worked in Canada for 20 years, I went to school in Canada – I know what to expect. [A Skilled Immigrant] may speak really well in the interview, but can they write a report? Are we speaking about the same things? Canada’s north – there is nothing like this. People who have not experienced it may not know what they are getting themselves into.” An Industry participant added: “cultural differences can also be about pace of work and the working (culture) within the organization”.

An Industry participant added: “it is how we interact with each other – protocols with communication, human rights, what we consider respectful interactions with each other – relations between genders.” In addition, “It is really just society norms – in terms of every day, when to speak out, we know when it is OK to interject in the conversation and when not to”.

One participant added an example of differences in Canadian and American work culture. The participant explained a situation where a Canadian core logging crew set up a mock Canadian flag in front of their core shack in an American camp and the American workers were extremely offended and then covered the Canadian flag with a larger American flag. For the Canadian crew it was a light joke, but this was offensive to the patriotism of the American workers.

There may be significant differences around safety expectations as articulated by one Industry participant: “sometimes there are things that are just assumed... [Someone with mining experience outside of Canada] may look at a Canadian operation and ask ‘Why so much rock bolting and screening? – it’s really about perceptions and what you are used to’”. Although Industry participants agreed that ‘safety’ was the most important aspect of the Industry culture, other cultural expectations around meeting deadlines and absenteeism may be unspoken. Industry and Skilled Immigrants working in the sector outlined a variety of topics that collaboratively define working culture in the sector. As one participant summarized, “Accountability, work ethic, hierarchy, communication, behavior in meetings – what is appropriate is the flow of communication and information”.

## Overcoming Barriers to Employment

The barriers identified through the initial surveys and focus groups were then summarized into the top seven barriers to employment.

### *Key Barriers to Employing Skilled Immigrants in the Industry*

Lack of:

- *Canadian experience,*
- *Understanding of the industry, what skills are required, and where to find the jobs,*
- *Industry specific training or experience,*
- *Industry network,*
- *Understanding of the culture and ability to interact seamlessly with others in the work setting,*
- *Education/skills transferred into the Canadian equivalents, and*
- *Language and communication skills.*

The top barriers to employment were presented back to the three target groups during their second focus group session. The purpose of this exercise was to validate the key barriers as summarized by the project team and provide the participants with an opportunity to identify and discuss potential mitigation strategies for the identified barriers.

The following figure outlines the suggested solutions to overcoming these barriers. Focus groups responded to these barriers independently. Findings identified by focus group participants were not shared with other focus group; each focus group was present the same barriers. The figure illustrates where target groups identified similar solutions.

**Figure 15 – Suggested Employment Barrier Solutions by Focus Group Attendees**

Barriers	Solution	Skilled Immigrants Not Working	Skilled Immigrants Working in Mining	Industry
Get Canadian Experience	Mentorship	•		•
	Internships	•		•
	Volunteering	•		
	Small consulting/contract job	•		•
	Training on the job/apprenticeships*	•		
	Get an entry level job, or any job that gains Canadian experience*	•		
	Live in Canada, instead of going back and forth	•		
	Provides employers with incentive to hire Skilled Immigrants	•		
	Join the military	•		
	Volunteer job in the mining sector or industrial environment	•		

