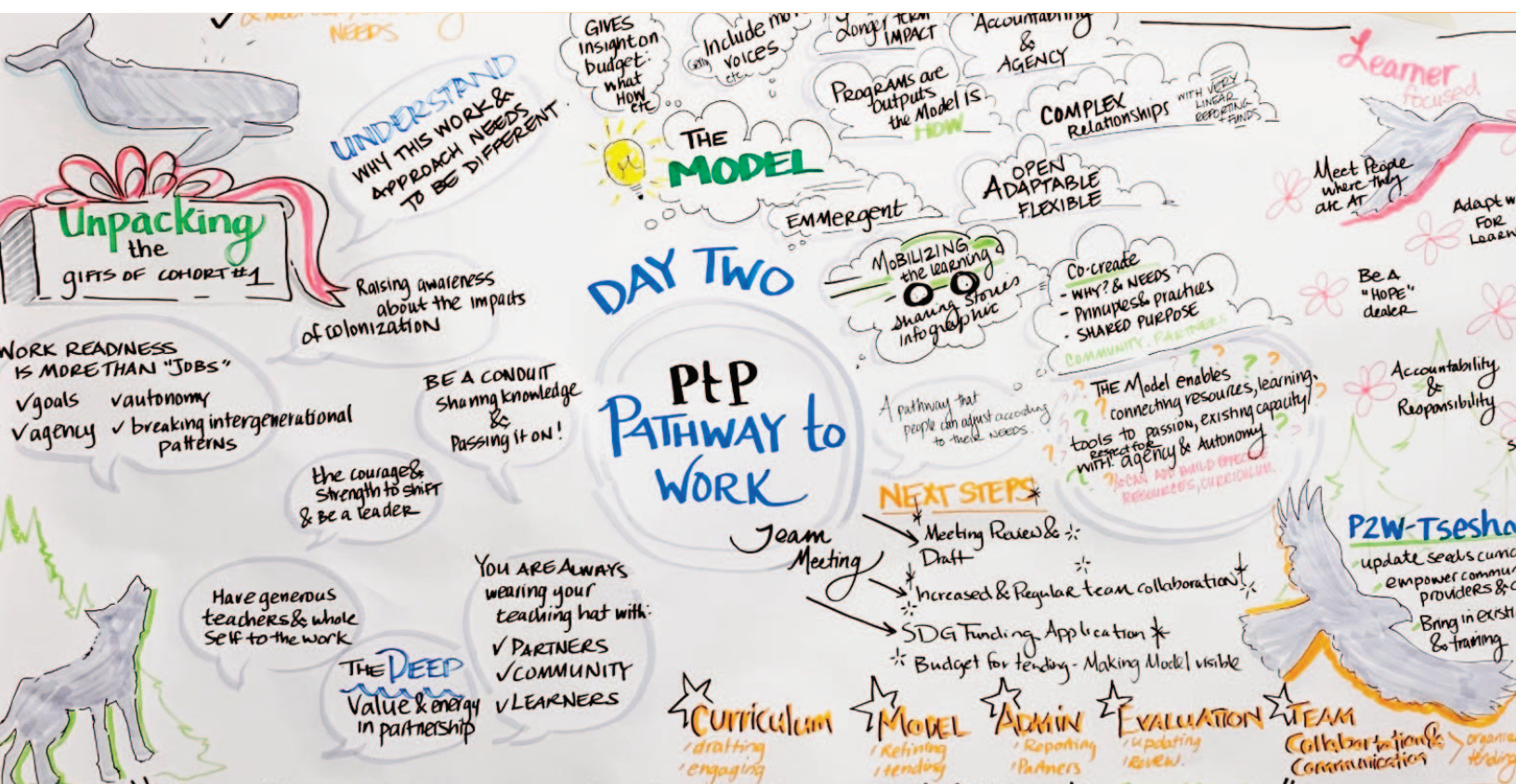


# Pathway to Work Final Evaluation Report



Graphic by Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier

## The Story of Pathway to Work and What We Learned

Prepared by:  
Sue Folinsbee, Project Evaluator  
February 2023

[www.pathwaytowork.ca](http://www.pathwaytowork.ca)

Pathway to Work: Final Evaluation Report

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**Canada** 

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Our team members are:

- Ron Castel, Indigenous liaison, Manitoba Building Trades Institute (MBTI)
- Sue Folinsbee, Project evaluator, Tri En Communications
- Geri-Lynn Fontaine, Facilitator, Kanata Indigenous Workplace Skills
- Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier, Indigenous advisor, White Raven Consulting
- Karen Geraci, Program developer, inQuire Consulting
- Nene Kraneveldt, Indigenous liaison
- Marisa Mazzulla, Program developer, inQuire Consulting
- Ellen Martin, Sustainability advisor
- Barbara McFater, CEO, PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs
- Heather Paterson, Project manager, PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs

I would also like to give special thanks to Leah May who supported me with evaluation work for Cohort 7 in British Columbia.

Many thanks to all the participants, community leads, facilitators, family members and project partners from the seven cohorts who provided input for the evaluation throughout the project.

The P2W project is funded by the Government of Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada. For more information about P2W, please see [www.pathwaytowork.ca](http://www.pathwaytowork.ca)

Sue Folinsbee  
Project Evaluator  
February 2023

## The Awesome P2W Team



Ron Castel



Sue Folinsbee



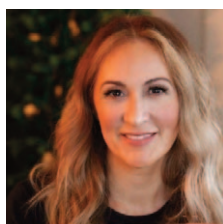
Geri-Lynn  
Fontaine



Kelly Foxcroft-  
Poirier<sup>1</sup>



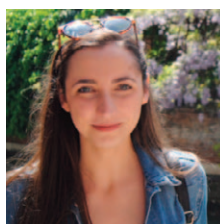
Karen Geraci



Nene Kraneveldt



Marisa Mazzulla



Ellen Martin



Barbara McFater



Heather Paterson

## Dedication to Geri-Lynn Fontaine

This final evaluation report is dedicated to our dear friend and colleague Geri-Lynn Fontaine. Geri passed away on December 5, 2023, after a short battle with cancer. She will always remain in our hearts.



<sup>1</sup> Credit to Indigenous photographer Melody Charlie for photograph of Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier.

# Introduction

## About the P2W evaluation report

This final evaluation report covers the five years of the Pathway to Work (P2W) project which began in October 2017 and ended in August 2022. During the project, nine evaluation reports were written. Six evaluation reports were produced for seven cohorts as part of this project along with three team evaluation reports.

This report focuses on the planning, development and delivery and evaluation of the P2W Project according to the four seasons, the four directions and the four phases of life of the Medicine Wheel. The findings are presented according to our Pathways to Work Framework<sup>2</sup> on page 9.

## Background

Pathway to Work was a five-year, multi-phase pilot project funded by the Government of Canada's Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program. The project was delivered by PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs (PTP), a community-based agency that empowers adults to find work they value.

The project involved working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and support organizations to co-design and pilot a Work Readiness program, then use the experience gained to develop a program framework to inform future efforts.

