

Project Insights Report

Two-Eyed Seeing Network



PARTNERS

Construction
Foundation of British
Columbia



LOCATIONS

British Columbia



INVESTMENT

\$717,132



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Executive Summary

Ongoing and persistent labour and skill shortages coupled with underemployment among key segments of the population, notably Indigenous youth have left the connections between industry and Indigenous populations to remain underdeveloped. The COVID-19 pandemic only reinforced the disconnect between these two groups.

In an effort to bridge this gap, the project aimed to test innovative methods of bringing together a diverse group, including Indigenous communities, Indigenous youth, industry representatives and employers, workforce and social development experts as well as education and training providers.

The Two Eyed Seeing method of bringing together both Western and Indigenous lenses to solutions was at the centre of the approach. In particular, the Two-Eyed Seeing Network (2ESN) blended new technologies, standards and practices while honouring the whole person and their interconnectedness to the land and others.

The 2ESN and related activities (i) identified barriers that Indigenous youth face to quality employment; (ii) highlighted best practices for workforce development for Indigenous youth; and (iii) developed a preliminary conceptual pathway for Indigenous youth workforce development that could serve as a guide for future pilot projects.

Overall, the 2ESN fostered a network of people, organizations, and communities that is more connected, knowledgeable, engaged and motivated to work together to bridge the gaps between Indigenous youth and industry in British Columbia.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1 Nearly two thirds of network contributors felt the 2ESN provided an opportunity to build meaningful connections with others doing work in Indigenous youth workforce development.
- 2 There were over 200 active contributors to the 2ESN representing more than 120 organizations across B.C.
- 3 61% of network members connected with one another outside of 2ESN activities.

The Issue

Employers in British Columbia, and elsewhere, report persistent labour and skills shortages are dampening overall competitiveness. At the same time, Indigenous populations are a significant and growing potential pool of talent, especially Indigenous youth, and Indigenous communities are looking to leverage that talent.

Despite these opportunities, the links between industry and Indigenous communities remain underdeveloped. Part of the challenge stems from how programs and workforce development pathways have been built in the past – typically developed *for* Indigenous communities rather than *with* them, resulting in policies and programs not aligned with the needs of Indigenous communities and youth.

Key to bridging that divide is meaningful engagement and establishing strong relationships that provide new opportunities to collaborate.

This project aimed to bridge the gaps between Indigenous youth and industry in British Columbia by building a network of key, diverse actors to create workforce development pathways that reflect the opportunities and needs of both youth and industry.



What We Investigated

The Two-Eyed Seeing Network (2ESN) provided a dedicated and unique venue for local and regional partners to have meaningful conversations, develop relationships and partnerships, and collaborate to build workforce development pathways that reflect the opportunities and needs of all groups while prioritizing Indigenous youth.

The project's activities to support the development and work of the network included focus groups, key informant interviews, an environmental scan and literature review as well as a series of three regional roundtables and an advisory group.

To develop the network, partners reached out to their social and professional networks to recruit contributors while ensuring representations across the five regions of the province and five stakeholder groups (Indigenous communities, Indigenous youth, industry representatives and employers, workforce and social development experts, education and training providers).

As part of that process, an Youth Advisory Group of young Indigenous people from across the province was established. The group met regularly for facilitated conversations that fed into three dedicated roundtable sessions.

Roundtable discussions of the 2ESN focused on (i) the current state of workforce development in B.C. and understanding the realities Indigenous youth face; (ii) exploring the desired future state of workforce development and how it should look to support youth and address the barriers they face; and (iii) understanding how to build a pathway between the current state and desired future state.

✔ What We're Learning

The result was a network of people, organizations and communities that are more connected, knowledgeable, engaged and motivated to work together to bridge the gaps between Indigenous youth and industry in B.C. The 2ESN had 599 participants, comprising 207 active contributors representing 123 organizations across the five regions of B.C. Almost half of participants attended more than one network event.

Network contributors said one of the main accomplishments of the network was bringing together diverse stakeholders to start a conversation. Participation in the network gave them a chance to hear new perspectives from individuals or groups they had limited opportunities to hear from prior to their involvement in the 2ESN.

The 2ESN facilitated opportunities for making connections and working towards partnership development among network contributors. Developing formal partnerships takes time, trust and resources and the non-linear process involves stakeholders becoming aware of each other, becoming connected, engaging in conversation, determining if there is potential for collaboration, building trust and relationships and then partnering for project development.

In addition to broader lessons, project activities highlighted a number of key barriers to greater inclusion of Indigenous youth in the workforce:

- Lack of required educational qualifications or grades;
- Lack of knowledge/awareness about available supports;
- Significant physical distance between Indigenous youth and employment/educational opportunities; and
- Lack of driver's licences

The 2ESN also produced a preliminary conceptual milestone-based pathway to guide future pilot projects focused on Indigenous youth workforce development. The pathway includes:

- Importance of engaging youth in their own futures, including in the design and delivery of workforce programs and supports.
- Better employment and skills training outcomes will rely on an increased understanding of local economic opportunities and improved awareness of those among groups such as Indigenous youth.
- Workforce development delivery needs to consider the unique circumstances of rural and remote communities where many Indigenous youth live. A one-size-fits-all approach is not effective and training programs need to be developed and delivered in a way that ensures they are a match for the community of people doing the training.

★ Why It Matters

As employers seek to address persistent labour and skill shortages and make progress on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, it is important to leverage the talent of underrepresented and marginalized groups such as Indigenous youth. Employers and trainers need to improve their cultural awareness and capacity to engage with Indigenous youth and communities to better understand their needs.

This project highlighted that successful workforce development strategies include the targeted populations in their design and delivery and emphasized the need to take the time to establish relationships between stakeholders to tackle the unique barriers faced by the groups, rather than attempting to use a one-size-fits-all approach.

Lessons of this nature can be leveraged when considering how to develop solutions to improve the labour market and social outcomes for other underrepresented groups that face unique workforce barriers.



State of Skills: Supporting Indigenous and Northern Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Indigenous and Northern entrepreneurship and businesses play a crucial role in bolstering local economies by supporting economic diversification, job creation and community development.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

►► What's Next

The network developed a preliminary conceptual pathway for Indigenous youth workforce development that can be a guide for future pilot projects.

The conceptual pathway can also be adapted to develop specific pathways for different regions, sectors, groups of youth, or other contexts.

Many network participants expressed an interest in continuing the conversations, particularly to determine collaborations and initiatives that can take what was learned from the 2ESN discussions and apply it in actionable ways.

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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