	Co-op or casual terms of employment		•	
	Employer can offer fixed term contract with possibility of extension		•	•
	Tools for employers to evaluate transferability of skills and experience		•	
Understand more about the industry, what skills are required and where to find the jobs	Online workshops	•		
	Socialize yourself by attending events within the industry community	•		
	Network, 'tell your story', and introduce yourself to others*	•		
	Immigrants should attend more social activities routinely. For example, games night, community potlucks, reading groups, hiking groups, morning industry coffees, etc.	•		
	Volunteer in a job that is related to your skill	•		
	Training, business ethics training (ex. APEGBC's ethics course), BCIT courses*	•		
	Internships	•		
	Mentorship	•		
	Connect/Inquire to get your credentials assessed (ex. APEGBC)*	•		
	Follow international standards	•		
	Searching on the internet for top companies and identify their needs and priorities	•		
	The province should provide incentive to hire Skilled Immigrants	•		
	Focus your job search on Industry websites and forums	•		
	BC Jobs Service should provide more practical training	•		
	Informational Interview and real stories with examples of successful immigrants	•		
	Research the industry and search websites*	•		
	Government job site with sector information	•		•
	Informational interviews with employers in the industry	•		
	Public library – could provide training on how to research the Industry and the skills required	•		
	Industry funded skills training	•		
	More Industry information for Skilled Immigrant agencies		•	•
Industry needs to be more visible, bring Skilled Immigrants to mine sites, and Industry to Skilled Immigrant services		•	•	
Start Industry "Skilled Immigrant Group"		•		
Video tools showing Skilled Immigrants working in the sector		•		
Enhancing Explore for More website with Skilled Immigrant specific content		•		
Industry publications		•	•	
Advertise the Industry on general job boards		•		
Receive industry specific training or experience	Subsidized internships (couple of months)	•	•	
	Unpaid internships (this could be limited to a short number of weeks). Employers should be subsidizing the costs of transit and food. The unpaid internships could work like a probationary period – and then employers could select and hire the best candidates after the completion of the internship	•	•	
	Participate in government funded Industry training (there were no known examples of this within the focus group)	•		
	Develop training programs with unions on specific tasks	•		
	Industries have to invest more on training workers on the job site	•		
	Participants indicated a need for specific training on safety practices within the Industry and general Industry knowledge	•		
	Apprenticeship	•		



	Internship	•		
	If the government subsidizes this – people that are interested will attend	•		
	Practical short courses (ex. safety)	•	•	•
	Volunteer	•		
	Take courses specific to qualifications	•		
	Networking with professional in the field and find out which courses are valued by industry	•		
	Find courses which offers training about both technical and cultural aspects of working in the industry	•		
	Mentorship	•		
	Mining 101 (could subsidize for Skilled Immigrants)		•	
	Streamline federal and provincial processes validating credentials (ex. Share education information submitted to immigration with provincial professional associations(ex. APEGBC)		•	
Create or improve industry network	Workshops	•	•	
	Go to college	•		
	LinkedIn*	•		•
	Association memberships	•		•
	Go to job fair, try to get employers of the industry in attendance	•		
	Skills Connect	•		
	Through training program	•		
	Talk to all the people that you meet – participants indicated that networks are built not only through structured networking events but through everyday interactions.	•		
	Join Site-BC	•		
	Volunteer and connect with Professional Associations	•		•
	Have a mentor	•		
	Attend job fairs	•		
	Transfer your knowledge to others – share your knowledge	•		
	Improve your industry knowledge and get experience	•		
	Information session where Skilled Immigrants get the chance to connect with members of the industry*	•		
	Subsidize industry conference costs	•		
	In person informational interview*	•		
Attend industry events	•	•	•	
Industry sponsored events specifically for Skilled Immigrants		•		
Understand and fit in better with the culture/ Increase our ability to interact with others in the work setting	Attend Canadian cultural events and volunteer*	•	•	
	Join community organizations, Site-BC, a club*	•	•	
	Taking ESL courses	•		
	Government funded training	•		
	Utilize all opportunities to network	•		
	Toastmasters	•		
	Mentorship	•		•
	Cultural sensitivity training for employers/Skilled Immigrants			•
Onboarding programs with mentors for new hires		•		
Have education/ skills transferred to the Canadian equivalent	Evaluation of your credentials through assessment body– (BCIT Assessment) start with equivalency and then see if you need to do some skills upgrading*	•	•	•
	Compare foreign credential with an equivalent Canadian program (personal assessment)	•	•	•

	Industry list of transferable skills	•	•	•
	Follow international standards	•		
	Governments or top companies could have examinations/assessments to confirm your qualifications	•	•	
	Skills enhancement – you may want to pursue higher education or designation in Canada to prove equivalency.	•		
	Translate reference letters		•	
Have stronger language skills and better communication skills	Take ESL courses and subsidize funding course work*	•		
	Language workshops in the Canadian mining work environment	•		
	Toastmasters*	•	•	
	Practice and be sociable	•		•
	Learn the technical vocabulary of the work environment	•		•
	Courses and reading	•	•	•
	Try to make friends and go to every opportunity to network	•	•	
	Immigrants have routine social activities with local residents like games night, potlucks etc.	•		
	Get involved in your community, volunteer*	•	•	
	Obtain a college or university degree in Canada	•		

\*The solutions were indicated at more than one of the Skilled Immigrants not working in the Industry’ focus group sessions.

