

TWO EYED SEEING NETWORK

# SUMMARY REPORT ON DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

Key themes and findings from Roundtable discussions as the Network explored the current and ideal states of workforce development for indigenous youth, and building a model for pathway development between two states.

Prepared by: Two Eyed Seeing Consulting CCC Inc.

The Two eyed Seeing Network is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre.



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## Executive Summary

### Purpose

The Two Eyed Seeing Network Project (2ESN) seeks to accomplish the co-creation of a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to career development programming for First Nations Youth in British Columbia. It seeks to define what the future of work is for Indigenous Youth, and to unlock the untapped potential of British Columbia's First Nations Youth.

The overall purpose of the Two Eyed Seeing Network Project (2ESN) is to determine critical elements to address workforce development gaps; remove barriers; reduce impacts of interruptions like COVID-19; and establishes a viable pathway to future workforce participation for Indigenous youth and their communities.

### Overview

The Two Eyed Seeing Network was initiated in 2020 to fortify links between industry, training providers, workforce development services and Indigenous populations. British Columbia has increased demand for skilled workers across multiple industries, which is compounded by trying to keep up with global technology advances. Indigenous youth provide a significant source of labour and would solve future skills shortages. However, they are primarily left out of conversations for future skills and training.

Two Eyed Seeing describes an approach that looks with both Western and Indigenous lenses blending new technologies, standards, and practices with ways of doing that honour the whole person and their interconnectedness with the land and others – with a focus on sectors with high future demand.

The Two Eyed Seeing Network was established to:

- Create opportunities for Indigenous youth participation in high-demand jobs of tomorrow.
- Create workforce development pathways that make sense to industry, Indigenous communities, and education providers alike.
- Increase understanding of what industry-specific successful pathway development looks like.
- Develop measurements and milestones that are determined by, and make sense to, the Network.
- Create cross-cultural understanding between employers and Indigenous communities.
- Increase relationships that allow future independent and collective collaboration between participants.



Our Guiding Values:

- Two-eyed seeing is based in partnership, openness, respect and understanding.
- Diversity and inclusion are key enablers to growth and success; creating environments that value individuals and support belonging and connectivity helps establish a high-performing culture.
- All elements of the ecosystem must be engaged to fully understand the dynamics, and opportunities and challenges.
- Solutions must be practical and tangible; if we can point to it and describe it, others will understand it as well.
- Solutions must allow for local innovation and adaptation and must meet the needs of both industry and Indigenous populations alike, to be valuable.

An eight phase roadmap, to achieve the project goals was established:



**Initial Work**

Initial work for the project concentrated on several elements: initial focus groups, key informant interviews, a literature review, and environmental scan. These helped to ensure a two-eyed seeing approach was utilized – not only in the Network delivery, but also in the Network design.



Focus groups: 10 groups were held with Indigenous youth and Indigenous communities (5 of each) during which gaps in employment for Indigenous youth was discussed. The information gathered helped to inform the development of an Indigenous Youth Advisory. Further discussions were held with the Advisory group during which initial research was vetted and provided guidance to move forward. Further meetings were held regularly throughout the project in an advisory capacity.

What we heard during the focus groups included: that racism remains a constant barrier to employment for Indigenous peoples, in particular, Indigenous youth. Access to transportation in remote communities decreases youths' ability to participate in the workforce. Indigenous youth are eager to join employment opportunities. Cultural awareness training is essential for employers and industry.

Key informant interviews: 14 were conducted. Participants shared a variety of general insights, specific examples, and a wealth of follow-up resources for the project team to consider. Interviewees represented various organisations, had diverse backgrounds, and often served multiple community and professional roles. Specifically, community service providers, Indigenous service providers, industry partners and training providers were interviewed. Interview questions were grouped into three areas of exploration, each of which were aimed to successfully engage Indigenous youth in the workforce.

Environmental scan: Provided an overview of the current labour market opportunities among several industries with high demand. Approximately 920 major projects are forecasted within the province; therefore, access to a skilled workforce to serve the demands of these forecasted activities is paramount. In addition, clean energy and clean technology are creating changes whereby different skills are required in the sectors to ensure industries retain global relevance. This increased demand and technological evolution comes at a time when the Indigenous population of Canada is growing at a rate of 42.5% (more than 4 times the rate of the non-Indigenous population).

Key learnings from the interviews and environmental scan included:

- Encouragement of meaningful engagement, establishment of stronger relationships, and provide the means to explore new opportunities when presented.
- Determine ways for Indigenous youth to build confidence, develop soft skills, provide networking opportunities, and determine processes that work best for young Indigenous people to actively engage in the workforce on their terms.
- Provide Indigenous program support mechanisms that are novel and needed to ensure successful completion of training programs. Also provide support to non Indigenous staff to further understand challenges facing Indigenous youth.



- Youth do not always feel welcome or wanted in work environments, have transportation and financial challenges, and often need additional support to being successful in training and the workforce.
- Ensure safety and understanding for Indigenous workers at the workplace, provide space for youth voices and decision making, train staff to be patient, kind and supportive to learners needs, and include mentors to guide and share wisdom and life experience with participants.
- Capitalize on successes to ensure continued positive outcomes.
- Create a space for youth voice to fully understand their wants and needs, leverage existing networks in partnerships to encourage wide representation, be flexible in meeting times to accommodate work and school, and have facilitators who reflect both Indigenous and western ways of being and doing.
- Invite others to the table including government social service providing agencies, other Indigenous programs, and leaders in education, health, economic development and more.

A literature review was also conducted to determine the current climate and historical context surrounding Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada. Highlights from the literature review point to impacts from colonial systems, racism, and discrimination against Indigenous peoples have resulted in systemic barriers, including a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, culturally inappropriate health and education services, insufficient employment opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure in Indigenous communities. To overcome these barriers anyone seeking to engage in this space should familiarize themselves with the key documents that inform the current climate and context of Indigenous reconciliation, including the Indian Act as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls and Recommendations.

Several findings were reported. These informed how we engaged with Network participants, Indigenous Youth and confirmed and echoed their feedback. These included development of respect and trust between industry and Indigenous people (including youth); self determination to support projects and develop capacity and protocols to work together; and, commitment by industry, government, and Indigenous people to each other through mutual sharing, responsive fundings, ongoing reflection, inclusive hiring practices, progressive leadership, flexible timeframes, and Indigenous validation.

Promising practices gathered from the literature review included:

1. Developing supports to address youths' social and economic challenges
2. Adopting strength-based approaches to programming (i.e., with a focus on building assets or strengths rather than weaknesses)
3. Acknowledging the role of trauma in youths' lives



4. Assisting youth to obtain government-issued identification, recognizing barriers specific to rural or remote contexts (e.g., the absence of Service Canada Centres).

The collective results of the initial work provided five main themes that helped to inform the development of the Network. All five themes are interconnected and interdependent, these included:

1. *Recognize Indigenous youth as subject matter experts* - Youth must be recognized as equally important advisors in projects, organisations, and communities. This requires respecting and positioning them as valuable knowledge keepers, subject matter experts, advisors, and mentors.
2. *Understand their ideas of diversity and identity* - Recognize the new challenge and complexity in evolving and responding to labels and identity.
3. *Remove barriers and restructure systems* - Address limitations and gaps now, but also engage youth to assess and restructure systems.
4. *Be clear, complementary, and consistent* - Use technology, bite size chunks, and multiple channels to inform and inspire.
5. *Help navigate and create connections* - Be an ally, guide, conductor, and multiplier.

## Network Initiation

The research and design of the 2ESN project considered the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, gender, language, culture, and age, with a specific focus on Indigenous youth. Inclusion was thought about early in the project and continued to be a primary focus to ensure participants from Indigenous communities and organizations were engaged.

Information was gathered through the early work of the focus groups, key informant interviews, environmental scan and literature review to ensure a two-eyed seeing design and delivery of the Network was developed. From this, a clear structure for organizing the Network began to emerge and led to the creation of a logic model for the project.

The Network was initiated and included participants from Indigenous leaders and Indigenous subject matter experts, training providers, and employers from across the province. These groups each met in Regional Roundtables to provide distinct perspectives that were critical to understanding the overall picture of workforce development.

Roundtables were conducted in five regions, with two meetings in each region. Through these meetings Network participants discussed both the current state, as well as what an ideal state for workforce development would look like.

The last set of Roundtables saw the amalgamation of all five regions, in order to have focused and deep conversations on each element above. These five Roundtables were well represented, with over 200 participants engaging in the conversations.



## Exploration of the Current State

The groups in the Network each provided unique perspectives on workforce development for Indigenous youth. These concentrated on barriers, guiding values, and wise engagement practices.

During the first Regional Roundtable meetings, Network participants were asked to explore current state guiding values, barriers to Indigenous youth participation, wise engagement practices, promising Industry practices in workforce development, employment and training programs, and program design and delivery.

Wise engagement practices for Indigenous youth currently utilized or seen in practice include incorporating Elders when working with youth, allowing for mixed forms of participation; in person, virtual, on and off camera, and the ability to bring multiple partners to the table and ensuring programming is meaningful to youth. In addition, Network participants identified the following wise engagement practices for Indigenous youth that could be incorporated to increase value and efficacy: recognition - celebrating milestones and accomplishments; mental health supports - creating safe spaces and utilizing trauma informed practices; incorporating mentorships and job shadowing (and corresponding leadership training for staff doing the mentoring); providing career exploration earlier to youth; and ensuring training/internships that leads to paid opportunities.

Hiring Indigenous workers and building good relationships were identified as the top two promising industry practices Network participants currently see being utilized.

Conversely, the top 4 barriers to workforce inclusion by Indigenous youth were identified as follows:

1. Lack of required educational qualifications or grades; and lack of knowledge/awareness about available support (tied)
2. Significant distance between Indigenous youth and employment/educational opportunities
3. Lack of driver's licenses

Other barriers to Indigenous youth participation in employment and training programs Network participants encounter or see in their work the most often are the lack of flexible funding and education support; mentorships; access to transportation; availability of work opportunities nearby; and personal lacks – particularly in self-confidence. Coupled with that, are the presence of systemic racism and individual mental health concerns (particularly with anxiety). There is also a need to address barriers with access to training associated with training outside of the community - such as cost of accommodations and meals - especially in urban centers where cost of living is high.



When thinking about current workforce development initiatives, the following top four guiding values currently in practice were, as identified by Indigenous youth:

1. Indigenous knowledge
2. Inclusion; and strengths and solutions-based approaches (tied)
3. Open mindedness

The three guiding values for engaging youth, that youth see practiced the least are:

1. Non- representative (recognizing that individual youth speak for themselves, and not all Indigenous youth)
2. Honour
3. Open heartedness

Further to that, these Indigenous youth identified the following guiding values as missing from current practices: respect, fun, and unity.

## Exploration of the Ideal State

One of the key focuses of the 2ESN project, is to listen and learn from the rich and diverse contributors in the Network. When you truly listen, what you hear can change you. The second session of Regional Roundtable meetings focused on the ideal state of workforce development.

Additional wise practices identified by all project participants to engage Indigenous youth included:

- Workforce Development: access to training, support needed during training and what successful completion looks like. Important factors to consider are determining what our youth want to do, knowing who the youth in the community are, and providing resources to help with the application process, access to technology, and infrastructure to support online learning.
- Employment: we must explore what employers can do to attract, support, retain Indigenous youth and ensure career progression in the workforce.
- Promising Industry Practices: we must explore opportunities to support youth, by providing promising practices such as Indigenous mentorship programs, connect industry with Indigenous youth, build a roadmap to support Indigenous youth to prepare for training and employment opportunities, and how to help support the barriers that have been identified by youth thus far.
- Promising Practices for Program Design and Delivery: we explored what pathways to employment have been successful, what organizations do to reduce barriers/ requirements for clients to access funding, and ways that we can reduce barriers as it relates to access to training and workforce development in remote communities.



