

**Evaluation Report  
Natural Blends Trainee Program**

Includes:  
**Final Report**

**By Jenny Delumo and Sarah MacKinnon**

Completed for:  
COIN Natural Blends Cafe  
Supervising Professor: Prof. Chris Beyers, Trent University  
Trent Centre for Community-Based Education

Department: International Development Studies  
Course Code: IDST 422  
Course Name:  
Term: Winter 2004  
Date of Project Submission: April, 2004

Project ID: 552

**Call Number: 331 Del**

**IDS 422 Evaluation Report**  
**Natural Blends Trainee Program**  
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Trent University  
March 30, 2004

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## Acknowledgements

This was a learning experience for both of us and we needed much guidance along the way. There were many people involved throughout this process but first and foremost we would like to acknowledge the Natural Blends trainees. They gave us their time and their patience and without them we wouldn't have an evaluation. As integral to this evaluation as the trainees themselves was Diane Woodruff, the force behind the Natural Blends Café. It was through her assistance and support that we were able to accomplish what we did. A large and well-deserved thank you must be reserved for Jennifer Brown. The advice that she gave us over tea at Dreams & Beans was indispensable. One of the most important factors contributing to the completion of this evaluation was the facilitating role played by the staff of the TCCBE. They were always easily accessible and ready to answer any questions. We would also like to thank Chris Beyers, our professor, for his understanding and guidance whenever we ran into difficulties, which was more often than we might have liked. Thank you so much for all of your help.

# Natural Blends' Trainee Program

## Executive Summary

### **1. Project Description**

The Natural Blends' Trainee Program is a collaboration between the Peterborough & District Association for Community Living and the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network. They established the program in May of 2000 as a social enterprise that would meet their organization mandates to create opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program was meant to remove the barriers between those individuals and paid employment by providing training that would assist them in acquiring necessary employment and social skills.

### **2. Purpose of Evaluation**

The evaluation was sought by the core management staff in order to ascertain how the training program had impacted the lives of its participants. They were also interested in finding out what factors may have influenced their participation. At the time that this evaluation was proposed the program was still functioning making this evaluation a useful tool in determining what changes needed to be made to the program. During the evaluation itself, funding to the program was ended. As a result, the purposes of the evaluation were somewhat altered. It became necessary to examine how effectively the program objectives had been met.

### **3. Methods Used**

The small number of participants in the program meant that a qualitative approach to evaluation was most desirable. The methods used included a group interview and follow-up individual interviews. Amongst those included in these interviews were all of the trainees, as well as a representative of the management staff and a representative from PDA CL. In cases where it was not possible to meet an interviewee in person, interviews were conducted by telephone. Supporting documents were also obtained and analyzed to help provide a context for the evaluation.

#### **4. Major findings**

Among the major findings based on the data collected were the overall positive experiences of the trainees. The Natural Blends Café program created an environment in which the trainees could develop their employment skills and foster new relationships. At the same time their self-esteem improved and they were able to explore their employment opportunities. During the evaluation it also became apparent that there were certain structural difficulties that were interfering with the smooth operation of the program and the meeting of certain program objectives. The areas that were problematic included such things as; communication between partner organization and the Natural Blends Café, unclear roles and responsibilities, and the short-term nature of the funding.

#### **5. Major Recommendations**

The recommendations made as a result of the evaluation concern the initial planning phase, the implementation phase and the final phase of the project. The first of the recommendations is that the respective roles and responsibilities of any organizations involved be clearly laid out when the project is established. This includes the unambiguous outlining of the duties of any staff involved in the project. A very important part of this would be ensuring that clear lines of communication are developed and maintained throughout the life of the project. Another recommendation that is made concerns a contingency plan for the event that funding for a project should run out. The preference would be for a relatively smooth transition for those involved. Finally, for any project of this type, interested in training people for future employment, a job coach is essential. Therefore, it would be desirable to provide for job coaching through the program itself, when possible.

#### **6. General Conclusions**

The Natural Blends' Trainee Program was a desirable and important addition to the community. It changed the lives of those who had the opportunity to participate in the program. Now that it is coming to an end the question arises of what will happen to the former participants. They have lost not only income, but also a place to spend their days constructively, contributing to their community. The community will suffer the loss

as well, of having the opportunity to interact with these wonderful individuals. Hopefully, the end of this funding does not spell out the end of Natural Blends. There is a definite need for such a project within the community and there is no other organization providing this service.

## Section I – Introduction

In May of 2000 the Natural Blends Café was opened in the Peterborough Public Library as a part of a partnership with the Library Café Community Partners (LCCP). That organization is itself a collaboration between the Peterborough and District Association for Community Living (PDACL), the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN) and World 2 Go Foods. COIN is a non-profit organization that works to implement economic and social initiatives in the community. The other major organization involved, PDACL, also works to provide assistance to members of the community through various programs and services. Both groups have worked extensively in areas concerning individuals with intellectual disabilities. Prior to the launch of Natural Blends, PDACL and COIN had collaborated on another program that assisted those individuals in a related sector, this program was called World 2 Go Foods, and would become a partner of the Natural Blends Café through the LCCP.