## Overcoming Barriers to Relocate

Relocation is perceived to be a significant barrier in the employment of skilled labour in the Industry sector. With mining operations and exploration sites predominately found in remote or rural areas within the province, relocation of workers from urban centers will become increasingly important as the competition for skilled workers intensifies.

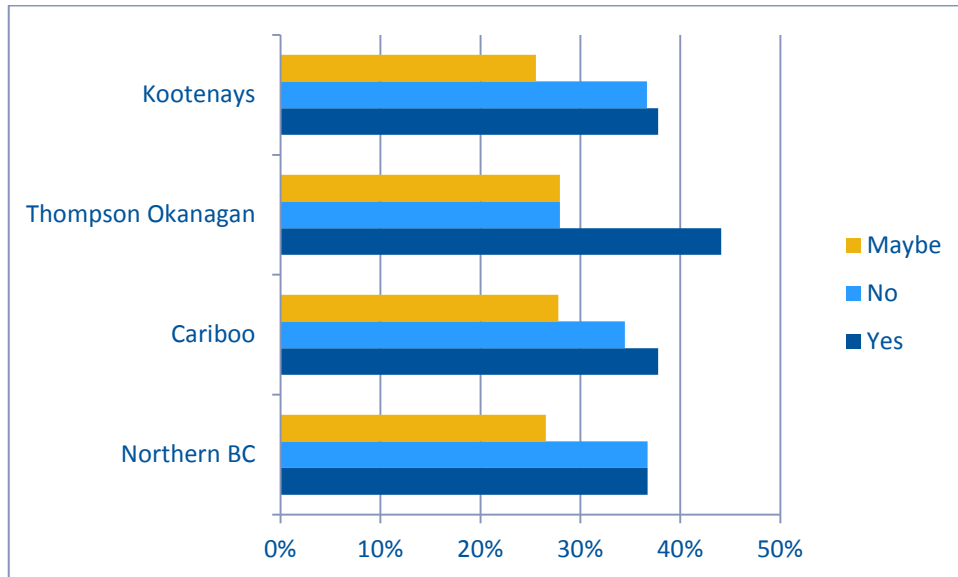
Within the Industry focus group sessions, there was a general perception that Skilled Immigrants were generally less willing to relocate to more remote regions of the province for employment. In contrast, the survey results and focus group findings indicated Skilled Immigrants would be willing to consider relocation.

Skilled Immigrants not currently working in the Industry focus group attendees responded that 75% of them would relocate within BC for a job in the Industry and 72% of respondents indicated they would be willing to work a schedule that required them to be away from home/family for a long time. Initial survey participants did not have a distinct preference to the region of BC when asked which region they would be willing to relocate to.

**“When you have come 5,000 miles what’s another 300 miles.”**

*-Skilled Immigrant working in the mining sector-*

**Figure 16 – Williness of Skilled Immigrants Not Working in the Industry Survey Participants to Relocate to Different Regions of BC if Offered Stable, Well– Paid Employment<sup>36</sup>**



When discussed within the focus groups, Skilled Immigrants indicated a prioritization of the potential support mechanisms that can be incorporated to ease the transition of relocation. Figure 17 highlights the importance of covering relocation expenses, assistance in finding a family member suitable employment, and the value of mentorship both within an organization and as part of acclimatization within a new community setting.

Some participants indicated that relocation could still be a challenge based on their family situation, and especially when career opportunities are often in small towns or remote locations in the province. Participants perceived integration as more challenging in a small community. One Skilled Immigrant who worked in the sector articulated this challenge: “as an immigrant we have seen a lot and have seen others’ experiences and circumstances, and small towns can be closed-minded”. This was reiterated by a participant who saw community as a real issue and the difference between living in Vancouver and their experience in a small BC mining community. “In a close-knit community – there are a small number of people who really run the town”.

