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Joint Economic Development Initiative

Moving Forward Together Through Reconciliation

THE NEW BRUNSWICK INDIGENOUS LABOUR MARKET **INTELLIGENCE REPORT**



Canada 

New  Nouveau
Brunswick

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS PROJECT



ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS
OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT

SUPPORTER OF THIS PROJECT



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From the CEO

Joint Economic Development Initiative

Now more than ever, there is a clear sense of enthusiasm for industry, government and private sector to partner with Indigenous peoples to help fill gaps in the workforce as well as build and create opportunities for economic development within First Nations communities.

With a salient skills gap and aging Canadian labour market, it is the opportune time to utilize the fastest growing population of New Brunswick to help fill the skill void. The 2016 Census highlighted that the overall population of Indigenous peoples between the years 2006-2016 increased by 67.1% in New Brunswick, whereas the non-Indigenous population grew by 0.3% during the same time.

In light of these labour force gaps and the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, JEDI has identified a Corporate Challenge as a response to historical government policies of assimilation. Call to Action number 92 calls for corporate Canada to ensure equitable access to employment, training and educational opportunities as well as ensuring that Indigenous peoples and communities gain from economic development endeavours. Research done by both industry and the federal government has called for increased engagement and development of the Indigenous workforce.

This year's Indigenous Labour Market Intelligence Report will focus on moving forward in Reconciliation through economic and workforce development. This report will give an insightful snapshot of the Indigenous workforce and how we can continue to move forward for the benefit of New Brunswick as a whole. Our research team compiled the feedback received from the participants at the December 2017 Plenary: Moving Forward

Together Through Reconciliation to release a report with recommendations for Indigenous, private, and public stakeholders to consider in advancing Indigenous workforce and economic development in the province. The executive summary contained in this report is meant to whet your appetite to learn more. This edition also shares relevant research from the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Project (AAEDIRP) which shows us how Indigenous youth perceive the pathway from high school into post-secondary education and the workforce. Our youth are our present and our future, and their voices must be heard.

The work we do at JEDI would not be possible without our partners and I would like to thank our partners who helped contribute to this publication: the New Brunswick First Nations, Wolastoq Tribal Council (WTC), North Shore Micmac District Council (NSMDC), MAWIW council, New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council (NBAPC), the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour (DPETL), and the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC).

Enjoy what follows in the Indigenous Labour Market Intelligence Report: Moving Forward Together Through Reconciliation.

Lynn Poole-Hughes

CEO
JEDI Inc.



Foreword by Chief George Ginnish **Natoaganeg First Nation**

As Mi'kmaq and Wolastoq peoples, we have a deep, historical connection to the land which is now called New Brunswick. Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have called this land home, hunting, fishing, trapping, and travelling nomadically during seasons in order to survive. This lifestyle required a strong work ethic, education, and a dedication to family. In contrast, a current challenge within Indigenous communities is poverty and unemployment. These challenges stem from the troubling history of colonial policies enforced on our people by governments. As peoples with bountiful skill sets in various areas (business, trades, IT, and entrepreneurship) we have it in our power to ensure that our communities and people thrive and prosper in the New Brunswick economy.

Research shared through the Indigenous Labour Market Intelligence Report is vital to understanding what our people can offer and where our capacities can be developed. The Indigenous population is young and growing and can meet the demands of the current and future workforce. This report will offer a coherent understanding of the challenges and views of our Indigenous youth which is essential knowledge for employers and post-secondary institutions.

The workforce profile of the North Shore Mi'kmaq communities that was completed in 2017 has already yielded results with many employers showing an increased interest in hiring our community members. Success breeds success, and as Indigenous workers are hired in prominent roles, their stories will inspire others to dream. Careers are built on hope, and the work of JEDI and its partners is essential to instilling hope in our community members to grow and prosper.

We are in a time of Reconciliation in New Brunswick. Successful partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be part of the solution to education and employment gaps. Reconciliation is the responsibility of us all, and by working together, Indigenous peoples can play a vital role in economic prosperity for New Brunswick.