The Indigenous Youth Advisory participants were asked for input on what an ideal state may look like to encourage Indigenous youth participation, by incorporating wise engagement practices, promising Industry practices in workforce development, employment, training programs, and program design and delivery. These participants provided further insight on some of the barriers faced to join the workforce, as well as ideal training programs and training options, support strategies (to enter the workforce and while working), and Indigenous youth engagement opportunities.

The Indigenous Youth Advisory discussed part of honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and being, honouring that there is 200+ specific Nations within British Columbia so process and protocol is not the same for everyone. With this in mind, several guiding values were identified:

1. Innovation
2. Network for Change
3. Capacity Building (mentorship/ leadership)
4. Reciprocity
5. Honoring Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being
6. Balancing Indigenous and Western Perspectives

Several other emerging themes were also noted and are related to building programs, ensuring Indigenous youth have a voice, recognising and removing barriers to employment, and finding novel and innovative ways to enable participation and success in the workforce.

Through the first and second Roundtable discussions, distinct themes were identified for each region, that are all interconnected, and equally important when engaging with Indigenous Youth:

1. *Northern discussions and feedback centered around “being with them”*
2. *Interior discussions focused on the importance of “listening to youth voices”*
3. *Fraser Salish discussions were grounded in “build trust, relationships and connection”*
4. *Vancouver Island discussions highlighted the importance of “walk with them”*
5. *Vancouver Coastal discussions centered around “meet them where they are at”*

All of this feedback received during the first two sets of Regional Roundtables led the discussion naturally to the next phase of the project.

### **Pathway Between Current and Ideal State**

Five key themes emerged as discussions evolved to map the pathway from the current to an ideal state of workforce development for Indigenous youth. As a result, the last set of Roundtables were amalgamated to focus on dialogue on five distinct themes:

1. Understanding Relationship and Rapport Building
2. Youth Need to be Involved in Their Own Futures
3. Understanding Local and Provincial Market Opportunities



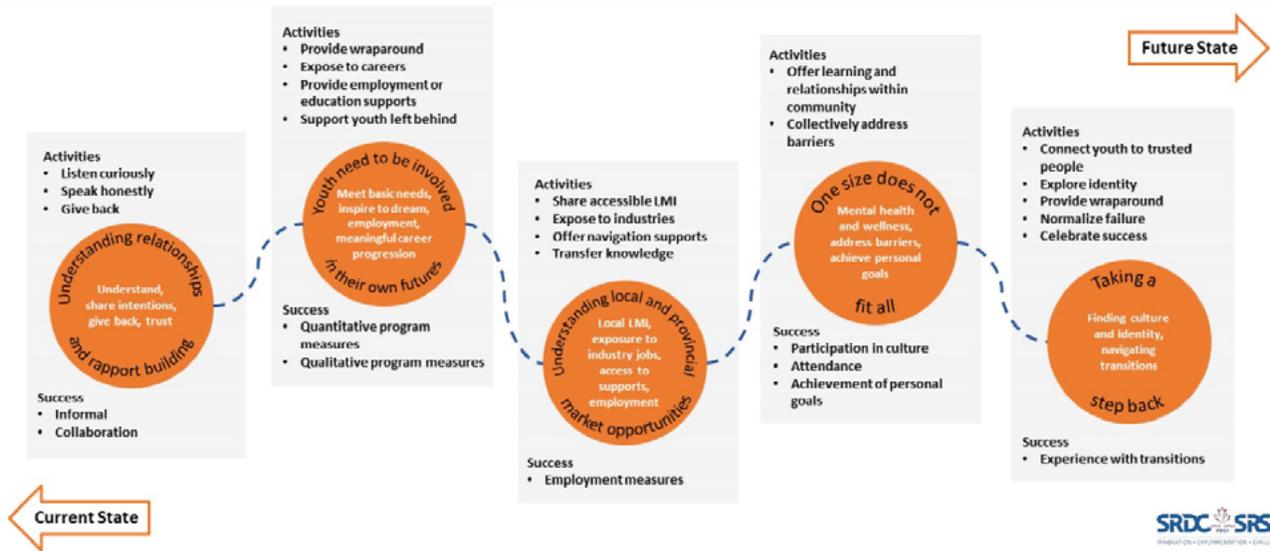
4. One Size Does Not Fit All
5. Taking a Step Back

Each discussion with the Youth Advisory and Themed Roundtables included a range of topics for discussion, including:

- Relationship and Rapport Building: What relationships and rapport building activities and approaches are required to create a successful partnership/relationship between communities and industry/training providers? How does a Two-eyed seeing approach help inform these relationships and inform program design and delivery?
- Youth Need to be Involved in Their Own Futures: Dialogue was focused on how youth can be incorporated into the design and delivery of these programs and supports. What opportunities are there to involve Indigenous youth with co-designing engagement plans? Who am I? A question that can be difficult to answer.
- Understanding Local Provincial Market Opportunities: Opportunities are constantly changing - how do we keep this information current? How do we work together to understand the opportunities and make them real for Indigenous youth? Indigenous youth voiced they are unaware about the employment and business opportunities in various sectors.
- One Size Does Not Fit All: How can skills training be delivered in rural and remote communities? What supports are needed to help communities and projects mobilize their plans? How can training programming be developed and delivered in a way that ensures it is a match for the community of people doing the training? How can communities and industry support this process? What innovative practices have been successful in accomplishing this?
- Taking a Step Back: What if youth are not ready to engage in training or the workforce? What does sustainable career development look like? Are youth being supported in the long term? How do we keep some from falling through the cracks? What if a youth is not ready to engage in a training program or the workforce? Discussion in this Regional Roundtable was centered on how best to support youth.

In addition to exploring the questions above, Network participants identified key activities and measures of success for each theme. These elements are highlighted in the diagram below:





## Next Steps

Through the Roundtable discussions, a wealth of knowledge has been shared amongst participants which, we believe, will further the benefits and outcomes that Network participants initially indicated they were looking for in the Network. These include:

1. Greater capacity to co-develop Indigenous youth employment and training projects
2. Increased awareness of Indigenous Youth needs/wants
3. New Connections and increased capacity to work with other partners
4. Opportunity to influence workforce development pathways
5. Increased knowledge of cultural awareness and cultural safety

Furthermore, Network participants identified the following opportunities where the Network could provide and bring value to the work that participants are doing back in their home communities and/or organizations:

- Partnerships
- Collaboration
- Inform programming
- Engagement
- Increased knowledge
- Communication
- Connections
- Recognition of Indigenous ways
- Increase program reach



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## Why We Are Here

Under-developed links between industry and Indigenous populations remain despite new economic opportunities, made worse by COVID-19 as communities struggle to maintain services and their populations safe. While Indigenous youth could provide a significant source of labour, they are primarily disengaged - left out of conversations for future skills and training.

Industry sees Indigenous youth's potential and understands their value in solving future skills shortages. Ever-evolving future skills compounds the challenge, making industry input into new technologies and processes essential to program development and ensuring training is relevant to industry demands.

What is needed is a Two-Eyed Seeing approach (looking with both Western and Indigenous lenses) – blending new technologies, standards, and practices with ways of doing that honour the whole person and their interconnectedness with the land and others – with a focus on sectors with high future demand (clean technology; clean energy; natural resource extraction and processing; marine shipping; the built environment; and manufacturing).

### Introduction

The skills of the future are top of mind for those involved in workforce development. What are the skills needed? How will future jobs be filled? How can we, as a society, be inclusive and relevant to youth seeking access to these opportunities, especially considering new challenges such as impacts of Covid 19 and the labour shortage across so many industries.

The Two Eyed Seeing Network (2ESN) project creates a network of Indigenous communities, Industry leaders, workforce & social development experts, and education/training providers, to bridge gaps, remove barriers, reduce impacts to interruptions like COVID-19 and establish a shock-proof pathway to future work for Indigenous youth.

### Project Partners

Developing a network with wide representation from both demand and supply sides is necessary to ensure well-rounded and carefully thought-out solutions. Towards that end, the Two-Eyed Seeing Network has several project partners, including the Construction Foundation of BC (CFBC), the Electrical Joint Training Committee Society (EJTC); Foresight CleanTech Accelerator Center; Vancouver Island University (VIU); Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC); and Two Eyed Seeing Consulting CCC Inc. (TESCI).

Each project partner brings a particular focus and expertise to ensure a well-rounded outcome and is responsible for reaching into their networks to bring participants to regional and provincial dialogues:



### **Construction Foundation of BC (CFBC)**

CFBC provides important links between Indigenous communities, training providers and employers. With a mandate to help build the next generation of skilled workers, it has extensive connections to stakeholders across BC. Since 2012, it has led several publicly funded granting initiatives; research projects; and direct workforce development programs focused on youth, at-risk youth, and Indigenous youth – maintaining program delivery to Indigenous communities during COVID-19.

### **Electrical Joint Training Committee Society (EJTC)**

EJTC has a mandate to provide the best and most up-to-date technical training in BC to enable their industry partners to maintain their market advantage and brings years of technical training expertise and direct connection to employers and organized labour through its well-established industry network - including LNG, marine shipping and transportation, utilities, and energy production.

### **Foresight CleanTech Accelerator Center**

Foresight has been working tirelessly to accelerate the impact and growth of the cleantech ecosystem in Canada and has proven success in twelve of cleantech's top sectors including mining, oil & gas, water, forestry, agriculture, energy, waste management, transportation, smart buildings, advance materials, manufacturing, and robotics. It brings a vast network of small- and medium-sized enterprises, as well as successful Indigenous innovation and engagement and future skills expertise and know-how.

### **Vancouver Island University (VIU)**

VIU is a dynamic and diverse educational organization, dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, service and research. As a leader in providing high-quality learning, VIU fosters student access, strong community connections and international collaboration by providing access to a wide range of university programs designed for regional, national, and international students. It brings years of experience in education and polytechnic program development and delivery, along with Indigenous partnership experience in creating customized programming to fit the unique needs of Indigenous communities on the coast.

### **Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)**

SRDC specializes in evidence generation and has extensive experience in leading and contributing to projects aimed at designing, implementing, and evaluating workforce development programs and learning activities. SRDC supports the evaluation of the Network and the establishment of milestones and measurements of success, accepted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners alike, to inform future decision-making on effective program opportunities for Indigenous youth.

### **Two Eyed Seeing Consulting CCC Inc. (TESCI)**

TESCI is a majority Indigenous-owned community contribution corporation (C3) that works directly with First Nations communities and their partners, to increase Indigenous participation



in the economic opportunities across BC. The team at Two Eyed Seeing Consulting includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and project management and community development experts who bring a vast network of Indigenous communities, with three decades of experience supporting First Nations, their partners, and Indigenous students – in the areas of governance & administration; cultural program development and delivery; major project negotiation; and workforce development research and planning.

Project partners understand there can never be equity, diversification, and inclusion in the workforce unless everyone is there building it together. In fact, diversity and inclusion are key enablers to organizational growth and success - creating environments that value individuals and support belonging and connectivity, establishing high-performing cultures.

## **Project Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of the Two Eyed Seeing Network (2ESN) Project is to determine critical elements to bridge workforce development gaps; remove barriers; reduce impacts to interruptions like COVID-19; and establish a viable pathway to future workforce participation for Indigenous youth and their communities.

### ***The Network Was Established To:***

- Create opportunities for Indigenous youth participation in high-demand jobs of tomorrow.
- Create workforce development pathways that make sense to industry, Indigenous communities, and education providers alike.
- Increase understanding of what industry-specific successful pathway development looks like.
- Develop measurements and milestones that are determined by, and make sense to, the Network.
- Create cross-cultural understanding between employers and Indigenous communities.
- Increase relationships that allow future independent and collective collaboration between stakeholders.

### ***Our Guiding Values:***

- Two-eyed seeing is based in partnership, openness, respect and understanding.
- Diversity and inclusion are key enablers to growth and success; creating environments that value individuals and support belonging and connectivity helps establish a high-performing culture.
- All elements of the ecosystem must be engaged to fully understand the dynamics, and opportunities and challenges.
- Solutions must be practical and tangible; if we can point to it and describe it, others will understand it as well.
- Solutions must allow for local innovation and adaptation and must meet the needs of both industry and Indigenous populations alike, to be valuable.