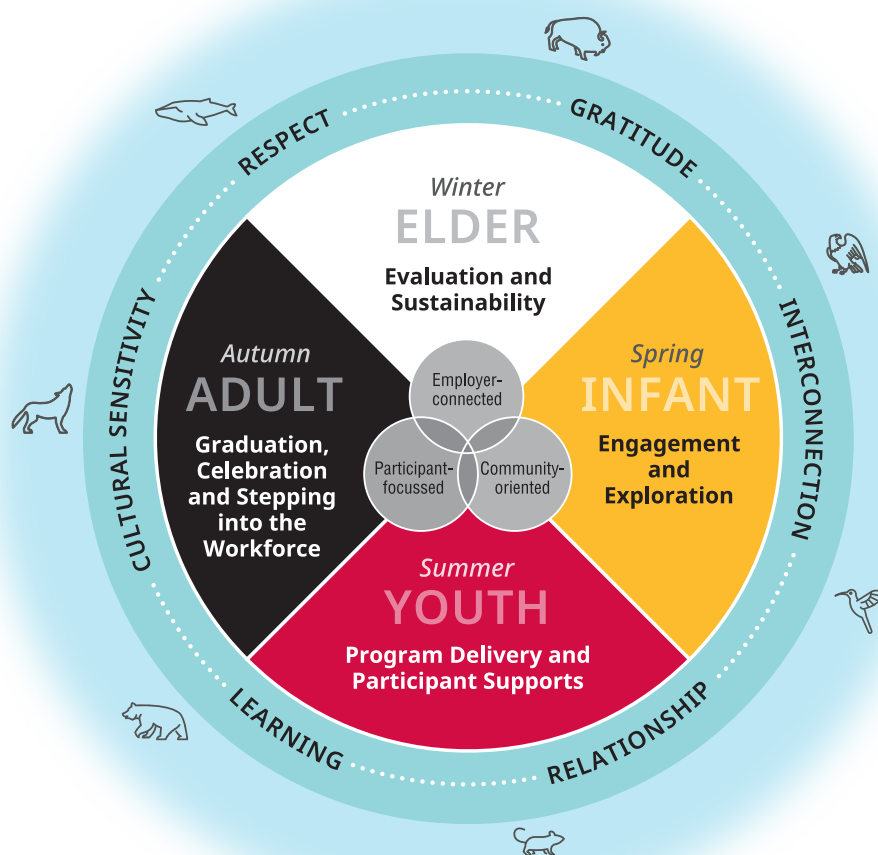
The P2W team worked closely with communities and other stakeholders to carry out these activities:

1. Design and implement pilot initiatives that connected Indigenous job seekers to local jobs on large-scale construction projects with seven cohorts in Manitoba (five) and British Columbia (two)
2. Develop capacity within communities to design, deliver and refine initiatives
3. Learn from the pilot experiences to develop a program framework.

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<sup>2</sup> Development of the Pathway to Work Framework was led by P2W team member Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier with the support of Ron Castel. The intent of Pathway to Work and descriptions of the Framework are summarized from this work.

# Pathway to Work Framework<sup>3</sup>



## Intent of Pathway to Work

The aim and intent of (P2W) is to provide communities, learners and employers a structure that is supportive, with the scaffolding to lift them up from a place of their own strengths and context. There is enough openness to allow the program to be responsive to community and learner needs. Within the spirit of reciprocity and reconciliation, the structure also honours the autonomy and agency of our Nation partners and our learners.

The concept of a framework aligns with our vision and intent to design and deliver programs differently, from a space of partnership and co-learning. We move at the speed of trust and in the spirit of “progress not perfection.” The purpose of this framework is to act as a component of knowledge mobilization, of communicating what we do, how we did the work and what we learned along the way.

<sup>3</sup> Development of the Pathway to Work Framework was led by P2W team member Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier with the support of Ron Castel. The intent of Pathway to Work and descriptions of the Framework are taken directly from this work.

There are two key concepts that are part of our analytical framework for our learning that provide pathways for the future ways:

1. The medicine bundle
2. The teachings of the medicine wheel

The medicine bundle is comprised of foundational pieces used to support the work and provide clarity for collaboration. The medicine wheel is a map of life, a philosophy of balance at the centre that aligns with an interconnected and interdependent view.

The medicine wheel offers a way to look holistically at our project through the natural cycles of life and seasons that provide guidance towards good practices.

The three pillars at the centre of the Pathway to Work Framework ensure that Work Readiness training has these qualities:

- Community Oriented
- Learner Focused
- Employer Connected

The medicine wheel teaches us to uphold what is at the centre to guide our work; we must uphold our relationships and always work towards balance, seeing the way the energy we put in affects everything around us.

## Our animal guides<sup>4</sup>

Across time, Indigenous people have used the teachings of the animals they see in their landscape. The animal guides provide teachings and deep truths about ourselves and help us in our lives and organizations and on projects like P2W so we work with others in a good way. The animal guides can show us how to work along side each other. We can receive lessons from our animal guides from a distance, depersonalizing the lessons we might receive without shame or blame or polarization. The lessons come in the form of story telling. The animal guides follow the seasons of the medicine wheel.

These guides can show us how to be in each phase or season and how to recognize and honour our own gifts and those of others. All gifts are needed on a project like P2W. No gift is better than another. We need all the qualities represented by the animal guides to be well.

This extra layer of thinking guided by the animals at a personal leadership level allows us to look more holistically at ourselves, and how we can use our gifts and when we might need to call on others where there might be gaps.

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier, White Raven Consulting for P2W Framework

**Spring:** Our animal guide is the eagle, representing big picture vision and the thinking we need at the beginning of a project when we are planning it out. We also need to see how things are interconnected in the landscape from the long view – flying above.

**Summer:** The mouse and the hummingbird represent the small things, interconnections, relationships and joy, especially around working with learners.

**Autumn:** The wolf and the bear represent courage, service, responsibility, leadership, gratitude and care.

**Winter:** The whale and the buffalo represent wisdom, discipline and working with depth. They remind us that we need wisdom and reflection during the winter phase of our work. This is the time to work with discipline to see all the learning, including mistakes, and what did not go well. We need to work with depth to go through this reflective, evaluative and sustainable phase of our work.

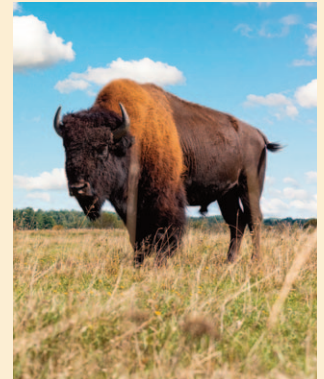
## Animal guides<sup>5</sup>



Courage, Responsibility,  
Servant, Leadership,  
Care



Joy, Relationships  
The little things matter!



Gratitude



Big picture vision  
Long-term thinking

Wisdom, Discipline,  
Working with depth

<sup>5</sup> Based on a graphic by Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier

# Putting together this final evaluation report

As an evaluator who is of settler heritage, I have been attempting to use approaches to gathering and presenting information that are less rigid and less colonial. Working with my colleagues on this project, I have had a lot of support and mentorship. It has been a team effort to gather the information for this evaluation throughout the five years of the Pathway to Work Project. The idea is to be more open-ended to hear the story of the project from the point of view of those involved rather than just asking a list of 10 questions. Having an open-ended approach is more holistic and in line with Indigenous teachings. However, some people may still prefer to have a list of questions. An effective way of working is figuring out how to meet people where they are at in the evaluation process and being flexible.

This way of doing things is a work in progress and there is still a long way to go. Through the project team evaluation work, we are looking at progress rather than perfection. We are interested in how things unfolded on the journey of the project in a flowing way that is integrated and holistic through the program framework. Within the story, we want to know what worked, what didn't, and what we learned. We also want to understand the pernicious effects of Canada's colonial history and residential schools on Indigenous learners when they come to learning and we offer a trauma-informed approach. We want to look at the project from an eagle's view to see possibilities as well as systemic barriers.

For the final evaluation report, I drew from all the previous nine evaluation reports as well as final reflections from project team members in 2022-23. The P2W framework provides a structure for organizing the story and our learnings from the P2W Project.

I have much gratitude to my mentors and team members for their support of the evaluation component of the project.

# Infant Spring Phase

Engage and explore – INTERCONNECTION **Animal Guide** – the Eagle



## Major changes on the project

In the beginning of the project, we experienced a major change on the project with the withdrawal of the employer partner even before the project had begun. This was a significant change because the training model for the project was to be designed in collaboration with the employer with their Indigenous partners in mind. The employer was to bring Indigenous relationships and potential entry into numerous communities.

The project team was able to come up with a strong alternative approach to the project which was then approved by the funder. The new plan became to approach different communities, umbrella organizations, Indigenous partners, and potential employers directly.

## New approach

This new approach was seen as more compelling, inclusive and innovative in that the relationship with Indigenous communities was at the centre of working in the spirit of co-creation to design what the communities need. This approach was more aligned with reconciliation than the original approach. It is something being called for under reconciliation, but not necessarily being done or being done well. PTP's goal was to use an approach aligned with reconciliation and as such the new approach should be considered a solid accomplishment. The team adapted to the new approach as we worked in a changing and challenging environment.

