



The Employment Gap for Indigenous Youth in East Ontario

Angie Perkins

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United Way
East Ontario

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES
IN PRESCOTT-RUSSELL, OTTAWA,
LANARK AND RENFREW COUNTIES



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction	4
Why We Need to Hire Indigenous Youth	5
<i>Economic Reconciliation</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>An Indigenous Understanding of Employment.....</i>	<i>8</i>
The Current Story of Indigenous Youth	9
<i>Demographics.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Key Social Determinants of Health That Impact Youth Employment</i>	<i>10</i>
Barriers to Indigenous Youth Employment	17
<i>Regional Lens</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>East Ontario Engagement Sessions</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>26</i>
What We Learned from the COVID-19 Global Pandemic	31
<i>For Workplaces</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>For Funding Agencies.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>For Educational Institutions.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>For Service Providers.....</i>	<i>33</i>
Appendices.....	34
<i>Employment Indicators of Success for Indigenous Youth</i>	<i>34</i>
Glossary and Abbreviations	36
Bibliography	37

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Introduction

Indigenous youth continue to have challenges with finding and retaining employment.

The purpose of this environmental scan is to provide an overview of the opportunities and challenges for Indigenous youth in the Canadian labour market, specifically Ontario.

This scan provides a framework to understand the context for Indigenous youth employment in Ottawa and identifies the barriers and employment gaps for Indigenous youth in Ottawa, the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, Lanark County, and Renfrew County, Ontario. This environmental scan is one of several deliverables that have been prepared as part of a project funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to increase the number of Indigenous youth being employed across East Ontario. Part of the intent of this work is to increase the capacity of employers to establish workplaces that are safe and productive for Indigenous youth.

The United Way East Ontario (United Way), in partnership with the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC), identified current best practices and tools utilized to support Indigenous youth employment and retention. This scan is based on focus groups, interviews, and surveys with Indigenous youth entering the workforce, Indigenous youth who are currently employed, Indigenous organizations with employment programs, employers, and employment service agencies. In addition to identifying barriers and best practices within the employment sector; this scan will provide a framework for a skills enhancement session for employers regarding the attraction and retention of Indigenous youth and to ensure workplaces are culturally safe. As part of this project, an Indigenous Employment Leadership Advisory Table has been formed by United Way and the OAC to provide ongoing feedback to the project.

A caution about any environmental scan around Indigenous lives: the diversity and richness of Indigenous people means that we cannot adequately capture the many patterns and themes that reflect the community. When we rely on written documents, we consistently find that the reports project the aspects of life that are easiest to measure and do not represent other facets of life that Indigenous

people would want to showcase that demonstrate strengths and resiliency. As such, the focus groups, interviews, and surveys are intended to capture some of the data that is absent within the literature. The important messages to remember when reading the scan are:

The Indigenous community in Canada is diverse and vibrant. There are more than 1 million First Nation people in 640 First Nation communities, 52,000 Inuit in 51 communities in Inuit Nunangat and a growing Métis community across the country. More specifically, within the Ottawa area, the population statistics include 38,115 Indigenous peoples according to the 2016 Census.¹ That includes 17,790 First Nation, 17,150 Métis and 1,280 Inuit. This scan can only capture a portion of that diversity and is written with this humility in mind.

Why We Need to Hire Indigenous Youth

Responsible businesses in all sectors, are adopting and creating new employment strategies, including hiring practices and policies to ensure Indigenous employment within their workplaces. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the main benefits of hiring Indigenous youth include access to a broad talent pool of employees, the potential of becoming an employer of choice and fulfilling their own corporate responsibility.²

“If properly managed, the skills, knowledge and expertise of a diversified workforce can generate a competitive advantage, providing higher levels of performance, creativity and innovation.”³

Indigenous people have one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations therefore, Indigenous youth will be a significant part of the employment pool from which employers can draw. For example, between 2006 and 2016, the Indigenous youth population grew at four times the rate of the non-Indigenous population.

“Turning 15 is an important milestone; it’s the age when a person becomes a potential member of the workforce. Over the course of 10 years (between 2016 and 2026), 350,000 Indigenous youth will turn 15.”⁴

Indigenous youth are a considerable highly concentrated talent pool of future and potential employees available for the workforce. Another motivation for some employers to hire Indigenous staff has been to maintain a competitive edge. A focus on quality, targeted, and culturally appropriate education, skills,

and training aimed at Indigenous people, could boost the country's economy by \$27.7 billion annually.⁵ As governments, particularly the federal government, have applied conditions on businesses to have some portion supportive of Indigenous people, businesses have been pivoting to meet these procurement requirements. In 2017 the Government of Canada produced a report called [Many Voices One Mind: a Pathway to Reconciliation](#) that recognizes the challenges and barriers Indigenous people face when entering, and retaining employment, in the public service. Also listed within the report are recruitment and retention strategies for (future and current) Indigenous employees as part of the organizations' reconciliation processes.

As the public service and other sectors enter new paths of diversity and inclusion, many have taken on their own corporate or social responsibility of reconciliation for Indigenous peoples across Canada through procurement, economic reconciliation, and employment efforts.

Economic Reconciliation

"The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC) emphasized that it is *everyone's* responsibility to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities."⁶ This responsibility is not only left for government departments or agencies to adopt, but for all employers, in all sectors, to find economic pathways in which they can incorporate Indigenous economic reconciliation practices within their organizations. Labour market information suggests that "Indigenous people in Canada represent 4 per cent of the total labour force and generate a combined household income of approximately \$30 billion per annum."⁷ Economic inclusion and focused policies and programs relating to Indigenous employment would only encourage the increase of Indigenous youth employment.

The specific Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, noted below, are meant to be actualized within the employment sectors in municipalities across Canada:

CALL TO ACTION 57: Professional Development and Training for Public Servants

"We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."⁸

Cultural awareness training within the federal government departments including all provincial departments should receive training developed and implemented by Indigenous organizations

recognized nationally to ensure consistency with special considerations of traditional territory in which the departments and province reside on.

CALL TO ACTION 66: Youth Programs

“We call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices.”⁹

To date, no such programs exist nationally to address best practices needed to develop knowledge and information sharing within Indigenous youth for Indigenous youth and by Indigenous youth.

CALL TO ACTION 92: Business and Reconciliation

“We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations.

This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”¹⁰

Equitable access to jobs, training and educational opportunities within the corporate sector would allow space for Indigenous employment to flourish and work within the same socio-economic factors of that of their non-Indigenous counterparts. This also includes Indigenous youth.