The idea for the Café was conceived because COIN and PDACL saw a specific need for such a program. The Peterborough Public Library was looking for a new business to take over space in the library for a food venture and COIN and PDACL were interested in providing employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities. In accordance with the mandates of the two organizations, the venture was a way in which to foster the development of social and employment skills of the clients they served, as well as promote the long term stability of such aims. The clients would thus be provided employment opportunities where the environment was favourable to acquiring or expanding those acquired skills.

The Natural Blends Café program sought funding as an “innovative social enterprise”. Under directive number 105-02 of the Ontario Disability Support Program (see Appendix D) funding for innovative projects is given for a single fiscal year with the option to renew for a further two years. This classification of funding had very specific connotations for the program due to the nature of the funding timeline. The Natural Blends Café was able to receive the full three years of financial support before their funding was terminated in February of this year. The funding requires that programs



become self-sufficient. As such, once the three year time-period is over it is impossible to renew the funding.

The organizational structure of the Café was virtually established during the proposal phase of the Natural Blends Café and certain responsibilities were assigned to COIN and PDACL. COIN was to provide support through its responsibility for the management aspect of the Café. PDACL was giving its support through the use of Personnel Plus, its in-house employment services program designed to provide job coaches for the trainees. PDACL and COIN are involved in activities that have common purposes and goals within the community. However there was need for a very strong collaboration in order to run the Natural Blends Café. Thus a micro-board that consisted of representatives from the partners was also assembled to oversee the program and deal with any problems or concerns.

The expectations for the program were articulated in terms of short-term and long-term goals. During the first year of operation the aim of the café was to assist members of the Peterborough community in developing job skills and becoming more employable.

### **Objectives of Natural Blends**

The Natural Blends Training Program seeks to provide training to individuals with intellectual disabilities in such a manner as to promote future employment. Trainees are taught valuable employment skills, with a particular emphasis on customer service and social interaction. The aim of this training is to nurture necessary skills that will lead to employment in the food services industry. The beneficiaries of this project will not only be the individuals selected to participate, but also the community in general. The participation of these individuals within the community will increase the community members' awareness of issues surrounding individuals with intellectual disabilities.

### **Purposes of Evaluation**

This evaluation was executed at the request of the Natural Blends Café. It was undertaken as part of a fourth year International Development course, the purpose of which is the evaluation of a community development project. The facilitator in this relationship between the organization and the students performing the evaluation was the

Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE). The evaluation took place between January 5 and March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The evaluation team was made up of Jenny Delumo, a 4<sup>th</sup> year International Development major, and Sarah MacKinnon, also a 4<sup>th</sup> year International Development major.

The purpose of the evaluation was three-fold. First of all, the evaluation was designed to ascertain how the program impacts the lives of the trainees involved. Another goal was to examine how social and family support influences participation in the project. It should be said here that Jennifer Brown, another Trent University student, had addressed the surrounding issues of external, structural and political influences upon the program in a research essay. In order to avoid repetition between the two papers, there was an attempt to avoid raising issues that were discussed in the other essay in depth<sup>1</sup>. The final purpose of the evaluation was to analyze the success with which the training program met its stated objectives.

## **Section II – Evaluation**

### **Evaluation**

The primary objective of the evaluation was to examine the program from the perspective of the trainees. With this in mind, the primary research question was to evaluate how the Natural Blends' Trainee Program impacted the lives of its participants. The second research question asked how the trainees' participation in the program been affected by external factors. As a program that worked to improve the quality of life for its trainees as well as to develop and improve their work skills, the most important aspect of the evaluation was to determine if this goal had been achieved.

### **Data collected/methods:**

The primary research questions were to be answered from the perspective of the participants of the Natural Blends trainee program. Therefore, a majority of the data collected and analyzed was collected from that particular group. Further data was also collected from other relevant actors involved in the program. These people included the management staff at Natural Blends and representatives from the founding organizations,

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<sup>1</sup> If clarification is desired on these issues, please refer to Appendix B or consult the essay by Jennifer Brown also concerning itself with the Natural Blends Café.

COIN and PDACL. The primary source of data was the results of a group interview that was conducted with a majority of the trainees. Individual interviews, either face-to-face or over the phone when necessary, were used to follow-up with individual trainees whenever possible. Interviews were also conducted with a member of the management staff of the Library Café, as well as a representative of PDACL. Supplementary information (such as written reports and other relevant publications) was gathered for background purposes.

Using the perspective of the trainees as the lens through which the program must ultimately be evaluated, a quasi-experimental design was the most appropriate way in which to answer the research questions. However as the evaluation progressed, the evaluation method became non-experimental. This was due to the loss of funding that forced the program to shut down. (Weiss) While it may only be a temporary shut down, should alternate funding be found, it was strongly suggested that there would be fundamental changes made to the design of the program. Therefore, what began as a formative evaluation ended up summative in nature. This affected the theoretical concepts behind the evaluation. The approach that is taken while a project is underway is much different from the approach taken once a project has been completed. During a project any recommendations made as a result of an evaluation should be made keeping in mind the decision-making process of participating organizations. These recommendations may be acted upon in order to influence the future functioning of the project. The same cannot be said in the case of a post-project evaluation. In the case of a summative evaluation recommendations serve to prevent the same mistakes from being made on similar projects in the future. Another way in which a post-project evaluation may be useful is to determine the usefulness of a certain program.