**What We Seek To Accomplish:**

- To co-create the development of a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to career development programming for First Nations Youth in BC.
- Seek to define: What is the future of work for Indigenous Youth?
- Unlock the untapped potential of BC's First Nations Youth.

**Roadmap For Achieving Our Goals:**



**Inclusive Research Design**

The research and design of the 2ESN project considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, gender, language, culture, and age, with a specific focus on Indigenous youth. In order to be inclusive in our design, an Indigenous Youth Advisory was established. The Youth Advisory role is to offer Indigenous youth perspectives and voices that inform the Network and our dialogue with participants. Inclusion was thought about early in the project and continues to be a primary focus to ensure we engage participants from Indigenous communities and organizations as well as adapt our western style of work to Indigenous protocols and ways of knowing. For example, the Network always has an Elder start our Network discussions off in a good way.



## It Starts With a Conversation

The saying “with us, not for us” comes to mind as we gathered to plan the 2ESN project and to determine what successful outcomes would look like. It began with the understanding that many projects simply operate from a western perspective of doing business, and so to truly ensure a Two-eyed seeing approach, input from an Indigenous perspective was critical. As a result, the project team conducted a series of focus groups before the establishment of the Network to hear from Indigenous communities, organizations, and youth and to gather perspectives on a variety of matters, including barriers and gaps to employment, cultural safety, network design, etc.

### Initial Focus Groups

Over the summer of 2021, the Two Eyed Seeing Network held five youth and five Indigenous community focus groups where gaps in employment for Indigenous youth was discussed. These findings were collected through the Mentimeter platform, where we compiled core data to begin to present in a key findings and learnings document. This informed our next steps leading us to develop an Indigenous Youth Advisory to provide space to amplify youth voices and perspectives in all that we do during this project.

The key themes that emerged from the Indigenous Youth Advisory discussions, confirmed the data collected from the initial research phase and informed how we did our work. Specifically, how we entered into dialogue with the Regional Roundtable participants. Indigenous Youth feedback contributed to how we entered these conversations each step of the way. The Indigenous Youth Advisory met prior to each Regional Roundtable discussion to share their voices/perspectives on current, ideal state and pathway exploration. Their collective voices were shared with the Network participants, guiding our discussions.

### Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant interviews were held and responses to research topics were gathered from 14 interview participants who shared a variety of general insights, specific examples, and a wealth of follow-up resources for the project team to consider. The informational interview participants represented various organisations, have diverse backgrounds, and often serve multiple community and professional roles. Specifically, community service providers, Indigenous service providers, industry partners and training providers were interviewed.

Questions were asked with the goal of developing workforce development projects that successfully engage Indigenous youth. As a result, interview questions were grouped into three areas of exploration:

1. Engagement with Indigenous Youth: Outreach and Relationship-Building
2. Engagement with Indigenous Youth: Programming and Support
3. Engagement with Stakeholders and Partners: Informing the 2ESN



## Environmental Scan

This scan provides an overview of the current labour market opportunities in the industries with high demand, including clean technology; clean energy; natural resource extraction and processing; marine shipping; the built environment; and manufacturing.

Natural resource extraction and processing - through oil & gas, mining, and forestry - as well as the corresponding construction, marine shipping and manufacturing needs of these industries are key drivers for the economy in British Columbia. As the energy and resource sectors continue to move toward more innovative and environmentally responsible ways to extract and export products, clean energy and clean technology are evolving to be more relevant industry sectors to the overall economy. With approximately 920 major projects forecasted within the province, access to a skilled workforce to serve the demands of these activities are paramount.

The Indigenous population is the fastest growing population in Canada. Since 2006, our Indigenous population has grown by 42.5 % which is more than four times the growth rate of the non-Indigenous population over the same time period. With our Indigenous youth playing a significant role in ensuring that a skilled workforce continues to advance to meet the needs of these sectors, different platforms to assist with making these connections are key.

The scan also provides information on the various agencies already providing services to Indigenous peoples in BC. In total, more than 1,100 offices around BC provide services to Indigenous peoples – from workforce development and employment programs, to health, housing, child, family, youth, arts and culture, business and economic development, language, treatment and health, and legal services.

## Literature Review

This document describes the current climate and historical context surrounding Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada; and provides further information, evidence, and promising practices across three main themes:

1. Engagement,
2. Program design and delivery, and
3. Milestone-based pathways.

The Literature review was prepared by the Social Research and Demonstration corporation (SRDC). Highlights from this literature review point to impacts from colonial systems, racism, and discrimination against Indigenous peoples have resulted in systemic barriers, including a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, culturally inappropriate health and education services, insufficient employment opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure in Indigenous communities (Thistle, 2017<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Thistle, J. (2017). Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness>



It is critical for any organization engaging in the Indigenous space to learn, listen, reflect, and understand how this continues to affect the lives of Indigenous peoples – including youth – today. This includes understanding the historical and current colonial context/climate and how this impacts Indigenous communities and youth; as well as examining one’s own power and privilege as it relates to Indigenous people (City of Toronto, 2019<sup>2</sup>).

In addition to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Final Report, there are many documents and reports marking key moments in the history of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples that anyone seeking to engage with Indigenous people should familiarize themselves with. At a minimum, anyone seeking to engage in this space should familiarize themselves with the key documents that inform the current climate and context, including the Indian Act as well as Calls and Recommendations of landmark documents such as:

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (TRC Calls to Action)
- Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice (MMIWG Calls for Justice)

## Network Design Themes

Five main themes emerged during the initial research phase (focus groups, key informant interviews, environmental scan, and literature review) to help inform the development of the Network. All five themes are interconnected and interdependent, yet the first thing, to “Recognize Indigenous Youth as Subject Matter Experts” was consistently voiced in participant interviews and service provider reports.

1. *Recognize Indigenous Youth as Subject Matter Experts* - Youth must be recognized as equally important advisors in projects, organisations, and communities. This requires respecting and positioning them as valuable knowledge keepers, subject matter experts, advisors, and mentors.
2. *Understand their ideas of diversity and identity* - Recognize the new challenge and complexity in evolving and responding to labels and identity.
3. *Remove barriers and restructure systems* - Address limitations and gaps now, but also engage youth to assess and restructure systems.
4. *Be clear, complementary, and consistent* - Use technology, bite size chunks, and multiple channels to inform and inspire.
5. *Help navigate and create connections* - Be an ally, guide, conductor, and multiplier.

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<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto. (2019). Meeting in the Middle: Protocols and Practices for Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Partners and Communities. City of Toronto.  
[https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/8674-SSHA-Protocols-and-Practices-for-Indigenous-Engagement\\_Sept-9-2019.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/8674-SSHA-Protocols-and-Practices-for-Indigenous-Engagement_Sept-9-2019.pdf)



## Resulting Network Structure

Through these early discussions and research, a clear structure for organizing the Network began to emerge:

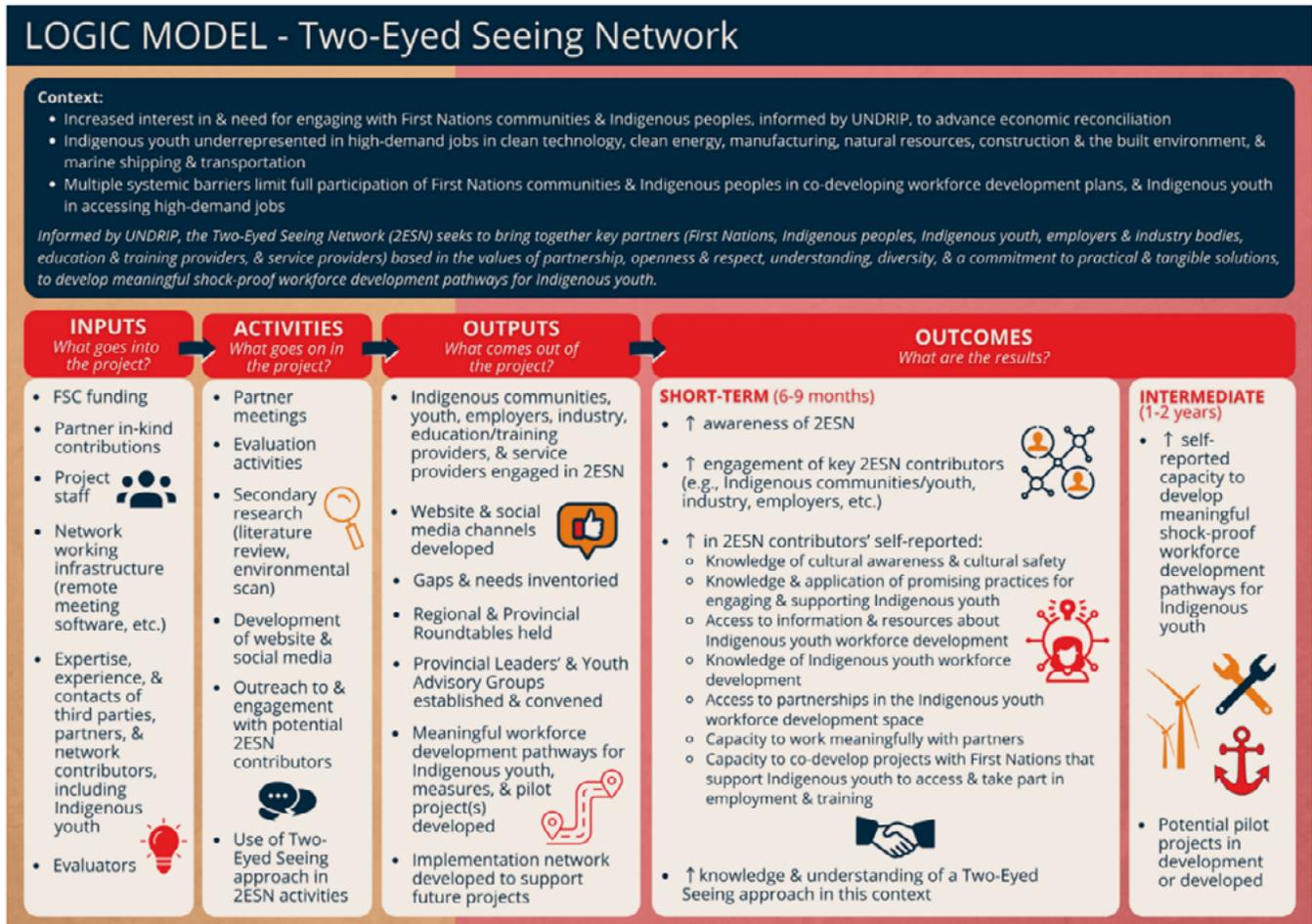


Figure 1: Logic Model developed by SRDC for the Two-Eyed Seeing Network

## Network Contributors

- Provincial Roundtable:** Comprised of senior Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and subject matter experts, whose role is to validate the 2ESN approach and remain informed throughout the project's duration. Provincial Roundtable representatives are invited to participate in the Regional Roundtables and are also encouraged to play a role in the development and validation of a model for workforce pathway development towards the end of the project.
- Provincial Leaders' Advisory Group:** The Provincial Leaders' Advisory Group is comprised of the project partners and project planning team. It provides ongoing subject matter expertise throughout the project, including meetings prior to Regional Roundtables to inform and validate content for these sessions.



3. *Indigenous Youth Advisory Group*: Like the Provincial Leaders' Advisory, the Youth Advisory Group provides ongoing input throughout the duration of the project. Specifically, the Youth Advisory meets prior to every Regional or Themed Session. This ensures that youth lead the way in the discussion.
4. *Regional Roundtables*: Participation in the 2ESN via Regional Roundtables is free of charge, and open to partners working in, or preparing the workforce for jobs in, clean technology, clean energy, natural resource extraction and processing, marine shipping, the built environment, and manufacturing. Contributors to Regional Roundtables include Indigenous communities, industry leaders, workforce, social development experts, and education and training providers who are interested in improving access for Indigenous youth in the aforementioned careers. Participants are divided into five regions across BC, including:
  1. Northern
  2. Interior
  3. Fraser-Salish
  4. Vancouver Coastal
  5. Vancouver Island

## With Us, Not For Us

The initial stages of the project ensured that not only did the delivery of the Network include a two-eyed seeing perspective, but that the very design of the Network itself was done with input from both Indigenous and Western perspectives. We believe this made a significant contribution to the effectiveness, rates of participation, and depth of conversations that occurred in the Network sessions.

