



**Future
Skills
Centre**

Centre des
**Compétences
futures**

Project Insights Report

Indigenous ICT Development Centre



PARTNERS

ID Fusion
FireSpirit



LOCATIONS

Manitoba



INVESTMENT

\$670,344



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☰ Executive Summary

The Indigenous ICT Development Centre program was designed to provide information and communications technology (ICT) training for unemployed and underemployed Indigenous individuals in Winnipeg and The Pas, Manitoba. The program aimed to increase Indigenous representation in the ICT industry through a combination of in-class training, self-directed learning and work-based training.

Participants expressed strong enthusiasm about joining the program, citing several motivating factors: its focus on Indigenous people, the program's shorter duration compared to other certificates or degrees, the opportunity for hands-on workplace learning and the potential for career change. Moreover, participants felt supported by the implementation team throughout the program's delivery.

Despite initial challenges with the pace and content of in-class training, the program successfully pivoted its design based on participant feedback, leading to increased satisfaction among trainees. However, due to COVID-19, work placements were unevenly distributed, which negatively impacted employment outcomes of participants (with more success reported in Winnipeg than in The Pas). Those who did find employment expressed that the program had a significant positive impact on their lives and career paths.

The continuous learning approach used throughout the program highlighted the importance of Indigenous-led programs in addressing upskilling needs and supporting career changes of Indigenous people.

KEY INSIGHTS

1

Participants were highly motivated, highlighting the importance of Indigenous-led training and career guidance.

2

Program design was adapted based on participant feedback, which led to increased satisfaction and a more effective training experience.

3

The onset of the pandemic significantly hindered the work placement component of the program, adversely impacting participants' employment outcomes.

▶ **The Issue**

The ICT sector is among the fastest-growing sectors in Canada. Despite high demand for talent, Indigenous people remain vastly underrepresented in ICT roles.

The project sought to address a lack of Indigenous representation in the local ICT industry. In particular, IDFusion Software was looking for ways not only to enlarge the pool of available Indigenous talent but to give Indigenous businesses the opportunity to shape and deliver ICT training.



🔧 **What We Investigated**

This project investigated the potential benefits of establishing an Indigenous ICT Development Centre to offer ICT services and training within local communities. In particular, the Indigenous ICT Development Centre focused on working with Indigenous youth and underemployed individuals, experimenting with effective training methods, paid work experience, job coaching and mentorship—all while learners remained in their home communities. By collaborating with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employers, the pilot aimed to explore Indigenous-led training schemes with close links to the local community as a solution to the lack of Indigenous talent in Winnipeg and The Pas, Manitoba.

Driven by two Indigenous private sector organizations, the initiative sought to create a framework for Indigenous ICT professionals to train, collaborate and market their services both individually and collectively. The pilot used in-class training, self-directed learning and work-integrated learning to allow students to acquire on-the-job ICT skills while applying their knowledge in real-world work settings.

✔ **What We're Learning**

Participants were highly enthusiastic about the program, appreciating its focus on Indigenous people, shorter duration compared to other credentials, hands-on learning opportunities and career change potential.

The program faced early implementation challenges with respect to the training pace and content, but early adjustments based on participant feedback improved training content and overall program satisfaction. However, COVID-19 disrupted work placements, leading to uneven job outcomes, with higher success rates in Winnipeg than in The Pas. Those who secured employment reported that the program had significant positive impacts on their careers and lives.

The evaluation process entailed collecting information about participant experiences through focus groups, surveys and interviews to gain an understanding of lessons learned and potential program improvement. Overall, a number of important lessons were learned through this process:

Indigenous participants appreciate Indigenous-designed, -led and -delivered training

The model is promising as an effective solution for upskilling and for fostering employment opportunities for Indigenous individuals. Participants expressed a strong appreciation for the Indigenous-centred approach combined with practical skill building in a sector with a strong demand for talent.

Stakeholder engagement is crucial

Successfully aligning the program with participants' needs requires understanding their perspectives and contexts. Engaging program participants and incorporating their feedback is essential for creating a culturally relevant and community-driven program. For Indigenous communities, co-creation, consultation and a thorough understanding of context are essential for building sustainable relationships and ensuring that program design is culturally relevant and community driven.

Clear pathways from training to employment produce better results

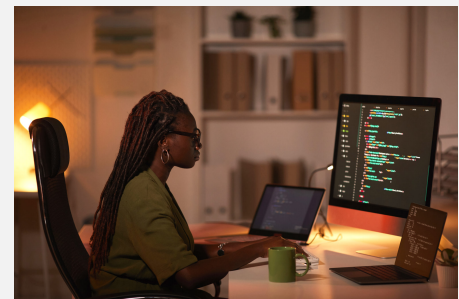
Developing a well-defined pathway from training and work experience to employment is crucial for sustaining participant engagement and achieving successful outcomes.

Flexible timelines can support planning and implementation adjustments

A more substantial pre-delivery period would have enabled program coordinators to better plan for potential challenges to delivery and to identify potential risk mitigation strategies.

★ **Why It Matters**

Innovative skills and training programs are needed to significantly change the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the ICT sector, and to support the self-determination of Indigenous communities over their digital access. As Canada continues its Reconciliation journey, more investment is needed to support this kind of skills and training innovation in an effort to dismantle the barriers to economic inclusion for Indigenous Peoples. With expanding efforts to increase broadband access and improve access via Starlink, interest in and the importance of increasing the representation of Indigenous students and professionals in key sectors like ICT will only grow in the years ahead.



**State of Skills:
Digital Tools in the Skills
Ecosystem**

It is essential that these innovation efforts be developed and led by Indigenous Peoples and communities. The lessons learned from this program can inform future efforts by highlighting the importance of culturally tailored training, stakeholder engagement and clear pathways to employment.

Even before the pandemic, the transition to digital education and training delivery was well underway in Canada.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

► What's Next

The lessons from the project have led to the development and launch of another project, Building IT Capacity in First Nations. The new project, led by IDFusion Software, in partnership with the Southeast Resource Development Council, is a community-centric, Indigenous-focused ICT training program. The new project targets local residents with an inclination toward ICT and aims to create skilled, sustainable local employment.

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

How to Cite This Report

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