## Challenges with new approach

There were some challenges associated with the approach as well. The main challenge was that it took a great deal of time and effort to build relationships and attract interest in partnering on the project. Another challenge was figuring out how to make up the financial loss because of the withdrawal of the initial employer partner.

## Significant meetings

In 2018-2019, there were significant meetings: an in-person partners meeting in October 2018 and virtual team meetings in January and February 2019. The in-person meeting provided the opportunity for partners and project team members to meet, to discuss potential roles for partners and to reflect and give feedback on what had been done to develop a training model to date. Participants in the meeting developed the set of guiding principles below for working on the project and talked about their hopes for the project, the "why" of the project and next steps. The project team met virtually to discuss roles and responsibilities, to better understand these roles and how to work together as a team. Led by team member Ellen Martin, the team worked together to develop a Theory of Change and a vision for the project.

# Pathway to Work Guiding Principles

During the project, the team consistently applied the following lived into Pathway to Work Principles:

- **Respect:** We value good communication, clear roles, and transparency. We are open and honest and provide regular updates.
- **Interconnected:** We are sharing and generous, supporting the journey.
- **Learning:** We are a learning community, learning from each other all along the way. We put relationships at the centre, value personal connections; we are all learners; we combine and share experience.
- **Gratitude:** We are appreciative and thankful, feeding ourselves and others good things.
- **We Start with Relationships:** We work to serve and start with community. We centre our work and programs on the learners' interests and goals. We embrace diversity. "It's about people and their stories".
- **Cultural Humility:** We are learning to work in sensitivity to community context and culture. We work with reciprocity, investing into community, working towards resonance and cultural safety wherever possible.

## New paradigm

2018 -2019 highlighted the resilience and commitment of the project team to work in a different paradigm which put Indigenous communities at the centre, working in relationship and reciprocity and in the spirit of reconciliation. As such, the project was seen as so much more than developing a program or training model. It had a higher vision of connecting Nations to the positive benefits of their territories and beginning to take back that which had been taken away through colonization. It was also seen as making a contribution to access to meaningful employment for community members who participated in P2W. Economic prosperity was seen as a way to a better life for participants, their families and communities.

As a diverse and cross-cultural group, mostly white, we explored and experimented with how to communicate with each other to accomplish the work of a very complex project. This learning was built on a foundation of growing trust and on getting to know and understand each other better. There was a desire among team members for regular communication including face-to-face meetings to continue to facilitate relationship-building and to ensure everyone could make their best contributions to the project.

In 2019, the solidifying of a partnership between PTP and the Manitoba Building Trades Institute (MBTI) was a major accomplishment with Ron Castel, Indigenous Liaison, taking on the lead role. Successful completions took place for Cohort 1 in the Tataskweyak Cree Nation in Split Lake in the summer of 2019 and for Cohort 2 with the Swampy Cree Tribal Council in the fall of 2019. In these early days of the project, Ron Castel successfully became the bridge for the project team into work with Indigenous communities in Manitoba, an unexpected and more appropriate alternative to the original plan which was to have the Indigenous

members of the project team provide this support from across the country. Ron joined Nene Kraneveldt, the project's Indigenous Liaison in BC. From the beginning, Nene did much work in the new paradigm to interest and engage communities in the project.

Although sometimes bumpy, this work of staying true to the needs of communities and of engaging in new ways of working began to produce positive results. Within this revised approach, the team built a new path, as the way to reach the next stage of the journey was not always clear. As a result, team members developed a higher tolerance for ambiguity, which was not always comfortable. The recommendation at this time was to find ways to expand the number of Indigenous colleagues on the team and to come up with ideas to develop the employer component of the project. Both these areas were seen as critical to the long-term success of the project.

## **The importance of time to build relationships**

During this period, the team learned about the importance of relationships to do our work and the amount of time and leadership that is needed to build relationships. Often this important time is not accounted for or built into funding timelines. The time for us to build relationships as a project team paralleled the time needed to build relationships with communities. Hand in hand with relationship-building is reciprocity. Reciprocity means the learning and giving is on both sides.

Proposals may not make space for reciprocity. Funders may have expectations about what outcomes should be and prescribed ways to measure the outcomes that are different from how they would be measured and valued from an Indigenous perspective. It was difficult to map out a project with a concept and partners in place as a requirement to receive funding. More flexibility to co-create with Indigenous communities is needed within funding proposals.

## **Indigenous leadership on the project and expansion of the project team**

In 2019 an important shift on the project was to centre Indigenous leadership through key components of the project led by Indigenous team members with PTP's role changing to a supporting one. It was clear at the team meeting in September 2019 that the project's leadership needed to move away from PTP to the partners and had to come through an Indigenous lens. Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier offered to take responsibility for the development work on the training model and Ron Castel and Geri-Lynn Fontaine took on bigger roles across the project. Kelly also took on a mentorship role with Sue Folinsbee for evaluation, working towards an Indigenous lens. Nene Kraneveldt continued to lead the work in BC. Both Nene and Kelly played a key leadership role in the facilitation of many of our project team meetings.

Team members saw the expansion of project team roles for Ron Castel and Geri-Lynn Fontaine as key successes. This provided a great opportunity to connect and talk about the project as a whole. Although the work in Manitoba and BC both centre Indigenous wisdoms, the work was perceived differently. This spoke to the importance of ensuring our work acknowledged different cultural practices across Canada rather than one monolithic view, so the work could remain authentic.

## Engaging communities; planning and preparing for cohorts

Over the course of the project from 2019 to 2022, seven Work Readiness cohorts successfully completed the training during the P2W project. Each initiative started with P2W team members getting to know the community before collaboratively designing and implementing programming that built on the lessons learned from earlier cohorts.

This planning phase for each cohort included analyzing strengths and challenges of each community and working with them to identify the supports, services and learning materials required to realize each community's vision. The time from getting agreement and signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to moving ahead to delivering the program depended on community capacity, what was taking place in the community at the time as well as COVID lockdowns and the ability to secure the right partners and facilitators.

## Development of the project framework and new materials

### *The Pathway to Work Framework*

Team member Kelly Foxcroft-Poirier aptly uses the metaphor of making maple syrup to describe the process of developing the P2W framework developed during the project.

[!\[\]\(7a315dbd5736d1ca324577d88145843b\_img.jpg\) Click on this link to hear Kelly speak about the process](#)

### *New materials*

A number of new materials were developed during the project along with the project framework. The development carried out started during the Infant Spring Phase and continued to the end of the project. These materials included Skills for Success learning materials, facilitation cards, implementation tools and facilitator videos. The team learned what needed to be developed as each cohort was delivered and saw what could be added to make the planning and delivery process stronger. These additions also contributed to sustainability in that others outside the project will be able to use these materials. The materials are described in detail and can be accessed at [www.pathwaytowork.ca](http://www.pathwaytowork.ca).

# Youth Summer Phase

## Program delivery and supporting learners – RELATIONSHIP AND CONNECTION

### Animal Guide – the mouse and the hummingbird



## Overview

From 2019 to 2022, seven cohorts attended Work Readiness training: five in Manitoba and two in British Columbia. Six of the cohorts were held in First Nations communities and one was held in an urban centre, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In total, 99 Indigenous learners registered for the program with twenty-one of these being women. Eighty-six participants completed the Work Readiness training and 79 completed a work placement. The indigenous communities involved were:

### Manitoba

- Chemawawin Cree Nation
- Dakota Tipi First Nation
- Misipawistik Cree Nation
- Mosakahiken Cree Nation
- Pine Creek First Nation
- Sapotaweyak First Nation
- Tataskweyak Cree Nation

### British Columbia

- Snaw-naw-as First Nation
- Snuneymuxw First Nation
- Tseshaht First Nation

## Facilitators of the Work Readiness Program

Geri-Lynn Fontaine facilitated the five Manitoba cohorts. In British Columbia, Floyd Blades and Christle Lowe facilitated Cohort 6 with Tseshaht First Nation, and Joel and Sandi Beaupre facilitated Cohort 7 with Snaw-naw-as and Snuneymuxw First Nations. As part of the planning stage, community partners and others received training on CAMERA and ESAT training.<sup>6</sup>

### Manitoba cohorts

In Manitoba, these were the components of Work Readiness training:

- Six weeks of Work Readiness with integrated Essential Skills, a week of safety training and a six-week work placement (Cohorts 1 (summer) and 2 (fall) in 2019)<sup>7</sup>
- Five weeks of Work Readiness with integrated Essential Skills, an Introduction to Construction Trades including safety training (seven weeks) and a work practicum building a house in the community (six weeks); (Cohorts 3 and 4 in 2021)<sup>8</sup>
- Six weeks of Work Readiness training with integrated Essential Skills only (Cohort 5 – urban setting in Winnipeg, spring 2022)
- One self-realization workshop.