We can say with confidence that the research and design of the 2ESN project considered the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, gender, language, culture, and age, with a specific focus on Indigenous youth. Inclusion was thought about early in the project and continued to be a primary focus to ensure participants from Indigenous communities and organizations were engaged.

### Network Launch

The Network launched in November of 2020, with the initial Provincial Roundtable, consisting of 29 senior Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and subject matter experts. Together, the Provincial Roundtable helped validate the approach to the Network – which had been developed as a result of the early engagement work, and helped provide guidance and input into the Network wide launch in January 2021.

### Network Initiation

The first Indigenous Youth Advisory met in January 2022 and started the Two Eyed Seeing Network conversation with an exploration of the current state of workforce development for



Indigenous youth. The larger Network held its initial Regional Roundtables in February and March of 2022 with a total of was initiated and included participants from Indigenous leaders and Indigenous subject matter experts, training providers, and employers from across the province. These groups each met in Regional Roundtables to provide distinct perspectives that were critical to understanding the overall picture of workforce development.

## **Our Voices Matter**

Each group of participants in the Network has a distinct role to play, and a distinct perspective that is critical to understanding the overall picture of workforce development for Indigenous youth.

### ***First Nations Community Leaders***

Community leaders are committed to building opportunities that will engage and provide new opportunities for their youth to thrive in community and abroad. Recognizing the great contribution that Community leaders will bring to the Network is key. Community leaders have seen what has and has not worked when engaging with new education and training for careers across a multitude of industries. Also, in many cases, these leaders have the inside track on what the future of work is available for people in their community. Specifically, First Nations Community Leaders are critical to:

- Developing, sharing, and accessing tools to enable greater allyship in the Network and beyond
- Co-Creating promising practices that service providers can and should use when developing career development programming to support youth in their community
- Helping to design and influence inclusion practices with industry employers and training providers

### ***First Nations Youth***

Two Eyed Seeing is focused on developing a way forward for organizations to work with youth in a way that acknowledges them for who they are and what they can contribute to the future of work. To do so, it is imperative that they recognize their voices are needed and wanted within the Network. Specifically, First Nations Youth provide a distinct perspective as they:

- Explore what career success means to youth today
- Co-create new pathways to meaningful employment
- Design and lead future career pathways in support of their communities

### ***Training Providers / Service Providing Organizations***

Training and service provider organizations provide insight into learners' needs, industry activity, innovative curriculum and more. Their voice at the table is important as they are an ally for learners on their career pathways and serve as a connector between employees and potential employers. Specifically, they support:



- Individual learners to understand and meet their career aspirations
- Preparing the workforce for the jobs of today and tomorrow
- Positive collaboration mechanisms to match employment outcomes to training

### **Employers**

Employers can inform the Network on hiring opportunities, industry trends, traits and training they seek in potential employees and more. Their voice at the table is important as they are partners in co-developing pathways with the Network and other allies. Specifically, they are critical in:

- Building justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in the workplace
- Accessing new and inclusive ways to build bench strength for communities and industry
- Providing (and also refining) current hiring, training, and retention practices with a Two-Eyed Seeing perspective
- Navigating and expanding the changing landscape of Indigenous and industry relations

## **Walk A Mile In My Shoes**

### **Current State Exploration**

During our first Regional Roundtable session, Network participants were asked for input via Mentimeter platform, to explore current state guiding values, barriers to Indigenous youth participation, wise engagement practices, promising Industry practices in workforce development, employment and training programs, and program design and delivery.

### **Barriers to Participation**

Network participants were asked what barriers to Indigenous youth participation in employment and training programs they encounter or see in their work.

The top four barriers were identified as follows:

1. Lack of required educational qualifications or grades; and lack of knowledge/awareness about available support (tied)
2. Significant distance between Indigenous youth and employment/educational opportunities
3. Lack of driver's licenses

Other barriers to Indigenous youth participation in employment and training programs

Network participants encounter or see in their work the most often are the lack of funding and education support; mentorships; access to transportation; availability of work opportunities nearby; and personal lacks – particularly in self-confidence. Coupled with that, are the presence of systemic racism and individual mental health concerns (particularly with anxiety).



### Indigenous Youth Voices

The project team facilitated a meeting with the Indigenous Youth Advisory to amplify their voices and experiences when engaging in the workforce. It is important to note that this is a small representation of Indigenous youth voices and does not speak on behalf of all Indigenous youth. The youth on the Advisory were asked a series of questions and feedback was gathered via the Mentimeter platform.

When thinking about current workforce development initiatives, the following top four guiding values were identified by Indigenous youth as what they see currently in practice:

1. Indigenous knowledge
2. Inclusive; and strengths and solutions-based approaches (tied)
3. Open mindedness

The three guiding values for engaging youth, youth see practiced the least are:

1. Non- representative (recognizing that individual youth speak for themselves, and not on behalf of all Indigenous youth)
2. Honour
3. Open heartedness

Further to that, these Indigenous youth identified the following guiding values as missing from current practices; respect, fun, and unity.

### Wise Engagement Practices

Network participants identified wise engagement practices for Indigenous youth they currently utilize or see in practice the most as incorporating Elders when working with youth; allowing for mixed forms of participation; in person, virtual, on and off camera; the ability to bring multiple partners to the table; and ensuring programming is meaningful to youth. In addition, Network participants identified the following wise engagement practices for Indigenous youth that could be incorporated to increase value and efficacy: recognition - celebrating milestones and accomplishments; mental health supports - creating safe spaces and utilizing trauma informed practices; incorporating mentorships and job shadowing (and corresponding leadership training for staff doing the mentoring); providing career exploration earlier to youth; and ensuring training/internships that leads to paid opportunities.

### Promising Industry Practices

Hiring Indigenous workers and building good relationships were identified as the top two promising industry practices Network participants currently see being utilized. Network participants also recognize Indigenous communities and organizations as more than stakeholders. We must be focused on mutually beneficial relationships. Community engagement is necessary to facilitate this.



Network participants identified the following as what they see currently missing from promising industry practices. There is a lack of flexible funding models, often the criteria is rigid and not in collaboration with meeting needs. Better communication is needed overall, including active listening and better internal communication. They expressed that there needs to be Indigenous representation at board levels, and we must strive to honour UNDRIP. An emphasis is needed on career development and cultural training for programme delivery and training. Long term commitment from employers is needed to strengthen relationships when engaging Indigenous youth.

Promising practices for program design and delivery that Network participants currently utilize or see in practice the most are developing supports to address youth's social and economic challenges. It is important to integrate essential skills within specific training. Such as how to apply for a SIN card and navigate the application process. Educators and training providers need to acknowledge the role of trauma in youth's lives and how it impacts them when training or looking for work. A recommendation to better support youth is to hire Indigenous instructors/providers and incorporate opportunities for experiential learning.

Promising practices identified by Network participants as missing in program design and delivery is the need for mentorship; peer and Elder support. More training is needed for educators/training providers on systemic racism and cultural safety. Currently programming is largely created through a western lens and way of being. Indigenization of these programmes would be beneficial to youth participating. Barriers to access that need to be addressed include providing services in remote communities, lack of accommodations (cost of when in urban areas) and technology and wrap-around supports.

### **Guiding Values**

The top three guiding values ranked in order, that the Network participants see currently, in workforce development when engaging Indigenous youth are:

1. Indigenous knowledge
2. Strength based and solutions based supports and programming
3. Inclusive

Interestingly, Indigenous youth expressed a similar perspective on guiding values they currently see in workforce development.

Network participants chose the following guiding values needed and ranked in order of importance:

1. Inclusive
2. Indigenous knowledge
3. Strength-based and solutions based supports and programming
4. Amplifying the voices of Indigenous youth 30 and under



Indigenous youth identified representation of Indigenous youth voices as utilized the least in practice and that respect, fun and unity were missing from guiding values they see currently.

## Listening To Learn, And Learning To Listen

One of the key focuses of the 2ESN project, is to listen and learn from the rich and diverse contributors in the Network, subject matter experts and most importantly Indigenous Youth. Being open to new ideas and perspectives was critical in how the project team showed up and facilitated dialogue throughout the project to date. Just as we understand that people learn differently, they also listen differently. Much of our learning in the work environment happens through conversation and collaboration among our team, colleagues and mentors. When you truly listen, what you hear can change you. Being open to learning and doing things in a different way, facilitated envisioning an ideal future state for Indigenous Youth workforce development.

The project's goal is to bridge the gaps between Indigenous youth and industry in BC. through establishing, building, and engaging a network of Indigenous communities, industry leaders, workforce and social development experts, and education and training providers.

Specifically, the Two-Eyed Seeing Network aims to learn:

- What are the future workforce opportunities in the various regions across BC?
- What are the skills of the future?
- How do we attract, train, recruit and retain Indigenous workers to work the jobs of the future?
- How can training be provided remotely (utilizing experiences learned during COVID-19 to shape remote and distance learning where possible)?
- What investment in program delivery is needed to ensure Indigenous youth remain supported throughout their learning and employment pathway?

### Ideal State Exploration

Network participants in the second session of Regional Roundtable meetings focused on the ideal state of workforce development. Their feedback was received via breakout rooms using the Zoom platform. To encourage small group discussion focused on a set of predetermined inquiry questions and then reported back out to larger group for more detailed discussions. Video clips from our Indigenous Youth Advisory participants were played at each Regional Roundtable – prior to the discussions and to allow for the youth voices to be amplified and to inform discussions around each set of questions in the discussion.



## Workforce Development

In determining ideal employment and training programs to engage Indigenous youth, we must look at access to training, support needed during training and what successful completion looks like. Important factors to consider are determining what our youth want to do, knowing who the youth in the community are, and providing resources to help with the application process, access to technology, and infrastructure to support online learning.

### Training

Network participants' discussions on Indigenous youth's access to employment and training programs provided the following recommendations to support them; provide in community training and provide opportunities for exploration such as short term training opportunities and trade sampler programs. There is a need to address barriers with access to training associated with training outside of the community such as cost of accommodations and meals - especially in urban centers where cost of living is high. Support is needed with access to scholarships and other resources available and how to navigate the application process.

Program outreach, early access and more conversations at the high school level or earlier is needed, to support youth in identifying career opportunities and understanding what is required to access those career opportunities. As reflected by Network participants and echoed by Indigenous youth, creating fun around opportunities is important to encourage and motivate youth to see where they may fit into the world of employment. Communication and creating greater awareness through means such as social media, posters of upcoming training available is needed as well as engaging youth through platforms they use and reaching out to where they gather. Hands-on training such as dual credit programs that offer work experience are key to informing youth of what is available and what they may be good at or want more of. Network participants identified providing access and support for aptitude, psychological and vocational assessments is critical to supporting program completion and success. Many youth have practical experience that contribute to transferable skills, helping youth to identify these transferable skills also supports their success.

### Access to Training

We must be mindful of our language with youth, such as seeing challenges as opportunities and as an opportunity to change things. When we think about the trades, use the term trades professionals versus tradesman/tradeswoman as it can create a sense of pride and inclusion. Often access to training is a barrier for Indigenous youth. Network participants highlighted the need to listen to youth and seek to understand what they are saying about these barriers and acting on that feedback. Another recommendation is to work with the First Nation Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and bring in the same curriculum that is delivered in urban center schools, so that there is an opportunity to have the prerequisites needed for post graduate work and training. There is a need to be thoughtful when creating training to ensure that it leads to employment without long delays before people are getting to work. Provide funding



and support to employers who are hiring apprentices and making a long term commitment to youth being successful in the workplace.