The research objectives and small number of trainees directed the research methods used. As stated previously, the primary evaluation question was to evaluate how the program impacted the lives of its participants from the trainee's perspective. Thus the chosen methods of acquiring data were focus groups and interviews with the trainees. The number of participants was also a deciding factor in the methods chosen. Since there were a small number of trainees, it was possible and preferable that data was acquired qualitatively as opposed to quantitatively.

## **Problems and Constraints**

This evaluation, which at the outset appeared to be very straightforward, turned out to be much more challenging than initially anticipated. The small number of trainees involved in the project was originally perceived as very positive because it meant that more time could be given over to in-depth individual interviews. It was thought that the evaluation could be much more thorough due to the smaller sample size. However, the reality of the situation was quite different. A small sample size, while being more conducive to an in-depth approach, meant that failure to secure participation had a significant impact upon the data collection. In light of time constraints it was difficult to develop relationships with participants that engender trust and confidence. The result of this situation was that the trainees were quite often reluctant to participate in individual interviews. Due to the small number of participants in the program this development had a substantial impact upon our gathering of information. This situation is something that had not been accounted for in the planning of the evaluation and forced a re-examination of the methods of data collection, as well as the timetable for completion of the evaluation. Adaptation of the evaluation strategy became necessary. If a comparison is made between the dates estimated in the Research Placement Agreement (Appendix 1) and the dates that they were actually completed, it is evident exactly how much the timetable and the methods of evaluation changed throughout the process.

Another constraint upon the evaluation was the fact that the funding for the Natural Blends Training Program ran out and consequently the staff of the library café had to be laid off. This meant that what had initially began as an in-course evaluation transformed into a post-evaluation, significantly altering the goals and the appropriateness of the evaluation. It was necessary to adapt to the changing circumstances. The new funding for the library café, should it come about, would be under entirely different conditions. The café would be operating with changed objectives, a changed structure, new partners, and new staff. As a result of these drastic alterations to the project, any recommendations coming out of this evaluation would likely be irrelevant.

### **Section III – Results**

In response to the primary question of how the Natural Blends' Trainee Program impacted the lives of its participants, an overwhelming consensus was established in the responses given by the trainees. All asserted that the program had a positive impact on their lives. However, this did not mean that the scope of that positive impact was the same for each person. Ascertaining whether the program had affected their lives in a positive way leaves room for ambiguity as to what constitutes a positive outcome. For some of the participants, this meant that they enjoyed the job and would continue to work there. For others it was a learning experience that was not their preferred job, but nonetheless gave them insight into where they want to go from there. Aside from the employment opportunities aspect, the program affected their social development in a way that in turn affected their activities outside of the program. This took the form of increased self-esteem and assertiveness in finding employment opportunities outside of the COIN/PDACL realm of services.

The trainee's participation in the program was supported by various outside factors. Yet all of the trainees stated that there was little difficulty in being able to participate. Rather, with schedules that allow for outside responsibilities and personal preferences, and with a strong family base for three of the trainees, there was no discernable impediment to participation. Social organizations other than COIN and PDACL were also influential to some extent in the lives of the trainees. The importance of these programs lies in how they are able to shape the outside concerns of the trainees as in the case of Adult Protective Services (APS).

The question of whether or not the training program had achieved its objectives became an important issue to evaluate as the nature of the evaluation changed. The program did meet its goals in a number of ways. The trainees have been able to participate in a community focused social enterprise, and as a result, have gained a sense of pride by earning a wage, improved their employment skills and raised their self-esteem. However, in achieving these goals, some of the support that was supposed to come from the organizations involved was lacking. This also translated into the failure of

one of the goals of the program, namely assisting the trainees in obtaining employment after the completion of the training program. The task of finding employment for the trainees was taken on by members of the management staff in order to ensure some level of support in this area in spite of the fact that it was not their role. In this respect, the program was not successful.

The primary question of how the program impacted the lives of its participants has been explored on an aggregate level. It would also be prudent to explore this question with reference to specific examples given by the trainees.

The Natural Blends Trainee Program (NBTP) was a positive experience for all trainees in one way or another. The trainees entered the program with varying job experience and employment skills. Differences between the trainees in this aspect were a factor in how they viewed their time in the NBTP. For some, their prior work experience was not enjoyable and thus lent itself to comparison with the NBTP. In this sense they viewed the NBTP as a better job situation than the ones they had been in before. For one person, Trainee #1, she left a job that did not fully utilize her personal skills or allow for personal or professional growth. She came into the program knowing what she did not want, and excited to utilize her previous job skills and learn new ones. NBTP enabled her to develop her customer service skills, an aspect of the job that she particularly enjoyed. Trainee #1 explains this as such, ‘I just like the customers. I just like the whole customer service.’”