<sup>6</sup> To learn more, see [www.pathwaytowork.ca](http://www.pathwaytowork.ca)

<sup>7</sup> For Cohort 2, Swampy Cree Tribal Council hosted the training with four Nations participating.

<sup>8</sup> The six weeks of Work Readiness was part of a larger training initiative and practicum offered by MBTI and First People's Development Inc. The partners could see the value of the Work Readiness program as part of the larger training initiative and practicum. As well, the larger training initiative could provide many new opportunities for participants. The expanded program gives Indigenous workers work experience, experience using tools and trades terminology. They are exposed to a lot of construction trades, which increases their options.

The long view in planning Manitoba cohorts was to move through locations from North to South where costs of northern, more remote locations would be more expensive to deliver training.



By Ron Castel

### ***Self-realization workshop***

The self-realization workshop was a key component of the Work Readiness program and was offered in all five Manitoba cohorts. The workshop was facilitated by Ron Castel in a culturally appropriate way. It was designed to promote healing and to give participants a way to look at traits and habits and why they make the decisions they do seven generations after contact. The workshop “takes the curtain away” to show that making some of these decisions may not be their fault. The medicine wheel concept is used to look at the child, youth, adult and Elder in the modern day and show the dysfunction and chaos caused by colonization in each of these life stages. As Ron says, “Government tried to fade us out.” It is essential for participants to see this truth, even though it may make them angry.

Participants learn about lifestyle and society before contact. Pre-contact, there were no reserves, welfare or currency. There were no material goals or no monetary gains; laws respected the carbon footprint. Animals were honoured and there was no waste. People did not see themselves as better than animals. There were schools, doctors, trade and commerce. There was ceremony and spirituality. Through natural laws, the child was taken care of with love and attention by grandparents and trained in what they were good at. Playing and learning, they were embraced by the community and made strong to take on life’s challenges. Adults looked after youth and taught them skills; they were the leaders of families and communities. There were three hundred nations that were part of Turtle Island. Communities back then were nomadic and usually were made up of three or four families. They met at the forks for trading, weddings and births.

Back then there was no question of “who we were,” and it feels hopeful to gain back that sense of identity in this workshop. Participants learn that the impact of contact was the strategic assimilation of the continent. The goal was to “assimilate the savages” through separating the parent and the child. As a result, parents had no identity, and their children cannot speak their language. This circle that was begun with residential schools did not end until 1996.

Ron emphasizes that it is important to do this workshop early in the Work Readiness program so participants see why today is the way it is for them and that they do not need to hold all the blame. Work Readiness teaches “now that you are an adult, here’s what you have to do.” Participants learn how to make decisions, set goals, manage time, be responsible, manage money, reach goals and deal with stress. The workshop also covers work ethics and how to be professional.

## ***British Columbia cohorts***

In British Columbia the model for programming included:

- Eight weeks of integrated occupational skills, hands on construction experience renovating a building in the community, and essential life skills (Cohort 6 in summer 2022)
- Five weeks of Skills for Success, employability skills, First Aid, and the BC Construction Foundation's Paddle Program (Cohort 7 in summer 2022).



*Participant from Cohort 7 with completed paddle.*

There was a desire to find pathways for accommodating a much larger sector of community members in Cohorts 6 and 7 in BC than just those who were employment ready. For example, there was an emphasis on building cultural pride and identity in both cohorts. There was also an emphasis on life skills along with Work Readiness topics. The project allowed space for these differences. This shows the diversity in how the model and project can be applied to meet community needs in different parts of the country. In Cohort 7, participants had the opportunity to work for a major construction company working locally. However, none of the participants took advantage of this opportunity because they did not have the option of work placement which often serves as a confidence-building first step on the bridge to work. In addition, some pursued healing and community services and were not ready to take advantage of this opportunity.

## The story of the Summer Phase

In this section we tell the story of the actual program delivery of the Work Readiness program across the cohorts. This includes recruiting and selecting participants, and the Work Readiness program itself. We describe both the highs and successes along with the bumps in this journey. Although some of the highs and bumps are similar in Manitoba and BC, it is more authentic to tell the story by province because the delivery of the program and journey were different.

### ***Manitoba cohorts***

The Work Readiness program consisted of these four components:

- an intake and selection process to ensure the right fit between potential participants and the program
- classroom based instruction on 1) topics such as time management, communication, money management, setting goals and career planning; 2) an integrated Skills for Success component on topics such as taking notes, reading calendars and schedules, etc., 3) role model presentations and access to Elders for counselling and or/classroom support 4) health and safety training; 5) construction skills training (optional)
- a self-realization workshop<sup>9</sup>
- a job placement or work practicum.<sup>10</sup>



*Geri Fontaine at Tataskweyak Cree Nation*

The project in Manitoba was looking for communities that were open to the idea of young people working and that were ready to get involved. The importance of the community having purchasing power because wage earners' money stays in the community and more people are employed was also a criterion. There also needed to be local employers and a project for employment.

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<sup>9</sup> The self-realization workshop was delivered by Ron Castel in each of the five Manitoba cohorts.

<sup>10</sup> Cohort 5 in Manitoba did not have this component.

### ***Participant reflections during the program***

The most common thing that participants in the Manitoba cohorts longed for was to find and keep a good, steady-paying job. They wanted to work to provide for their families, support their children better financially and have their own home and vehicle. They also wanted certificates or further education that would help them get a good job along with skills like managing stress and communication that would help them at work. Many participants had a feeling of optimism at being able to move forward to achieve work-related and educational goals. They were exposed to many ideas that they had not considered for future careers both in the trades and outside the trades.

Overall, participants liked the welcoming atmosphere, the humour, the fun, the program content and activities, working together as a group and learning new things. In Cohort 2, some participants said it was good to leave their community and go to a different place where they could meet new people and make new friends. Participants looked forward to getting up in the morning and coming to the program. Participants saw what they were learning as valuable to their future. Some participants expressed their desire to come to the program every day and how it “refreshed their brains.” One person noted, “We grew together. The way we communicated together was like wolves in a pack.”

Budgeting and managing time were among the most important things learned by participants. They also learned Essential Skills like reading, document use and math for work; along with work values such as respect and being on time. There were more spiritual or emotional learnings related to personal growth such as more open-mindedness, self awareness, connection with others, dealing with anger, honesty, self-confidence and having pride in oneself. The program showed people how to set goals to “go after opportunities that are out there even if it means leaving the community to go to the city.”

*Here's what participants had to say across the cohorts in Manitoba during the program in their own words...*

*I expect to build on and utilize essential skills to seek meaningful employment.*

*I can budget better. I learned how much I was wasting my money.*

*I am motivated to come every day.*

*I am learning a lot about myself and others.*

*I have social anxiety but this classroom setting does not trigger anxious feelings.*

*I am expecting to learn to build maybe a house. I think this program is about how to work with others and work in the real world.*

*I am learning a lot, not to be shy, to speak up in front of others.*

*I like that it is a small class and everyone is patient with each other.*

*[I would like to see] more hands on.*

*I am learning to use a tape measure.*

## FACILITATORS' APPROACH

### *Workplace Readiness facilitator*

The Workplace Readiness facilitator spoke about the program being a journey of reciprocity where participants learned from the facilitator and the facilitator learned from them. The program was facilitated in a spirit of caring. Blame was never used when participants were late or did not attend. Instead, the facilitator focused on what participants might have missed or asked “Do you want to be that way?” She was also always prepared to be flexible to meet participants where they were at (providing more practice and examples with Essential Skills) and changing how the program was delivered (switching to distance learning during COVID). She was also available to help participants with any challenges outside of the program.