Chief George Ginnish
Natoaganeg First Nation





JEDI Plenary 2017: Moving Forward Together Through Reconciliation

Historically, the government of Canada engaged in colonial policies that segregated Indigenous communities, separated Indigenous children from their families, and sought to destroy Indigenous language and culture. The legacy of these colonial policies has resulted in lower education, employment, and economic outcomes for Indigenous peoples compared to the rest of Canada. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada undertook a process of understanding and healing which culminated in the release of 94 Calls to Action for Reconciliation. Three of these Calls to Action address the responsibility of government and industry to support Indigenous economic and workforce development.

This report aims to answer the question: How do we apply the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in New Brunswick's public and private sectors?

In order to answer the research question, the Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) hosted a plenary meeting entitled: "Moving Forward Together Through Reconciliation". The event was attended by representatives from the public and private sectors, as well as Indigenous communities and organizations. After learning about the shared history of Indigenous peoples in New Brunswick, participants were led in a facilitated focus group discussion exploring two aspects of the research question: Indigenous economic development and workforce development. The discussions were recorded and analyzed for emerging themes that will advance Reconciliation in New Brunswick.

Overall, the findings of this report show the shared commitment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to move forward in Reconciliation. Continuous education, at all levels, was a common theme for building a shared understanding of the history of Indigenous peoples in New Brunswick. Building on this shared understanding, all sectors can work with communities to build welcoming workplaces, implement Indigenous hiring policies, and build the capacity of the Indigenous workforce. Meaningful engagement must also take place at a community level and in economic development. Meaningful engagement requires the private and public sector acknowledge their fiduciary duty to consult before moving forward with any project that may impact Treaty rights. This also includes meaningful procurement policies for Indigenous companies to be given an opportunity to grow and be successful in the supply chain for major projects.

In summation, both the private and public sectors must commit to building relationships with Indigenous peoples through open communication and participation in the communities. As historical wounds heal through relationship-building, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be reconciled and move forward as equal participants in New Brunswick's economy.

You can view the full report online at:
http://0104.nccdn.net/1_5/174/219/077/TRC-Report-Electronic-Copy.pdf.

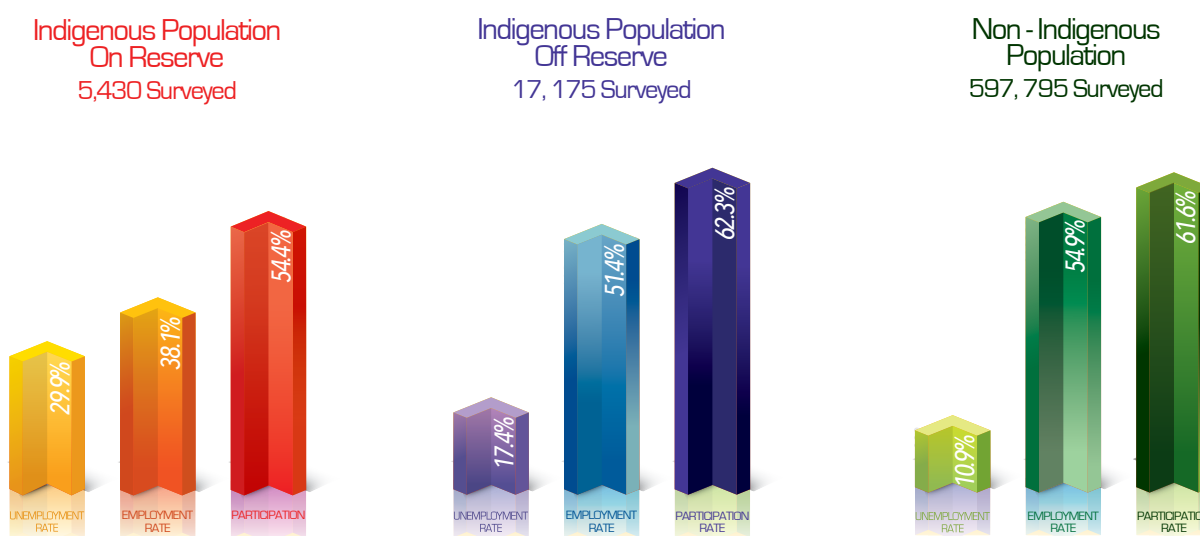
Labour Force Readiness: The Pathway for Aboriginal Youth from High School into Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Engagement

