



Further Education Society
Strengthening Communities

Pathways

Creating Opportunities for Indigenous Youth Employment in the Tourism and Government Sectors

Project Overview

“Pathways: Creating Opportunities for Indigenous Youth Employment in the Tourism and Government Sectors” is a multi-year project with a national scope. The project will develop new workforce solutions to help employers and bridging organizations leverage and support the untapped potential of Indigenous youth in the workforce.

This project builds on the findings from the Government of Canada’s “Many Voices One Mind: A Pathway to Reconciliation” report and on FESA’s successful “Going the Distance” project, and includes FESA’s award-winning Cooks with Stone Program for Indigenous Youth

Pathways will address work inexperience and/or limited literacy and essentials skills (LES) as contributing factors to unemployment of Indigenous youth in the workforce by bringing together youth and their communities, Elders, mentors, bridging organizations, and employers to develop a holistic and comprehensive Employment Training & Mentorship model.

This model will provide workplace literacy and essential skills (LES) training, mentorship, and internship/work experience opportunities that will lead to meaningful employment and/or continuation of education for Indigenous youth ages 18-30. An important focus of the project will be to support potential young leaders to find their space within their communities and in the work environment.

Pathways will also build the capacity of employers and bridging organizations (those organizations that provide job resources and skills training support) in the Government and Tourism sectors to successfully recruit, mentor, and retain Indigenous youth by building their understanding of mentorship, and of the role of LES in the workplace. Awareness of, and adherence to Indigenous culture relating to workplace success will be foundational to all aspects of the Pathways project.

Pathways is led by the Further Education Society (FESA) and is funded in part by the Government of Canada’s Sectoral Initiatives Program.

Project Objectives

By February 23, 2025, the Further Education Society, with the support of communities across Canada, will:

1. Increase the percentage of Indigenous youth who find employment in the Tourism and Government sectors by removing barriers to employment through workplace LES skill development and internship/work experience opportunities.
2. Improve the capacity of employers in the Tourism and Government sectors to successfully recruit, mentor, and retain Indigenous youth as a direct result of an increased understanding of mentorship, of Indigenous culture as it relates to workplace success, and of the role of LES in the workplace.
3. Improve the capacity of job resource centres, Indigenous groups, and employment training organizations (bridging organizations) to better prepare Indigenous youth for entry and advancement in the workplace.

Employment Training & Mentorship Model

The four stages of the Employment Training & Mentorship model include:

1. Employment Readiness (pre-work) Training (through face to face and/or distance learning) that builds LES in Indigenous youth so that they have the skills necessary for successful placements.
2. Employer Pre-Work Training that prepares employers and bridging organizations to support youth in successful mentorship and work practicum/internship placements.
3. Work Practicum and Internship Placements.
4. Post-Work Training for Indigenous youth focuses on supporting continued skill development and successful transition to other employment or education opportunities.

FESA has identified three regions for pilot activities: Calgary, Ottawa, and Stoney Nakoda, and we will explore partnerships in other regions across Canada as the project activities unfold. Each region will support 2-3 cohorts of 6-8 youth each over the 3-year period of the pilot project.

Pathways National Advisory Circle

Our National Advisory Circle (NAC) is made up of Indigenous community leaders and youth, including the NAC's Chair Ted Norris and Elder Vinnia Van Overdyk. The NAC guides the project, while also providing peer and cultural mentorship to Indigenous youth members.

Culinary Program

These unique programs support youth in tourism and hospitality by combining an Indigenous traditional knowledge and skills camp, workplace essential skills training, culinary training, mentorship, job placements and an opportunity for full-time work with an employer partner.

Winnipeg, Manitoba - Me-yaw-sin Micowin

In partnership with Manitoba Métis Federation, Red River College Polytechnic, and Bistro on Notre Dame, FESA will launch the Me-yaw-sin Micowin Pilot Program in Winnipeg for Métis youths. 6-8 youths will participate in a 12-week program that incorporates literacy and essential skills, life skills, cultural knowledge, and culinary skills training and development. FESA's Indigenous Workplace Learning Circles (IWLC) program will be incorporated and adapted as necessary by program partners. The Me-yaw-sin Micowin Pilot Program will serve as a preparatory program for Métis students seeking to enter the Red River College Polytechnic's Culinary Program.

Stone Nakoda Nations, Alberta - Cooks with Stones

The development of the award-winning Cooks with Stones program was driven by the Iyarhe Nakoda Eyithkabi, which means Mountain people of Nakoda (also known as Stoney Nakoda), and was supported by partnerships with FESA, Stoney Nation Consultation, Indigenous chefs, Pursuit Banff/Jasper Collection, Stoney Nation Job Resource Centre, and many others.

The result of the Stoney community's work, partnerships and support was a holistic 9-week program. Cooks with Stones provided youth participants with traditional knowledge, learning from the land, workplace essential skills training, culinary training, mentorship, internships, accommodation, and transportation.