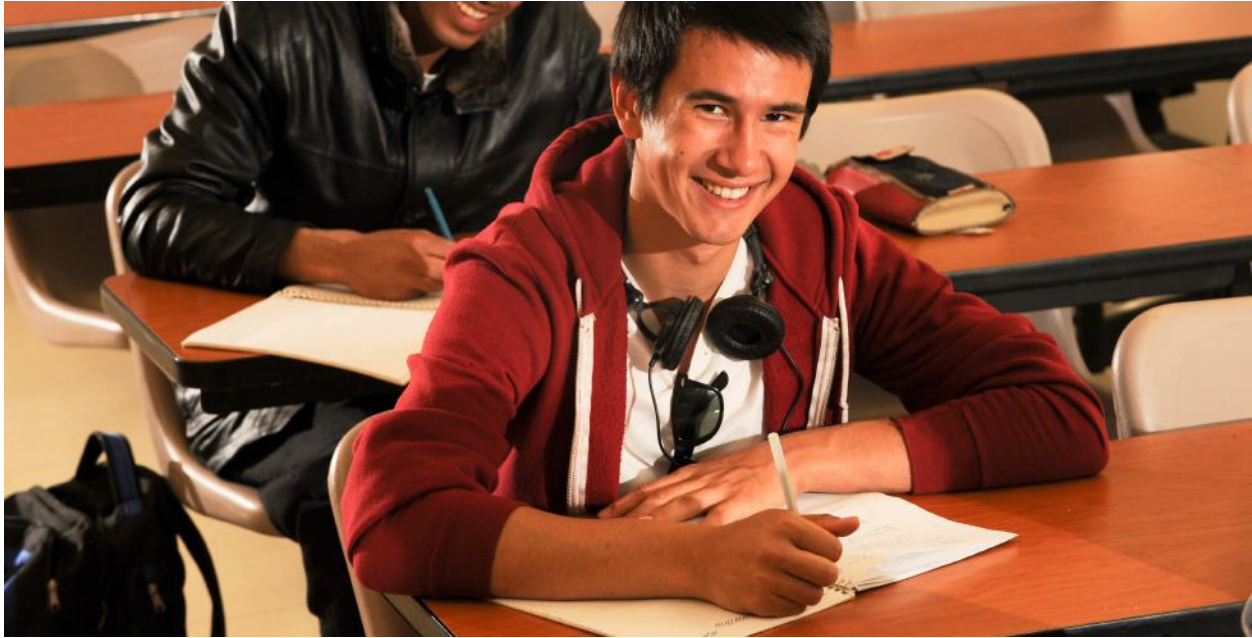
“Reconciliation is not an Indigenous problem; it is for all of Canada. We have all been taught to believe in Aboriginal inferiority and European superiority and that’s wrong... But in addition to that, the way that schools treat Indigenous history also needs to be re-evaluated and rethought and recast... Reconciliation is about our responsibility to the future.” – Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, CBC Interview, 2015

An Indigenous Understanding of Employment

Indigenous communities across Canada are working to restore balance from hundreds of years of disruption and cultural genocide. Indigenous youth are increasingly part of reconciliation and are recognizing their responsibilities to themselves and to their communities. The concept of having a job to make money and to fulfill individual objectives is only one responsibility for Indigenous youth. In many Indigenous ways of knowing and being, youth are asked to use their gifts and talents so that they can then take up their responsibilities to their other relations in the family, community, and Nation. The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition states that work for youth often combines four key aspects of life that are interconnected:

- Paid work and maintaining their livelihood, ideally related to their educational goals.
- Cultural and ceremonial work: The youth are often asked to carry responsibilities around ceremonies, particularly as helpers to the Elders and in learning their future responsibilities.
- Family work: Many Indigenous people have children younger than non-Indigenous Canadians and have a unique responsibility to restore family life away from the legacy of residential schools and towards values and practices of Indigenous family life. In addition, Indigenous youth often carry responsibilities for the Elders in their family and for their siblings.
- Healing work: Many Indigenous people are actively restoring balance in themselves, their families and their Nations through healing and reclamation of cultural knowledge. As each person restores balance in themselves, we then restore balance in our communities. For some youth, that healing includes advocacy work to right past and current wrongs.

Youth today, in employment situations, are often balancing paid work, responsibilities to family and community, and their own healing as they help restore their community and Nation.



The Current Story of Indigenous Youth

Demographics

As mentioned earlier, between 2006 and 2016, the Indigenous youth population rose four times greater and faster than the non-Indigenous population in Canada¹¹, Skudra et al., also stated that the Indigenous youth population is on pace within the next decade to reach 350,000 once turning the age of fifteen. With nearly a third of a million Indigenous youth entering the labour force market in Canada within the next ten years, the demand for employment development programs and economic inclusion in the workforce is required and essential.

Statistics state that Indigenous youth in Ottawa have an unemployment rate of 22.7 per cent in comparison to 16 per cent of the overall youth population.¹² This represents a significant gap in the labour force for Indigenous youth and reflects several complex issues that reflect challenges and barriers Indigenous youth face when entering the labour market for the first time. These barriers are often compounded by a variety of social determinants that impact their overall health and well-being, which in turn determines their rates of success (or lack thereof) in actively seeking employment and attainment.

Key Social Determinants of Health That Impact Youth Employment

Emerging through international discussions dating back to 1986, determinants of health have evolved over time to encompass the broader social forces that impact upon health. Poverty, employment, working conditions, education and literacy, social status, social support networks, housing, physical environments, geographic location, access to health services, food security, early child development, gender, culture, and language are some of the complex and inter-related social determinants of health.

By way of example, higher educational attainment is intrinsically linked to other social determinants of health, including greater employment opportunities, higher income, secure housing, more nutritional options, and ultimately better health outcomes.¹³

The article goes on to identify the link between lack of educational outcomes that in turn reflect homelessness, which highlights the intersectionality of systemic and structural violence and oppression among Indigenous peoples.

The barriers Indigenous youth are subjected to lead to poorer socio-economic status in comparison to all other non-Indigenous youth, and all variants or social determinants of health are overlapped by multiple barriers that continue to plague Indigenous youth. This can inevitably lead to the lack of their ability to succeed in employment or otherwise.

Social determinants of health recognize that there are multiple conditions that enable people to live the lives they would choose to live. Indigenous Canadians have a life expectancy 12 years lower than the national average and experience higher rates of preventable chronic diseases compared with non-Indigenous Canadians.

Transgenerational trauma from past assimilation policies have affected the health of Indigenous populations.

Social determinants of health disproportionately negatively affect the health of Indigenous peoples.¹⁴ “The Canadian Government, as an act of reconciliation, must begin to redress these harms caused by colonialism. This includes recognizing and addressing poverty, housing, water, and sanitation issues, food security, violence, and health and educational inequities faced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.”¹⁵

HOUSING

In 2018 it was estimated that nearly 34,075 people were of Indigenous descent, roughly 4 per cent of Ottawa’s overall population¹⁶ yet 24 per cent of the population experiencing homelessness in Ottawa are Indigenous, and of that 24 per cent, 40 per cent are Inuit. The over-representation of single Indigenous adults and Indigenous youth who are experiencing homelessness highlights the need for Indigenous holistic and economic inclusion within the Ottawa area.

Socio-economic conditions that continue to plague Indigenous populations and youth within urban centres mainly target the wide-ranging aspects of stability, as well as the ability to overcome and persevere through traumatic and troubling paths that possibly pre-determine the rates of success within a modern urban centre. The 2018 Point In Time Count also states that Indigenous people are disproportionately over-represented (in homelessness and otherwise) due to experiences of racism, and the rates of trauma and abuse resulting from the legacies of colonization and Residential Schools.

Youth facing unstable housing situations are already in systems that have not prepared them for life. Indigenous youth transitioning and/or leaving the child welfare and foster care systems have a 5.4 per cent probability of experiencing homelessness (both visible and hidden¹⁷) in comparison to 1.6 per cent of non-Indigenous.