### **Support Strategies**

Consider challenges that impact youth such as needing access to technology or the internet and providing training on the technology being utilized if needed. Peer-groups, mentorships and/or buddy systems all help to support and assist with orientation and create a community for students that supports their success. In addition, accommodations for learning or learning disabilities are crucial as not all learners learn in the same way.

Network participants provide the following recommendations to support youth's success while they are in training or employment programs. They highlighted the need to build relationships with someone in the community who can provide additional students support and help them navigate their success in the training program. Family support is very helpful in the community, as there is an established relationship of trust and youth will listen to Elders or families guidance. We are not just supporting youth, but their communities as well. Providing opportunities for certifications such as forklift training, helps assist youth getting into entry level jobs.

It is important to look at the youth as a whole person and at ways to support the whole person, which can range from nutrition to mental health support, providing accommodation, child care and transportation, meals or food vouchers. Meeting the learners where they are at and helping to build their confidence in a supportive environment is key, to contribute to their success in completing a program. Instructors need to be flexible and have an awareness and understanding of the types of issues that youth both on- and off-reserve might be experiencing, such as including time for traditional needs like fishing and hunting. Create safe spaces for learning that address learning challenges and support a variety of learning needs.

### **Support strategies for youth training completion:**

It is not enough to engage youth in training programs, often they start but may not see the program to completion. Additional support strategies are needed to assist in successful completion of training programs. Network participants recommend that providing continued support along the journey is key and equally important to teach them to walk on their own confidently. Training certification and/or credits that can be used towards their diploma, builds incentive and engagement.

Network participants engaged in rich discussions around how we define success, and that the traditional definition may be too narrow of a focus. Identifying what people measure as success and thinking through how people view success in different ways is an important step. Youth may be looking for experiences, or just employment, and some youth may learn to dream up bigger ideas of where they want to land in the future. It is important to provide hands-on



experiences, which can provide skill in real time and build confidence among youth. These experiences can be provided through internships or paid work experience opportunities.

Paid work in training helps the youth to develop good experience and also offers the employers the opportunity to gain experience working with different youth. Youth building networks with employers, trainers and other students allows them to move into another environment with those same networks and gives them a sense of community and a sense of place, which strengthens their ability for success.

Navigating employment like how to do work searches, resumes, interviews, and support in place that provide training that works through real life scenarios in employment is needed. For example, how to have a tough discussion with their employer, negotiate a pay increase, or how to balance work and life responsibilities. Redefine what the focus of success looks like. Often, success is focused on a person meeting a career goal, but many times success can simply look like obtaining employment to develop some experience and new skills.

***Strategies to reduce barriers/requirements for Indigenous youth to access funding and wrap around supports***

To help reduce barriers Indigenous youth face, provide foundation resources for students through programs and courses that provide direct support for things that they need to be successful such as work boots and access to transportation. Have a conversation about transportation at the beginning of the application process in order to have rideshare options and/or transportation needs met like gas vouchers set up before their start date. Some communities have buses and others need to organize pairing up students that live nearby to share rides. Have post-secondary schools provide Elder support groups, areas dedicated to Indigenous culture, including Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge into curriculum whether it be trades programs or elsewhere.

Provide opportunities to have employers come out to the school or community and do presentations to the youth to show what available jobs they have and explain what a day in the life of that occupation looks like. Training providers look at providing food or bringing food in or having microwaves on site for people to heat their lunches or having food vouchers available for those who need it. Child care funding should be more inclusive, not just for childcare spaces, including Elders or other individuals who may be looking after the children. Provide skills assessment so that youth coming in have the confidence knowing what transferable skills they bring to the table.

Employers need to be aware of their reputation in the community. They need to examine their internal processes and practices for inclusion and cultural safety. If a company has a reputation in the community of having racist employees, this spreads quickly, and many are discouraged



from applying to those companies regardless of how much money is being offered or the benefits offered for working there.

Recognizing that seeds need to be planted early not just with the youth, but also with their support systems, and cultivated throughout with realistic timelines and expectations, preparing the youth not just to get to be interested in a job, but to be aware of what skills and training is required.

BC has 200+ Nations, so it is important to have an understanding all cultural practices and protocols are not the same. If employers can gain an understanding of their local Nations, it will give them a place to grow from when they are working with their Indigenous employees. Recognizing diversity, starting out locally and then building from there. A barrier to entry in professional occupations such as engineering (as it requires post secondary training to enter) needs to be addressed at the high school curriculum level to ensure prerequisites for university programs are offered. These professions and their organizations would benefit from participating in outreach programs in elementary school, to ensure youth become aware of these opportunities and that long term engagement starts early. Improve internal communications with service providers and employers working with youth, to understand awareness around issues that are important to Indigenous youth such as MMIW, reconciliation and residential school children murders.

## Employment

### Wise Engagement Practices

In determining ideal wise engagement practices when we engage Indigenous youth, we must explore what employers can do to attract, support, retain Indigenous youth and ensure career progression in the workforce.

### ***Recommendations for employers to ensure Indigenous youth are hired to fill workforce needs:***

Network participants shared many recommendations to support employers filling workforce needs with Indigenous youth successfully. Key highlights include encouraging employers to share their mission or vision statements to show their commitment to inclusion practices and that you are interested in supporting inclusion and ensuring that there is a space for Indigenous youth. Create healthy communication feedback practices and encourage trades as a viable and rewarding career option, as well as offering opportunities that are youth centred. Have youth provide input and inform pathways towards a trade or important work to ensure that it is something that motivates them and something they want to be a part of. It is important to connect youth to the “why” of work - such as being a part of something, belonging, connecting with other coworkers, and benefits of lifestyle .

Providing internships for youth to explore different work environments and supporting youth to understand how to apply for a job, best practices with resume writing and job searches are helpful to support success. Employers understanding what youth value and are looking for and



what is important to them in the workplace is key to attracting them. Look at what is possible for different approaches to childcare, transportation, and satellite programs to reduce barriers for isolated communities. It is critical to build connection, relationship and seek guidance from community Elders on how best to support youth. Build a bridge between employers and Indigenous people and youth. For example, provide first-hand experience on what a worksite looks like, invite youth to see it and experience what a day in the life of that work environment looks like. Provide hands-on experience opportunities for the youth so that they can see what interests them in the workplace. Field trips in high school can build awareness for youth on various work sites and different industries that are available. Often transportation and lack of access to driver training programs is a barrier to employment, advocate for driving schools/licenses in high schools in remote communities. Have other Indigenous employees in organization so youth see people who look like them working there

The Impact of COVID 19 on youth employment was initially encouraging people to stay local in the community and then having to switch gears to go work outside the community back to in person employment. This has provided an additional barrier to address and integrate youth working back at job sites. Call to action 92-be better allies, provide Indigenous scholarships to encourage engagement in a particular field such as engineering. Include a mentor with the scholarship to help support the youth to be successful. Career fairs are a good way to meet with other employers to share good practices and how they address cultural safety and awareness being able to share information of what has worked well.

***What employers can do to support Indigenous youth in the workplace:***

Provide Indigenous mentorship programs that introduce and support ways to make the transition from community to the workplace when placing Indigenous youth in employment outside the community. Provide safe workplaces by providing training for all employees on cultural awareness and anti-racism with the understanding that youth face more barriers and may require more support. Provide clear expectations of workplace rules, professional conduct and standards in the work environment that are easily understood. Employees need to know what is expected and how to function successfully within the work environment. Look at ways to support Indigenous workers with cultural obligations such as hunting or fishing for their communities. Could they access flexible work schedules and/or unpaid time off to contribute to their community in meaningful ways without consequence at their job. Regularly conduct 360 degree internal audits of organization to assess any areas of bias or unwelcome behaviour and deal with them before moving forward to invite youth in, ensure a safe environment where they can grow and be given opportunities to grow into that next role.

Train the employers to understand how to work with Indigenous youth in order to facilitate shifts in traditional hiring practices and retention. Provide training on healthy conflict resolution and communication skills. Provide funding for programs that work to support youth and that help reduce barriers - such as CFBC's driver training fund for youth at risk, or for anyone who



would like to donate to the fund (100% of funds raised go to the youth). Mentorship programs that support employees to navigate systems and provide any extra support that they may need as they transition into their new job and throughout their career path. Building skills confidence with youth by helping them to be aware of their gifts/strengths and how these connect to career skills and progression supports their success.

Often Industry is engaged with First Nations communities on large projects that provide employment opportunities. When project teams meet with communities, each project and scenario is unique, but the common element for success is building relationships, having contractors, proponents of major projects, unions, and communities, around the table to tackle each one of the challenges that are going to come up when hiring youth, keeping them in the job, and helping them develop a career path.

Train community members who are going to be working on the project as mentors that have a cultural understanding, to provide in addition to a workplace mentorship, life skills and support that the community can provide to help support the worker for the long term.

## Industry

### Promising Industry Practices

In determining ideal promising practices when we engage Indigenous youth, we explored how this Network will help organizations youth, by providing promising practices such as; Indigenous mentorship programs, connecting industry with Indigenous youth, building a roadmap to support Indigenous youth prepare for training and employment opportunities, and where can we do better to help support the barriers that have been identified by youth thus far.

### ***How this Network will help organizations attract and retain Indigenous youth:***

By listening and learning how to improve our understanding of youth needs and how to have respectful conversations. We need to meet youth where they are, gather information to have meaningful conversations to understand where each other is at, and possible solutions that meet a variety of needs. A one size fits all solution is not what will be successful. Do not approach and engage with Indigenous youth to encourage participation with predetermined solutions; come in wanting to listen and learn, allowing them to come up with new solutions that work. Get curious about and being better informed around the challenges and the roadblocks Indigenous youth face in the workplace. Ask how support can be better and get involved to better support them.

### ***Indigenous mentorship programs and organizations efforts to better connect with Indigenous youth:***

Various organizations have created gathering places where youth know they can go to connect into mentorship that happens in the gathering place more organically. A student will come in and have a problem and talk to somebody there that provides in the moment support. Creating informal and formal mentorship practice allows organizations to meet ongoing needs, in a way



that works best for that organization or community. Continually look at different ways to evolve these spaces, it is not a “one and done” strategy. Evolving needs require evolving solutions and support. Be willing to adapt and ask questions around what is working or not working and what is missing.

Improving the trades apprenticeship relationship/mentorship between the trade person and apprentice to better support Indigenous youth, marginalized people and/or those new to the field is a current trade focus. Rotating apprentices around different areas to learn different skills, working with several red seal individuals, allows for a range of mentorships and the ability to see different workplaces. It is important to have a designated person or people in the organization as a connection point for apprentices to go to with concerns or that require some additional support that are separate from their red seal mentor. Sharing stories of lived experiences builds trust, connection, and relationship which is important to the mentorship piece having a successful outcome. There is a need to be flexible with the idea of mentorship and what it looks like, could be 1-1, peer support or a group setting.

### **Education/Training Providers**

#### **Promising Practices for Program Design and Delivery**

In determining ideal promising practices for program design and delivery, we explored what pathways to employment have been successful, what organizations do to reduce barriers/requirements for clients to access funding, and ways that we can reduce barriers as it relates to access to training and workforce development in remote communities.

#### ***Successful pathways to employment when working with Indigenous youth***

As mentioned previously, building relationships and outreach in the community, working towards meeting youth where they are at is key. Providing funding for contractors to hire youth, with more of an incentive to hire Indigenous, women, and other minority groups, is also helpful. Further, having a designated liaison that functions in between community and organizations to bridge gaps and help youth meet the requirements to access services from specific organizations or bring services to the community helps youth be successful in gaining employment. Provide structured criteria/steps for what is needed to access services or enter programs, which is easy to navigate and understand by youth. Service providers can have specific criteria which are regulated by the ministry and can at times be part of the barrier, they are limited or do not cover all needs. There can be a lot of red tape or hurdles to access services. Criteria needs to be updated to meet the needs of those using the services, in a way that allows them to successfully navigate, and access needed resources.

