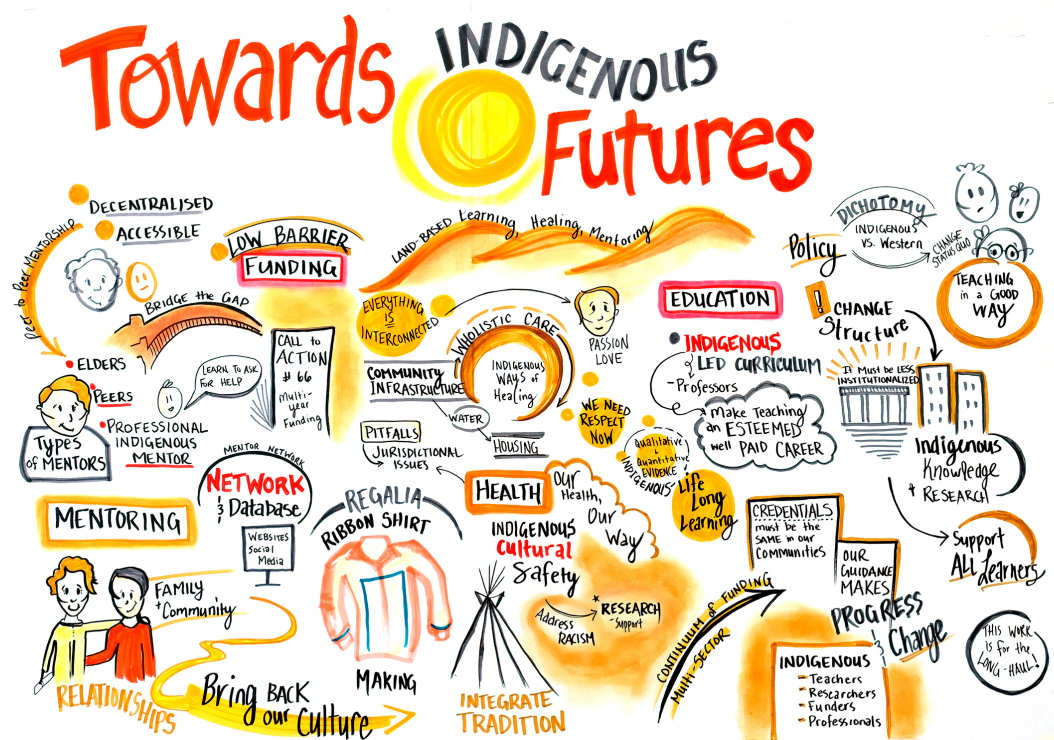


# Indigenous Youth Well-being: Cultural Empowerment, Education and Employment



Youth Convening, Regina, February 14-15, 2019

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING  
Michelle Buchholz

Drawing Change

Prepared by:  
Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Associate Professor  
Michelle Buchholz, Research Assistant  
Andrea Leveille, Research Assistant  
Faculty of Education, Centre for Study of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies,  
Simon Fraser University

---

## Table of Contents

Overview.....	3
Lessons from Research .....	4
Education Matters. Period.....	5
Holistic Understandings of Success .....	6
Connecting Education, Career, and Life Pathways .....	6
Employment Trends and Career Possibilities .....	7
Transitioning from School to Work.....	9
Youth Perspectives on Living A Good Life.....	10
Indigenous Youths’ Vision of “having a good life” .....	11
Factors for more FNMI youth to succeed .....	13
Hopes for the future of Indigenous youth .....	14
Next Steps.....	17
Reflections from Cross-Sector Partners.....	18
Opportunities for and with FNMI Youth.....	20
Collective Actions .....	26
Leveraging.....	26
Amplifying.....	28
Supporting .....	28
Conclusion and Recommendations .....	29
References .....	35
Appendix A: Graphic Recordings from the Youth Gathering .....	39
Appendix B: Recommended Further Reading .....	41
Appendix C: Recommendations to Guide the Work Ahead: Reflections by the Author.....	42

---

## Overview

Within its work in 2018-2019, the Rideau Hall Foundation (RHF)<sup>1</sup> aimed to identify “conditions of success” that allow more First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) youth to lead healthy and rewarding lives on their terms. In this report, we use the terms First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, FNMI peoples, Indigenous peoples, and Aboriginal peoples interchangeably to respect and honour the diversity of our first peoples and acknowledge the right to self-determine how one is known through their tribal affiliation.