The following figure summarizes potential strategies for reducing workplace relocation barriers experienced by Skilled Immigrants and illustrates the selection of the strategies by order of importance for each of the target groups.

<sup>36</sup> Survey responses were from 106 participants.

**Figure 17 – Relocation Strategies for Skilled Immigrants Prioritized by Focus Group Participants**

Potential Relocation Strategies	Skilled Immigrants Working in the Sector	Skilled Immigrants Not working (Richmond)	Skilled Immigrants Not Working (Coquitlam)	Skilled Immigrants Not Working (Surrey)
Having some or all of the relocation costs subsidized	2	1	1	1
Tour of new job sites	6	4	3	4
Connecting with a local mentor to help with settling into the company culture	4	3	5	2
Connecting with a local mentor to help with settling into the community culture	3	6	5	3
Assistance with finding a job for another family member	1	2	3	2
Assistance with finding a place to live	5	6	2	6
Tour of the geographical region	7	7	5	3
Assistant with finding amenities (stores, doctors, schools, places of worship).	7	5	4	4
Utilizing government services such as Welcome BC, Mosaic, Immigrant Services Center of BC, etc.	8	6	4	5

The ranking of the strategies are done by the most influential (1) to least influential (8). Focus Groups determined that some strategies were as important as others and ranked them accordingly. The top three rankings (1, 2 and 3) for each Focus Group are highlighted. The potential relocation support strategies were not ranked by the Industry Focus Group.

## Removal of Employment Barriers for Skilled Immigrants

What would the employment cycle look like for Skilled Immigrants if the barriers to employment were removed? This is an important question to consider when determining the key strategic actions and areas of priority for the Industry. The following illustration is a visualization of the employment cycle without employment barriers.