In 2020 during COVID-19, 4,700 youth (aged 16-18 depending on the province) left the child welfare system and only 700 of them had a place to go. This left 4,000 vulnerable to unsafe or no secure housing,¹⁸ In 2016, Statistics Canada stated that 52.2 per cent of the 28,665 children under 15 in the foster care system were Indigenous.¹⁹

The lack of safe and stable housing has a direct correlation to the prospects of staying in school and attaining and retaining employment.

EDUCATION

Education and literacy levels among Indigenous youth in 2006 for high school completion rates were 19.3 per centage points lower than their non-Indigenous counterparts; by 2016, this dropped to 14.8 per centage points,²⁰ illuminating the potential progress of educational outcomes. The near 5 per cent difference between Indigenous youth versus non-Indigenous graduation levels still indicate the need to lessen the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth across Canada. During that same year of 2006, the graduation rates of Indigenous peoples from college and trades completion were at 0.4 per cent lower than non-Indigenous which rose to 2.6 per cent in 2016²¹—meaning the rates of non-Indigenous students graduating from college and trades programs grew faster than that of their Indigenous counterparts. University attainment followed the same trend—in 2006 Indigenous graduation rates were 17.1 per cent lower than non-Indigenous graduates and slightly changed in 2016 with 18.8 per cent lower than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

In Ontario, “more than 16,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are attending Ontario’s public colleges and universities. However, a significant gap exists in educational attainment between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population in Ontario. When it comes to university education, 29.3 per cent of the non-Indigenous population has a university degree, while only 11.3 per cent of the Indigenous population has a university degree. There is not a significant difference in college-level attainment, where fees are on average one-third of university tuition fees. Indigenous populations that live on a reserve are less likely to have access to education. Nearly 50 per cent of the Indigenous community that lives on a reserve does not have a high school degree.”²²

“The lack of funding by the federal government has forced communities administering the funds to make difficult decisions about who receives funding each year. In 2014-2015, 22,000 Status First Nations and Inuit students received financial assistance from INAC; this figure was the same in 2006. However, before the implementation of the funding cap, about 27,000 students received financial assistance. It was estimated that by 2007, about 22,500 people were unable to pursue post-secondary education due to a lack of federal funding. Recent contributions from the federal government to the PSSSP program of \$90 million for two years is a positive step but does not address the increase in the Indigenous youth population and the potential instability of funding in the long run. When a funding cap is in place, communities are certain that they will not be receiving more than the allotted amount. When the government of the day devotes \$90 million in funding for two years, there is nothing to ensure that funding will continue. Because of this, Indigenous students are at a clear disadvantage in accessing post-secondary education in Canada.”²³



“In Ontario, undergraduate tuition fees have increased by 248 per cent since 1993-1994, which has made campuses inaccessible to even more students. The Government of Ontario provides minimal funding for Indigenous post-secondary education in the province. In 2015 the provincial government provided five million to support the nine Indigenous institutions. Indigenous students don’t receive any direct financial support from the province, except for the Aboriginal Bursaries Search Tool introduced in 2009.”²⁴

Although the graduation rates for university and post-secondary education are rising, the educational gap between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous student graduation levels remain.

HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

“Indigenous peoples in Canada have high rates of mental health problems and experience some of the greatest inequalities in social determinants of health...To address mental health issues faced by Indigenous peoples, policies must address a broader array of social determinants, such as food insecurity, income and employment status.”²⁵

Nationally, Indigenous people are below the non-Indigenous Canadian average of access to health services, overall health conditions, mortality rates, and quality of life. The disparities of Indigenous peoples’ health in comparison to non-Indigenous are unchanging, although Indigenous people living in urban areas or cities increase their access to health care. Elflein states: ‘Whereas 60 per cent of non-[I]ndigenous population in Canada report their health as very good or excellent, only 49, 51 and 45 per cent of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples respectively perceive their health care as such.’²⁶ Chronic illness is also more prevalent within Indigenous peoples across Canada, as well as health conditions more prone to the Indigenous populations; these conditions are diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and allergies and mood disorders listed above the national average²⁷. Access to medical services or access to a family doctor in comparison to non-Indigenous population in Canada continues to widen, as 85 per cent of non-Indigenous people have a family doctor, in comparison to the Inuit population stands at 43 per cent.²⁸

Mental health among Indigenous youth is alarming and a growing concern whether they live in their own communities or within urban cities across Canada. Suicide is the leading cause of death for Indigenous youth aged 10 to 29 years old. In fact, Statistics Canada reports that suicide rates among First

Nations youth are five to seven times that of non-Indigenous youth, depending on their location and affiliation, with some of the worst suicide rates in Canada being amongst Inuit youth who are eleven times more likely to commit suicide than the national average.²⁹ The lack of mental health services directed at Indigenous youth exacerbates the overall vulnerability of youth and highlights the need for solid infrastructure and advocacy for Indigenous people who are at higher risk for suicide and mental health services and who are the least likely to have access to any health services.

SAFETY & SECURITY OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Indigenous youth and peoples are at a significantly higher risk to experience crime related events before they leave their household or start their first job, and many violent crimes tend to be ‘normalized’ before maturity into young adults.

“In 2014, approximately 275,000 Aboriginal people aged 15 and older, or more than one-quarter (28 per cent) of Aboriginal people aged 15 and older overall, reported that they or their household had been a victim of at least one of the eight types of offences measured by the GSS on Victimization in the previous 12 months. This was a significantly higher proportion than for non-Aboriginal people (18 per cent). The fact that the Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population—and victimization has been associated with being younger—accounts for some of this difference, though it does not account for it entirely. In essence, if the Aboriginal population had the same age composition as the non-Aboriginal population, the proportion of Aboriginal victims would be slightly lower; however, it would still remain higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population.”³⁰

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS’ SAFETY

In 2015, the federal government launched the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and a subsequent report was produced in 2019 with 231 Calls to Justice. In 2021 the Government of Canada released their [National Action Plan](#) to respond to the report. During that time, more Indigenous women and girls were killed.

In the 2010 report produced by the Native Women’s Association of Canada, they found that most of the Indigenous women who were killed were youth. Over half of the cases (55 per cent) involved women and girls under the age of 31, with 17 per cent of women and girls 18 years of age or younger.

According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability Report in 2020, of the 160 women killed in Canada, one out of every five identified as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit.

In reviewing the Action Plan, there is limited focus on Indigenous youth. Granted these are complex systems to shift. However, establishing safe work, education, and living environments are fundamental for Indigenous youth to succeed in any employment endeavor.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

“Major disparities in the socioeconomic status and environmental contexts resulting from colonial policies and practices continue to drive inequities that have persisted for generations. These disparities include higher levels of substandard and crowded housing conditions, poverty, and unemployment, together with lower levels of education and access to quality health-care services.”³¹ Indigenous youth, children and families are disproportionately at risk for ill health, higher infant mortality rates, tuberculosis in Inuit communities and people, higher rates of child and youth injuries and possible death, diabetes, youth suicide and potential exposure to environmental contaminants than non-Indigenous children and youth within Canada. The inequality of socio-economic status for Indigenous youth in comparison to non-Indigenous exemplifies the overburden of barriers that Indigenous youth need to overcome before entering the workforce, adding to the lack of participation due to systems that are completely out of a youth’s personal control.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

As the over-representation of Indigenous youth in the justice system continues to increase, many Indigenous leaders state that the justice system is the secondary path of many transitioning from the child welfare or foster system. “Although Indigenous youth make up just eight per cent of Canada’s youth population, they account for 46 per cent of youth in custody. Amidst the general decline in youth incarceration rates in Canada, the proportion of incarcerated Indigenous youth has only grown from 22 per cent of all Canadian youth in 2006 to a staggering 47 per cent of boys and 60 per cent of girls in 2017.”³² Luo also states within this article that Indigenous youth are more likely to be denied bail, to be sentenced, and to receive- longer sentences than non-Indigenous youth due to racism and discrimination within the justice system. This in turn leads Indigenous youth to reoffend as they do not

have the social supports in place in comparison to non-Indigenous youth, therefore increasing the levels of incarceration. The increase of incarceration rates of Indigenous youth then raises the unemployment rates, as both outcomes are directly related.