It is critically important that all work related to education and career directly involve FNMI youth across all stages of the process (i.e., conception to research to design to implementation to evaluation). Bringing “youth together and increas[ing] their stock of knowledge, tools and methods as well as gather[ing] strength and resolve” (Korteweg & Bissell, 2015, p. 15) empowers them to advocate for their desires and needs. As a result, they can confidently participate in the development of culturally relevant and responsive programming, policies, and practices in a multitude of ways across their education, career, and within society.

This report is a culmination of several activities organized by the Rideau Hall Foundation in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, with the aim to center the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous youth within a discussion of their aspirations and visions for living a good life throughout their education and career journeys.

These activities included:

1. Youth Gathering on Indigenous Youth Employment and Community Well-being, Regina, February 13-15, 2019;
2. Cross-Sectoral Gathering on Indigenous Youth Employment and Community Well-being, Ottawa, March 4-5, 2019;
3. One-on-one interviews with 43 respondents (64 stakeholders) conducted by RHF staff.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Rideau Hall Foundation amplifies the impact of the office of Governor General as a central institution of Canadian democracy and works with others to build a better country for all Canadians.

---

---

In addition, a literature review was conducted related to Indigenous youth well-being, educational persistence, and career experiences. The summary of a round table analysis of 200 Indigenous youth (21 roundtables) conducted by Youth Fusion<sup>2</sup> is included in the review of the literature.

The report provides a synthesis of the themes and key messages shared during both convenings, the interviews, and the surveys. The appendix includes the briefing document that was prepared for the Youth Convening which provides a summary of what we know about Indigenous youth transitions through education and onward to employment, viewed through the lens of Indigenous perspectives on individual and community wellness.

## Lessons from Research

The following literature summary includes the insights and lessons learned from previous studies pertaining to Indigenous educational experiences, careers, aspirations, and living a good life. At the outset, living a good life for Indigenous people is not an isolated factor or variable that can be easily measured. In fact, throughout the literature, it was evident that living a good life is about individual goals but also interrelated to youth’s aspirations for their peers, communities, and nations (e.g., community well-being). Living well then is connected to one’s cultural, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being – all of which are interconnected with each other. Education and career are key factors in living a good life, balanced with their culture, ways of knowing and being, and language(s).

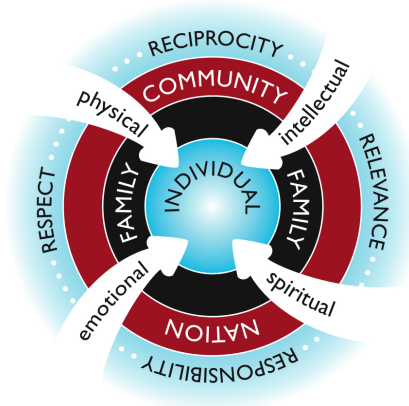


Figure 1: Indigenous Wholistic<sup>3</sup> Framework

Pidgeon (2008, 2016) presents this interconnectedness through her Indigenous wholistic framework (Figure 1) to show how the individual is connected to their family, community, and nation (both local and global sense of nationhood). This model also presents the idea of holism to reflect the realms of the physical,

---

<sup>2</sup> Youth Fusion is a charitable organization whose mission is to lower school dropout rates by creating continuous ties between the school system and the community, in order to involve at-risk youth in innovative and meaningful educational projects that contribute to their learning, their qualifications, and their social integration.

<sup>3</sup> Wholism is intentionally spelled with a W to reflect Indigenous ways of conceptualizing the whole being.

---

intellectual, spiritual, and emotional to think through Indigenous sense of well-being. One must be balanced in all four realms to live a good life. Furthermore, the 4Rs (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) help connect all Canadians to the work ahead through responsible relationships, respecting Indigenous knowledges, ensuring programs and services are relevant to FNMI peoples, and reciprocal actions.

### Education Matters. Period.

The positive impact of increased education levels on employment, income, and health continues to be supported by research (Andrade, 2014; Aylward, Abu-Zahra & Giles, 2015; Cahill, 2018; Hossain & Lamb, 2018). For Indigenous peoples', increasing educational attainment has the additional benefit of closing the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Statistics Canada data show that in 2015 the employment rate of Indigenous people with less than a high school education was 42.8% compared with 60.5% for non-Indigenous people with less than high school. In contrast, Indigenous people who had completed post-secondary had an employment rate of 78.4% compared to 85.9% for non-Indigenous people who had completed post-secondary. Equally important, Indigenous peoples can utilize increased education to broaden opportunities for decolonization and to contribute to the empowerment of their communities.