London, England - Cooks with Stones

Indigenous youth from the Cooks with Stones program were invited by the High Commission of Canada UK, in partnership with Rainmaker Global Market Access to showcase their culinary skills and cuisine at the Canada Day London 2023 Festival.

As part of the program, Cooks with Stones students built their culinary and workplace essential skills, through workshops and mentorship. The culmination of their time was the opportunity to showcase their skills to an international audience at the Canada House VIP reception and the Trafalgar Square celebration.

They served a menu of venison, wild rice, berries, and Chaga tea for the Canada Day Reception at Canada House under the mentorship of Chef Dean Herkert, owner of Toba Centric, operating as Bistro on Notre Dame. In Trafalgar Square, a venison shin poutine, created by the students and Chef Scott Iserhoff of Pei Pei Chei Ow, and inspired by the incorporation of potatoes in the First Nations' diet was served from the food truck.

Saugeen First Nation

In partnership with Saugeen First Nation and St. Francis Xavier University's Coady International Institute, FESA is developing an Indigenous Youth Leadership and Governance Program for Saugeen youths.

Youths, current and former band councillors, Elders, and other community leaders in Saugeen were interviewed to explore the characteristics of a good leader, the skills required for

Indigenous youth to become a band councillor, and Indigenous governance and leadership. A report was created from the knowledge and suggestions gathered from the interviews which will shape the Indigenous Youth Leadership and Governance Program. Four elements that emerged from the interviews as foundational to Indigenous leadership will guide the program.:

1. Understanding identity
2. Future Generation/Seventh Generation Thinking
3. Living in two worlds
4. A deep understanding of oral history

The program is currently being developed in collaboration with the Saugeen community and it is anticipated that the program will be implemented in 2024.

Assembly of Seven Generations: Adaawewigamig

Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) is an Indigenous youth led and driven grassroots, non-profit organization focused on community support and opportunities for Indigenous youth. FESA worked with A7G to produce an employee handbook for A7G's storefront, Adaawewigamig, located at the ByWard Market in Ottawa. The handbook and training guide promotes relationships and reconciliation through creating engaging customer experiences, conversation, and education that shares the work of Indigenous artists, businesses and culture. The aim is to make a positive impact for youth who are embarking on their career journey.

FESA continues to work with A7G to explore opportunities in tourism for youth, as well as in government as we begin developing pre-employment training for Indigenous youth interested in the Government sector.

eLearning

Recognizing the importance of eLearning in reaching more learners and communities FESA has put its Indigenous Workplace Learning Circles (IWLC) program online. The IWLC program is a strength-based program designed to support Indigenous learners to increase Skills for Success and gain tools needed to be successful at work, home or school.

Working with Sweet Spot International (SSI) and Xpan Interactive we developed several additional eLearning programs and trainings. For example, our eLearning programs now include 'Your Place in the Circle' and 'Online Meeting Basics', these programs are designed to reach Indigenous learners who experience barriers to digital literacy and to bridge Indigenous traditional knowledge into today's online learning environment. Additionally, a resume builder was added as part of the suite of online programs and tools for use in Pathways. The Resume Builder program will allow project participants to populate their information and work experience into fields to generate a resume.

Based on needs expressed by program participants, project partners, and bridging organizations, we are developing eLearning session to complement the IWLC program so that youths build the literacy and essential skills and life skills needed for their successful placements. Currently under development are microlearning sessions that will cover topics such as communication, finance, safety, and life skills.

For anyone working with Indigenous learners including community workers and employers we also offer Indigenous Workplace Learning Circles (IWLC) Facilitator Training. This training builds community, organizational and workplace capacity to deliver and incorporate the IWLC program, support Indigenous learners and improve staff and learner retention. The training walks participants through the IWLC curriculum, explores methodologies and tools to help successfully deliver the program and integrate Indigenous adult learning principles, and adapt the program to address community and employment training needs.

Looking Toward 2024/25

- Continue supporting and building strong relationships.
- Pilot the “Me-yaw-sin Micowin” (Good Food) initiative in collaboration with the Métis community and learning institutes in Winnipeg and Bistro on Notre Dame.
- Respond to requests from Indigenous communities to deliver (IWLC) Indigenous Workplace Learning Circles in support of youth employment and training while building community capacity to deliver the program on their own.
- Work with Saugeen First Nation on community leadership and governance primarily from a youth perspective. Piloting of Introduction to Indigenous governance three-day workshop for youth in spring of 2024.
- Continue to build the ‘Your Place in the Circle’ Indigenous online program.
- Launch of eLearning Indigenous programs and trainings.
- Development of pre-employment training for youth who are interested in working in the government sector.
- Make inroads into the federal government system to provide Indigenous youth with opportunities to experience and work in federal departments.

About FESA

Further Education Society, an Alberta-based registered charity, strengthens communities, families, and individuals through literacy and learning. For over 25 years, FESA has worked to build community capacity and address gaps in Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) development throughout Canada. FESA has supported community-based literacy initiatives in over 750 communities across the country by providing free family literacy and adult foundational learning programs. FESA offers subsidized training for grassroots workers so they can deliver and adapt our curricula to fit the low literate learners in their communities. Much of this work has been in partnership with Indigenous communities across Canada including remote and isolated communities. FESA specializes in working with isolated, multi-barriered, low-literate, learners.