While the NBTP was useful in helping the trainees to discover what type of job they would like to explore in the future, it was also helpful in showing a number of trainees what they would not like to explore as well. The majority of the trainees agreed that while they were not necessarily interested in working at a coffee shop in the future, there were many aspects of the job, such as customer service, that they realized they were well suited for and liked. As one trainee went on to say, ‘I like the people and I like cash, I’m not too sure about, like, the coffee business.’ She went on to say that exposure to those job skills opened her up to the possibility of jobs with similar skills that she would

consider working at like a retail-clothing store. Two trainees as the NBTP, Trainee #5 and Trainee #6, both went out and found employment in areas where employment skills, similar to those developed at NB, were utilized. This sentiment was not shared by all of the trainees. Trainee #4 commented that he does not want a job requiring the use of the skills he acquired at NB and is actually interested in carpentry.

The chance to gain new employment skills was an important aspect of the NBTP. Those with previous experience in the job market commented on how they came to change their working habits and thus gain better employment skills. Trainee #1 specifically mentioned that during her time at NB she became more comfortable in following direction and working as part of a team. Through her position with NB she became more familiar with employer-employee dynamics. ‘I’m one of those independent people and having somebody say no you have to do it this way its just like but why? But I’ve learned to kind of, you know... not necessarily like it, but live with it.’

One of the aspects of the impact the NBTP had on its trainees was the results the program had on their self esteem. More than half of the trainees remarked that they felt more comfortable working in the public and in their lives outside of the program at a result of their jobs at NB. Trainee #2 noted that The NBTP met her expectations in terms of introducing her to new people, allowing her to develop new skills and raising her self-esteem.

A common issue that seemed to arise for all of the trainees during the group interview was that of the job coach role. There was a sense of frustration amongst a majority of the trainees that the job coach which had been promised at the outset of the program had not been provided. There was one exception to the pattern, a trainee who had obtained a job coach through other means. As one trainee stated it affected the trust that the trainees had placed in those in charge of providing the job coaches. When asked if they felt any sense of anger due to the job coach situation this trainee responded “In some ways because we can’t really trust Personnel Plus.” Another trainee explained that it was the management staff of the NBTP, which provided such services even though it

was not their job. She stated, “I guess they’ve kind of filled the place of the job coach.” The job coach position was designed to provide much needed support to the trainees when it came to finding employment after the training program. The reality of the situation was that the management staff of the program provided what support they could.

The issue of support was not exclusive to the issue of the job coach. The management staff at NB provided an extra level of support to those trainees that required it. Trainee #3 exemplifies how important this was because in terms of his participation in the program, a key factor was that he maintained an established routine. The NB management staff was aware of this and willing to make sure that these needs were met.

### **Other Actors**

Data collection also included talking to the relevant external actors. This outside perspective was helpful in outlining the context in which certain issues or problems arose. Those individuals interviewed provided useful background in terms of the wider context of the program, as well as the initial stages of program planning and implementation. They shed light upon the organizational superstructure within which the NBTP is situated and the various social, political and economic factors which play a role in the functioning of the training program. When evaluating the success of the NBTP these actors expressed similar concerns to those raised by the trainees. Confusion surrounding the job coach position was a problem area that was acknowledged. Communication between the partner organizations was also identified as needing improvement. At the same time, the interviewees were quick to identify the positive aspects of the program. Primary among those aspects were the positive experiences of the trainees and the importance of the service provided by Natural Blends.

## **Section IV – Discussion of Results**

When the Library Café Community Partners (LCCP) collaborated with the Peterborough Public Library (PPL) to establish the Natural Blends Café it was with the intention that the program would be self-sufficient within 3 years, when the funding ran out. The organizations involved in the program, PADCL and COIN were to work in partnership with each other to ensure that outcome. However, 3 years later it is evident



that the desired outcome was not achieved. That is not to say that the program was not successful. This can be seen in the positive response that the employees had concerning their participation in the Natural Blends training program. The training program did succeed in imparting useful employment skills, as well as being a positive social experience. Overall, there were many strengths and weaknesses of the program that need to be examined.

### **Strengths**

The NBTP fulfilled a necessary role in the Peterborough community that addressed issues concerning individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program provided a safe and supportive environment in which to work where the trainees were either introduced to new employment skills or their previous skills were expanded upon. The interaction between employees, their managers, and Natural Blends patrons also provided a forum in which to expand upon the trainees' social skills. The trainees learned how to function in an environment that required teamwork as well as direction because the Natural Blends management staff provided patience, understanding and encouragement. The trainees were allowed to develop at their own pace, without any pressure to leave the program before they were ready.

### **Weaknesses**

The program would have been even more successful if certain issues had been addressed. Among those issues were the difficulties encountered by PADCL and COIN in terms of communication between these two organizations. Another weakness of the program, which could not really be avoided, was the short term nature of the funding provided. Associated with this is the fact that there was no contingency plan in place for the trainees. This lack of strategy meant that there was no safety net providing placements for trainees in the case of permanent or temporary closure of the café. This problem could partially be a result of a lack of job coaches for the trainees during their time in the program. Job coaches were supposed to be made available to the trainees in order to help them find work outside of the program once their training was finished or once they decided to leave. Thus the absence of job coaches in the program may have resulted in.....