In 2017, the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Project (AAEDIRP) conducted research on the perceptions of the pathways to the labour force for Indigenous youth in Atlantic Canada. The New Brunswick component of this work was completed in partnership with the First Nations Education Initiative Inc. (FNEII), Three Nations Education Group, and the University of New Brunswick.

Why Labour Force Readiness?

Employment plays a key role in the economic outcomes of Indigenous communities. However, statistics show that significant gaps still exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in employment and income. In Canada, the evolving knowledge economy requires ever higher levels of skills development and education to meet labour market demands. It is imperative that Indigenous youth are prepared for these demands.

Labour Force Statistics for Indigenous Population On and Off Reserve (New Brunswick, 2016)



• In 2016, the participation rate for those who identified as Indigenous and were living on reserve (54.4%) was noticeably lower than it was for both off reserve Indigenous population (62.4%) and the non-Indigenous population (61.6%). Similarly, the unemployment rate for those who identified as Indigenous and were living on reserve (29.9%) was noticeably higher than it was for both the off reserve Indigenous population (17.4%) and the non-Indigenous population (10.9%)

The Purpose of the Project

The project was meant to explore the challenges inherent in the pathway from high school to post-secondary education and/or sustained employment. The study was fueled, in part, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2015) Calls to Action, including:

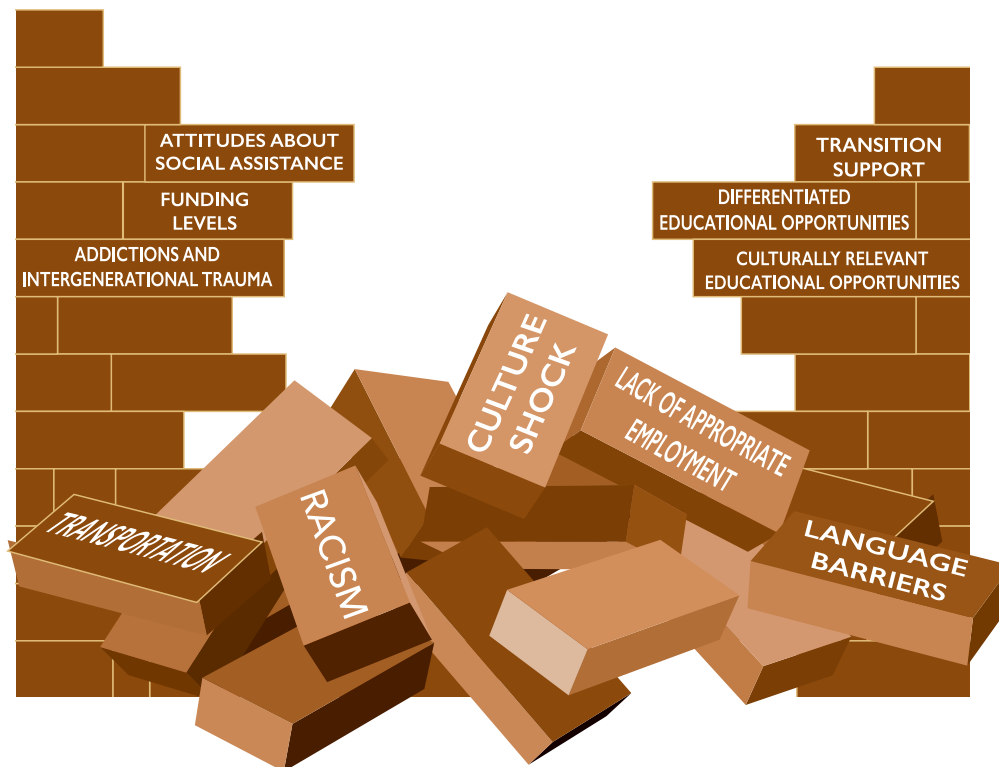
- We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
 - i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation;
 - ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.