Central to this increased education should be capacity-building that extends beyond theory and academics. Indigenous youth need their education to include the knowledge, training, skills, and experiences to reflect their career goals (McCreary Centre Society, 2014). "Training has to be more closely aligned with career goals and opportunities. There is lots of training, but it is not necessarily leading to long-term careers" (Government of Alberta, 2010, p. 24).

There is also a clear need to address systemic and societal barriers, including institutional racism (Moïse & Parent, no date; Neeganagwedgin, 2013; Shotton, 2017), to ensure FNMI youth's visions of success for their lives includes their full participation in education and career opportunities. Calls for change involve more integration of Indigenous ways of knowing and being across all aspects of education (Brandt, 2007; Kulig et al., 2010), more educational choices in and around Indigenous communities including options that go beyond trades education (Moïse & Parent, no date), and education for non-Indigenous Canadians to improve their understanding of and relationships with Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2015).

---

## Holistic Understandings of Success

All aspects of FNMI peoples' cultural knowledge, including language(s), connection to the land, protocols, and relationships with family and community, inform their understanding of success. Their perspectives can be different than what is deemed successful by broader society (see Hall, Hessel, & Coates, 2015; Pidgeon, 2008, 2016; Waterman et al., 2018; Whitley, 2014), and in fact, Indigenous understandings of success reject current definitions that narrowly focus on individual gains (e.g., degree completion, high GPA, "good job"). Indigenous cultural values position individual success within the success of the collective.

The concept of attaining success is also nuanced. Success may be the completion of a degree or program to launch a career, or skill-building to contribute to community success. It may also be the completion of a handful of courses as part of a journey of self-discovery that leads to a different path to life goals. Overcoming hardship, including the inequality of on-reserve vs off-reserve education and systemic prejudice, are other facets of success in the course of pursuing education and careers (Shankar, Ip, & Khalema, 2017; Shield, 2009; Timmons, 2013).

As presented in Figure 1, a wholistic perspective of educational success subsequently considers all of the needs of the student, including the emotional, cultural, physical, and intellectual, as well as their relationships with their family, communities, and nation in addition to their relationships across the post-secondary institution (e.g., with peers, faculty, and staff) (Pidgeon, 2008; 2016).

Indigenous youth value their Indigenous languages and recognize that a barrier often exists for them given the English and/or French requirements to access post-secondary education (Moïse & Parent, no date). Once in university, there are limited opportunities to use their Indigenous language as equivalent to the second language requirements of some degree programs. Indigenous understandings of living a good life with "success" then challenge dominant discourses of what success is and provide another critical juncture in not only *how* we listen to youth, but how we champion and take up their calls for action and change.

## Connecting Education, Career, and Life Pathways

The best practices in supporting FNMI youth through their educational journeys can also be applied to their career pathways. For example, employers can achieve improved staff retention rates and overall

---

workplace satisfaction by taking into consideration holistic ways of supporting their Indigenous employees, who have multifaceted responsibilities. By understanding how Indigenous people consistently value connections with other Indigenous people within their field and by supporting the development of such cultural networks, employers can help Indigenous employees achieve a good life (Roy, 2014). Research also finds that flexibility in the workplace that allows for engagement in family and cultural practices can help Indigenous people achieve career and life success (Brougham, Harr & Roche, 2015; Julien, Somerville, & Brant, 2017; Moïse & Parent, no date).

Education is not only important for career aspirations; one's educational level often impacts health and other life circumstances. The beneficial health impact of having a secure career, and the related economic stability helps Indigenous people avoid the psychological distress associated with economic insecurity (Hossain & Lamb, 2018). The National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health has found a positive relationship between Aboriginal peoples' income levels and health outcomes, demonstrating that an Indigenous person who makes a good living is also likely to have a healthier life (Reading & Wein, 2009). By understanding the determinants of health, such as income level, educational attainment, geographic location, employment status, and other factors (e.g., effects of historical trauma), educators and employers can be more intentional in providing multi-faceted services and supports for Indigenous youth (Reading & Wein, 2009).

### Employment Trends and Career Possibilities

Drawing on holistic understandings of success, living a good life means having balance across all aspects of one's life (emotionally, culturally, physically, and intellectually). This balance is supported through education and career opportunities. Research shows that Indigenous youth aspire to living a good life, that includes education and career pathways that lead to meaningful employment and financial security.