URBAN CONTEXT

According to the 2016 Census, about 45 per cent of Registered Indians, 76 per cent of Non-Status Indians, 50 per cent of Inuit, and 70 per cent of Métis live in urban areas or outside of their home community (First Nation reserve, a hamlet in Inuit Nunangat or a Métis settlement).³³ It is further estimated that one third of all Inuit will be living south of Inuit Nunangat by 2030.³⁴ Indigenous people are coming to urban centres for education and employment opportunities yet they are coming from communities that were unable to prepare them for education and employment.

Ontario represents approximately 22 per cent of the Indigenous population in Canada, the largest of any province.³⁵ More than 16,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are attending Ontario's public colleges and universities. However, a significant gap exists in educational attainment between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population in Ontario.³⁶ The cohort of Indigenous people between the ages of 25 and 34, are still more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to not have graduated from high school, and less than half as likely to have obtained a university degree. In more precise terms, the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous university attainment in Ontario has remained unchanged: within both the older and younger age cohorts, non-Indigenous people remain exactly 2.6 times more likely have obtained a university degree than their Indigenous counterparts."³⁷

According to Kagita Mikam (2021), Indigenous people are moving into urban settings for increased opportunities, whether it be health services, post-secondary opportunities, or employment but statistics still show they have increased gaps of education and employment rates in comparison to the non-Indigenous population.

"Not only do we come to an urban setting for education or employment, some come because it's necessary to move out of poverty or domestic and toxic relationships. Some simply take the risk and relocate with the hopes for better opportunities for themselves and their children with no safety net once they arrive in the urban environment. This means they are facing the unknown and are not prepared for the higher costs of living, the lack of access to safe housing and lack of family support. The urban lifestyle certainly creates for a longer action plan considering all our barriers. Childcare, criminal record, no transportation, non-supportive social workers. Something as simple as not having the ability

to pay for bus fare can be a huge barrier for a person on a fixed income. It really isolates the individual. Considering the many barriers and obstacles, some may end up more depressed or disconnected and with new struggles they are faced to cope with.”

Systemic barriers and discrimination facing Indigenous people have been well-documented:

Even at higher numeracy and literacy skill levels, First Nations people still have a significantly lower probability of employment... (75 per cent) than Métis (87 per cent) or non-Indigenous (90 per cent) people. Notably, even lower-skilled non-Indigenous people have a higher probability of employment than First Nations people (87 per cent). Workplace bullying and discrimination causes some Indigenous people to leave employment. Other studies have shown that the likelihood of success increases when training is culturally appropriate, engaging in land-based training and including wrap-around supports.³⁸



Barriers to Indigenous Youth Employment

The educational levels of Indigenous peoples are increasing each year as many Indigenous youth, communities and governance systems try to lessen the educational gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. However, it is apparent that Indigenous youth entering the labour market are still afflicted or presented with many barriers. Below are some of the most prevalent barriers identified for Indigenous youth entering the workforce:

1. Education and job readiness
2. Financial literacy
3. Transportation
7. Precarious work and the gig economy
8. Workplaces are not trauma informed and do not have appropriate mental health supports

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 4. Childcare and pregnancy | 9. Workplace belonging and safety |
| 5. Lack of Indigenous representation in the workplace | 10. Digital literacy and connectivity |
| 6. Discrimination within the workplace | |

EDUCATION AND JOB READINESS

High school graduation and literacy are basic requirements needed to enter the workforce. As mentioned earlier, Indigenous graduation rates have slowly improved throughout the past few decades. The realization that culturally appropriate education for Indigenous youth is needed, where safe and positive Indigenous outlooks of their own cultural identity, history, and worldviews are respected and taught from a non-biased, non-colonial perspective. This allows Indigenous youth the flexibility to learn while still maintaining the basic literacy skills needed to enter the workforce.

“A racist narrative is propagated through continued whitewashing of Indigenous cultural teachings, giving cause to issues facing Indigenous students. As both an educator and a student viewing the world through a European and Indigenous perspective, I have witnessed that historical oppression is reinforced in our classrooms, and a loss of culture is a barrier to the success of Indigenous students.”³⁹

Loss of culture through colonial educational systems directly impact the educational level outcomes for Indigenous youth; more culturally specific education through primary and secondary curriculums that reinforce Indigenous protocol and teachings would address (slowly) the high school graduation rates.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

The lack of financial literacy for Indigenous youth, stemming from inadequacies of secondary or post-secondary educational systems, leaves Indigenous youth with the inability to foresee, understand and apply for financial aid or resources that may ensure a prosperous future. New financial literacy programs are being developed and delivered by various Indigenous organizations within East Ontario, focused on ensuring an appropriate cultural financial lens.

“Limited money means students have no way to pay for a car to get to work. Working to earn money can be too stressful, especially if an individual has a full course load. After high school, students may be reluctant to incur debt and there is often a lack of

awareness about the financial supports offered.”⁴⁰

TRANSPORTATION

Our recent consultations and surveys confirmed that Indigenous youth have lower access rates to personal transportation. In many rural communities, costs of transportation are very high or even precarious or non-existent for some. Part-time or seasonal jobs require youth to take public transportation and with odd work hours this, in turn, decreases the number of Indigenous youth acquiring and retaining part-time or seasonal work.⁴¹ Many service providers’ programs try to alleviate the need for and access to transportation by providing bus passes within urban areas for Indigenous youth to access or retain employment prospects.

CHILD CARE & PREGNANCY

Indigenous youth statistics show pregnancy at higher levels than that of their non-Indigenous counterparts within the same age groups; nearly half of Inuit women (45 per cent) were mothers during their teenage years and early mothers were less likely to obtain a high school diploma.⁴² In 2017, Statistics Canada also stated that “First Nations women living off reserve (66 per cent), Métis women (64 per cent) and Inuit women (44 per cent) who were early mothers remained less likely to have completed a high school diploma than other mothers ... This result may not be surprising, since many of the women who had their first child before the age of 20 had not completed high school at the time.”⁴³ Alternatively, both the employment rates and educational outcomes increased if pregnancy was not completed during teenage or young adult years.

In addition to having children younger, affordable, culturally appropriate childcare services are not available or non-existent for Indigenous people. “Young parents in one focus group felt that the lack of affordable childcare was their biggest barrier to employment. They did not receive enough government assistance with childcare expenses to allow them to access employment.”⁴⁴



There are also concerns about accessing childcare services that are not culturally competent, thus making parents vulnerable. One youth in the study from British Columbia responded by saying there is fear that a child welfare or family services agency will become involved once you apply for daycare. Although this study was completed in 2014 it still resonates with Indigenous youth leaving the child welfare system and then being or feeling tracked by the exact same system from which they are trying to transition.