FESA was the top winner for the 2022 Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award for its Cooks with Stones program. The program development was driven by the Iyârhe Nakoda community and supported by partnerships with Pursuit Banff/Jasper Collection, Stoney Nation Consultation, Stoney Nation Job Resource Center, and many others. The result was a holistic program providing participants with traditional skill and knowledge development, opportunities to learn on the land, support to build literacy and essential skills and meaningful job placements within the tourism and hospitality industry.

To find out more, visit www.furthered.ca.

Elaine Cairns

With 30 years of experience in education, Elaine is a literacy specialist as well as a workplace learning specialist, facilitator, trainer, and a recipient of Literacy Alberta's Lifetime Achievement Award for her outstanding contributions to the field of literacy. Elaine is the cofounder and the current Executive Director of the Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA). She is the co-author of the nationally recognized, award winning Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS) Program. For over 25 years, Elaine has assisted FESA to build community capacity and address gaps in parent education and Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) development throughout Canada. In 2013, FESA was awarded the Council of the Federation Literacy Award, which recognizes outstanding achievement, innovative practice, and excellence in literacy.

Elaine has extensive experience working with isolated and remote communities and providing mentoring and facilitator training for community workers and trainers. The Indigenous curricula she has helped develop over the years embraces Indigenous traditions and focuses on the sharing of information through a strength-based approach. Elaine recognizes that every community is different and that approaches to Indigenous LES development must reflect these differences. She works with local community members and leaders to incorporate the knowledge of Elders, to ensure the sharing of traditions and culture is the focus of the curricula. Elaine is honored to be the recipient of the 2017 Chief David Crowchild Memorial Award presented by the City of Calgary. This award recognizes and celebrates her work in Indigenous communities and her efforts to build cultural understanding between Non-Indigenous and Indigenous people.

Teal Dratowany

Teal brings over 15 years of dedicated service to the Further Education Society, where she currently serves as the co-Executive Director and the Project Manager for FESA's Pathways project. Teal is a Certified LAPS Practitioner and Trainer has been actively involved in programs and trainings dedicated to supporting foundational learners. Notably, she played a pivotal role in managing FESA's Calgary Programs, overseeing 60-70 adult and family literacy programs annually. Teal's focus on program and project development initiatives for foundational learners has provided her with broad experience developing Skills for Success (SFS) programs, and assisting with projects that require creative community partnerships, community capacity building, curriculum development, and training. Teal works collaboratively with Indigenous communities to develop solutions to literacy and Skills for Success needs and challenges.

This collaboration ensures that the design, development, and delivery models align with the goals of the community and reconciliation, while meeting unique local needs. Her experience in program and project development, also includes managing two large federally funded projects called Going the Distance (2017-2022) and Pathways, both dedicated to empowering Indigenous communities across Canada by addressing workplace Skills for Success and fostering meaningful employment opportunities.

Ted Norris

Ted is the Chair of the Pathways National Advisory Circle. Born in Alberta, Ted is of Michif, Cree, French & Scottish heritage. He entered the full-time workforce in 1971 and retired from the Federal public service in 2012. Ted is passionate about promoting Indigenous culture, education, politics & economic development across Canada.

Career highlights include:

- District Recreation Coordinator for Edmonton's inner-city communities;
- Multicultural Advisor for the City of Edmonton where he liaised closely with the 700+ ethno-cultural community groups in that city;
- Shortly after relocating to Ottawa in 1992, he worked for the Hon. Senator Joyce Fairbairn in her role as Canada's first Minister for Literacy, followed by the Hon. Ralph Goodale in his role as Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians between 1998–2004. He also served Ministers Claudette Bradshaw, Andy Scott & Denis Coderre;
- Founding member of the Aboriginal Employees Circle of HRSDC & subsequently awarded a Public Service Award of Excellence 2012 for the AEC;
- Founding member of the Metis Nation of Alberta Metis Education Foundation.

Snapshot of recent & current endeavours:

- President of Norris Consultants – May 2012 – present.
- Provincial Coordinator for the Ontario Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Program – 2013-2017.
- National Aboriginal Advisory Committee member for the Chief Commissioner of Correctional Service Canada (CSC) – 2013 to present.
- Volunteer Facilitator for the National Table for Aboriginal Literacy & Essential Skills – on-going.
- Circle of Change member for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Missing & Murdered Aboriginal Women national advisory committee – 2016 - 2019
- Vice-Chair National Indigenous Circle - Further Education Society of Alberta – Going the Distance project & Ontario Regional Facilitator for the GD project – March 2018 – present.
- Policy Horizons Canada – Trainer / facilitator for Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #57 – Dec. 2019 – March 2020.
- Volunteer for the Prince Edward County Arts Council – Arts Advisory Committee - 2021

Contact Us

If you are interested in this project or have further questions, you may contact any of the following project personnel:

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The logo for the Government of Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag icon above the letter 'a'.

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