**Figure 18 – Ideal Employment Cycle for Employing Skilled Immigrants**

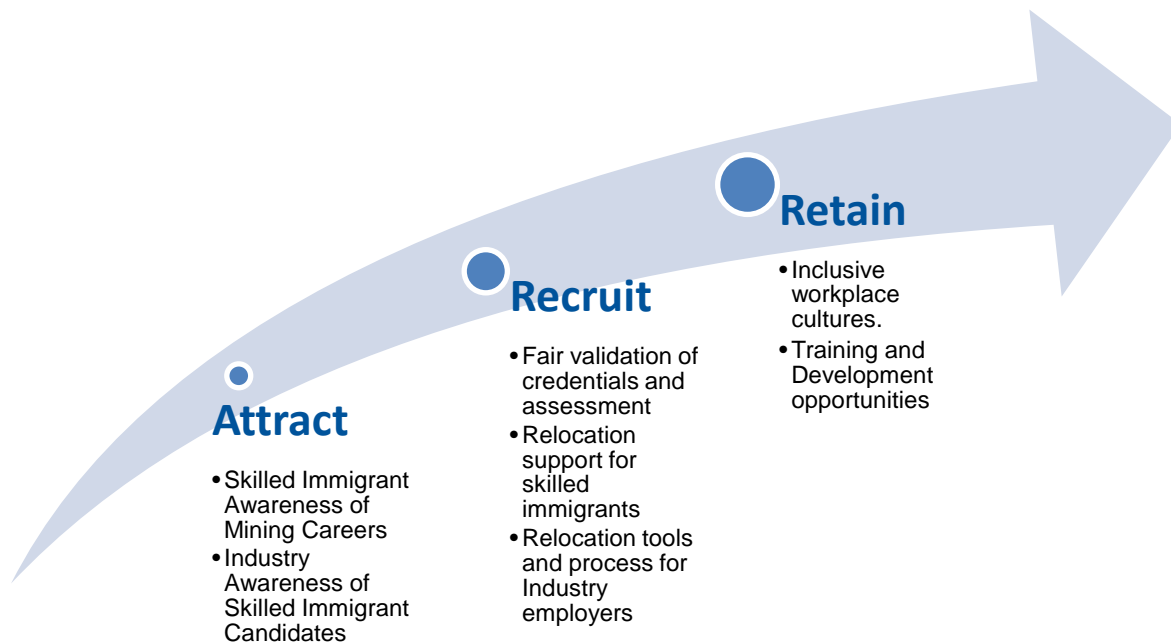


Figure 18 illustrates that to increase the attractiveness of employment within the Industry, efforts to improve career awareness amongst Skilled Immigrants must be balanced with improving Industry awareness of the value of hiring Skilled Immigrants. To ensure qualified Skilled Immigrants are not just interested in employment but are actually recruited into the sector there must be fair and transparent validation of credentials and experience. Additionally, as the Industry is uniquely located in many remote locations in the province, the sector must support and improve the relocation process and must advocate a culturally inclusive environment within their organizations and the communities in which their organizations operate.

## Identification of Solutions and Potential Courses of Actions

Solutions to the key barriers skilled immigrants are facing were summarized into six key recommendations.

### ***Key Recommendations to Employing More Skilled Immigrants in the Industry***

- *Build career awareness resources for Skilled Immigrants,*
- *Develop broader Industry awareness of the value of hiring Skilled Immigrants,*
- *Build Industry partnerships with Skilled Immigrant service providers,*
- *Support policy initiatives for a more demand-driven immigration system,*
- *Improve foreign credential and experience recognition, and*
- *Provide relocation support that is Industry specific.*

The recommendations were presented to the three target focus groups and the Project subcommittee for discussion. From these discussions, a potential course of action for each of the recommendations was generated.

### **Building Career Awareness Resources for Skilled Immigrants**

The need for increasing Skilled Immigrants' awareness of careers in the Industry is paramount. The type of information that is needed to increase awareness includes:

- more information on the sector and the types of careers available,
- skills and training required for specific occupations in the sector,
- information on locations of the jobs, and
- forecasted opportunities.

In consultation with Case Managers and Employment Counsellors at Avia and Skills Connect; front-line support workers are also in need of this information and information on where to direct Skilled Immigrants for employment opportunities.

Industry Employers reported using mining career focused websites to post jobs, while Skilled Immigrants were largely unaware of these sites. At a basic level, this indicates a disconnect between Industry and Skilled Immigrants on job advertisement and job searching strategies, and illustrates the need for further engagement between Skilled Immigrants, advisors they seek out for guidance, and the sector.

In addition to career awareness, Skilled Immigrants taking part in the Project indicated some specific differences in the way mining is conducted both from a technical and social perspective in the countries from which they emigrated. Articulating the specific regulatory frameworks, health and safety policies, and workplace culture within the Industry in comparison to other global jurisdictions is an important component of building BC specific Industry awareness.

To build awareness of the sector and the careers within it, participants expressed a particular interest in hearing the actual experiences of Skilled Immigrants that are now working in the Industry and exploration sector. Hearing the real-life career stories through on-line videos or in-person presentations was the preferred method of delivery. It was also suggested that the real-life career stories answer questions that could include;

- What do you do in the Industry?
- What are your duties and responsibilities?
- How did you get your career started in the Industry?
- What is your career path and education stream?
- What are employers in the Industry looking for in applicants?
- What does it take to succeed in the BC mining and exploration sector?
- What challenges did you face and how did you overcome these challenges?
- What advice would you give to a newcomer? What advice do you wish you had received?

In addition to hearing real-life career stories, there exists an opportunity for greater career awareness through wider distribution of Explore for More (EFM) BC career information kits. It was also suggested that the EFM information should be included in the 'welcome packages' for Skilled Immigrants when they arrive in British Columbia, and broader efforts to develop mentorship for Skilled Immigrants who may not yet be in the sector. This type of mentorship would enable individuals to gather support and information from Industry employers and employees as they move from career exploration and skills upgrading through to finding gainful employment.

## Develop Broader Industry Awareness of the Value of Hiring Skilled Immigrants

Currently, the Industry is facing some specific challenges in the diversification of its labour sources. In comparison with other industries, the sector is underperforming in the utilization of Skilled Immigrants. This shows an opportunity for the Industry to improve its competitiveness within an increasingly tight labour market. In order to do this, the Industry needs a specific strategy to attract and retain qualified Skilled Immigrants. This strategy should include both sector specific career information to increase the awareness of the Industry (as indicated above) and tactics to expand Industry awareness of the value of Skilled Immigrants as a potential labour source.