It is important for employers to have a pulse on and assess their onboarding materials, orientation experience, process, and current work culture. Ask themselves is this an inviting space and comfortable for Indigenous youth? Do we as an organization have an understanding or awareness of what that looks like? Language matters, making sure it is inclusive and can be easily understood by all. Have people from your organization involved in a variety of



programs and be out in the field creating connections and building up more communities within Indigenous communities. Make sure youth understand that there are people always available to ask all types of questions and support them in being successful. For example, what happens when your work gear rips after you bought it from Mark's Work Warehouse. Having someone to help them navigate this type of situation, or to understand their benefit/retirement package, and resolve other challenges they may encounter.

Provide awareness to different resources available such as Trades Training BC that have foundations that raise money to help students in need. They often approach funding agencies to provide personal protection equipment (PPE), or needs for students involved in programs, and they work with the ASETs quite closely to support Indigenous students through several trades' programs. One program is a joint BCIT and Camosun program (tuition credits) for marine training for underrepresented groups such as Indigenous people and women, with the funding coming from Transport Canada through the Oceans Protection Plan. They provide support besides PPE, such as travel, meals (while traveling), day care, and accommodations. The funding that was provided was flexible and adaptable (not full of barriers) and the program included an entrance assessment as an alternate entry method as opposed to standard prerequisite. Colleges that offer wraparound support for their students which help with tuition, books, transportation, in some cases childcare, and a meal support plan, creating a sense of belonging for students. Funding for supports beyond first year trade students is needed, access funding to reach out to other students taking level 2, level 3, up to the Red Seal.

Programs that support gaining certifications are helpful to access entry level roles that they might need. Such as a forklift driving certification or First Aid. It is critical for Indigenous youth to be supported when they leave their communities for opportunities in other areas or urban centers where they don't know other people or communities, to build a sense of belonging. After care is what is going to be important for participants to be successful

## **The Things we Learned Along the Way**

The 2ESN project has been rich in learning, collaborating, and focusing on the best way to support Indigenous youth in workforce development. The skills of the future are top of mind for those engaged in workforce development. Who will step in to fill future career needs? How can we, as a society, be inclusive and relevant to youth seeking access to those opportunities, especially considering new challenges such as COVID-19. Indigenous youth are the fastest growing demographic in the country. Indigenous youth provide a source of stable, local labour for projects; reducing the need for fly in fly out workers. The Literature Review, Environmental Scan, Key Informant Interviews, and Focus Groups confirm and validate the contributions of the Indigenous Youth Advisory and Network Participants.



## What We Read, Heard, and Learned:

Indigenous youth are highly sought after in today's workforce, however, still remain vastly underrepresented. They are willing to take on new opportunities and are often open to coaching and mentoring other youth. Mentorship is key in training success. Include ceremony in meaningful ways. Ensure program is meaningful to youth and allow youth to lead.

### Focus Groups

What we heard from the initial Focus Groups:

- Racism remains a constant barrier to employment for Indigenous peoples, in particular, Indigenous youth.
- Access to transportation in remote communities decreases youths' ability to participate in the workforce.
- Indigenous youth are eager to join employment opportunities.
- Cultural awareness training is essential for employers and industry.

## Environmental Scan and Key Informant Interviews

### Emerging Themes

1. *Outreach engagement and relationship building:* encourage meaningful engagement, establish stronger relationships, and provide the means to explore new opportunities when presented.
2. *Amplifying youth voices:* determine ways for Indigenous youth to build confidence, soft skills, provide networking opportunities, and determine processes that work best for young Indigenous people to actively engage in the workforce on their terms.
3. *Programming and support:* provide a host of Indigenous program support mechanisms that are novel and needed to ensure successful completion of training programs. Also provide support to non Indigenous staff to further understand challenges facing Indigenous youth.
4. *Barriers to participation:* youth do not always feel welcome or wanted in work environments, have transportation and financial challenges, and often need additional support to being successful in training and the workforce.
5. *Enablers to participation:* ensure safety and understanding for Indigenous workers at the workplace, provide space for youth voices and decision making, train staff to be patient, kind and supportive to learners needs, and include mentors to guide and share wisdom and life experience with participants.



6. *Success factors*: capitalize on successes to ensure continued positive outcomes.
7. *Network design*: create a space for youth voice to fully understand their wants and needs, leverage existing networks in partnerships to encourage wide representation, be flexible in meeting times to accommodate work and school, and have facilitators who reflect both Indigenous and western ways of being and doing.
8. *Network participation*: invite others to the table including government social service providing agencies, other Indigenous programs, and leaders in (education, health, economic development and more).

## Literature Review

### ***Indigenous Engagement***

SRDC's Literature Review confirmed the following summarized findings related to principles and wise practices when engaging with Indigenous people, particularly in an industry context as well as in those sectors of interest to the 2ESN and helped inform the Network design. The findings are drawn from lessons learned both in Canada and internationally. These findings from the literature review informed how we engaged with Network participants, Indigenous Youth and confirmed and echoed their feedback.

## Respect

### ***Cultural Competency***

- Should serve as a precursor to any engagement activities
- Onus is on the potential partner to take cultural competency training, as well as understand appreciate, and apply that training in their relationships
- Seek and accept cultural mentorship or advice from local Indigenous people

### ***Honouring, knowing, and understanding***

- Acknowledge and honour Indigenous ways and practices unique to each community
- Understand Indigenous concepts of holistic well-being (intellectual, spiritual, emotional, physical, and cultural)

### ***Formal acknowledgement***

- Acknowledge traditional owners and caretakers of the land
- Acknowledge and appreciate the history and current context of Indigenous peoples

## Trust

### ***Engage Early***

- Reduce distrust and increase trust and participation by engaging before the start of any project
- Starting slowly is a strong indicator for future success
- Find ways to collaborate on smaller projects first, using participatory approaches based on Indigenous aspirations and priorities



***Connect with respected Indigenous members***

- Connect with well-respected Elders, community members, or tribal government officials who have pre-existing trusting relationships
- Can enhance community participation, provide support during governance turnover, and provide insight into culturally appropriate protocols
- Seek insight into appropriate contact approaches to their communities

***Be inclusive of Indigenous peoples***

- Include Indigenous peoples in all aspects and phases of the work or project
- A community advisory board is critical for building trust and mutually respectful environment
- Boards should include Indigenous community members, key informants, agencies from community, as well as members from a variety of backgrounds depending on specific project needs
- Hold meetings regularly and focus on opportunities to interact and build trusting relationships
- Board roles may include guiding, advising, and providing general project oversight on its design, incentives, and other components, throughout all project phases

***Be inclusive of youth and respectful of gender balance***

- Equal respect accorded to different genders, based on understandings of traditional roles
- Intergenerational inclusion and honouring of views, including youth and Elders

***Use appropriate communication approaches***

- Open and respectful communication styles
- Avoid jargon
- Be prepared to listen and allow time for meaningful discussion throughout all stages of the project
- Face-to-face dialogue, community visits, or virtual formats that foster relaxed, informal, and friendly meetings
- Be upfront and honest about expectations, intentions, resources, or any limitations
- Provide ongoing project updates, share results, and report back to the Indigenous community through a variety of forms (emails, phone calls, mail outs, posters, routine meetings)

**Self-determination*****Indigenous driven***

- Indigenous peoples' right of self-determination to prohibit projects that do not benefit their community
- Partnerships, projects, and research operate within framework of Indigenous decision making, with Indigenous-driven priorities



**Build capacity**

- Provide reciprocal benefits to community, like training and work opportunities for Indigenous community members

**Protocol development**

- Follow decentralized decision-making processes or Indigenous-based protocols, which acknowledge historical and contemporary power dynamics and differentials and consider these structures within particular communities
- Develop Indigenous community-based protocols that outline how to work together, roles, processes, approvals, and practice standards; this may take the form of Leadership (Band, Chief and Council, Executive Council) resolutions or written agreements
- Understand formal approval processes unique to each community, which might include community meetings to provide project overviews or obtaining approval from Leadership

**Commitment****Mutual sharing**

- Foster co-learning, where Indigenous peoples can expand their knowledge of those external to their community, in addition to non-Indigenous individuals learning more about the history, culture, tradition, and stories of Indigenous peoples
- Blend traditional ways of being with the Western system for harmonized governance
- Acknowledge power inequalities exist and reduce them by developing mutual accountability agreements to share responsibility, accountability, and stewardship
- Practice active collaboration and negotiation to share power, including agreed conflict resolution processes and transparency about decision-making, and agreements that spell out mutual benefits

**Responsive funding**

- Build engagement with Indigenous communities into project budgets, timelines, and activities from the outset
- Provide funding to support Indigenous communities' capacity to effectively engage with mainstream sectors or industry
- Be transparent about the budget
- Ensure funds are available to respect and honour Indigenous protocols and traditions, like Elder honoraria, physical gifts to an Indigenous person sharing knowledge, and traditional tobacco for use during prayers

**Ongoing reflection**

- Build in a process of continued reflection to scrutinize the partnership's balance of power, ensure opportunities for engagement are meaningful, and that members are equally respected



- Acknowledge one's own history, background, and values with the goal of continuously working towards more self-understanding
- Recognize, respect, and allow space for processing feelings, including skepticism Indigenous individuals may have towards research, industry, or certain sectors
- Accept new viewpoints and be willing to step away from one's "expert" position within a topic area

### ***Indigenous hiring practices***

- Hire Indigenous staff who can help foster relationships between the company and Indigenous communities, maintain open communication, and ensure that Indigenous interests are considered throughout the project
- Build in opportunities for non-Indigenous staff to mentor Indigenous staff and peoples
- Community presence
- Work towards having an authentic presence within the community
- Attend community-based social and cultural events, or make arrangements to work from that community on certain days

### ***Progressive leadership***

- Leadership should be strategic, collegial, not risk-adverse, and not "turf-bound"
- Accountable to the engagement policies and frameworks, and committed to doing things differently without the context of bureaucratic silos
- Avoid authoritative decision making or imposing solutions
- Build consensus amongst the group to make decisions more legitimate
- Support leading from the ground up and in a community-based way

### ***Flexible timeframes***

- Build in as much extra time as is needed (possibly a year or more) for engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities, including getting to know the community, the people, and the history of the community
- Educate external funders, industry, and other bodies about the importance of adequate time for engagement
- Recognize that Indigenous communities may have limited resources, as well as competing priorities that may take precedence
- Recognize that sharing power and honouring a community's self-determination will likely involve multiple reviews, consultations, and approvals that take time to realize

### ***Indigenous validation***

- Information gained or gathered about an Indigenous community should be confirmed and, where needed, modified by Indigenous individuals
- Seek Indigenous community perspective and interpretation of engagement and project findings



**TRC Call to Action #66: Indigenous Youth Voices**

Three independent Indigenous youth advisors were appointed in 2017 by Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, and Northern Affairs, to gather and consolidate insight, ideas, and feedback from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth across Canada on the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #66 (Indigenous Youth Voices, 2018<sup>3</sup>). The three Indigenous youth advisors – Maatalii Anerag Okalik, Gabrielle Fayant, and André Bear – engaged directly and in-person with Indigenous youth across Canada. They described their engagement process as being grounded in the following values (Indigenous Youth Voices, 2018<sup>4</sup>):

Strengths and solutions-based	Non-representative	Open heart	Solidarity	Indigenous knowledge
Amplifying the voices of Indigenous youth 30 and under	Honour	Transparent	Truth	Indigenous languages
Non-partisan	Open mind	Inclusive	Spiritual laws	Ceremony

**Promising Practices**

The literature review conducted focused on promising practices related to Indigenous employment programs more broadly. In addition to the literature review, a project conducted by SRDC more specific to Inuit youth employment practices findings offer four overarching practices and approaches identified as integral to any employment program geared to Indigenous youth.