- 84% of Indigenous youth (aged 15-19) expect to get the job they want (see Bibby, 2009 cited in Bruce, Martin, & Raham, 2012)
- 79% expect to be more comfortable financially than their parents. (see Bibby, 2009 cited in Bruce, Martin, & Raham, 2012)

---

The broader literature of employment trends reports:

- Employment rates are lower for FNMI people than non-Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2015). For example, 50% of FNMI youth (age 15-24) were employed compared to 67.5% of non-Indigenous youth.
- The size of the projected FNMI labour force depends in part on FNMI educational trends (Drummond, et al., 2017). The workforce areas employing the largest percentage of FNMI peoples are sales and services (23%), trades (including transport and equipment operations) (21%), and business (including finance and administration) (17%).
- The employment rate of FNMI peoples rose with increased educational certification. For example, 42.8% with less than high school were employed as compared with 78.4% with completed post-secondary. (Cahill, 2018; Drummond et al, 2017)
- More FNMI women (8.4% in 2006) complete university degrees than FNMI men (5.2% in 2006), and consequently they are also more likely to be employed. (Brant, 2012; Gerber, 2014; Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2009)
- Higher educational attainment narrows the disparity in income rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For example, Indigenous women with university degrees have a median income that is higher than non-Indigenous women. For example, in 2006, Indigenous women with a Bachelor’s degree earned \$2,471 more a year than non-Indigenous women with the same education. (Brant, 2012; Greenaway, 2010)

FNMI youth have made it clear that they are most interested in careers that provide service for and keep them connected to their communities – in professional careers (e.g., business owner, doctor, lawyer, teacher, engineer), in trades, and in traditional careers. Youth Fusion’s national consultation with 200 Indigenous youth found that youth aspired to professional-type careers but also employment related to the arts and sports (Moïse & Parent, no date). Other youths were seeking careers that were directly available in their communities (e.g., childcare workers, water truck driver, hairdresser, police officer) or wanted to be self-employed. This report highlighted that many youth value local and traditional careers, such as hunting. However, it was also evident that some of these youth “were not aware of the possibilities offered to them in their community and struggled to envision themselves in a good quality job” (Moïse & Parent, no date, p.3).



---

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) calls on Canadian society to address the structural inequalities that inhibit FNMI youth from accessing the education and career opportunities they need to reach their life goals. In order to achieve this, Indigenous youth have told us:

[We] want businesses and colleges and universities to do outreach to our communities and make young people aware of the wide variety of careers and education paths that they have open to them. We want these “job fairs” to stimulate us to think about the many ways we can learn and acquire skills that will allow us to work in our communities and help others. (Ontario Provincial Child Advocate, 2013, p.77).

Similarly, the consultations with youth done by Youth Fusion found that youth limited their potential when they didn’t see role models who represented them. For example, youth who had not met Indigenous doctors struggled to see themselves as being able to do that work; they felt that it was only for Caucasian people (Moïse & Parent, no date, p.3).

### Transitioning from School to Work

Previous FNMI youth consultations and research initiatives done by other organizations identified a variety of factors youth felt supported their transition from education into their careers:

- Mentorship and networking (Civicaction, 2014; McCreary Centre Society, 2014; Moïse & Parent, no date; Policy Research Initiative, 2008)
- Support with resume building and interview preparation (McCreary Centre Society, 2014; Moïse & Parent, no date)
- Training and internships designed to lead to employment (Civicaction, 2014)
- Centralized job postings (Civicaction, 2014; McCreary Centre Society, 2014)
- Better information about employment trends and required skills (Civicaction, 2014; McCreary Centre Society, 2014)
- Increasing and diversifying employment opportunities in diverse FNMI communities (urban/rural/remote/northern/reserve) (Abele & Delic, 2014)

This research noted the importance of getting a foot in the door – recognizing that a first job can play a critical role in one’s career trajectory. Indigenous youth require early employment opportunities that are meaningful and offer a variety of skill development opportunities (CivicAction, 2014; Moïse & Parent, no date).

---

Family, community, and cultural responsibilities remain a valuable part of Indigenous peoples' lives when they are employed, and employment opportunities must allow Indigenous peoples to contribute to the success of their communities *and* their employers (Bingham, Adolpho, Jackson, & Alexitch, 2014; Clark, 2002; McPhee, Julien, Miller, & Wright 2017; Moïse & Parent, no date; Offet-Gartner, 2011; Roche, Duraisingam, Trifonoff & Tovell 2013; Waterman & Lindley, 2013).