From the research conducted, Industry employers indicated both a willingness to hire qualified Skilled Immigrants and a lack of experience in hiring Skilled Immigrants. This dichotomy reinforces the need for employer specific tools and resources to ensure a greater level of engagement between Skilled Immigrants and Industry employers. At the time of research, no employers reported the existence of a

***“While it is somewhat difficult to break in - once you are in, BC Mining is a close community network making it easy to move about. I believe we should be more supportive of potential employees trying to break in, even if over skilled - as in my experience a lot of strong candidates are overlooked and we lose this potential with them moving to other industries.”***

***-Skilled Immigrant Working in the Sector-***

specific strategy targeting the attraction and retention of Skilled Immigrants.

In addition, there are perceptions of bias and discrimination within Industry hiring practices that need to be addressed. The sector is known for its tightly knit community. This can be attributed to the finite nature of projects, and the Industry's sensitivity to the commodities market. This has led to a mobility of workers from one project to another as shifts in the market or mining cycle result in shifting workforce requirements. It is understood that employers in the sector have a tendency to hire 'those they know'. This was reinforced by the reliance and presence of successful corporate employee referral programs that were referenced by employers in this research, and employer's preference to hire locally. In most cases, employers recruit first within a small geographical radius and then branch outwards if they are unable to fill the hiring requirements locally. Skilled Immigrants may lack sector specific networks, and are likely not connected to more remote communities in the province where upcoming and current mining operations tend to reside. This presents significant employment barriers that will require collaborative action by employers to ensure they are accessing all available talent pools.

In order to build Industry awareness of the accessibility of Skilled Immigrants as a labour source, we need to show the business case for hiring Skilled Immigrants, and assist employers in fair evaluation of potential hires. This includes evaluation of the relevancy of 'Canadian experience' as a requirement for specific employment opportunities. As articulated by Industry, there are unique aspects of the sector that are particular to the geography and geology of BC; however, broad generalization around 'Canadian experience' and 'cultural fit' need to be evaluated to ensure fair and unbiased hiring practices within the sector.

One participant indicated that removing bias and strong onboarding is not enough "There is a need for ongoing reinforcement – having supervisors that have the cultural sensitivity to train and manage people and deal with issues right away". As the Industry is characterized by a strong and insular nature, creating opportunities for Skilled Immigrants to meet and network within the Industry was considered paramount.

## Build Industry Partnerships with Skilled Immigrant Service Providers

Skilled Immigrant service providers are the conduit to accessing Skilled Immigrant talent, and as specified in the structure of this project work, building Industry partnerships with service providers can provide extensive expertise and insight in the removal of employment barriers and development of effective strategies to engage immigrants.

Other sectors are currently partnering with these service providers to access their talent pools through formalized incentivized mentorship programs, internships, sector specific career fairs, and training partnerships. There exists opportunity for the Industry to build partnerships with these providers to increase access to Skilled Immigrant talent. This includes the development of a sector specific liaison who would act as a conduit between Skilled Immigrant talent Industry employers. Both Skilled Immigrants and employers communicated the importance of a sector liaison as it would benefit from a central contact that could connect them with suitable skilled

***"I had no idea that there were Skilled Immigrants already in BC that were ready and willing to work. It would save my company time and money to first look at resources closer to home; the cost to upgrade training would be minimal compared to the cost of sourcing outside of Canada."***

*-Industry Representative-*



immigrant talent and connect skilled talents with jobs.

Partnering with government service providers can also include Industry support in policy initiatives that remove barriers to employment that are relevant to the Industry. This includes increasing access to government employment services, and easing the transition for international students (student visa) that are completing post-secondary studies in respective disciplines. As one individual expressed, “As a student it was difficult to access government employment programs to start the process of transitioning into employment without a permanent residency card.”

