



Career Trek: Evaluation

Prepared for: Future Skills Centre

Prepared by: Johnston Research Inc.

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Overview:

Project: A Program for Young Moms in Northern Manitoba

Duration: March 2021- May 2023

Population: Women aged 15-23

Industry Sectors: Education

Region(s): Northern Manitoba

The project aims to . . .

- Provide participants with the opportunity to explore and learn about career and education/training options specific to the North to ensure they have the necessary tools to make informed decisions about their future
- Provide learning opportunities from Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Improve skills in resume writing, networking, interview skills and financial literacy for young mothers

Beginning / Past: Where the Project started

#Spirit: the team began the project with a strong emphasis on spirit and meeting community needs.

#Relationships: the team set out to build relationships with the communities that built on the Indigenous values and culture, specific to each community.

#Process: Planning came from a place of community strengths.

For over 25 years, Career Trek has operated as a charitable organization providing career education programming to children, youth and adults across Manitoba. Within the last 10 years, Career Trek has expanded their programming to Northern Manitoba, collaborating with schools in The Pas, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Flin Flon and surrounding communities.

Career Trek's programs provide the opportunity for participants to gain confidence, develop skills, explore interests and increase awareness of a variety of career paths. Under the Career Trek programming umbrella, Career Trek recently launched M Power North Program in Northern Manitoba. This program is specifically designed for women with young children, who are between the ages of 15 and 25. The program provides young moms with the opportunity to explore careers, education employment opportunities available in the North, develop/enhance employability skills, participate in workshops (i.e. financial literacy, resume writing, interview prep etc.), connect with industry professionals and entrepreneurs, connect with other moms, and spend time with Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

By working in this way, the program aims to provide participants with a greater awareness of education and career opportunities that exist, an opportunity to define interests, skills, likes and dislikes and create opportunities to connect with professionals working in specific industries.

“The knowledge and insight to different careers I’ve gained from the M Power Program will definitely stick with me when I begin looking at what my future career looks like for me and my family.”

– Program Participant

Experiences / Present: Program Impacts and Barriers/Gaps

#Spirit: the team is flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of each community. They have built time into the processes for reflection from a place of spirit.

#Relationships: the team has built relationships with the communities that are grounded in connection and Indigenous-led methods. Relationships are supportive and reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and doing specific to each community.

#Process: Planning continues to be done from a place of community strengths, opportunities and sovereignty.

During the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-2022, the program was delivered exclusively in a virtual format over video call (Zoom) twice a week. However, prior to and following the pandemic, Career Trek has delivered its programs on campus at University College of the North and through the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy. The team has found that the program has the most impact when delivered in person in a community space, business site or on campus at University College of the North. In-person events give Career Trek staff the opportunity to support participants in their learning, allow participants to build a connection with each other and build support networks. Additionally, to ensure participants can access the program with as little difficulty as possible, the M Power North program also provides transportation, child-minding and meals.

Given the challenges of the pandemic and the altered landscape of the labour market, the Career Trek team determined a need to better understand:

- the challenges faced by communities, and how best to respond to these challenges
- the relevance and impact of the program, and;
- identify any areas of improvement to ensure the program continues to meet community needs and better reach participants.

To accomplish this, the Career Trek team originally intended to implement a community survey to gather insight and feedback. However, as the team consulted with Johnston Research Inc. on what they hoped to learn and who they wished engage with, it was determined that an evaluation process would be better suited to meeting the consultation objectives. Therefore, the team pivoted the original approach to a two-phase evaluation; (1) with service providers and (2) with potential M Power North program participants to help fill in any gaps in information that the team wasn’t able to get from the Service Providers.

Transition: Primary Data Collection:

#Spirit: spiritual energy is shared from the programming implementation team, grounded in a strong foundation of listening to, and building reciprocal trust with the community.

#Relationships: The team worked together to arrive at an agreed joint solution for the data collection process was built on trust, which is not easy to build in one call

#Process: the process implemented supported growth and balance within Indigenous communities by honouring local identified priorities.