## **Section V – Recommendations**

Through the accumulation and analysis of data, certain aspects of the program have shown that changes should be made in the program (or similar future programs) to be successful. The recommendations are as follows:

1. One of the most important elements of the program was the provision of job coaches for the trainees in order to ensure their future employment after completing the training program. Cuts in funding from the government resulted in job termination for a number of people in PADCL. Some of those people who were terminated were employed as job coaches, thus PADCL was unable to supply the requisite number of job coaches in light of the number of people requiring their services. Therefore, if a program is to be implemented in which the presence of a job coach is an essential requirement of the program, as was the case with Natural Blends. In the future, programs that are similar to Natural Blends should consider making funding for the program should include the salary of a job coach.
2. Another key to the success of such a program is an organizational structure that allows for open and effective communication between any partner organizations. This was, to a large extent, lacking in the Library Café Community Partners (LCCP), particularly between PADCL and COIN, as well as Café management staff. In order to prevent this from happening, the respective roles of the participating organizations should be clearly defined. Also important is the establishment of clear lines of communication that keep those involved apprised of all concerns and developments. This requires the founding of a governing board with clear parameters as to their authority and responsibilities. These parameters are equally important in cases where such a governing board already exists.

## Abbreviations

COIN – Community Opportunity and Innovation Network

LCCP – Library Café Community Partners

NBTP – Natural Blends’ Trainee Program

PDACL – Peterborough & District Association for Community Living

PPL – Peterborough Public Library

TCCBE – Trent Centre for Community Based Education

## Appendix A

### **Trent Centre for Community-Based Education** **Research Placement Agreement – Evaluation Projects** For IDS 422

**Students: This form is to be completed by the consulting partnership (one contract for each pair of students). Instructions for completing the template are in italics. These should be deleted before all parties sign the final copy of the agreement.**

When doing an evaluation project you are providing a consulting service to a community organization. The key to a successful consulting relationship is a clear and documented agreement amongst all parties, outlining everyone's expectations and responsibilities. If you have any questions or difficulty developing your research placement agreement or completing the template, contact the TCCBE (phone, email below)

1. Fill out only sections I and II. The first version of this agreement is a draft and these sections will be reviewed by the Host Organization, your professor, and the TCCBE before finalizing the project.
2. You should be working on your ethical review for the IDS department. You can cut and paste relevant parts of Section II from this form to complete question 8 of your ethical review form.
3. Circulate the draft agreement to all parties for review. Revise the agreement based on feedback from your host organization, TCCBE and your professor and then print a good copy
4. Have all parties sign the contract.
5. When all parties have signed the agreement, forward a copy to each person for his/her records (the TCCBE will be happy to make copies at no charge).

#### **Section I: Party to the Agreement**

##### Student

Name: Sarah MacKinnon

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##### **Trent University**

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**Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE)**

Representative's Name: Natalie E-Mail:  
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**Section II: The Project**

**a. Title of Project:** Evaluation of the Natural Blends' Trainee Program

**b. Funding List:** The host organization

**c. Background:**

Natural Blends was instituted to assist individuals with intellectual disabilities in gaining social and employment skills. Initiated by COIN in May of 2000, the organization's trainee program receives most of its participants through Peterborough Community Living.

**d. The Purpose of this evaluation is:**

- i) To ascertain how the program impacts the lives of the trainees involved
- ii) To examine how participation in the project is affected by social and family support services.

**e. The key research questions are:**

- How does the Natural Blends' Trainee Program impact the lives of its participants?
- How has the trainees' participation in the program been affected by external factors?

**f. The placement will begin:** *October 16<sup>th</sup>* **and end:** *March 9<sup>th</sup>*

**g. The schedule for completion of the project will be as follows:**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Completed by</b>	<b># Hours</b>
Discuss and write group interview questions/guide	January 9 <sup>th</sup>	3
Get signed consent forms from trainees	January 9 <sup>th</sup>	-
Organize and host group interview with trainees	January 10 <sup>th</sup>	6
Compose individual interviews	January 16 <sup>th</sup>	3
Organize and host individual interviews	January 24 <sup>th</sup>	8
Get written consent to talk to family members	January 24 <sup>th</sup>	-

Get written consent from trainees to talk to social workers	January 24 <sup>th</sup>	-
Write questions from family member interviews	January 31 <sup>st</sup>	3
Organize and host family member interviews	February 7 <sup>th</sup>	9
Organize meetings and talk to individual social workers	February 15 <sup>th</sup>	8
Transcribe interviews	Ongoing until Feb 20th	60
Analysis of information	February 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10
Compose outline of report and give participants a draft of pertinent information	March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	4
Finish first draft of report	March 9 <sup>th</sup>	14
Submit draft for feedback	March 9 <sup>th</sup>	-
Finish final draft of report	March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	5

**h. The total number of hours required to complete this project is estimated at:**

Approximately 133 hours per person.

**Section III: Final Report**

The products of the project handed in to the host and instructor will take the form of a report containing empirical research and data.

After receiving feedback on the draft report a corrected copy will be given to the host organization. An executive summary of the evaluation is to be given to the TCCBE.