LACK OF INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION IN THE WORKPLACE

The absence of Indigenous liaisons or other Indigenous staff within a workplace can deter initial employment or lead to lack of retention as many Indigenous youth are left feeling alone. This also includes the added pressure of needing to educate non-Indigenous staff about history and culture. “If they land jobs in large urban centres, Aboriginal people may experience isolation. New cultural norms, unfamiliarity with urban environments, the lack of role models in more senior jobs—or even the absence of a single familiar face in the organization—can contribute to retention problems. As they consider their careers, Aboriginal people may also have to deal with different definitions of success and their own cultural bias toward humility instead of “selling yourself.”⁴⁵

“There must be respect for the culture and the unique knowledge and cultural traditions Indigenous peoples bring to a work or school environment. Employers need to show how they are changing their workplace culture to nurture and support youth who are learning new skills.”⁴⁶

DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

“Discrimination is not confined to the labour market; discrimination in other domains can also affect labour market outcomes. Institutionalized discrimination, for example, has contributed to the lower employment rates and earnings of Indigenous peoples in Canada today.”⁴⁷

Racism within the workplace deters many Indigenous youth and people from applying for and retaining employment.

Lower employment rates, underemployment, unemployment, lower wage comparisons (with non-Indigenous), and denial to hire or promote Indigenous people within the current workforce leads to inequality within workplaces, inequitable hiring practices, and the inability to foster diverse and inclusive workplaces.

“While Indigenous children were being mistreated in residential schools by being told they were heathens, savages and pagans and inferior people—that same message was being delivered in the public schools of this country.” – Justice Murray Sinclair, CBC

Wage gaps are also considered discriminatory for Indigenous youth and the currently employed. This links directly to the economic growth of urban centres, the need for anti-discriminatory policies, and affects the overall economic prosperity of all Canadians. Unfortunately, not many studies address why employers fail to report these issues nor are such studies completed. Additional studies are needed to reveal discriminatory practices within the workplace to help identify and resolve these issues relating to employment.

“We heard that Indigenous Peoples, as well as racialized and certain religious minority communities experience bias in hiring, retention and mobility in employment. Participants explained that bias, both conscious and unconscious, can work in a variety of ways, such as screening resumés based on names, only interviewing referred candidates, and not providing clear requirements or processes for promotion. For youth in particular, systemic racism within the education system and among employers leads to both un- and underemployment.”⁴⁸

This racism applies to all sectors of employment—federal, provincial, private, non-profit and resource industries. Racism within any workplace deters many Indigenous youth and people from applying for and retaining employment.

PRECARIOUS WORK & THE GIG ECONOMY

The Ontario Government defines precarious work as: “work for remuneration characterized by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlement... For some, precarious employment is limited to work that has an element of contingency, and for others it is used synonymously with non-standard employment such as part-time and temporary work.”⁴⁹ For many Indigenous people of Canada, including those in Ontario, this may be also comprised of contract or term positions for employment for projects varying in length from six months up to two years of employment, etc. This includes employment at all levels of government and federal government departments, public and private sectors. The opportunities to which Indigenous youth and Indigenous people have access are less likely to become permanent positions wherein they can obtain pensions, promotions, and a permanent full-time job. Ontario’s report also expanded upon the negative effects of precarious work environments: “Such employment is generally characterized by low pay and low fringe benefits, little or no job security, limited training, few opportunities for career development and advancement, little control over one’s work environment, uncertainty over work scheduling, and little or no protection through unions. It can include large numbers of people who are recently unemployed, women, and members of visible minority groups, immigrants, and youth. Also, some secure non-standard forms of employment also have a negative aspect such as, for example, poorly paid permanent part-time work. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that people are more likely to be poor or in the struggling bottom 40 per cent of society if they have non-standard work.”⁵⁰

The lack of data and information on Indigenous youth and people in precarious work environments highlights the need for more transparent collection of labour market information directed at Indigenous youth and peoples interprovincially and on a national scale. Ontario’s report does not state how many of the youth are affected by precarious work and/or the number of Indigenous people that work within these situations.

WORKPLACES ARE NOT TRAUMA-INFORMED AND DO NOT HAVE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

During the time that this environmental scan was being prepared in the summer of 2021, more than 1000 unmarked burial grounds of Indigenous children were found across Canada. Indigenous youth are often navigating historical and current realities that clearly message that Indigenous people do not matter. While we know many Indigenous people are resilient and many are on their healing journey, uninformed or hostile work environments can undermine basic mental health and well-being. The current mental health responses, including referring employees to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) would not be sufficient because of cultural sensitivities and nuances particular to Indigenous youth and employees. There must be a recognition that the legacy of residential schools and colonization has had residual effects for Indigenous people. They need to have access to supports for internal and external resources within their current workplace that are Indigenous-specific to ensure the

mental health needs are for Indigenous youth and employees and that they also address the Indigenous Canadian colonial past and experience.

WORKPLACE BELONGING AND SAFETY

Policies that address harassment, racism, and safety should ensure a workplace is free from discrimination and bias, although for most Indigenous peoples and youth, the opportunity to work in an environment free from all these types of issues is less likely to happen. Catalyst describes this as ‘emotional tax’ and is defined as: “Emotional tax is the combination of being on guard to protect against bias because of race, ethnicity, and gender and experiencing the associated effects on well-being and ability to thrive at work. More than half of survey respondents (52 per cent) said that they are regularly on guard to experiences of bias, a hallmark of emotional tax. Being on guard to bias includes feeling the need to prepare for possible insults or avoid certain situations where they anticipate bias may occur. Indigenous women (67 per cent) reported this experience much more commonly than Indigenous men (38 per cent), reflecting the disproportionate discrimination and violence they experience compared to other groups.”⁵¹ Catalyst also states that there is no psychological safety while at work; “yet 61 per cent of Indigenous Peoples we surveyed indicated that they do not or seldom feel psychologically safe at work. There was no significant difference between women and men.”⁵²

DIGITAL LITERACY AND CONNECTIVITY

The RBC [Building Bandwidth – Preparing Indigenous youth for a digital future report](#) released in July 2021, emphasized that the success of Canada’s youth to thrive in the workplaces of the future depended on two required abilities: the skills to work with people (foundational skills) and the skills to work with technology (digital skills). RBC’s Future Launch survey found that even though Indigenous youth frequently use digital devices, they are less confident in their digital literacy skills than their non-Indigenous counterparts, with a 13 per cent gap emerging. Part of this issue is that high-speed internet is not accessible in large parts of rural and Northern Canada, restricting access for many Indigenous communities. The RBC report cites that in 2017, the CRTC found that about 24 per cent of households in First Nations communities had high-speed internet, compared with 97 per cent of urban and 37 per cent of rural households. The lack of digital skills and connectivity limits the long-term earning potential for Indigenous youth and will put them at a disadvantage to be prepared for the workplace of the future.

Regional Lens

As reported above, Ontario has the largest Indigenous population. Even so, according to the 2016 Census, in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, Lanark County and Renfrew County, just slightly

over 5 per cent of the total population of these areas combined identified as Indigenous. Due to population sample size, data is limited. The information listed below includes Canadian and Ontario data as well as consultations and conversations with individuals who provide services to Indigenous youth. The barriers listed above are the same yet exacerbated within the rural context.