As previously mentioned, the data collection was initially intended to be completed in two (2) phases.

- **Phase 1:** a survey with Service Providers in the area [The Pas, Opaskweyak Cree Nation]. The objective of Phase 1 was to understand the “lay of the land” from the Service Provider perspective working with similar demographics as Career Trek; gathering insights based on their own personal, professional and lived experiences.
- **Phase 2:** a 10-point survey administered to potential participants of the M Power North program. This objective of this phase was to help fill in any gaps in information that Career Trek wasn’t able to get from the Service Providers.

In planning the data collection process, Career Trek determined that working with someone that the community was familiar with, and who they trusted would be the best / right way to obtain honest insight and feedback on the program. Therefore, the team hired an individual (contractor) who was well-connected in the education sector, and has lived within the community for over two decades to assist with the evaluation.

This individual (contractor) met with nine (9) local Service Providers including:

- Baby & Me (Regional Health Authority program)
- Kelsey Community School
- Families First
- Beatrice Wilson Doula Program
- Provincial Family Assistance Program
- Manager, Province of Manitoba based in The Pas
- Prenatal/Postnatal Care Program

Though not part of the original plan, during Phase 1, Career Trek’s CEO had the honour and foresight to meet with the Council of Elders at University College of the North. This session served as an opportunity to validate and add to the data collected by the Contractor. The Career Trek team felt that depth and breadth of insight provided by the Service Providers and Elders was enough to inform how to improve the program delivery and structure going forward to meet womxn where they’re at and where they’re comfortable. Thus, the project team

determined that Phase 2 was not required at this time. Career Trek attributed the success of Phase 1 to taking the time to hire a local contractor to connect with service providers.

Future State: Next Steps

#Spirit: Team is culturally competent and inclusive, and these values are reflected in the work they do.

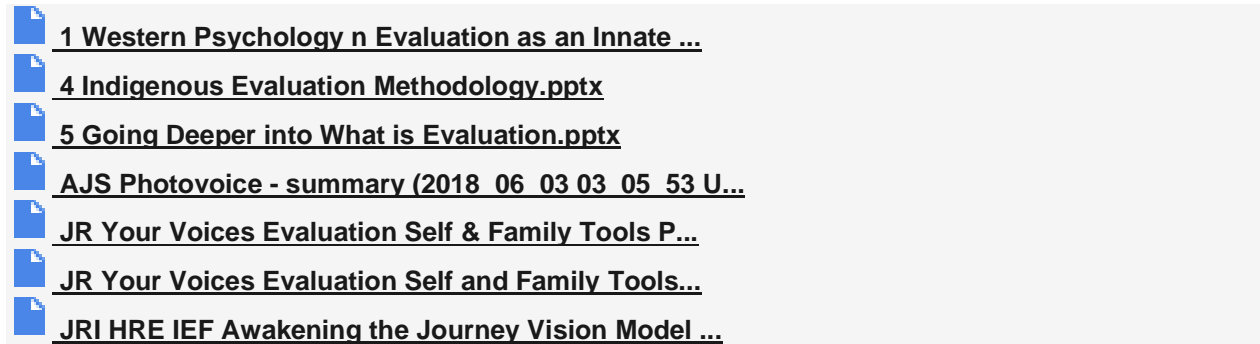
#Relationships: the team intends to continue to build relationships with the communities while applying principles of Indigenous position, equity and inclusion.

#Process: The team intends to collaborate with local service providers to improve the program content, design and process.

Plans are currently underway to come together with local Service Providers to embed career education programming into the services and supports already being offered in the community. This approach aims to empower, and support autonomy within the community.

Appendix A: Documents Provided to Organizations

Data Collection Tools to review:



1. The Waawiyeyaa storytelling tool which participants the opportunity to share their stories on a linear path through the past/present/transition and future states



2. The Medicine Wheel tool with gives participants the opportunity to share their reflections wholistically through the lens of spirit, mind and body