Mentorship benefits FNMI youth in their transition from school to work as it offers insight into what successful employment looks like while also connecting youth to leadership frameworks that resonate with holistic Indigenous values (Julien, Wright, & Zinni, 2010; Moïse & Parent, no date; Paterson & Hart-Wasekeesikaw, 1994). Thinking about the transitions from school to employment more holistically is supported by research. For example, training programs that have integrated support in the process of securing employment (resume building, application support, interview preparation) see more than 90% of trainees who complete the program go on to employment or further training (MacKinnon, 2014).

Across these studies, FNMI youth offered advice and recommendations to employers that reflected the statistical findings. They also suggested that employers engage in stronger collaboration and coordination between stakeholders with the aim of long-term partnerships and initiatives for Indigenous youth education and career opportunities (see CivicAction, 2014; McCreary Centre Society, 2014; Policy Research Initiative, 2008).

## Youth Perspectives on Living A Good Life

In February 2019, the Rideau Hall Foundation and Canadian Roots Exchange<sup>4</sup> brought together a diverse mix of young Indigenous leaders from across Canada, including entrepreneurs, students, professionals and community leaders to discuss their visions of success and community well-being. The gathering had four goals:

1. Identify factors that have allowed participants to succeed in different contexts;
2. Identify changes that participants are striving for to allow more youth to prosper;
3. Build a cohort of young Indigenous leaders who can lead the change, with support from participants at the subsequent Cross-Sector Gathering, as well as the two Foundations;

---

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE) is a community of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth committed to building honest and equitable relationships.

---

---

4. Produce media products that promote the messages presented by participants.

Those there to witness included Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Marie Wilson, former Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and His Honour Tom Molloy, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. Graphic recording was done by Michelle Bucholz. (See Appendix A for full images.) What follows is a summary of emergent themes, and where appropriate, direct quotes from the youth as they shared their experiences, ideas, and recommendations for the future.

*“Mother was my teacher, gifted me the language and cultural way of life. Youth keep me going, my energy and spiritual self – you inspire us. We have something to hope for – express your thoughts and dreams.” – Elder Mary Lee, Cree*

### Indigenous Youths’ Vision of “having a good life”

Indigenous youths’ notions of success in life challenge common Euro-Western conceptions of success like graduation and high paying employment. In fact, a successful life for FNMI youth extends beyond their individual goals and aspirations and directly connects to their relationships with their extended family, Elders, peers, communities, and nations.



These youth said a good life involves notions of belonging, feeling safe, a sense of identity, financial and human support for their education, career and life goals, and being part of healthy communities. It involves balance in all aspects of their lives. It means being successful in all worlds they walk in and living beyond survival mode. As one youth described the factors that supported their success, “I was propelled by the idea of possibility”.

The most powerful measures of success were not based on financial wealth and status but prioritized

---

being on a healing journey where they were in balance in terms of their emotional, cultural, physical, and intellectual well-being.

- *Emotional.* Youth connected emotional wellness to their mental health, dealing with legacies of intergenerational trauma, and building resilience to the systemic racism they experience in their day-to-day lives.
- *Intellectual.* Education for these young people extended beyond the formal schooling of university or college and was deeply connected to being educated in their ways of knowing and being as Indigenous peoples, whether it was around cultural teachings, language(s), land-based traditions or a combination of all these aspects of being Indigenous. *“Knowledge is power, Elder told me education can’t be taken away”* (Youth participant).
- *Physical.* Their physical needs included not only their mental and physical well-being (e.g., sports, diabetes prevention) but also the connection of arts, music, and traditional practices (e.g., beading, quill making, sweats, smudging). Youth also spoke of their connections to environmental needs (e.g., clean water, sustainable food, safe housing, recycling) to support their visions of a good life.
- *Cultural.* Youth spoke of the privilege it was to have ceremony and language in their lives and recognized that some FNMI youth don’t have those same opportunities. Living a successful life for FNMI youth was tied to having cultural teachings and mentors who guide them on the way. As one youth shared, speaking to the value of language and culture and to being around his Elders and family, *“I was extremely privileged growing up, what our grandparents gave us... you can’t buy that... I owe [my success] to my family.”* Youth explained how cultural teachings, their language(s), and cultural practices all helped build their resiliency and empowered them to be leaders in their communities.

### Relationships Empower Indigenous Visions of Success

*“Relationships are key, find the unseen and make family and friends to learn about myself, culture,...blaze my own path.”* (Youth participant)

Feelings of success were also about being seen and heard. Many youths spoke about the need to be seen, heard, and listened to. Those moments in their lives where they felt supported and successful were directly connected to having someone in their circles being a mentor who listened. Most spoke of the women in their lives being that key support (e.g., mother, aunties, Grandmothers, other Elders).