It is hoped that the project will spur the development of strategies to assist youth to overcome the barriers related to post-secondary education and employment. It is also meant to serve as a starting point for future research in Indigenous career development.

Themes from New Brunswick

The Community case studies revealed several persistent challenges to labour force readiness including:

BARRIERS RELATED TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT



Language Barriers

The Indigenous communities all speak English primarily, in some cases in addition to their Indigenous languages, but few in the communities are fluent French speakers and only one youth participant chose to attend the local Francophone high school and was thus able to find employment in nearby Francophone communities. This lack of competence in French is a barrier to employment for Indigenous youth in New Brunswick.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

“

- *I think because we're kinda isolated here, I mean as far as our geography goes...you'd have to go*
- *40km to town to have job opportunities because our neighboring communities here you need to*
- *speak French in order to work and a lot of people don't have that. (BM#10)*

”

Transportation

No New Brunswick Indigenous Community hosts their own high school; therefore, all Indigenous students must journey by bus to complete high school. In some cases, this trip could be more than an hour each way. Because of the rural nature of most of these communities, they are often a considerable distance from employment opportunities which requires more support for transportation. Some communities provide limited bussing and others try to enable drivers' education. A driver's license is, however, only useful if a person owns, has access to, or can afford a vehicle.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

“

- *If I had a chance to work off reserve I would. I'd prefer on reserve because it's closer. If I had more*
- *modes of transportation I'd probably go off, work somewhere big. (BM#14)*

”

Culture Shock

Transition to employment or post-secondary institutions was described as being akin to culture shock for some young people as the difference between home communities and the cities where they attended work or post-secondary programs were considered to be "fast" or outside of the scope of their experience. It was reported that moving to the big city could be very isolating for young people.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

“

- *I find a lot of our clients, when they go off to cities and things like that, they have a hard time*
- *transitioning and, because they're used to the slower pace of life here and everybody knows each*
- *other and then they almost feel isolated when they go into an urban environment. (BM#24)*

”

Attitudes About Social Assistance

There continues to be a reliance on social assistance in many of the communities. A number of the participants felt that the reliance on social assistance is starting to shift because of the increased focus on education and training. Social assistance was seen as more of a safety net rather than a foregone conclusion.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

“
 • Social welfare was like a crutch. They would always go back to it and use it, and I think some still do. But, because there are so many people now that are getting training and getting jobs and kind of seeing more of a light at the end of the tunnel, they’re not so prone to think that it’s their first option. (BM#24)
 ”

Culturally Relevant Educational Opportunities

Many of the participants argued that there needs to be culturally relevant learning in schools. They also felt that teachers and school officials need to be more aware of how Indigenous students learn and how intergenerational trauma influences young people’s experiences of schooling.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

“
 • With the Personal Development Career Planning course, I think that it either needs to be scrapped or totally rebuilt... It’s a lot of sharing or journaling, which is a great way to assess, but not all of our First Nations students are comfortable with that aspect... (BM#21)
 ”

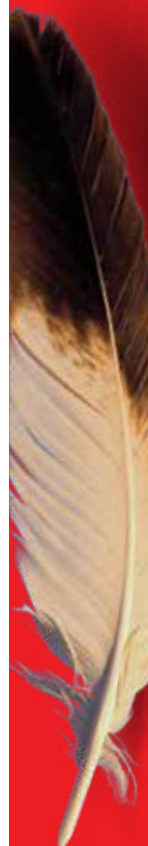
Differentiated Educational Opportunities

Community members continue to report that young people are streamed into the vocational occupations, thus limiting their future education and career options.