**The marking scheme for the project as outlined in the syllabus will be:**

- Design.....5%
- Data collection and analysis.....20%
- Final report and reporting evaluation to clients.....15%

**Section IV: Responsibilities**

**Responsibilities of All Parties:**

1. Each party to this agreement has the right to initiate renegotiation of this agreement if circumstances affecting the project change.
2. Each party has the right to terminate the placement if the conditions of the agreement are not being met. Because of the potential consequences to a student's program of

study, a decision to terminate the placement must be made in consultation with the TCCBE.

3. The student owns the copyright for all work completed as part of his/her placement, but the host organization may use all project reports or papers, in whole or in part, as it sees fit as long as the student is duly credited as the author. (If work is completed collaboratively between the student and staff of the host organization, copyright will be jointly held.) A copy of the executive summary of the report will be added to the TCCBE resource library to be available to the community.
4. All parties must complete the pertinent section of the form entitle Work/Education Placement Agreement/Post Secondary, to enable the Ministry of Education to purchase workers compensation or private insurance coverage for the student.

**Please initial beside the section below pertaining to your responsibilities.**

**Responsibilities of the Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Students' Initials**

1. Undertake the project conscientiously and with due respect to the expectations of the host organization and the University.
2. Keep his/her instructor and the TCCBE informed of the project's progress and notify them of any concerns about the placement or the host organization in a timely fashion.
3. Attend and participate in all necessary meetings (with his/her instructor, placement supervisor and/or the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education.)
4. Ensure that the confidentiality of any information acquired in the course of his/her placement is strictly maintained, notwithstanding the host organization's commitment to make the results of the research project publicly available.
5. Provide a copy(s) of the final product(s) of the research to the host organization and an executive summary of the report to the TCCBE.
6. Upon the advice of his/her instructor, comply with ethical guidelines and review procedures.

**Responsibilities of the Host Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Host's Initials**

1. Orient the student to the organization and work site. Ensure the student understands any risks or hazards that may exist and the safety practices followed. Promptly report any incidents to the TCCBE.
2. Provide adequate direction, ongoing communication and feedback on the quality of work so as to enable the student to complete the project successfully.
3. Supply/provide resources listed above needed to complete the project.
4. Be available for occasional consultation and meetings with the TCCBE as needed for the purpose of monitoring the placement or refining the Community-Education Program. Cooperate in evaluation activities initiated by the instructor or the TCCBE.
5. Comply with policies and ethical guidelines governing research projects conducted in conjunction with Trent University and the TCCBE, as advised by the TCCBE, the instructor or the student.

**Responsibilities of the Instructor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Instructor's Initials**





## Appendix B

### Focus Group Interview Outline

- I Food and distribution of name tags
- II Icebreaker
- III Presentation of who we are and our research
- IV Consent forms
- V Food and/or/maybe Icebreaker
- VI Questions
  - 1. How did you here about the Natural Blends Trainee program?
  - 2. What were you doing before you started the program?
    - Did you give anything up?
    - What would you be doing if you were not involved in the program?
  - 3. How did you become involved in the program?
  - 4. Did you have any expectations about the program?
    - Did the program meet those expectations?
  - 5. What did you want to get out of the program?
    - Did you achieve what you wanted to?
  - 6. Was there anything that helped your participation in the program?
  - 7. Was there anything that hindered your participation in the program?
  - 8. How do you feel about your experience in the program?
    - What did you like about your experience?
    - What did you not like about your experience?
    - Was it fun?
    - Was it helpful?
    - Did you gain new skills?
    - Did you meet new people?
  - 9. Former Participants:

Did your experience in the program help you find work after you left the program?

10. If you had a chance to go back, would you still enrol in the program?

VII Wrap-up (maybe an icebreaker)

VIII Contact information and interview sign-up sheet

Appendix C

**The Ontario Disability Support Program and  
The Natural Blends Café Trainee Program:  
A Social Policy Analysis and Evaluation**

Jennifer Brown  
Student Number 128216  
CAST 477  
Professor Jim Struthers

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Natural Blends Café project has been divided into two sections: (1) An evaluation of Natural Blends, and (2) an analysis of Ontario's current social policies and their potential impact for the Natural Blends program. The evaluation was undertaken by two students, Jenny Delumo and Sarah MacKinnon, for a fourth year International Development course, that provides the opportunity for students to be involved in the evaluation of a community development project. The other part of the project, the social policy analysis, was completed as an assignment for the Canadian Studies 477 (Canadian Social Policy) class. The intent of combining these two projects was to provide a more thorough analysis of the Natural Blends program by incorporating the evaluation and external, structural and political influences of social policy together. In the beginning stages of the project, it was believed that neither the evaluation, nor the analysis, is exclusive from one another. In concluding this project the findings appear to indicate that this initial assumption was correct. As we have divided the project into two sections, the attempt has been made to minimize any repetition in both sections.

The evaluation of Natural Blends was designed to ascertain three queries regarding the program: (1) how the program impacts the lives of the trainees involved, (2) how social and family support influences participation in the project and (3) analyze the success with which the training program met its state objectives. And so, this essay will only briefly address these issues with the understanding that a more in-depth discussion regarding these issues can be accessed upon examination of the evaluation.

As well as illustrating the analysis that I have been working on this past year, this essay will also draw upon recent theories discussing 'disability' and the concept of social citizenship, as well as highlighting the current socio-political context Canada in which social policies are formed, as well as providing a brief comparison of other provincial disability social policies.