 Browse Geri-Lynn's videos

<https://pathwaytowork.ca/facilitation-techniques/>

The program focused on setting goals for a career and planning for participants' futures and their families because just getting a job was not enough. It included learning to speak up for themselves, getting the right employer and making solid plans to achieve their goals. Presentations and check-ins were part of the program. Participants may have come in with low self-esteem as evidenced by their body language, but this changed as they went through the program.

The equality of everyone learning from each other, including the instructor, and teaching each other was emphasized. Professionalism at work was learned through story-telling, with both the instructor and participants sharing stories. Humour and fun were integrated into the learning. Participants did a lot of role plays and they learned to negotiate and work as a team. These skills were extrapolated to the workplace where participants learned the importance of “looking out for a co-worker's back.” They also learned the top factors to being successful.



*Ron Castel in front of house built at Dakota Tipi*

### *Construction trades trainer*

The construction trades trainer (Cohorts 3 and 4) carried out much of the classroom work as a whole group. As a facilitator, he often listed questions on the board, gave participants a chance to reflect on the questions, and then discussed answers as a whole group together.

The majority of classroom time focused on what he believed participants would need to know on the job. He introduced math concepts as needed to help participants

understand how these skills apply to construction tasks. He paired participants who struggled with participants who understood concepts and encouraged peer instruction to help stronger participants consolidate what they had learned and to help weaker participants develop and practise their skills. Throughout the training, he incorporated life lessons.

## ***Successes and gaps in the Work Readiness program***

The process of learning and change within the Manitoba cohorts was an iterative one as the Manitoba implementation team<sup>11</sup> finetuned what was working well and identified and addressed gaps for each new cohort over several years.

### **Successes**

There were many successes; the main one being that the program prepared participants for the next steps that included safety and construction training and their work placement or practicum.<sup>12</sup>

The integrated Skills for Success modules worked well and only had to be adjusted to suit each cohort. For example, in Cohort 2, it took more time to go through the topics so pre-instruction content and more practice was added to suit the needs of participants. In Cohorts 3 and 4, the content was modified to include topics such as using a tape measure, calculating floor area, imperial measure and fractions. Similarly, in Cohort 5, more teaching of fractions and using a tape measure were added.

The building of relationships and trust on many levels was the key to the success of the cohorts. A key factor in successful relationship-building was the concept of reciprocity where everyone had something to learn, give and receive back from others. Co-creation of the program with the communities to realize their vision was another success factor.

Communities decided what supports, services, curriculum and programming they needed. Other success factors were a good intake process (criteria for selecting participants)

[[see Pathway to Work website for information](#)], supportive employer partners, excellent facilitators, the Essential Skills (replaced by Skills for Success) [[Skills for Success](#)] component and the CAMERA Placement assessment [[CAMERA](#)]. Role model presentations supported and encouraged participants. Participants could relate to role models who at one time were in a similar place to them.

In Cohorts 3 and 4, strong internal capacity and good relations between the facilitator and community support workers were other success factors along with orientation training with community staff. Aside from the content of the orientation package, the training provided an opportunity for the facilitator and community workers to get to know each other better. The facilitator also developed learning materials that could be used at home during COVID lockdowns with an approach using Facebook and Messenger for distance learning. This approach was also used when there were other reasons the participants couldn't learn on-site. This proved to be a proactive, effective alternative.

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<sup>11</sup> Manitoba team members were Ron Castel, Geri Fontaine, Karen Geraci and Marisa Mazzulla with the support of project manager Heather Paterson.

<sup>12</sup> Does not apply to Cohort 5.

For Cohorts 3 and 4, the Work Readiness program was part of a larger program that included a construction trades training component and the building of a house in each community. This was a new model for the P2W project. Participants were interested in hands-on construction training and related work. The partnership with Manitoba Building Trades institute (MBTI) and First Peoples Development Inc. (FPDI), provided them with the whole package, including work experience. Participants were exposed to many different trades and opportunities during the practicum, increasing their options for the future. In addition, the facilitator for the construction trades training was also the employer for the practicum. This proved to be a very successful model.

For Cohort 5, the question was “What would be the difference offering the Work Readiness program in an urban setting as opposed to in an Indigenous community?” Winnipeg was seen as a good test ground with a lot of Indigenous workers and employers looking for workers. Resources in Winnipeg were abundant. There were a lot of Indigenous programs, not-for profits, unions and construction employers. Eagle Urban Transition Centre (EUTC) became the partner that could recruit participants for the Work Readiness program and help participants secure employment opportunities with local employers as there was no work placement component for this cohort. As part of the partnership, EUTC also committed to support participants afterwards with counselling and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE ) because of COVID.

### **Challenges**

The Manitoba team found it more difficult to plan and deliver P2W in Winnipeg than in more rural Indigenous communities. There are so many resources, supports and programs in Winnipeg that organizations, because of how funding is structured, seemed to be working in silos and protecting their own interests. It may be more difficult to find partners and the right kind of commitment. This was contrary to what one might think given the abundance of resources for Indigenous job seekers in the city. The importance of partnerships that would cover all the different aspects of the initiative in an urban centre was seen as essential. This included partners who could contribute a training venue, training dollars, a work practicum, supports like child care and transportation and recruitment; and who would be able to first provide connections to employment for participants and then to follow up with them after the program.

## Addressing Challenges

The Manitoba team identified and addressed gaps from one cohort to the next. This included clarifying roles and responsibilities, so everyone knew what their tasks were. Coming out of Cohort 1, a task list and work plan showing who was responsible for what was developed for Cohort 2. Roles and responsibilities were more clearly defined in Memoranda of Understanding. The role of community support workers was more formalized around outreach, intake and the screening process. There was a need for more support on the ground for the delivery team with the intake process, CAMERA assessments, problem-solving/guidance for participants and coordinating the graduation. This support was adjusted depending on the capacity of the community and/or partners. For example, the facilitator took on more of this support role in Cohorts 2 and 5.

A training agreement was developed outlining expectations for participants; they were required to sign this agreement. The importance of a community employment counsellor to follow up with participants on resume development and employment related issues was also noted.

Out of Cohort 2 came the idea to develop an orientation package for community support workers. This would focus on intake and screening, job development, work placements and project communications. An orientation package was developed and piloted with community staff for Cohorts 3 and 4 using Zoom. More work was also done on finetuning the screening and intake process for these two cohorts. Each new strategy to address identified gaps strengthened the planning and delivery process.

For Cohorts 3 and 4, the Work Readiness program was part of a larger program that included a construction trades training component and the building of a house in both communities. This proved to be a very successful model.

For Cohort 5, there was no availability of training incentives as there had been through the other four community cohorts. This cohort was also supposed to be a partnership with FPD I which would have meant training funds and a work placement. Unfortunately, the partnership did not work out because of differing timelines due to COVID. This deficit meant re-visioning things and acting creatively by providing participants with bus tickets and gift cards for groceries as an alternative.

## ***British Columbia Cohorts***

In British Columbia, the Work Readiness program had the following components:

- An intake and selection process
- Life skills (learning about oneself, group building, topics that included anger, self-esteem, boundaries, conflict, stress, anxiety, goal setting and how to create change)
- Employability skills (workplace culture, First Aid certificate, putting together a resume, interviewing skills etc.)
- Skills for Success (math skills, measurement, estimating area, read and understand product instructions and safe use; Workplace Hazardous Information Systems (WHMIS), how to cooperate with others on a work site and how to work safely)
- Hands-on occupational skills construction project (facilities maintenance (Cohort 6) and the BC Construction Foundation's Paddle program (Cohort 7)).