These include:

1. *Developing supports to address youths’ social and economic challenges* (including those related to health and housing), particularly for those who are not in employment,

<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Youth Voices. (2018). A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66. Indigenous Youth Voices. [FINAL - Indigenous Youth Voices - Roadmap to TRC 66 - Compressed.pdf \(a7g.ca\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Indigenous Youth Voices. (2018). A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66. Indigenous Youth Voices. [FINAL - Indigenous Youth Voices - Roadmap to TRC 66 - Compressed.pdf \(a7g.ca\)](#)



education, or training (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2019a, 2019b; Henderson et al., 2017<sup>5</sup>);

2. *Adopting strength-based (i.e., with a focus on building assets or strengths rather than weaknesses) approaches to programming* – in addition to fostering social and community connections – in line with principles of Positive Youth Development (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2019a, 2019b; Collura, 2010<sup>6</sup>);
3. *Acknowledging the role of trauma in youths' lives*, including through the hiring and training of staff to recognize the symptoms of trauma, connect youth to resources, and support the adoption of healthy coping mechanisms (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2019a, 2019b); and
4. *Assisting youth to obtain government-issued identification*, recognizing barriers specific to rural or remote contexts (e.g., the absence of Service Canada Centres) and that some youth may lack the documents and/or bank account required to apply for a SIN and obtain employment (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2019a, 2019b; MNP, 2014<sup>7</sup>; Wannell & Currie, 2016<sup>8</sup>).

## Regional Themes

When exploring what an ideal state may look like to encourage Indigenous youth participation, it was critical to amplify youth voices to guide Roundtable discussions. During each Regional Roundtable prior to engaging in discussion questions, Network participants were provided with video clips from the Indigenous Youth Advisory meetings. These video clips and youth perspectives informed discussions on what ideal state exploration looks like to bridge gaps, remove/reduce barriers, and establish pathways to future work for Indigenous youth.

This is a key step in building promising practices with youth and not for them. Over the course of our five Regional Roundtable sessions, regional themes around engaging Indigenous youth participation emerged during our rich discussions with Network participants. Although each region focused on a particular theme, they are all interconnected, and equally important when engaging with Indigenous Youth.

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<sup>5</sup> Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. (2019a). *Targeted Literature Review of Promising Practices in Supporting Inuit Youth along the Pathway to Employment: Report Prepared for Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre*. Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. (2019b). *Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre: Pathways to Work. Final Report*. Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.

<sup>6</sup> Collura, J. (2010). *Best Practices for Youth Employment Programs: A Synthesis of Current Research*. What Works, Wisconsin – Research to Practice Series.

[Microsoft Word - whatworks res to action brief ISSUE#9--Collura4 - Copy.doc \(wisc.edu\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> MNP. (2014). Report: Employment and Training Programs Serving Aboriginal People in Ontario. MNP. [http://www.msdsb.net/images/ADMIN/correspondence/2015/MTCU\\_etsi\\_phase\\_i\\_aboriginal\\_engagement\\_report.pdf](http://www.msdsb.net/images/ADMIN/correspondence/2015/MTCU_etsi_phase_i_aboriginal_engagement_report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Wannell, T. & Currie, S. (2016). Determinants of Participation in Indigenous Labour Market Programs: Final Report. Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. <https://www.srdc.org/media/199959/ilmp-determinants-report.pdf>



1. *Northern* discussions and feedback was centered around “being with them”
2. *Interior* discussions focused around the importance of “listening to youth voices”
3. *Fraser Salish* discussions were grounded in “build trust, relationships and connection”
4. *Vancouver Island* discussions highlighted the importance of “walk with them”
5. *Vancouver Coastal* discussions centered around “meet them where they are at”

## Indigenous Youth Voices

The Indigenous Youth Advisory participants were asked for input on what an ideal state may look like to encourage Indigenous youth participation, by incorporating wise engagement practices, promising Industry practices in workforce development, employment, training programs, and program design and delivery.

### ***Emerging Themes and Key Findings from Indigenous Youth Advisory Discussions***

Youth that live in more remote communities struggle with accessing technology and transportation to places of training. In addition, some youth face barriers such as childcare and much needed wrap-around services to be able to pursue training. Knowledge of training options and accommodations that are available to the youth is important as many do not know what their options are. For youth, successful completion of training looks like job satisfaction and being able to support themselves and their families and feeling connected to their communities. Youth identified that the ability to work within their communities and feel like they are making a difference as being very important to them.

### ***Ideal Employment and Training Programs to Engage Indigenous Youth Participation***

For youth to participate in employment and training programs, certain barriers need to be addressed and/or reduced. In order to access training, youth need support in; obtaining proper identification, obtaining driver’s licenses, obtaining status cards, support to complete their GED or upgrade training to become eligible to participate in programs, access to technology and other wrap-around supports is key. Connectivity and infrastructure need to be addressed in small or rural communities.

### ***Important support strategies identified:***

Spending time reaching out directly to communities supports building trust and connection. Providing training in the community helps support some of the barriers that go with additional costs associated with having to travel for training and the need for childcare. Offer mentorship programs - help youth feel connected throughout their training and offer a safe space to check in and make sure they are getting the things they need to succeed. Offering hands-on training to provide youth the opportunity to experience what the workforce really looks like. Have accommodations during training like flexibility in attendance or assignment extensions. Assistance with transportation and childcare when travelling for training. Have wrap-around services extended into the first month of employment to bridge gap between end of training



program and starting employment as support often ends before youth are able to collect their first paycheck.

***Ideal training options identified:***

1. ability to study short-term or certificate type programs
2. short duration training allows for youth to obtain skills quickly and get into workforce earlier

***Ideal Wise Engagement Practices When Engaging Indigenous Youth***

When employers are engaging Indigenous youth to fill their workforce needs the following wise engagement practices were identified; employers reaching out directly to the youth in their communities to ensure all youth are equally informed about potential employment opportunities. Approaching youth while still in school to bring awareness to employment opportunities and prerequisites needed to enable them to take the courses needed to eventually pursue the careers they are interested in. The ability to guide youth in obtaining proper identification needed for the job

***Wise engagement practices identified to support youth in the workplace:***

Offering wrap-around support services during the onboarding process would give youth the means to engage in work before they begin receiving their paycheck. Provide mentorship programs and safe workplace environments which support Indigenous youth's culture and have zero tolerance for racism. Offer wrap-around support services during the onboarding process for things like work-boots, transportation, and lunches. Employers can support youth in their career progression through offering upgrading/training opportunities as well as mentorship programs which allow space for regular check-ins and open communication.

***Guiding Values When Engaging Youth***

The guiding values came out of the initial work and research that was completed with the Two Eyed Seeing Network, all the project partners and participants. The Indigenous Youth Advisory discussed part of honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and being, was identifying and honouring the fact that there is 200+ specific Nations within B.C. so process and protocol won't be the same for everybody, and if everyone has a deeper understanding about the places that they come from and what's local to them, it will also provide a foundation for developing even more understanding for Indigenous people that that we connect with.

***Network Established Guiding Values***

1. Innovation
2. Network for change
3. Capacity building (mentorship/ leadership)
4. Reciprocity



5. Honoring Indigenous ways of knowing and being
6. Balancing Indigenous and western perspectives

**Other Things to Remember:*****Ask Me First, Then Let's Build It Together***

Rather than assuming we know what is best for youth, ask them what they need. Be curious about their unique experiences and seek to understand what they have been through and how this informs their ability to show up in a work environment.

***Reciprocity Is An Action***

Relationship and collaboration are key when engaging Indigenous youth and communities. The relationship must be one of value to both.

***Keep Me Safe***

Historically, Indigenous youth and their communities have experienced training and workplace cultures that do not understand their needs and hence have not created a safe space to bring their whole selves. Focus and attention to cultural, workplace and classroom safety is critical for success.

***Let Me Shine***

We all bring unique gifts and talent to the workforce. We must expand what our definition of success in the workplace looks like and be more inclusive in how we engage workers and provide work that highlights their strengths. Get curious about the gifts each youth brings.

***Let Me Bring All Of Me***

Part of creating inclusive and diverse workspaces means creating workplace culture that welcomes all voices, even when they differ from our own. Youth need to feel safe to bring their whole selves to work, only then do we have true inclusion and belonging.

***Work With Me So I Don't Get Stopped***

As identified previously, there are many barriers for Indigenous youth in successful engagement in the workforce. Removing and reducing barriers is critical to successful engagement.

***What If I'm Not Ready***

Part of successful engagement with youth is meeting them where they are at and knowing when to take a step back. Sometimes that means they are not ready for employment. They may need support with the basics of a SIN and other documentation to help support them being ready for active employment.



## Tools For Our Journey

### Pathway Between Current and Ideal States

To have a successful and fruitful journey, one must think about the tools needed to support and guide us on our path. What we know for sure is that the journey to creating a network that bridges gaps, removes barriers, reduces impacts to interruptions like COVID-19 and establishes a shock-proof pathway to future work for Indigenous youth, must involve healing the relationship between the western perspective and Indigenous ways of knowing. We must have a capacity for generosity, a desire to create meaningful relationships and work.

In the third round of Regional Roundtable meetings, the focus on dialogue was centered on the following five themes that emerged from previous dialogue. These themes emerged through the project and capture what the Network participants deem are the critical elements needed to ensure successful workforce development pathways for Indigenous youth:

1. Understanding Relationship and Rapport Building
2. Youth Need to be Involved in Their Own Futures
3. Understanding Local Provincial Market Opportunities
4. One Size Does Not Fit All
5. Taking a Step Back

### Themed Roundtables

To encourage deeper discussion on each theme, the third set of Roundtables were amalgamated into provincewide meetings. Each session talked about one key theme and many Network members joined to discuss each subject matter. What resulted was a thorough look at each critical element in pathway development.

#### 1. Understanding Relationship and Rapport Building

The Roundtable meeting began with a look at a two-eyed seeing approach to Indigenous workforce development, program design and delivery with the critical provision of support services. Participants discussed questions such as: What relationships and rapport building activities and approaches are required to create a successful partnership/relationship between communities and industry/training providers? How does a two-eyed seeing approach help inform these relationships and inform program design and delivery? Below are some of the key elements of that discussion:

#### ***Indigenous Youth Advisory recommendations on building relationship and rapport:***

Part of building rapport is to start by understanding the history of the area, as told by the people to develop a deeper understanding. Ask to hear stories, because stories are culturally significant and share a lot of information that can help develop a deeper understanding of some of the processes and protocols that the communities typically use. Respecting



and learning about the community's protocols is part of building trust in relationships. It is important to recognize the community's strengths and not just focus on what type of support is needed. Invite Elders and leaders to local special events, participate in community outreach, and work to create opportunities for both parties to have critical reflection and a long-lasting foundation.

Good and open communication between all partners of any project helps to build up and support the relationship. Getting to know the land you are on, and the local land-based Nation's land acknowledgments are a great way to start to understand a little bit of the history of the land. Ask what they want to see in their community and what they need specifically, as every community is different. Take care to ensure that you are building relationships that are reciprocal and that will help benefit everybody involved.

***Network participants recommendations on building relationship and rapport :***

Network participants echoed recommendations provided by Indigenous youth above and included the following as well; build trust by taking the time to be with others who are setting the course of events in the common context of facing and overcoming issues, mistakes, and challenges. Understanding there are two elements of relationship and rapport building: Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth themselves. Having a commitment to give back by doing things like hosting and participating in cultural events that transfer knowledge between youth and Elders. Food is a great way to sit down together and start to build connections. We may not always get it right and we learn from mistakes while taking responsibility for them and being open to feedback in order to grow from the experience. Collaborations need ongoing evaluation to determine what is working well or may need to be changed.

Recognize that meeting youth where they are at, being gentle, supportive, and helpful when interacting with them, is a principal element of building relationships and building rapport. It is important to be mindful that Indigenous people walk in two worlds (ie. never put their bags down, always wear two different shoes).





and ask what support would be helpful for them in terms of career planning and starting post-secondary and/or training programs for new jobs.

### ***Network participants recommendations on engaging youth:***

Similarly, Network participants suggested getting the message to youth that it is possible, that they can grow up knowing about the career possibilities and can imagine and see themselves in those roles. It is important to communicate in the way that is most comfortable for them, considering the language, the visuals, the platforms, and incentives for them to join in the conversation. Being involved in their own future means making decisions on those futures and that means being informed on what those decisions could entail. Youth need to be connected to their own strengths and attributes they come by naturally with the support of networks and resources around them. Utilizing the [Guiding Circles \(Facilitator Training\)](#) guide books and workshops can be valuable to get more people to become facilitators in order for youth to take a deep dive into these things about themselves prior to making decisions on education, training and career moves. There are over 100 trades to choose from, often people can only name off a few off the top of their head, education about opportunities is key to informed decision making.