## INTRODUCTION:

In our society, employment is ascribed as an inherent component of life. People from all walks of life strive to attain their goals and objectives with the inevitable end of acquiring employment. Applicable to anything that is somehow ‘fixed’ in our reality, is the marked division between those who engage in this ‘fixed’ agenda and those who do not. Accordingly, we have people who are employed and people who are not employed. Such a division has not been established without certain repercussions. Tanya Titchkosky suggests that these repercussions manifest by way of certain moral values prescribed to both sides of the ‘either/or’ dichotomy. She thus asserts,

Doing things or not going things is not the only issue. Instead doing ordinary things *in* ordinary ways and *with* ordinary conformity within the ordinary order of everyday life is what is at issue, and all this ordinariness is laden with moral value. In the face of disability, the Good or ordinariness comes to the foreground.”<sup>2</sup>

Following this, she notes how “disability provides the hegemonic character of ordinary life, and to disrupt and question the taken-for-granted expectations that ordinary life is merely an ordinary matter.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, within society there is overarching consensus concerning what is deemed to be “normal”, and disability is merely another means of establishing this consensus. Demonstrative of this perception, is how often we as a society and as individuals, question the normalcy of employment, affirming this notion that employment can be included in this “ordinary order of everyday life.” Therefore it should be no surprise that an essential mandate of the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSPA), enacted in 1998, was to enhance the capabilities of people with disabilities for by way of providing their labour

ODSP was conceived as an incentive based program, whereby the structure of the policy is designed in such a way so as to provide support mechanisms for people to decrease their reliance on income assistance. Supports for gaining employment is the essential means for this mandate to be fulfilled. An on-line handbook outlining the structure of ODSP suggests rather encouragingly, “once you are earning over this

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<sup>2</sup> Tanya Titchkosky, *Disability, Self and Society* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Titchkosky, 23.

amount, your ODSP cheque is gradually reduced as your earnings increase. However, a person who is working is always better off.”

Initially, the Ontario Disability Service Program (ODSP) was touted as being a means with which people with disabilities could be disengaged from their previous marginalized status, to become more active citizens. Seemingly, being an ‘active citizen’ suggests that there are other means in which you can participate in society, however the actual scope of ODSP’s mandate is does not allow such breadth. Under ODSP, the ‘active citizen’ is merely a softer synonym for the ‘working citizen’ thus reinforcing the normalcy of employment. The means in which one can contribute to society are severely hindered when the active and working citizen become synonymous for one another.

Although the central focus of this assignment is to examine the ways in which social policies such as ODSP may affect programs like the Natural Blends Café, I propose that this analysis not be confined within the realm of issues pertaining to people with disabilities and their means of gaining employment (not meaning to suggest that this particular realm is not important, nor that is not relevant to this assignment). Rather, this analysis can serve as a case study regarding a much larger issue at hand. Although the Natural Blends Trainee program is indeed valuable as it serves to equip individuals with disabilities with skills they may otherwise not have acquired, training programs are only so good if there are employment opportunities available for them afterwards. Over this past year, I have been told time and time again about the flux of individuals with disabilities graduating from high school, having participated in numerous co-op jobs (also providing them with ‘employable’ skills), but then having no where to go afterwards- except into more training programs. If they are unable to work, more training is perceived as being the solution. Similarly, unemployed individuals are often viewed to be unemployed because *they* don’t have the necessary skills. *They* don’t know how to write a proper resume. *They* don’t know how to conduct themselves in an interview. If they did know how to do these things, they would not be unemployed. Human agency bares the sole responsibility for not having a job, regardless of external influences (i.e. high unemployment rates).<sup>4</sup> Within this context, training programs therefore present

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<sup>4</sup> For more information regarding this topic, see Linda MicQuaig, *The Cult of Impotence: Selling the Myth of Powerless in the Global Economy* (Canada: the Penguin Group, 1998).

themselves as an easy way for the government to suggest that the issue of unemployment is being taken care of, when really training programs hardly address the issue at all. Though a slight digression from the initial project objective at hand, such issues are important to make note of in order for a more thorough analysis to transpire. With this context as the foundation for this research, I suggest that ODSP provides what is a far cry for sufficient integration of people with disabilities into Ontario's societies. Although certainly a worthwhile venture, much of the Natural Blends Café Trainee Program's set backs are due to the structural inadequacies within the policies of ODSP.

### **NATURAL BLENDS AND ODSP:**

A primary goal of this analysis was to determine the implications social policies such as ODSP had on the Natural Blends Café. Two main problems came to surface through my observations over this past year.

First off, funding. The initial aim for the program was to be a self-sustaining business by the time their first funding contract had expired. As this particular objective was not met, new sources of funding needed to be sought out. The ending of their initial funding contract in February of 2004 led to the laying off of their trainees. Both locations remained open, though only the supervisors remained on-site. As previously mentioned in the section 'problems and constraints', obtaining and moreover *maintaining* funding is a task that presents itself to almost all smaller sized non-profit organizations. The implications are such that primary objectives of an organization are therefore diverted when having to constantly apply for the renewal of short-term funding, or when having to research for new funding. Notably, funding sources often have their own agendas that need to be upheld, and so funding is often provided with certain conditions that enable their agendas to be carried through. In the current climate of 'fiscal' spending, when sources of funding are limited, organizations may feel pressured to alter their own accordingly so as to comply with the funding that is available.