---

One youth shared in a lesson of support he received from his great-grandmother, who told him that *“Education is our new way of life. Find your aunts wherever you are.”* He took her advice and found his extended support network by finding his female role models and supporters.

Mentors were seen as opening doors of opportunity and were respected as leaders for their way of being, not necessarily for holding positions of power and influence. Mentors held deep belief in the youth and guided and passed on their knowledge to the youth. Mentorship was described as:

*“Having the ability to pry open doors for others and pull them through”* (Youth participant)

*“Having people listen to me and being connected to positive people in the community. This created volunteer opportunities and building of network – now I’m more empowered to share.”*  
(Youth participant)

### Lifting Up Others

Youth have a clear sense of vision and responsibility to give back to their communities, and to make life better for the next generation. In fact, a consistent theme from the youth was youth empowerment and self-determination – *“allowing and supporting Indigenous youth to create and do their own solutions”* (written feedback from youth convening). They deeply felt the immense responsibility it was to be a voice for those who weren’t in the room or at the tables where decisions were being made that directly impacted youth. In sharing stories of their resiliency through school, post-secondary education, and/or work, FNMI youth noted that they gained this strength from those who believed in them, showed them the way by passing on knowledge and skills, and valued who they were as Indigenous peoples. Their understanding of education encompassed more than the K-12 or post-secondary system. They acknowledged that even to be in Regina was a privilege, and they wished that such opportunities be extended to other youth, particularly those whose lives have not had the same opportunities (e.g., high school dropouts, incarcerated youth, in-care youth).

### **Factors for more FNMI youth to succeed**

In considering the questions *“Can these conditions of your success be replicated?”*, the resounding answer from the participants was YES! To do so, we must consider the whole student (physical, emotional, cultural, and intellectual), while encouraging network and relationship building with Elders,

peers, mentors, and supporters. The following table presents the factors FNMI youth identified as helping and hindering their academic and career journeys.

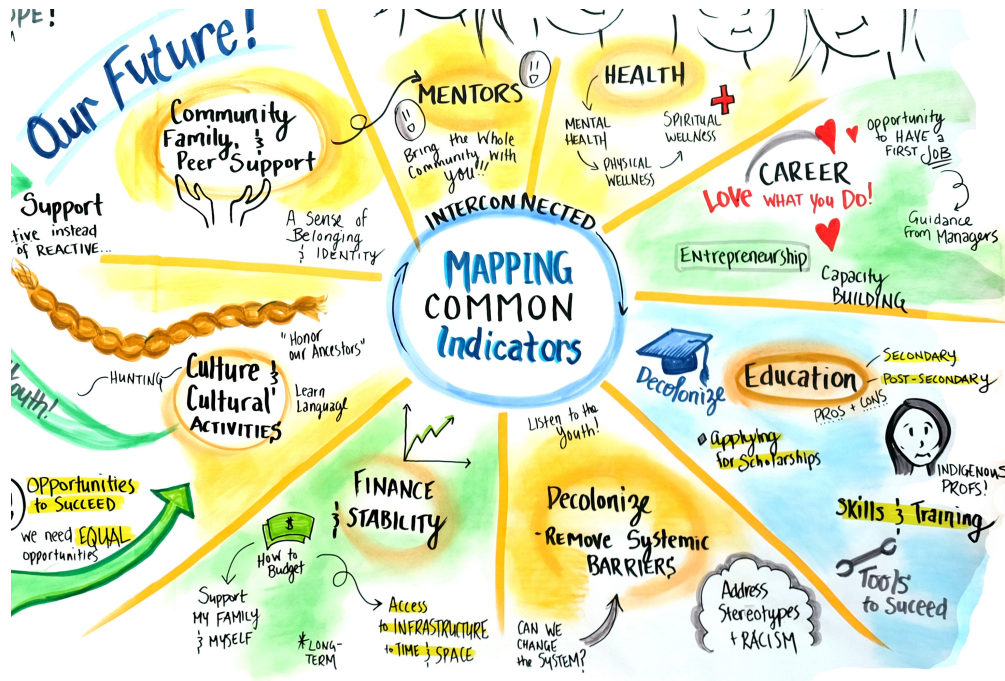
Helpful	Hindering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Family stability</li> <li>● Peer-to-Peer support, especially when without immediate family and Elders</li> <li>● Empowered by those who gave them their first job, taught responsibility and accountability</li> <li>● Indigenous programs and services (e.g., Indigenous student centers, lodges, educational programming)</li> <li>● Indigenous peoples at the front of the room (e.g., teachers, employers, funders)</li> <li>● Tutors</li> <li>● Mentors – Indigenous and non-Indigenous</li> <li>● Value of Elders as mentors</li> <li>● Cultural teachings and activities (e.g., land-based)</li> <li>● Access to education in community</li> <li>● Having language and deeper understanding to articulate experiences (e.g., colonization, residential school, racism, empowered in learning)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Systemic Racism and stereotypes (e.g., racism experienced in post-secondary class; problematic guidance counsellors in K-12)</li> <li>● Absence of (or lack of connection to) Elders and/or family and/or extended community</li> <li>● Disconnected from language and culture (or worse, it is “banned”)</li> <li>● non-FNMI not understanding (e.g., lack of awareness)</li> <li>● Lack of relationships and mentorship</li> <li>● Post-Secondary Education (PSE) policy or lack of understanding of Indigenous student experiences</li> <li>● Lack of resources (e.g., financial, food, housing)</li> </ul>