*Cohort 6 in the classroom*

### ***Participant reflections on the program***

Participants in both cohorts expressed great gratitude and appreciation for the Work Readiness program, their community and the facilitators. They respected and liked their facilitators. The most important things that participants learned were related to self-awareness. They learned their talents and strengths, and areas where they were very capable. They gained confidence and self-esteem and reduced their social anxiety. They made new friends, left their homes possibly for the first time after COVID and had ideas for where they would like to go next. For many, the program was a healing experience. Participants enjoyed the hands-on experience in both programs, such as doing maintenance work at the Tseshaht Language House and carving their paddles. They learned new skills such as using a tape measure, cutting angles, framing and using power tools. Some were looking forward to next steps that included steady and better paying work or further education. In both BC cohorts, the products from the program were very visible – the carved paddles and the work accomplished at the Language House. There was great pride in one's culture and identity expressed. In Cohort 6, some of the older participants mentored younger ones. This was described as a very satisfying experience with reciprocal benefits on both sides.

For the learners that attended, facilitators and partners needed a deep understanding of the barriers and intergenerational trauma people face because of colonization and residential schools. Learners' goals were not necessarily employment but goals around belonging, life skills, time management, training and to lessen "racial anxieties about being out in public." Learners got a "deeper understanding of where they have been, where they are, and where they are going".

*Here's what participants had to say in British Columbia during the program in their own words...*

*I am learning to be whole and it feels good.*

*I am soaking it all up and loving it all. Thank you.*

*I am learning how I may look to others when responding to them.*

*Able to relate. I do a lot of the skills (stress related) already, a good refresh.*

*I learned you can write a story to help write your resume.*

*So far, the program has not disappointed.*

*The facilitators work very well together. They complement each other's style and technique.*

*I am more capable than I thought I was.*

*I am a bit more open minded now.*

## FACILITATORS' APPROACH

### COHORT 6

#### ***Workplace Readiness facilitator***

In Cohort 6, for the initial three days and then one day a week of Work Readiness topics, the facilitators approached teaching as a way to walk alongside participants so they could gain skills to achieve goals important to them. They saw the participants as experts on themselves and worked to create a supportive, safe environment where they could gain skills, recognize their inherent strengths, past successes and transferable skills. The facilitators worked to level the power imbalance between learners and themselves and call on what they were skills they already had, so they could experience themselves holistically. This meant recognizing all of their strengths, weaknesses, joys and sorrows as a complete being. The facilitators used their authority to maintain healthy boundaries regarding respect, safety and time. Specific materials were adapted to the needs and desires of the group. Mistakes were seen as learning opportunities and the facilitators said they were not experts and that they were learning alongside the participants. One of the many simple, non-verbal ways the facilitators showed that everyone is learning together was to arrange the tables into a circle. The facilitators acknowledged that it was important to acknowledge their privilege as white people and work to diffuse their entitlement and privilege. Being in good relationship with participants, and their employer, along with community members was key.

#### ***The facilities maintenance instructor***

The facilitator looked for strengths and weaknesses and encouraged stronger learners to mentor those with more acute needs. The difficulty of the program was also adapted to suit the majority of learners present. Usually in a program of this sort, there would be theory followed by some practical work. In this case, however, it suited the group better to have the classroom building renovation as the main project and address most of the theory aspects in the first and last weeks of the course, doing the practical work in between. The Elder provided practical and emotional support which contributed to the overall success of the program.

#### ***Elder and counsellor***

The energy, presence and wisdom of having an Elder and counsellor from the community was essential to the success of the program. They were indispensable resources to compare and contrast settler and traditional Indigenous understandings along with culture-specific practices to the Nations that were in each cohort. They integrated practices like a sharing circle into the program, which differed from the morning and afternoon check-in process the facilitators had been using.

## FACILITATORS' APPROACH

### COHORT 7

#### *Work Readiness facilitator*

In Cohort 7, the facilitators drew from a variety of materials for two days a week of Work Readiness related topics. Their section of the program had both fluidity and structure and they checked with learners with what they had planned. The facilitators used a trauma-informed approach to meet learners where they were at. Learners had choices; they could pass at any time and participate in what felt good for them. The facilitators learned from their teammates on the project what the cultural protocols were for a respectful approach to learning. The program followed Indigenous cultural protocols by having a circle at the beginning and the end of the day. The facilitators consciously chose activities and materials that represented Indigenous voices and role models. These activities also celebrated and honoured culture and responsible cultural pedagogy. They also set the tone through the use of positive language and creating a positive environment where learners were not judged. At the beginning of the program, the focus was on self-regulation strategies and tools. By the end, the focus was on values and how learners wanted to work in the world.

#### *Coast Salish Employment and Training Society*

The work on Thursdays was coordinated and supported by the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society (CSESTS) Bladerunners coordinator. First Aid training, talking circles, and CAMERA assessments and an employer presentation from Stuart Olson Inc all took place on Thursdays.



On Thursdays, a facilitator did a talking circle where he shared relevant and personal stories of who he was and where he came from. He discussed workplace safety, bullying and harassment and the right to refuse work.

*Cohort 7 graduation*

## ***Successes and gaps in the Work Readiness programs in BC***

### **Successes**

Cohort 6 benefited from strong leadership from the Tseshaht community lead and strength in known partnerships with North Island College and the Nuuchah-Nulth Employment and Training Program. The community knew what it wanted and worked with its partners and facilitators to ensure that it happened. In addition, the program was monitored constantly to make sure participants got the support they needed, challenges were dealt with and that goals were on track. The Elder and counsellor contributed to the success of the program. The Elder was able to offer insights about traditional ways on doing things and how to adapt to employment in the community and outside. She also modeled ongoing learning, acknowledging when she was learning something new. The counsellor offered extra support to those participants who needed it. Another success factor was the facilitators. They were sensitive to the needs of the participants and able to adapt their content, materials and process to meet participants where they were at.



*Cohort 7 graduation*

A success factor for Cohort 7 was that The P2W Indigenous liaison for BC and the project manager served as mentors for the community lead from Snaw-naw-as First Nation who was new in her role and stretched thin. The mentorship focused on all aspects of the role. The community lead acknowledged the importance of this mentorship.

Navigating partnerships and ensuring that community needs were central to the partnerships were important focal points in the mentorship. This mentorship contributed to building capacity for the community lead in her new role. The mentorship continued

until the completion of the project and the graduation ceremony for learners. Other success factors were the ongoing presence and support of the Indigenous liaison and the hiring of a project coordinator right before the delivery phase.

Shortly after the coordinator was in place, two experienced facilitators were hired to teach the Skills for Success and Work Readiness component of the program on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Like Cohort 6, a success factor was the facilitators. They were flexible and sensitive to the needs of the participants and met participants where they were at.

Funding to sponsor two participants was provided by Stuart Olson Inc. and the coordinator secured additional funding from RBC Foundation through its Future Launch Program. There was no work placement planned but any learner in the program had the opportunity to work for Stuart Olson Inc., a construction company working locally.

The Construction Foundation of British Columbia delivered the Paddle Program where participants had the opportunity to carve traditional paddles. The hands-on learning was founded on traditional Indigenous knowledge and methods. The program had huge value with the carving being very grounding for learners and where they come from. The fact that it was “hands-on” was beneficial in that it made people feel capable, which in turn strengthened their willingness to learn.

Culture was described as having huge value in building pride and confidence in oneself and one’s capabilities. The Paddle Program was seen as hugely honouring of First Nations culture.

### **Addressing gaps and challenges**

One of the gaps for Cohort 6 was that there was not enough understanding of what was involved in developing and offering a program like P2W for the community. Important to know was the amount of work all the planning and delivery would take.

A longer time line to plan and deliver the program was recommended. This would include more time to understand what was involved in developing and offering P2W and more time for the program itself. More time for the program would include time for theory, time for hands-on work in the facilities maintenance section, and more sessions for a pre-life skills section or orientation to help participants get used to a classroom schedule and to work with others in a group.