Presently, negotiations are underway between COIN and ODSP. Natural Blends intends to apply for the funding received through the Employment Supports section of

ODSP. It should be noted here that nothing has been set in stone thus far, in terms what arrangements have been made for future funding. However, speculation of COIN partaking in this particular program serves a telling example of how organizations may find themselves orientating around the conditions for funding, rather than the funding orientating itself around the organization's need.

There is funding available for several kinds of service-provider enterprises under the ODSP Employment Supports. For example, 'employment planning', 'self-employment', 'support coordination', etc. The vision for Natural Blends has 're-vamped' the original program according to what is offered through ODSP Employment Supports. Those in charge of the organization of the program have considered applying for several of the supports ODSP, thus enhancing the service-provider capacities of Natural Blends. Notably, the new program would include what is referred to under Employment Supports as 'job coaching' and 'job maintenance'.

The vision of a new Natural Blends program is described as upholding a 'holistic' approach whereby both 'front entry' and 'back entry' elements of the program are to be more cohesive and better facilitated. An example of a 'front entry' element is a more thorough intake process for accepting trainees; an example of a 'back entry' element is the program itself providing the job coaches. Job coaches had been a feature of the initial program, although they were provided by PDACL, not COIN. Job coaches had not materialized due to increased demand on PDACL and limited funding (see evaluation, 'weaknesses'). In order to avoid similar problems in the future, COIN would be responsible for providing the job coaches.

A more thorough intake process might be contingent for receiving funding as ODSP would like to see an increase in the number of intake and output of trainees. Demonstrating tangible results in the form of concrete numbers is increasingly a characteristic of funding conditions. Being 'results oriented' is perhaps a consequence of competition developing among the increasing number of organizations seeking funding. Quantifying 'success' rates, i.e. having as many people go through the program as possible, excludes other factors that should be included when determining success—namely the skills that had been attained and any positive impact (social or economical) on the participant.



The training time under new supports allotted by ODSP seems to around six months. For Natural Blends, increasing the number of participants going through the program entails a shorter training period. The average length of time for participants to have acquired a certain skill level is two years. The reasons for this long time period are several. Historically, individuals have entered the program with varying skills and functioning levels, which makes it difficult to determine any set amount time deemed appropriate for requiring a certain skill level. Also, to be noted is the different backgrounds each participant comes from. What goes on in our personal can have implications in how we interact at work, and how much knowledge we may be able to absorb on any particular day. The same should be emphasized for the participants of the Natural Blends program. And lastly, the hours of work were largely determined by the fact that anything over \$160 a month is subject to being 'clawed back' by the government. And so, hours were generally kept to a maximum of nine hours a week, divided into shifts of three hours. Another determining factor of working hours was the individual and how many hours each week they could personally manage. And so, two years of training time does not seem too long when these factors are included.

Under Employment Supports funding, training time would be decreased (no specific time was mentioned, however it seemed that six months was the time frame mentioned the most). And so, in order for the program to increase the number of trainees, while decreasing the training time, the standards will have to be raised in the new intake process. Notably, by raising the bar for the intake process the trainees that will have to be accepted are those who are at relatively high functioning levels, therefore excluding those at lower functioning levels. The implication of this shift is that those who are eligible for the program decrease, while those who are ineligible increase dramatically - begging the question of what programs are available for the now ineligible individuals? The evaluation notes that there are no other programs like the Café in Peterborough.

Another significant difference the Café would encounter under the funding is that the trainees would not be paid. Theoretically, trainees spending less time in the program, would render them employable at a sooner date, and therefore technically placed in a job soon thereafter (assuming that there are jobs available for that individual to

apply/compete for). As trainees would be receiving ODSP throughout the duration of the program, receiving a wage might not seem necessary. Under the initial Natural Blends program, the participants did receive a wage fulfilling the normative premise of the contractual relationships - receiving a wage for ones' labour only seems fair. The amount received of ODSP per month, \$930.00, is barely enough to cover the cost of necessary expenses (i.e. rent, groceries, bus pass, prescriptions, etc.) and so receiving a wage on top of this amount provided a little bit more spending money for the participants.

Notably, the evaluation of the program concludes that the experiences of the trainees were overall very useful. Significantly, the experience of being involved in a program like Natural Blends was one that all of the participants enjoyed.

In light of all of this ambivalence, it has therefore proven to be quite the mental exercise in trying to develop any form of concrete recommendations for the Natural Blends Café program. It would be too easy and naïve of me to recommend that ODSPA undergo some type of reform, while understanding that this recommendation is not readily within the capacity of COIN or the TCCBE. However, as the Natural Blends program will be commencing again in September under new sources of funding, I strongly recommend that the program continue to utilize the TCCBE for future projects. Hoping to build a stronger case for potential ODSP reform, I propose that future students investigate the following themes and issues while continue utilizing the training program as a starting point or as the basis for future research.

## Appendix D