In looking at the hindrances above, there was a clear understanding of the inequities in Canada’s education system for FNMI youth, particularly the differences between on-reserve, off-reserve, and rural/remote communities.

*“Youth need to use voices to be proactive, if it isn’t working, we need to speak up.”* (Youth participant)

### Hopes for the future of Indigenous youth

*“What we want our future to look like is to be successful on our lands, in our lives, and in our bodies – there is no one answer, multiple perspectives to learn together.”* (Youth participant)



Hopes for the future are interconnected and inter-related, as the above snapshot of the graphic recording reflects. For the youth it means zero barriers across all aspects of their lives, where they are confident to dream and achieve, live their culture, and envision a future of possibility. For example, without relevant community programming and educational choices, unnecessary barriers prevent (or at least discourage) FNMI youth from thinking about college or university, or employment opportunities that require further training. Education was seen as a way forward to meaningful employment. Within the discussions around education and employment, participants also emphasized the connection to living well and being part of healthy communities.

The participants called for a decolonized, intercultural and Indigenized education system. They felt that Indigenous youth need support through scholarships and funding, skills, training, and tools to succeed in education and employment. The participants also valued the culturally appropriate supports they encountered through their own education and felt such holistic support services should be extended to employment and health sectors.

Education was characterized as layered – from the land, including traditional and cultural education, and then the Canadian K-12 and PSE systems. The participants valued their cultural education, the teachings

---

from their traditional knowledges, languages, and teachings from the land and water, and cultural ceremonies. The FNMI participants shared that to live well and to succeed in living a good life, Indigenous youth must be balanced in all forms of their education and lives. This articulation of education and its value in supporting Indigenous peoples is critically important as it holds up FNMI ways of knowing by positioning lands and waters first, which informs traditions, languages, and cultural practices. Maintaining this relationship grounds youth in the strength and the support needed to enter into education systems.

Participants who had attended college or university shared stories of racism, exclusion, and lack of connection. However, there were also stories of resilience supported by the presence of Elders, Indigenous and ally faculty, relevant coursework and/or programming and the support of the Indigenous student services on campus. Recognizing that reconciliation requires sustained systemic change, FNMI youth envision walking with their education and culture in balance and walking into their careers with that same balance.

Participants made the following suggestions to improve the education system:

- Include traditional and formal forms of education and respect Indigenous ways of teaching and learning (e.g., experiential, collective).
- Address systemic inequities between K-12 schooling (remote/urban; reserve/off-reserve) to ensure equality of access to PSE, including funding inequities across the system. This systemic change is required to support the aspirations and pathways of possibility for all FNMI youth across the country, including remote and rural regions, and those both on and off reserve.
- Develop more opportunities for FNMI youth to study in the North.
- Increase the presence of Indigenous educators across all disciplines and levels of education (K-12, college, undergraduate, graduate). This may take a regional approach, recognizing, for example, the need for more Inuit teachers for the North.
- Provide training to all teachers to work in Indigenous communities, especially rural and remote communities.
- Develop national standards for the curriculum that is used to educate non-Indigenous students about Indigenous peoples. This would include resources or toolkits to support the teaching of residential schools and Indigenous content.
- Provide opportunities to stay in their community for K-12



---

FNMI youth put forward the following considerations for access and success in post-secondary education and career:

- Offering mentors and guides in both educational and career settings to create a culture of “lateral empowerment”, whereby Indigenous youth are supported and encouraged. This should include Intergenerational mentoring with youth and Elders, with dedicated space for gathering.
- Culturally relevant programs and support services, including Indigenous mental health (e.g., suicide prevention training).
- Healthy and sustainable food (e.g., learning how to hunt, reclaim traditional ways).
- Access to infrastructure (e.g., internet) to give access to education and employment.
- Cultural programs on and off reserve to give a better grounding in culture while in school and at work.
- Training of non-Indigenous educators and employers to support Indigenous students and employees.