Capacity to plan and deliver the program was addressed through ongoing mentoring for the community lead, for Cohort 7 and the support of the project coordinator. Snaw-naw-as First Nation did not have the space to offer a continuous program of this length. Space for the program at the Woodbank School in Nanaimo was offered by partner Snuneymuxw First Nation. This meant that participants from Snaw-naw-as First Nation had to take a bus each morning and then in the afternoon to get back to their community in Nanoose Bay. The bus driver was considered an integral part of the program and was honoured at graduation.

# Adult Autumn Phase

Graduate, celebrate and step into the work force – **RELATIONSHIP AND CONNECTION**  
**Animal Guide** – the bear and wolf



## Introduction

This part of our story pays attention to what happened at the end and after the Work Readiness program. We celebrate and rejoice every success of communities and participants during the Adult Autumn phase. We move through the take-aways for participants and communities across the cohorts and how the participants' achievements were witnessed by community members, facilitators and others. We see how the celebration of graduation in every cohort was an authentic celebration of everyone who had been involved. We also look at where participants are at after the training along with what might come next for communities.



*Elder speaking at the graduation for Cohort 6 in BC.*

Across the seven cohorts, graduation was a joyful and moving event that honoured participants for their courage and achievements. Most of the graduations were opened by Elders or community leaders. Some graduations were a sharing circle where everyone got to speak. Laughter, photos, celebratory cakes and other food, gifts and certificates expressed the joy and gratitude that were present at the events.

Outcomes of a program like P2W are more than getting employment. For some, it may be getting up in the morning and getting into a routine. For others it may be gaining a voice, greater self-esteem and self-awareness. Still for others, it may be starting a path to healing. The beauty of the P2W framework is that it will reveal itself in different ways with Nations across Canada.

## The story of the Autumn Phase across the cohorts

Through Pathway to Work, 79 participants had the opportunity to complete a Work Readiness program. Fifty-nine went on to employment or further training and education opportunities.

In both Manitoba and BC, there were many commonalities in what participants got for themselves mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally. For example, across the cohorts, most participants learned more about themselves, learned to speak in public, made new friends, gained self-esteem, had more ease in social situations, were better able to manage stress and had some plans for what they would do after the Work Readiness program.

In all cohorts, participants expressed gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to attend the Work Readiness program and gratitude for their main facilitators and supportive community members, role models and Elders.

**In Manitoba**, most participants saw themselves on a path to obtaining work, many in construction, and gaining further education. Participants were at different places on this path. Employer feedback received from work placements and practicums was very positive.<sup>13</sup> For example, employer feedback from a general contractor for Cohort 1 indicated that the six individuals on one of the work placements were work-ready. The employer felt the work placement experience was excellent. He strongly agreed he would hire those on placement with him. Those working on the placement were described by the employer as punctual, responsible and respectful. At the time Cohort 1 ended, three participants continued to work for this employer. The contractor (Cohorts 3 and 4) noted that participants were very motivated, and he saw tremendous growth in participants in the two communities during the practicum building houses. “The growth I see is day and night,” he said. Participants who had never touched a power tool got to the point where they wanted to use them at every opportunity. Also, the way they talked to each other during lunch breaks changed during this phase. They used the language and concepts from the program to talk to each other.

In one community, there is a large construction project planned that the contractor will be involved in. The employer indicated that “I would hire them all” if the project proceeds.

At the time the program ended, a few of the participants from Cohort 3 were working with a local carpenter, and others planned to start in a carpentry program. Still others were finding work and a couple found work in the city. Some were hesitant to move away from their home communities. Most of the participants from Cohort 4 were working on

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<sup>13</sup> One of the challenges on the project was getting feedback on the work placement from employers and information on what participants were doing after the program.



*Pine Creek First Nation – Cohort 4*

renovations for the community when the program ended. They were learning about finishing carpentry from more experienced workers, something they did not have a chance to learn in the house-build practicum. Two were learning plumbing. One female participant was waiting to take a Women in Trades Program.

In feedback from Eagle Urban Transition Centre (Cohort 5), two of the 6 graduates were working in construction, one went back to his kitchen job and there was no word on the other three.

**In British Columbia** participants from Cohort 6 had jobs lined up in construction, a flooring company, carpentry and four had signed up for the demolition program being offered next in the community. One was going back to school and two were undecided. After the program, five to six participants were working or going back to school. Two people finished the demolition course and are working, one young man was going back to school, one had family problems to sort out, and another young man had learning challenges and needed supports. Another person was doing the online demolition course.

Upon completion, the learners from Cohort 7 did not feel they were ready to take advantage of the employment opportunity with Stuart Olson. Being able to have a gradual introduction to the actual work and some hands-on placement opportunities may have changed this. After P2W, some learners reached out to further healing and community services. Two people went back to school and others are working. One person is looking for things to do, possibly a workshop.

*Here's what participants had to say across the cohorts in Manitoba at the end or after the program in their own words...*

*I am really proud of my job placement because I was given a chance.*

*I need to push myself to be more open-minded and ask more questions when I don't understand.*

*We learned how to set goals and focus on the goal.*

*My hopes are to hold on to the job I got lined up through this program.*

*I learned simple things for everyday life.*

*I am proud of finishing this course and being more ready for work.*

*Thank you, guys, for teaching me basic life skills and the meaning of them.*

*I learned Essential skills for the work force such as time management*

*The program motivated me to become sober.*

*I am looking forward to sharing my experience with other people and how it changed me.*

*Here's what facilitators, community leaders, employers and the P2P the cohorts in Manitoba at the end or after the program in their own words...*

*The participants were very engaged, comfortable talking, asking questions, learning lots and thinking about opportunities.*

*What I like about P2W is that participants are given knowledge and skills to work – how to behave with their employer and work ethics. A lot of youth do not know work ethics.*

*Word of mouth has gone back to the community. Others in the community are asking when it will be offered again.*

*Participants got awareness of themselves, organizational skills and budgeting skills and are utilizing these skills.*

*Participants are not afraid to take risks, do new things, and meet new people.*

*This young guy is a very hard worker. I have no problems with him.*

*Participants got more confidence. They are more comfortable in a professional setting.*

*Here's what participants had to say across the cohorts in BC at the end or after the program in their own words...*

*The program helped me deal with my childhood trauma.*

*I learned to use power tools safely.*

*It was great to learn about yourself. Positive thinking and met new people in the program.*

*I need to learn to be on time and be accountable. I want a full-time job.*

*I will always remember making my paddle.*

*I was happy to help out the younger participants and help motivate them. Thank you to everyone involved.*

*I used to protect myself. The program helped me. Everyone was so welcoming and helpful. Not like high school: "Oh you are late again."*

*I am looking forward to getting a steady job.*

*The facilitators taught us to work together, hear each other out. We were all listening to each other.*

*Here's what facilitators, community leaders and the P2W implementation team members had to say across the cohorts in BC at the end or after the program in their own words...*

*Participants walked out feeling better about themselves and more confident.*

*This [program] helps bring strong community and brings us together. It is not just skills it is also the healing needed.*

*Participants learned to cut angles for baseboards, framing for doors and cutting the beam so you could touch the ceiling.*

*Residential school had a huge ripple effect on why my gen didn't graduate... a lot of things that held us back and held us down. We found the key to help us move forward and that's our identity.*

*Doing the paddles provided a cultural connection for students. Walking in both worlds with the cultural piece. They are learning to take the best from both worlds to create their own pathways to success.*

*Participants have ambition to go forward. There is pride in them.*

*[Participants take-aways were] self esteem, having confidence to look for a job, connection with their culture, and other students and people. Regaining connections with others.*

# Elder Winter Phase

EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY **Animal Guides** – the whale and buffalo



## Introduction

In the Elder, Winter Phase, we have the opportunity to evaluate what went well and reflect on how things could be improved. These reflections take place in the spirit of authenticity and continuous improvement of the program for future participants and communities.

Participants, community leads, facilitators, P2W project team members and other partners look back on the other seasons and reflect on the project.