“Low density and remote areas influence outcomes. These areas have less diversified economies, more limited access to services and educational opportunities, and face higher transportation costs. Rurality and remoteness are correlated with such factors as lower labour market attachment, lower educational attainment rates and poorer health outcomes.”⁵³

Furthermore, in addition to the cost of accessing services, which can be a barrier for those in urban areas, youth in rural areas often have limited or no options with regards to public transportation and internet access. Several pilot programs have been launched to help address these access issues, notably the Social Planning Council of Ottawa’s Digital Equity project and the Community Transportation Grant funding in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell. However, both ventures are relatively new, and it may be some time before their end goals are achieved.

East Ontario Engagement Sessions

Throughout the months of May and June 2021, the United Way conducted several informal engagement sessions and one-on-one sessions with employers, service providers and Indigenous youth within Ottawa and the surrounding counties. School board representatives (including Indigenous representatives) from Renfrew County, Carleton University, YMCA and various other stakeholders, service providers and employers were included in these sessions. Indigenous youth also had a separate engagement session.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS WAS TO:

1. Validate the barriers identified within the environmental scan
2. Discuss how to address barriers more specifically (solutions)
3. Identify challenges of addressing current barriers identified
4. Have employers discuss success stories of hiring and retaining Indigenous youth. Employers—successes of hiring and retaining Indigenous youth
5. Identify any best practices or current employment programming or supports that enable Indigenous youth employment or that alleviates barriers Indigenous youth face

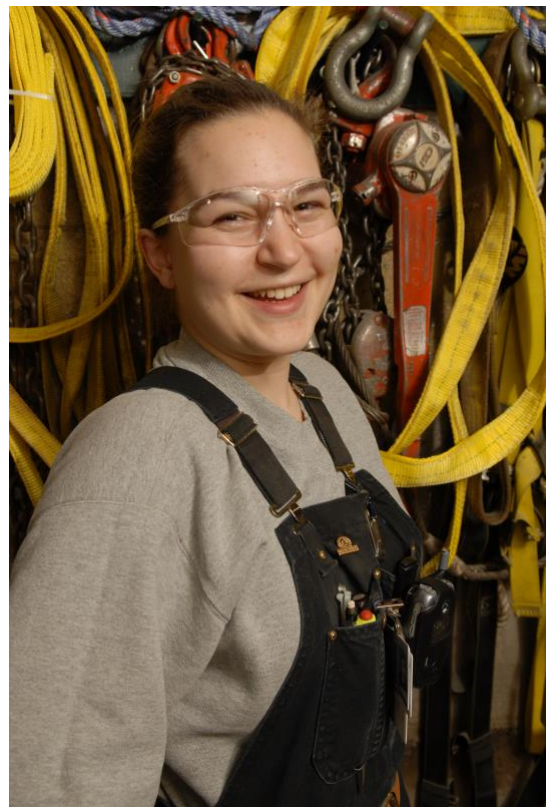
Generally speaking, the findings were that the barriers listed above are the most prevalent barriers that Indigenous youth are facing when trying to access the labour market or attempting to enter into the labour market for the first time. Also included in the findings was that educational institutions were now having to 'gatekeep' for their Indigenous graduating students from potential future employers that seek out Indigenous graduates to 'quota fill' positions for diversity and inclusion. Because recruitment strategies do not attract Indigenous applicants, employers now directly seek Indigenous students and graduates from post-secondary institutions rather than enticing Indigenous employees with culturally sensitive and safe places of employment.

One of the respondents said: "Even though employers are looking for a ready pool of students from vulnerable populations, I still need to make sure our students are going into a positive environment. Employers need to show me what they are doing at their end so that they are ready to hire these students. It is a balancing act to vet the employer while trying to protect the students so that they can build their confidence. There is this disconnect between the employer and whom they want to hire." Post-secondary institutions are now in a position of having to field potential employers about their intentions of hiring Indigenous youth and students, which in turn emphasizes the need for safe and culturally sensitive workplaces.

Best practices are the same for employers, service providers and youth:

- Resume building workshops;
- Ensuring marketing directed towards Indigenous youth;
- Co-op placements for students to determine if the organization is the right fit;
- More Indigenous specific workshops for Indigenous youth seeking employment;
- Have professional associations recruit new or graduating Indigenous students;
- Having more Indigenous employees in visible decision-making roles in the organization;
- Employers building relationships with post-secondary students to build trust and relationships before employment begins;
- Potential employers offering scholarships or bursaries;
- Having employers connecting with Indigenous communities and Indigenous organizations.

These best practices require commitment and dedication of current and future employers for Indigenous youth. Other best practices not mentioned in the above findings are listed below.





Best Practices

Increasingly, there are workplaces that have successfully integrated Indigenous youth into the workplace and have identified a number of key factors that support success.

Throughout the conversations with service providers, employers, educators, and community members, several themes emerged around existing programs and strategies for success in the East Ontario region.

MENTORING OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH

“Mentoring can be undertaken both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders. In fact, care must be taken to ensure that existing Indigenous leaders are not expected to undermine their own careers by spending so much time mentoring that it interferes with their work, unless some other duties are re-assigned to take into account the importance of the mentoring role.”⁵⁴ Smaller or more inclusive workplaces practice mentoring and coaching initiatives internally. For those Indigenous people working within the public service, this may not be an option unless a mentor is sought out to guide them through their public service career personally. Many Indigenous youth or people entering workplaces, whether public, private, or non-profit do not have access to an Indigenous mentor; this will lead to further impacts in retention.

CULTURAL SAFETY & WORKPLACE BELONGING

“Indigenous youth who face barriers to success may feel especially disempowered given their past life experiences. Ensuring cultural safety is key in fostering supportive environments and relationships. Cultural safety goes beyond cultural awareness (acknowledgement of difference), cultural sensitivity

(respecting difference), and cultural competence (having appropriate attitudes and skills to deal with difference). Cultural safety includes the aptitudes from these previous phases, but also involves a component of self-reflection to recognize our own cultural lens and develop empathy and advocacy to move towards understanding and positive change (Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2014).”⁵⁵ Cultural safety within educational systems, including post-secondary, within workplaces and future potential places of employment, will lead to higher graduation rates, and retention within places of employment.

When Indigenous youth feel a sense of workplace safety and a culture of belonging, productivity, morale and retention increases.

Compared to Indigenous employees with low levels of psychological safety, we found that those who experience high psychological safety are:

- Almost five times as likely to have a sense of belonging.
- Over five times more likely to experience being valued for their uniqueness.
- Nearly twice as likely to speak up when something is not right.
- Twice as likely to report task focus—the mental ability to home in on objectives.
- Nearly twice as likely to report being able to exhibit creativity

Research supports how vital these factors are. For example:

- Belongingness is part of what it means to be included and is linked to greater intention to stay at one’s job and heightens team citizenship behaviours (e.g., pitching in when coworkers are in need).
- Uniqueness is one of the indicators of an inclusive environment and strongly predicts a team’s ability to solve problems, among other outcomes.