When students arrived in the Bridging Years Program at the University of New Brunswick as part of the Mi’kmaq Wolastoqey Centre (MWC), they lacked the courses required for their desired degree program. Students claim to have been counselled out of courses like chemistry and physics (needed for engineering and nursing) because their guidance counselor felt they would be more likely to graduate with lower level grade 12 courses. This has a side effect of increasing high school graduation rates for Indigenous students while failing to support their academic aspirations.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

“
 • Making sure our students are ready to handle what they want to do and ready to go straight through instead of having to go through that bridging year. Because I was lucky I fought to get straight through, because they had that misconception, oh here’s another Indian I’ll put her in level 3. You’re not just putting me in level 3 because I’m from [a First Nation community]. Oh Hell no. I had to do that myself. (BM#1)
 ”



The Positives

While Indigenous youth still face many barriers on their pathway into the workforce, significant progress through innovation and effective prioritization of these issues is evident from the case study analyses of New Brunswick. The general attitude towards work in all communities tends to be positive. One participant noted that for most people in their community the goal was to get long-term sustainable work.

- Indigenous communities have offered a multitude of skills and placement programs to community members, forged partnerships with off-reserve public and private companies to develop internships and job placements for community members, and have deployed resources from Own Source Revenue to better support post-secondary education pursuits;
- Communities also offer Adult Education classes in the community, have partnered with Community Colleges and Universities to offer courses in the Community, and have built schools to offer culturally relevant programming;
- Communities have developed skills programs which are delivered across communities, created job banks and job matching databases, and support programs (e.g., drivers' licenses, resume writing, etc.) for Indigenous job seekers.

New Directions

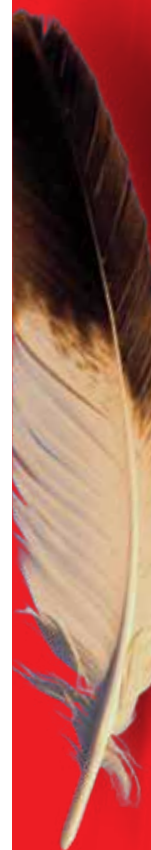
Indigenous communities are both proactive and innovative in their approach to prepare community members for post-secondary education attainment and sustained employment, and they will need to continue this approach in their development and delivery of programs.

Communities (and their funders) need to acquire longer-term funding to support transitions to employment, to develop career counselling for both middle and high school youth to ensure the development and realization of students' aspirations, to build the appropriate skill capacity in community members to meet the market demand for employment, and to continue to introduce culturally sensitive curricula.

Conclusion

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action make it clear that society and its stakeholders must make, at the very least, the same effort that Indigenous communities are making. Education institutions, in particular, have the resources and infrastructure to play a significant role in reducing the unique challenges and barriers that Indigenous students face.

This complete report can be accessed online through the AAEDIRP website:
https://www.apcfn.ca/images/uploads/FINAL_-_Labour_Readiness_Report_October_31__2017.pdf.





INDIGENOUS LABOUR FORCE PROFILE: North Shore Micmac District Council

The North Shore MicMac District Council (NSMDC) Labour Market Research Project, funded through the Department of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour (DPETL) was a partnership project between JEDI, NSMDC communities: Fort Folly, Buctouche, Indian Island, Natoaganeg (Eel Ground), Metepenagiag, Pabineau, Eel River Bar, and Working Warriors.

The purpose of this project was to increase awareness of Working Warriors (WW) with First Nation communities in NSMDC, build capacity by hiring community researchers, and collect and input skills data for each community. Employment Training Officers and researchers received training in Working Warriors and in Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (c/o First Nation Information Governance Centre). In addition, Employment Training Officers can continue to input and access data for their community.

FIRST NATION	% of (Resident) Members Registered
Fort Folly	17%
Indian Island	21%
Buctouche	5%
Natoaganeg	12%
Pabineau	63%
Metepenagiag	incomplete
Eel River Bar	incomplete
Total	10.2%

Recommendations for the project included:

- Engaging off-reserve memberships for each community to enter into the Working Warriors database;
- Practice cooperation and collaboration between communities to ensure initiatives are accomplished in a timely and cost-effective manner;
- Utilize and integrate WW into regular record keeping and collection;
- Encourage all work-ready community members to register on WW for resume-building and access to employment opportunities.



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