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# Job Seeking Information Behaviours of Urban, Métis Youth

**Abstract:** Study of the information seeking behaviours of urban, Métis youth. Interviews address why Métis youth use certain tools, resources, and community programs to look for meaningful employment and how motivation affects the search process. Finds that talking to people is the most used method of information seeking.

**Résumé** : Étude des comportements de recherche d'information des jeunes métis en milieu urbain. Des entrevues permettent de clarifier pourquoi les jeunes métis utilisent des outils, des ressources et des programmes communautaires spécifiques pour chercher des emplois intéressants ainsi que les effets de la motivation sur le processus de recherche. Les conclusions démontrent que l'échange verbal est la méthode la plus utilisée.

This recent project investigated the information seeking behaviours of urban, Métis youth, and  was facilitated through the building of a research relationship with a Métis community. Qualitative findings from the study with six Métis participants will be presented. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews addressed why or why not Métis youth use particular information tools, resources, and community programs to look for meaningful employment. This study relates to the Human-Information Interaction (HII) theme of the CAIS/AICS 2010 Conference as information behaviours of a specific client group are studied. Results of the study also intersect with other sub-themes of HII, namely user studies, interface design, and information literacy.

This study contributes to the field of LIS with a design that exemplifies the building of a relationship with an Aboriginal community for the purposes of LIS research, with and for the community. Much of the literature related to research and Indigenous communities refers to building partnerships with the community that facilitate community involvement in the project beyond the support and guidance of its leaders (Sharp and Foster 2002, Meadows et al 2003, McNaughton and Rock 2004). A community consultation for this project was conducted prior to any research taking place. This project introduced the community to the qualitative research method of interviewing participants, as well as introduced the issues surrounding ethical research. The participation of community leaders in an ethics and project consultation gave the community members an opportunity to shape the ethics proposal, as well as decide among themselves if the research was beneficial for the community.

Another contribution to the field of Library and Information Studies is that this study examined under-studied participant group. The discussion of library services to Aboriginal peoples in Canada has become a recognized topic in the literature (Breu 2003, Bruce 2003). However, Métis Canadians have yet to be studied as a unique Aboriginal group in the LIS literature. To date, there are no other research studies in the field of LIS that specifically address the information behaviours of Métis Canadians.

## 1. Research Questions

The project focused on the following four research questions:

1. *Methods:* Why does a participant choose to look for work using the information seeking methods that they use? What sources are helpful and why?
2. *Motivation:* Why are participants motivated to look for work? Does motivation change throughout the search period? Why?
3. *Access Local Services:* Why does a participant choose or not choose to use employment agencies or public library services to help them find work?
4. *Access Métis Community:* Why or why not does a participant talk to members and organizations of the Métis community to get help finding a job?

## 2. Methodology

The methodological perspective for data collection was phenomenology. This methodology was chosen because it best suits the goal of this project in that it attempts to understand people's perspectives and understandings of a situation (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, 139). This project was designed to study the phenomenon of being a Métis youth in an urban environment and to be looking for work. Methods to collect data for this study were in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six participants. Interviews took place with the researcher and some pre-selected questions were asked in order to lead the discussion, but not to limit it. Interviews were selected because they provide the opportunity to glean in-depth information about why people chose resources. Criteria for participation included residing in the city limits, being between the ages of 18 and 30, actively looking for work or be very recently employed, and self-declaring as Métis. Two interviews occurred for each participant approximately one month apart. Interviews were transcribed and each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Coding was iterative: as new themes were discovered, all interviews were examined again for those themes.

## 3. Results

Research question one addressed methods of searching for work. Three methods to find jobs were described in the information behaviour interviews: talking to people, internet searching, and newspapers. Question two considered motivation. The study found that talking to people is the most used method of information seeking. Studies have examined the psychological aspects of emotion and motivation when looking for work (Wanberg et. al. 1999, Savolainen 2008) and measuring how actively people search for work (Blau 1994). This study found that all participants experienced autonomous motivation, but only when they are finding many job ads that apply to them. Information overload also entered the discussion to determine possible causes in change of motivation. Question three asked why participants use certain agencies to help them in their job search process. No participants use the public library to look for work because they do not associate the library with employment-related services. All participants have accessed employment agencies for help with resumes and/or job postings. Question four considered the role of the Métis community in the job search process of the youth. In order to determine the current or future role that the Métis community has in a participant's job search process, it was important to determine if the participant considered him or herself part of the community. One way that this was determined was by asking about the provincial Métis cards. This study found that no participants encountered a scenario where having the card was beneficial when looking for work. While the Métis Provincial card cannot be considered a tool/ benefit in the job search process, it can be considered a link to obtaining the skills to assist with job-seeking. There is a strong connection between having the card and perceived facilitation of accessing education funding. Five

participants had already accessed the community for financial and educational support. There is indication of a desire to learn more about the community after accessing help.

**4. Implications**
The results of this study have implications for the marketing strategies of public libraries to Métis youth seeking meaningful employment. The development of programs for job seeking youth may bring those Métis youth into the library who would otherwise not know about its services. Results on internet use may inform web design strategies for libraries and job search sites. Implications for the Métis community include evaluation of services provided by the community, why they are beneficial to youth, and identified gaps in information literacy skills among youth clients. It is probable that this research will be used in grant proposals by the Métis community to access funding to further develop employment and training programs. Understanding the information seeking behaviours of Métis youth may lead to further studies that compare the job seeking behaviours of First Nations and non-Aboriginal youth to Métis youth and attempt to account for discrepancies that may contribute to the gaps in employment rates. Theoretical contributions to the areas of information behaviour, information literacy, and job search motivations will be presented.

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