It is important to remember that many youths are not working at the capacity they want to be, just because they are employed doesn't mean they are in a job that they really want to do, or love doing. We need to continue engaging youth, even when they are employed and realize that the way to keep the path moving is to increase skills and capacity within communities and territories. Listen to all feedback including complaints and criticism, there is a lot of wisdom that can come out of that, including times where it is hard for them to articulate and they are frustrated – if we open our hearts and minds, we can learn a lot.

The Network discussion was captured in the following infographic by graphic artist Kristen Elkow of Drawing Change.





The Youth Advisory also suggested to provide youth-friendly information sessions for future job opportunities, understanding that sometimes you need to close the door to open a window. Consider youth who are in jobs that they feel stuck in, or not really moving forward in, and understanding how to move from one job to another and keep references intact. Provide guidance on how to get off assistance and get into the workforce. What kind of training is needed for BCs future economy, when we look at the jobs that are all coming up in the next 10 years, what kind of training will be required to get into those positions or to get their foot in the door?

***Network participants recommendations on increasing awareness about local opportunities for youth:***

Network participants shared that they recommend continuing to offer exposure to different careers and skills provided in exploratory programs. We need to be able to provide these programs in an ongoing way rather than assume that there's one time in our lives when we need access to that information. We have the opportunity to bring in the conversation of skill sets and how they relate not just to a particular job, but also transferable skill sets (what you walk with) as an individual which can be applied to a whole host of different careers. Youth do not know how to market themselves in an environment if they don't understand it yet. Some of the roles they will end up in do not yet exist. Teaching youth how to identify their transferable skills to market themselves and build on them contributes to their success in the job market.

We need to open our minds to the possibility that Indigenous youth have a different perspective from previous generations and we need to pay attention to it. If what they want to do is learn more about their cultures and their traditions and build themselves up before they head off into the bigger world, we need to pay attention and support that. Maintaining a balance between virtual and face-to-face interaction is important. We need to ensure Elders are continually involved in terms of keeping labour market opportunities going and creating awareness so that they can be involved with the programming and share their knowledge and input. We should consider that the term "youth" itself might create an unintentional barrier. It is important to recognize that opportunities in urban areas are vastly different from those in rural areas and we need to support their success in engaging in those opportunities in different ways. Suggestions were made to create a virtual encyclopedia of jobs, keywords, and terminology on the 2ESN website created for this project. We can help facilitate connections and function as a resource.





supports, professional mentorship and providing the necessary accommodations. Include recognizing the importance of mental health and wellbeing as foundations of learning. Offer extra support with training skills and employment assistance. The incorporation of Elders, Indigenous sensitivity training and cultural components needs to be embedded into general training. We would do well to remember to bring our whole selves to be able to connect on a real, human level and understand and relate to youth. Finding ways to pair learning with community and culture is important for successful participation outcomes. Youth and children need to feel good about themselves, with their families and within their communities. Youth inherit the ways of those around them.



### 5. Taking a Step Back

Discussions in this session focussed on sustainable career development. Participants discussed answers to questions such as: What if I am not ready to engage in training or the workforce? Are youth being supported in the long term? How do we keep them from falling through the cracks? What if a youth is not ready to engage in training or the workforce? Discussion in this Regional Roundtable was centered on how best to support youth, to keep those who may not be ready from being unsupported.



***Indigenous Youth Advisory recommendations on keeping youth from falling through the cracks:***

Indigenous youth participants talked about those who fall through the cracks of programming and even if there's a lot of planning done, there's still some needs that go unmet. There were a lot of wraparound support discussions: they talked about ID, basic financial support, mental health, preventative services, transitional supports, and housing support needs.

Youth took a deeper dive and talked about distinct types of things that get in the way of success of completing a program or success of going from a program into employment. The youth had a lot of different stories to bring in. Such as making sure you take a step back and letting youth understand that youth are not losing their stride when they are assessing their situation. There were a lot of discussions about how to inspire youth and the different types of messaging to share with them to ensure they are on the pathway to success. Connecting to culture and identity and really knowing who they are is key; when they start to understand who they are, they understand their value and what they have to offer.

Youth spoke about employment and training for younger youth and thinking through how to create more flexibility, or even how to inspire youth at earlier ages to start exploring different careers and avenues for training. There is a need for addiction support as it is something that's running rampant in communities. For example, understanding that if youth are coming out of their addictions, or if they're looking for addiction support, it's important to understand different learning capacities and possible brain injuries that may impact them after coming out of that stage of their life.

***Network participants recommendations on keeping youth from falling through the cracks:***

Youth workers are key to the development of working with young people and connection between people at home and opportunities in the world. Invite youth workers to come together to share ideas, struggles, upskilling them, and learning from each other. Take this valuable feedback back to the communities and include in developing programs. It is crucial for youth to have that trusted person (attachment person) such as a youth worker, guardian, or someone at school. We need to reframe the conversation around being ready. We cannot lay the burden of readiness on the youth. Reframe and look at safety nets to put into place for someone that might fall through the cracks. Support the youth's rights of passage and provide them with teachings to support their growth/autonomy to recognize that they do have these gifts within them, if they feel connected, they may not fall through the cracks.

Be consistent in messaging to show you are not going anywhere. Let them know you will be there when they're ready. If we could look at how we've supported nurses and doctors in rural and remote areas, could we do the same for youth workers? We need more youth workers than we currently have. FNHA or treatment centres had their health teams that would go into communities and support them when they were in emergency situations to offer more support.



There are similar models out there of people travelling to support communities, how can we adapt these models to support youth. It doesn't cost a lot to create a circle and a place to talk. Rights of passage are so profound. We need to inspire Knowledge Keepers and honour and support them so that they can teach and lead.

Build a cohort around understanding your identity as an Indigenous person. Find ways to focus on being heart centered as a way of life and build that within each information session, so that if youth show up, you know they are there. It is key to reframe how we see failure. Part of doing this is to normalize failures and recognize it as an important part of the journey. Providing support by sharing our belief in them to be successful and believing in their success is critical for them to believe in themselves. We often forget that the pursuit of perfection is about doing better. Tell our youth they did better than yesterday, it is an important step forward in their belief in themselves to succeed.

Providing youth with a variety of opportunities if they weren't successful with the first steps, maybe that's because they were learning how to take those steps and with the next opportunity, they have the foundation to build off. Success is one small step forward over time. Some organizations are creating flexibility in their mandates and the way that they do things. We have to look at what we are doing to nurture the community as a whole, not just going in and focusing on the youth but also those around the youth. How can we create reciprocal relationships, so that there is something there for everyone that is involved providing meaning and impact for the community that supports the youth?

Everybody learns differently. Educators/training providers and Industry need to get curious when youth are failing. Is there something missing, are we looking at different ways of teaching and sharing communication? It is important to focus on creating solutions when we become aware of the challenges. Resiliency is important in successfully navigating challenges in life and the workplace. What can we offer youth to build resiliency skills to overcome the next transition stage in their life.





## We Do Better Once We Know Better

A great deal of wisdom, lived experience and knowledge was shared by all Network participants – youth and adults alike. Everyone’s contribution provided such a rich and multi-layered look at the state of workforce development for Indigenous youth and for paving the path forward to ensure more youth will be successfully supported in attaining their future goals.

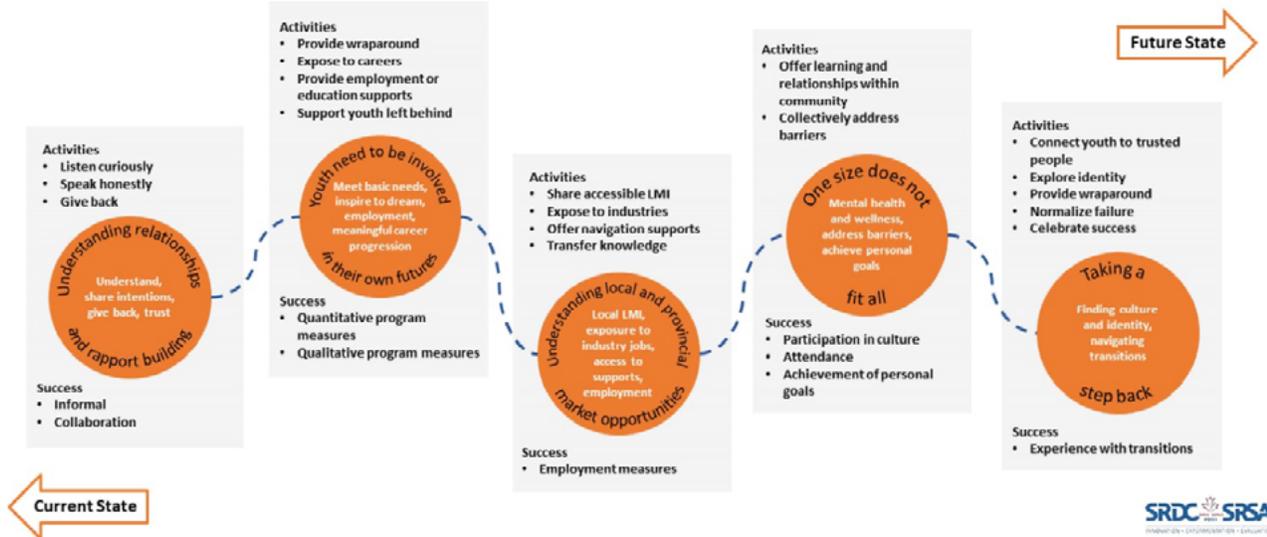
Both Indigenous and Western perspectives helped to formulate the preliminary milestones-based pathway for Indigenous youth workforce development below. Included in the diagram are the five key elements – understanding relationships and rapport building; youth need to be involved in their own futures; understanding local and provincial labour market opportunities; one size does not fit all; and taking a step back (supporting youth from falling through the cracks). Each section of the pathway also contains general guidelines for successfully accomplishing this element, along with key activities and indicators of what success in this area looks like.

This practical and tangible tool will allow all Network participants the opportunity to take these valuable insights back into their workplaces and communities - and incorporate elements of this pathway into the work they are already doing.



# Milestone-based pathway

## Preliminary planning from RR3



## Where Do We Go From Here

### Next Steps

In total, more than 535 participants have joined in the Network discussions. Through these Roundtables, a wealth of knowledge has been shared amongst participants which, we believe, will further the benefits and outcomes that participants initially indicated they were looking for in the Network. These include:

1. Greater capacity to co-develop Indigenous youth employment and training projects
2. Increased awareness of Indigenous youth needs/wants
3. New connections and increased capacity to work with other partners
4. Opportunity to influence workforce development pathways
5. Increased knowledge of cultural awareness and cultural safety

Furthermore, Network participants identified the following opportunities where the Network could provide and bring value to the work that participants are doing back in their home communities and/or organizations:

- Partnerships
- Collaboration
- Inform programming
- Engagement
- Increased knowledge
- Communication
- Connections
- Recognition of Indigenous ways
- Increase program reach



We are confident that the tools developed through the Network are useful and practical and provide a very real set of guidelines that will improve workforce development pathways for Indigenous youth. Furthermore, we believe the connections made through participation in the Network discussions will foster new relationships that will live outside of the Network itself, and will lead to new collaborations and partnerships that will benefit both Indigenous communities and youth, as well as industry employers and training providers – thereby being a living example of the value of a reciprocal relationship.

A February 21st Provincial Roundtable will share these findings and themes back to the Network at large, and provide the opportunity to look forward as we begin to take the learnings from our discussions, and move them into action through the development of one or more pilot projects that will embody the elements which the Network has identified.

Final evaluations of the Network, and an analysis of our intended and achieved outcomes will also come as we move into this next phase of the project.

Again, we wish to thank the many Network contributors/participants, for their knowledge, insights, wisdom and generosity of spirit as these discussions unfolded.



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