## Support Policy Initiatives for a More Demand –Driven Immigration System

There is a growing interest in Canada and within BC to shift current immigration systems and programs to be more responsive to the needs of Industry and employers. Recent research from the British Columbia Immigration Taskforce and IEC-BC has identified this as an important recommendation in the optimization of labour participation. Our research supports these findings. With specific reference to the Industry, the labour shortage is more intense than in other sectors. There exist a number of significant projects in remote regions of the province that will require workers with Industry specific skills and abilities. Many participants indicated frustration with the timeliness and relevancy of the labour market information that is referenced for immigration. In order for the Industry to be identified and engaged in relevant opportunities, it must be represented in the immigration selection process.

## Improve Foreign Credential and Experience Recognition

Recognizing foreign credentials and experience is essential to understanding the knowledge that Skilled Immigrants possess. Finding ways to adequately assess credentials has been explored; it currently is a laborious and expensive process that falls largely on the Skilled Immigrant to navigate. In the recent report *British Columbia Underground Miner Occupational Analysis and Skills Development*, the findings included a recommendation to support the National Occupational Standard for Underground Miners as the benchmark to assess the skills and experience of internationally trained and experienced workers. In addition, IEC-BC, through its Innovation Fund, is sponsoring a specific pilot program that is utilizing competency based assessment for Mining and Oil and Gas occupations to assist employers in the selection and hiring of immigrant talent. This pilot program is basing its assessment on the National Occupational Standards.

It is recommended that further work be done to increase awareness of the Industry specific occupational standards that have been developed and validated by Industry, and continue to evaluate and work towards a more competency based assessment approach. An acute barrier facing the Industry is the recognition of foreign credentials specifically around engineering and geosciences.

***“I found quite frustrating the feeling that although you have been accepted as a skilled immigrant, your foreign credentials are not recognized (as an engineer) and you need to pretty much go over all the document gathering processes (and expenses) a second time for accreditation. Basically government says you have the skills to work here, but APEGBC doesn’t see it. I believe some integration (e.g. document exchange and shared fees) would be very valuable for the industry.”***

*-Skilled Immigrant Working in the Mining Sector-*

Supporting the professional associations in the removal of any erroneous barriers that may be holding back qualified candidates is critical. It was suggested to improve the processing time by providing Skilled Immigrants with the information required for professional or trades certification prior to their immigration to Canada. Allowing for documents approved in the immigration process to be also utilized by the professional associations can limit time and costs for Skilled Immigrants. Further assessment of current processes of credential and experience recognition is needed to ensure the identification of any skills gaps and the remedy of appropriate training or experience. Improving foreign credential and experience recognition is beneficial to Industry as it increases efficiencies within current processes, and allows access to a largely underutilized pool of talent.

### **Provide Relocation Support That Is Industry Specific**

Although relocation as a barrier to employment was perceived as less significant to Skilled Immigrants than employers, there still exists the need to improve Industry specific supports for relocation. Awareness of the locations and what community supports they offer need to be accessible as many participants confessed to not knowing what the different regions of BC had to offer. As the Industry increasingly operates in remote regions of the province, the need for workers to migrate to these regions will increase. In order to attract and retain Skilled Immigrant workers, specific and individualized supports must be in place. From the Project research, a variety of needs were identified including the need for compensated relocation, support in finding employment for family members, and the need for mentorship from both a community and a company perspective. Increasing employer efforts and partnerships with Employment Service providers in remote regions can support the removal of these barriers. Cultural sensitivity training for current employees and communities that are receiving migrating Skilled Immigrants can further support retention after relocation.

## **Recommendations and Strategy**

The key research findings and recommendations were presented in a series of consultations to the research participants and the project subcommittee. From these final consultations a list of recommendations and their corresponding potential courses of action were compiled and outlined in Figure 19.