When companies and leaders fail to nurture workplaces and relationships that promote the psychological safety of Indigenous employees, they risk limiting the potential that their companies and Indigenous employees are able to achieve.”⁵⁶

Allowing the Indigenous employee or youth the space and an unbiased work environment where they can thrive, and flourish will enable higher retention records and an overall employee satisfaction experience within any work sector. Providing these spaces for learning and growth within an organization will help to ensure that it is culturally safe and inclusive.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Indigenous youth living within Ottawa and across Canada can acquire new skills and hands-on job training provided through Algonquin College, which has received \$2.5 million from the Government of Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The funding has been allocated to support 250 Indigenous youth across Canada gain skills and work experience to enter Canada's workforce. New funding designated for Indigenous youth from the federal government's COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund has also been directed to support specific training through a partnership between Algonquin College, Odawa Friendship Centre in Ottawa (Ontario) and the Akwesasne Education & Training Institute (Quebec). Algonquin College will also provide additional training and supports for numerous Indigenous partners throughout Canada.⁵⁷

Indigenous-specific employment service providers that deliver stable, consistent year-round services in Ottawa are: Kagita Mikam (Aboriginal Employment & Training Inc)⁵⁸, Minwaashin Lodge (Indigenous Women's Support Centre)⁵⁹, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (Inuit specific urban services provider).⁶⁰ Each of these service providers offer employment readiness programs, specific skills training programs, post-secondary education supports and client specific interventions that Indigenous youth or adults can receive through holistic programming and/or training in culturally relevant spaces where their Indigeneity is honored, valued, and understood. Additional Indigenous service providers within the Ottawa area also provide training and employment programs at a more specific or case-by-case level; the above organizations mentioned are the main providers of Indigenous programming alongside the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition that provides services to the Indigenous community in Ottawa with a 'unified' approach to all front-line services for all Indigenous peoples.⁶¹

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Indigenous liaisons or workplace support staff will encourage a sense of safety and inclusion when Indigenous youth enter the workplace environment. Having an Indigenous employee or on-boarding staff leads to a better understanding of the needs of the Indigenous individual and provides mentoring opportunities. It will also ease the hesitation of a new workplace and highlight the understanding of cultural competencies that non-Indigenous employers are not aware of. "When feasible, employing an Indigenous liaison staff person or youth worker facilitates positive relationships between the schools and the Indigenous communities and provides an important support for students. Indigenous high school students said they preferred talking to Indigenous youth workers at school because the youth

workers understood their cultural background.”⁶² The lack of Indigenous liaisons or staff within workplace will deter or lead to a lack of retention as many Indigenous youth feel as though, “[t]here must be respect for the culture and the unique knowledge and cultural traditions Indigenous peoples bring to a work or school environment. Employers need to show how they are changing their workplace culture to nurture and support youth who are learning new skills.”⁶³ If employers are not willing to provide respectful and culturally adhered workplaces, many Indigenous youth will look elsewhere or will not bother applying for available employment opportunities.

PREPARING INDIGENOUS YOUTH FOR SUCCESS: INUUQATIGIIT EDUCATIONAL HUBS

The Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families⁶⁴ was established in August 2005 by parents of children enrolled in the Head Start Children’s Program at Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) in Ottawa, Ontario. It is a multi-service Inuit organization that provides cultural, educational, recreational, and social support services to children, youth, and families of Ottawa’s growing Inuit community. The centre serves as a major hub of early years and youth services for Inuit families in Ottawa and surrounding counties.

The Educational Hubs program developed out of a need for culturally appropriate services and academic supports to continue beyond the early years for Inuit children and youth who graduated from Inuuqatigiit’s preschool programs. The intention behind this program is to provide Inuit school aged children and youth with a variety of cultural, health, academic and recreational activities to help them to meet their personal, social, and academic goals. Working alongside the OCDSB⁶⁵ we can identify the gaps, provide academic support in smaller cohorts, and create a safe and culturally responsive space for our children and youth.

The overall goal of the Educational Hubs program is to increase Inuit children and youth’s success by blending academic support with cultural competency, physical activity, homework support and healthy living.

Program objectives include the following:

- To improve study habits and school success of Inuit children and youth.
- To foster positive choices and healthy living.
- To reduce feelings of isolation and helplessness of Inuit children and youth.
- To increase children and youth's motivation to succeed in the learning environment.
- To increase healthy peer relationships amongst Inuit children and youth.
- To increase self-esteem, confidence and overall well-being of Inuit children and youth.
- To increase cultural identity and pride in Inuit children and youth.
- To overcome financial barriers that prevent low-income families from accessing tutoring support.
- To increase participation in physical activity.

Achievements to date:

- Attendance for all hubs (three elementary and three secondary) at 90 per cent rate.
- Out of the 35 students, 25 have been referred to our afterschool programming at Inuuqatigiit Centre.
- Out of the 43 students (virtual and in-person), six students have been referred to our internal youth councillor for supports.
- Ten of our elementary students have been referred to our Emotional Literacy working group which takes place every Monday at 2:30pm.
- Six of our secondary students have completed their 40 hours of community service hours by volunteering in our afterschool program.
- 15 students are receiving virtual (online) supports outside of the education hubs.
- Four of our secondary students have been successful at credit recovery program. 6 students outside of the hubs are working towards a physical education and leadership credit.
- Three secondary school students received their first high school credit through the educational hubs program (grade 10 and 11).
- All students received access to technology and resources that they potentially would not have at home.
- All students received and/or are receiving screening to identify supports needed for school.
- All students receive four hours of cultural programming and Inuktitut lessons each week.

Even though Inuuqatigiit and their Educational Hubs are more specific to Inuit youth, the Hubs do cater to, and include Indigenous youth who are First Nation and Métis. Since the inception of their programming, they are currently utilizing their Hubs for post-secondary students and have had a number of current students complete programming and return as mentors for other youth within the Hubs.



What We Learned from the COVID-19 Global Pandemic

Nearly one in ten Ottawans has been unemployed during the pandemic and the groups that have had the most difficulty meeting their basic needs such as housing, food and utilities are visible minorities and persons with disabilities.⁶⁶ The survey results completed by Ottawa Public Health only included two respondents that were of Indigenous descent, leaving the term visible minorities not specific to Indigenous peoples.

According to recent research conducted by the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed a number of factors related to Indigenous youth and employment:

1. **The positive impact of a living wage.**
For many Indigenous youth, the amount provided through the COVID-19 payments exceeded the wages that they normally received. This period of relative financial stability has made it possible for some Indigenous youth to return to school, consider options and identify expectations they have for their lives.
2. **The resiliency and leadership of youth in a time of crisis, particularly as essential workers.**
When Makhena Katerie Rankin Guérin physically moved into the seniors home in which she worked to ensure that she could continue to support the seniors. This demonstrated the level of responsibility that Indigenous youth have for community. "That bond, it's so valuable to me.

It was not surprising that it was youth who stepped into their roles as essential workers. In many ways they showed that they are an untapped and selfless resources in our communities.”⁶⁷

3. Existing inequities were further aggravated.

The most immediate need when COVID began was how to ensure that people had food security and for youth, the technology to continue in their education journeys. It quickly became clear that Indigenous youth were disproportionately in need of these two basic requirements to maintain life during the pandemic.