This section of the report reflects on the learnings from both working to do the project as the P2P team and working with Indigenous communities to set up Work Readiness programs. We look at our learnings from an eagle view. We use the wisdom of the medicine wheel framework, our three pillars, our values and especially the teachings of our animal guides to understand our lessons from Pathway to Work.

First to be said is that reconciliation has been part of our work. There has been growth and transformation at the leadership level where eyes and hearts were seen to be open to the various impacts of colonization. There was recognition of how much decolonization is in our work at both an individual level and project level. Team members were open and willing to do this learning.

*At the Tataskweyak Graduation in Split Lake, Manitoba*

We offer the following reflections on what contributed to the success of programming at the community level and the overall project.

## **What contributed to program and project success<sup>14</sup>**

The following factors are what we saw contributing to success at both the program level in communities and at the project level.

### ***Leadership***

Leadership represented by the vision of the eagle, the ability to take and hold the long view and make interconnections throughout a project is key to keeping it flourishing and on track. Strong leadership with eagle energy is needed both at the project level and the community level.

### ***Relationships and connection on the team***

*“So much good will with great people on the team and their strengths to get things done.”*

The hummingbird represents joy and camaraderie. We were uplifted by the growth and development of the team in different ways, the connection and understanding of our work, and support from colleagues. Support from our colleagues was motivating and uplifting and represented another layer of accountability. Everyone was open to learning through the project and adapting to those learnings throughout. When things were going well, team members were communicating with each other often and honestly.

### ***Team goals***

Shared goals among team members are important along with something concrete that each member can offer so like the wolf pack everyone knows their role to meet the agreed-upon goals. Look for capacity on the team so each person can offer what gifts they can bring to the project. When people know their role within the whole, they are more likely to have confidence to work on the project, be more vulnerable, and contribute more. Everyone wants to feel they are contributing. To clarify these aspects on a diverse team takes time and patience.

### ***Honouring all gifts***

Our team, partners in communities, facilitators and participants brought a multitude of gifts and talents. We had the joy and attention to detail of the hummingbird and mouse; the visioning and long view of the eagle; the courage, love, care and service of the bear and wolf; and the wisdom and depth of the whale and buffalo. All gifts are equal and needed to bring harmony, wholeness and stability to the project.

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<sup>14</sup> Quotes in blue are from project team members.

## ***Time and space***

**“There is no funding for collaboration. You need to carve out time and space for it.”**

We learned the importance of allowing time and space to guide a project like P2W to build good relationships. Allowing for time and space is a way of decentering whiteness and respecting the sacredness and cultural perceptions of time in Indigenous communities. Paying attention to needs around time is part of trauma-informed practices and not inflicting harm. Hand in hand with this idea was that it is unethical to move towards pre-determined outcomes and the idea that it is positive to work more with emergence. This time and space are especially important in the Spring phase of the project to ground it. Ensuring enough time at the community level to plan and carry out a program is essential.

## ***Partnerships***

An emphasis on partnerships that were a good fit was a part of the success of the project. This included known partners that communities had worked with before and partnerships that brought value for all the partners. These partnerships brought added benefits for participants. Partners and facilitators contributed at the cohort level when capacity was low. This contributed to the success of programming.

## ***Community oriented***

One of our three central pillars is to be community-oriented. Partners, including funders, need to see what kind of resources are already available in communities and align their support to what the community needs. Understanding that aspect helps allocate resources more effectively for what communities need and want. This includes supports, services and programming. The process of co-creation makes for positive teamwork, increased morale along with authentic involvement and engagement into the project. This co-creation is the key to success in working with communities. Hand in hand is the building of relationships and trust. A key factor in the successful relationship-building was the concept of reciprocity where everyone had something to learn, give and receive back from others. It is easier to open doors to communities you know something about.

## ***Innovation and creativity***

One of the innovations of our work was that we treated each of the community projects completely differently based on what the community needed and what they could offer, and the needs of the learners and their context. We did not use a one size fits all approach. Although this seems obvious, it is a lot of work to do this in practice. It is innovative to examine what communities already have to offer and leverage that with what we can offer to support them rather than putting forward “what we know is best.” This could be referred to as capacity bridging with resources rather than capacity building. Innovation is about success as well as failure, taking the risk to try out different things when you are not sure if they will work or not. In this way, there is no failure, only learning.

Pathways to accommodate large numbers of Nations' community members beyond those who are employment-ready will look different. There is space for this and this shows the diversity in how the project framework and project can be applied to meet community needs in different parts of the country.

### ***Learner centred***

*"Having strong facilitators is critical. We are walking alongside vulnerable folks with intergenerational trauma and we need to walk softly and meet them where they are at. Our facilitators rocked."*

We bring the hummingbird's joyousness and attention to detail with connection and relationship to working with learners or participants. Seemingly small things like having transportation, food and a clean space all represent the need for details that support participants and make a difference in their learning experience. This hummingbird energy is brought by many involved in the project but most readily by the main facilitators. Through the facilitators, we saw how safe and respectful learning environments were created. There was a sense of reciprocity in learning, a concerted effort to address power imbalances, flexibility in approaches and meeting learners where they are at. The focus was on meaningful learning and building people up. There was an effort to allow space for mentoring to happen among participants. These qualities are important when choosing facilitators to lead programs or even to teach workshops like First Aid.


### ***Integrated learning***

*"When participants do their upgrading first, the facilitator does not always know what participants need in this regard when they come to a work readiness program."*

The ability to integrate the teaching of Skills for Success at the same time as Work Readiness within a longer time frame program, rather than separate modules was articulated as an "aha" moment. This integration provides a fluidity to really help participants and understand where they need support. This blending is in contrast to programs where participants do their upgrading first before a Work Readiness program. The benefits of integrated learning are also apparent when construction theory is taught hand in hand with practical hands-on experience.

### ***Communication and transparency***

*"When roles and responsibilities were clear with the cohorts, things went so much smoother."*

We learned the importance of effective communication with our partners to do work in communities. Part of this work is determining clarity around roles and responsibilities of all involved. This means that everyone should be in the same room and on the same page as they "hammer out" what the **roles and responsibilities** [ see P2W website for information] are and who does what. Having clear roles and responsibilities defined early on allows for

the creation of a detailed implementation plan and a work plan of activities to be completed. Part of this work is understanding what capacity exists at the community level and what additional resources might need to be added. This hummingbird energy leads to more harmony, grace and good will on a project.

### ***Continual improvement***

The importance of ongoing learning to improve the program by addressing gaps that come up each time is important. Addressing the identified gaps made the program stronger for the next cohort of participants. There are always new areas to focus on each time.

### ***Employer-connected***

The importance of being employer-connected is rooted in strong relationships with Indigenous communities and a desire to support participants from these communities on work placements and hire them afterwards. We learned that having an employer who wishes to hire Indigenous workers without the relationship with communities does not work. Engaging and building a relationship with employers as well as educating them on Work Readiness programming as an opportunity for investment in a future pool of employment candidates is key.

### ***Elders and role models***

Elders, counsellors and role models are key to the success of Work Readiness programming. They can provide support for participants to believe in themselves and bridge cultural gaps between the western and Indigenous ways of doing things.

### ***Celebration***

*“Having culture as a centre point for graduation worked beautifully.”*

Celebration of participants and their achievements was accomplished through graduation. Graduation was a place where the whole community could celebrate their pride. Participants could express their gratitude with the community as a witness. The uplifting words of Elders and community leaders, testimonials from participants, along with food and gifts, brought closure to the Work Readiness program and paved the way for positive next steps. Celebration and closure are also important at the project team level. It provides the opportunity for team members to celebrate the completion of the project.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability was established as a priority from the outset of the Pathway to Work project and was considered throughout the five-year implementation period. Ellen Martin, Sustainability advisor was engaged to lead the development of the sustainability strategy. The purpose of this sustainability strategy is to identify options to sustain the Pathway to Work training model, in whole or in part, and the stakeholders who can take this forward. The sustainability strategy is documented in a separate report which can be found at <https://pathwaytowork.ca/>.