**Figure 19 – Skilled Immigrant Employment Barriers, Recommendations, and Potential Courses of Action**

Identified Employment Barrier	Recommendation	Potential Courses of Action
Lack of Industry Awareness.	Building career awareness of Industry employment for Skilled Immigrants.	<p>Develop a targeted career awareness strategy for Skilled Immigrants.</p> <p>Develop communication tools to increase Skilled Immigrant career awareness of the Industry. Potential tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web based career information &amp; brochures (dissemination in Welcome BC bags, employment centers, etc.),</li> <li>• Bureau of Industry speakers, and</li> <li>• Videos of Skilled Immigrant Industry success stories.</li> </ul>
Lack of Industry specific strategy on the hiring of Skilled Immigrants.	Develop broader Industry awareness of the value of hiring Skilled Immigrants.	<p>Review current Industry hiring practices for hiring bias and discrimination.</p> <p>From the results of the hiring assessment, develop tools for employers to enable fair evaluation of potential hires and build awareness of the value of skilled immigrant hiring. Potential tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and disseminate Industry specific business cases for hiring Skilled Immigrants,</li> <li>• Develop an Industry Toolkit that address employment barriers and builds more inclusive employment practices within Industry, and</li> <li>• Support cultural sensitivity training for Industry.</li> </ul>
Disconnect between Industry employers and skilled immigrant service providers.	Build Industry partnerships with Skilled Immigrant service providers.	<p>Develop an in-house industry specialist/Industry liaison within Skilled immigrant service providers (Mosaic, ISS BC, SUCCESS, Back in Motion, Skills Connect, etc.).</p> <p>Improve Industry career outreach and communication with Skilled Immigrant service providers.</p> <p>Create more opportunities for Industry and Skilled Immigrants to connect. These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled Immigrant and Industry Networking Events,</li> <li>• Skilled Immigrant and Industry Mentorship,</li> <li>• Industry Volunteer positions for Skilled Immigrants, and</li> <li>• Internships or Co-op positions for Skilled Immigrants.</li> </ul> <p>Create and support a BC Mining Skilled Immigrant Group (similar to Women in Mining).</p>
Disconnect between immigration and regional and provincial employment demands.	Support policy initiatives to a more demand-driven immigration system.	<p>Advocate for better services to support immigrants in rural and remote regions of the province - near Industry projects.</p> <p>Support improvements in the timeliness and dissemination of labour market information nationally and abroad. Profiling current Industry job opportunities as they arise.</p> <p>Support current policy initiatives to update the point system for Skilled Immigrants applying to Canada to be more relevant and responsive to Industry needs, and advocate for a more demand-driven immigration</p>

Identified Employment Barrier	Recommendation	Potential Courses of Action
		system.
Difficulty in the validation of foreign experience and foreign credential assessment.	Improve foreign credential and experience recognition.	<p>Assess current processes of credential recognition to identify Industry specific skills gaps.</p> <p>Advocate for the sharing of proof of education submitted through the immigration process with professional associations to streamline the process.</p> <p>Support professional associations and advocacy groups in the streamlining of application processes and removal of barriers for qualified Skilled Immigrant (ex. partnerships with APEGBC, SITE-BC).</p> <p>Improve awareness for Industry and Skilled Immigrants on how to get foreign credentials recognized, and tools to start this process prior to immigration.</p> <p>Increase awareness of current Industry specific National Occupational Standards.</p> <p>Support the development of competency based hiring tools (ex. Northern Lights College EIF project).</p> <p>Provide Industry support and advocacy for Skilled Immigrants interested in assessment and registration with the Canadian Mining Certification Program.</p> <p>Provide Industry support and advocacy for Skilled Immigrants interested in the ITA Immigrants in Trades Training initiative.</p>
Remote nature of mining and exploration working environment.	Increasing relocation support for Skilled Immigrants and employers.	<p>Increase employer efforts and partnerships with employment service providers in remote regions to provide suggested supports.</p> <p>Develop cultural sensitivity training for current employees and communities that are receiving migrating Skilled Immigrants.</p>

The recommendations need to have multi-stakeholder support including government, Industry and the Skilled Immigrant community to be fully implemented. It is important for the subject matter experts to work closely together to ensure that recommendations are carried out in a manner that is applicable and cost effective. Some recommendations are able to be implemented immediately, while others will need further pilot projects to better understand how best to bring them to fruition.

The next Phase in the project (Phase 2) would prioritize the recommendations and determine the best value in terms of first deliverables. Phase 2 would be short in duration and provide the opportunity to develop a strategy to assess each recommendation and identify initiatives for collaboration and partnership. It is through collaboration and partnership that the greatest impact for both Industry and Skilled Immigrants can be achieved.

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