4. Indigenous businesses support Indigenous youth.

Indigenous business owners⁶⁸ and entrepreneurs, who employ a large proportion of Indigenous youth and peoples, of which 20 per cent⁶⁹, have faced a significant impact to the labour market since the COVID-19 pandemic has begun.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, a culturally respectful labour market must include opportunity for Indigenous youth to succeed and become champions of their own future while respecting their self-efficacy through their Indigenous culture, unique histories, languages, and spiritual beliefs. While many programs and new funding is directed towards Indigenous youth and employment, there is still a long road ahead to ensure equal opportunity for Indigenous youth in East Ontario.

For Workplaces

In order for any organization to be successful on the road ahead, it is imperative to build trusting, authentic relationships with the Indigenous community – listen and learn, ask questions, gain understanding and co-create. Here are a number of suggestions on how organizations can realize this in the workplace:

- Create a culturally safe and inclusive workplace by ensuring active participation in cultural sensitivity, and trauma-informed training for employers, service providers, and post-secondary institutions including all agencies that provide support for Indigenous youth. This training should be provided by community recognized Indigenous resources, organizations, and Indigenous people.
- Ensure a commitment to understanding and creating or modifying internal policies that adhere to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action and the Calls to Justice from the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

- Support allyship, continued education and understanding of the effects of colonialism, residential schools, and Indigenous history.
- Provide access to Indigenous Elders and supports that exceed beyond employee assistance programs internally.
- Ensure that Indigenous employees are included in discussions and decisions made about diversity and inclusion but are not expected to carry the full burden of making change. Indigenous representation should be present in the co-creation and co-design of all projects and undertakings. Utilize existing resources, community partners and trainings that can help educate all staff and management on best practices.
- Connect with Indigenous employment service providers, co-op programs and post-secondary institutions to actively recruit Indigenous youth into your organization and support those employees with relevant mentorship opportunities.

For Funding Agencies

- Invest in Indigenous infrastructure that provides programs and services that support Indigenous youth to meet their basic needs and to be job-ready. This can include: internet access, childcare, safety equipment, accessible transportation, and affordable housing.
- Invest in programs aimed at helping Indigenous youth build skills to access the labour market; assess transferable skills to help guide Indigenous youth towards more stable jobs within the labour market while considering the impacts of Covid-19 within certain sectors (tourism, healthcare, etc.).

For Educational Institutions

- Increase partnerships with employers and apprenticeship programs that provide co-op opportunities to help expose Indigenous youth to new skills and potential careers. Identify any barriers within existing curriculum to participating in these programs, for example holding mandatory courses in a single time slot that conflicts with co-op sessions.
- Focus on job literacy skills, including awareness of different fields and positions; how to read and dissect a job posting to elicit key skills required; and exposure to a variety of job trial programs like co-ops and internships; in addition to self-marketing tools like resumes and cover letters.
- Increase access to work-integrated learning for Indigenous youth and use available subsidies to support programming.

For Service Providers

- Increase the representation of Indigenous staff, Staff Leaders and Board members with the aim to reflect the Indigenous community you serve.
- Build partnerships and connections with local Indigenous groups and experts so that appropriate and culturally relevant referrals can be made. Examples include the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition and Kagita Mikam.

Appendices

Employment Indicators of Success for Indigenous Youth

We have an opportunity now to support Indigenous Youth in the workplace. Prior to COVID-19 there were a number of positive trends and many of those trends continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between 2018 to 2019 the employment rates for Indigenous peoples aged 15 and over had an average of 148.5 (x1000) Indigenous peoples (living off reserve) employed in the Province of Ontario. These initial numbers indicate that employment for Indigenous people had risen in four fiscal quarters in comparison to the previous year of 2018. Contrastingly, the unemployment rates had increased from 2018 to 2019 by 3.4 points before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020; data for current pandemic related employment numbers will be compared in the following section.

Measure 1: Ontario Employment Rates⁷⁰

Ontario - Labour Market Indicators for Indigenous People								
3-month moving averages Seasonally unadjusted data	Indigenous		Yearly variation Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	Yearly variation non-Indigenous		
	Q2 2019	Q2 2018	number	%	Q2 2019	Q2 2018	number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	263.3	253.7	9.6	0.0	11,831.1	11,615.0	216.1	0.0
Labour Force ('000)	167.4	157.2	10.2	0.1	7,743.0	7,556.7	186.3	0.0
Employment ('000)	150.4	146.6	3.8	0.0	7,317.2	7,119.7	197.5	0.0
Full-Time ('000)	117.5	116.6	0.9	0.0	5,975.4	5,851.5	123.9	0.0
Part-Time ('000)	32.9	30.0	2.9	0.1	1,341.8	1,268.2	73.6	0.1
Unemployment ('000)	17.0	10.7	6.3	0.6	425.9	437.1	-11.2	0.0
Unemployment Rate	10.2	6.8	3.4	-	5.5	5.8	-0.3	-
Participation Rate	63.6	62.0	1.6	-	65.4	65.1	0.3	-
Employment Rate	57.1	57.8	-0.7	-	61.8	61.3	0.5	-

Notes: The Labour Force Survey excludes those living on-reserve. Estimates are based on three-month moving averages. Totals may not add due to rounding. Totals may be different from other tables due

to adjustments done to Indigenous statistics in the Labour Force Survey.

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey - ESDC custom table.

Measure 2: Labour Force Participation Rate/Unemployment Rates⁷¹

Ontario Map here							
		Indigenous population 15 YEARS AND OVER			Non-Indigenous population 15 YEARS AND OVER		
Labour force characteristics	Sex	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
		Persons					
Population ³	Both sexes (x1,000)	274.9	285.4	295.8	11,552.8	11,765.3	11,921.9
		Percentage					
Unemployment rate ⁴	Both sexes	7.9	9.7	12.5	5.7	5.5	9.5
Participation rate ⁵	Both sexes	61.0	62.2	59.5	64.4	64.9	63.6
Employment rate ⁶	Both sexes	56.2	56.2	52.1	60.7	61.3	57.5

Glossary and Abbreviations

Indigenous peoples'

Indigenous peoples' is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. Often, 'Aboriginal peoples' is also used. Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (1982) recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (more commonly referred to as First Nations), Inuit and Métis. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Employment Rate

The employment rate reflects the share of a given population that is employed at the time of data collection. This includes full- and part-time workers as well as individuals who are employed and on leave (e.g.: short term disability leave, vacation, or sick leave).

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma refers to the passing on of trauma-related stress between generations, particularly for Indigenous communities harmed by colonial institutions and actions such as residential schools and forced displacement. These traumatic events affect not only the individuals who experienced them, but also their families and communities for generations to come. Intergenerational trauma can manifest as depression, anxiety, addiction, or other mental health concerns.

Participation Rate

The participation rate of a given population includes all members who are employed or unemployed (see below). This reflects the proportion of the population currently working or actively seeking employment.

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate reflects the share of a given population that is not currently employed but is actively seeking work and is available to work. This number does not include any individuals who are not working and are not seeking employment (e.g., retirees or individuals who are unable to work due to medical conditions).

Visible Minority

Statistics Canada uses the "visible minority" definition from the *Employment Equity Act*, which includes "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".

Work Integrated Learning

Work-integrated learning programs are a model which embeds practical workplace experiences within an academic program of study. Examples include apprenticeships, co-ops, clinical placements, and internships which are built into an academic workload.

Abbreviations:

United Way – United Way East Ontario

OAC – Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

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