Indigenous youth envision their education and their careers as meaningful work that sees their dreams align with reality and allows them to contribute to their communities. Their individual achievements were only relevant in how they contributed to making life better for Indigenous peoples. It was clear and worth reiterating here that the work ahead is not to be completed like a checklist – it is a process of doing good and taking clear intentional actions moving forward. One youth stated, *“don’t play hot potato with our lives...someone needs to take responsibility.”*

### **Next Steps**

The youth called on governments, education, health, and other organizations to create conditions of prosperity for Indigenous young people, on their terms. By working collectively to make an impact, FNMI youth suggest more can be done than individually particularly because *“[FNMI youth] don’t have time for incremental change.”*

To make these changes, youth need partners who will:

- Support opportunities for gatherings with changemakers to network and listen to each other at the regional and national level. This would also encourage those planning and inviting individuals and/or groups to be mindful of who isn’t at the table and make sure they are represented (ensure diverse voices and perspectives – not always the same people).

- 
- Be intentional about succession planning (e.g., aunty/uncle); transitional knowledge.
  - Invest in the long term. Youth programming requires long-term financial investments (e.g., make budgets not shoestring, but ones that have generational impacts; create a regional program for Indigenous youth to provide grants for Indigenous youth initiatives). This would provide time, space, and money and together these can provide access to youth-led activities and initiatives to experiment and explore.
  - Do the work of decolonization. Settlers must come to this work with humility, be on a decolonizing journey and be aware of the systems of power and oppression; recognize history, give power and voice to youth.
  - Decolonize the reporting process with assessment protocols used to evaluate the impact and success of these initiatives based on Indigenous understanding of impact and success.

The Indigenous youth of this country are looking for the meaningful enactment of the TRC's (2015) 94 Calls to Action. For some youth they specifically mentioned Call to Action #66, *"We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices"* (TRC, 2015). They believe in having stakeholders and partners take up this intentional action of having multi-year funding to empower youth-led programming and national networking. The report concludes with recommendations and ways forward in supporting Indigenous youth across this country.

## Reflections from Cross-Sector Partners

The gathering aimed to bring senior leaders from national organizations in the philanthropic, education, community, and private sectors together to explore their collective role in advancing Indigenous youths' aspirations for themselves and their communities. During this second convening in Ottawa, approximately 40 participants reflected on what they heard from the youth convening and from the FNMI youth present at the event.

The gathering had three goals:

1. Deepen our collective understanding of youth aspirations, challenges, and conditions for success;

- 
2. Identify ways that our organizations can better involve youth across our processes and programs;
  3. Commit to collective actions that will allow all of us to achieve more together than we have achieved separately.

With these goals in mind, the video and graphic recordings produced from the Youth gathering were presented to address the first goal of deepening collective understanding, recognizing that many in the room were youth themselves and/or worked with youth-focused organizations. To also focus the discussion, the RHF team presented the “Guiding Principles for Engaging with Indigenous Youth,” which emerged from the youths’ identifying the factors that allow them to lead a good life and what is necessary to allow more FNMI youth to prosper.

1. Our strength in navigating two worlds arises from **CONFIDENCE IN OUR CULTURAL PRACTICES**;
2. **CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS** are systemic and interconnected, bringing together health, education, love, financial stability and community support. Solutions must be interconnected as well;
3. **DECOLONIZED EDUCATION** requires more Indigenous teachers, researchers, and funders. Most of all, it is critical that all individuals and institutions involved celebrate Indigenous knowledge and honour Indigenous approaches;
4. The **LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH PROVIDE THE ANSWERS**; what we need is mentoring to turn our answers into solutions;
5. **RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY** to impacting change. It’s not about identifying good guys and bad guys, but finding allies who understand that battles are won by building upon strengths;
6. **MENTORSHIP** means providing opportunities to grow on our terms rather than telling us what to do;
7. Indigenous youth want to be **SUCCESSFUL TOGETHER**...one Indigenous person’s strength is every Indigenous person's strength;
8. **TRC CALLS TO ACTION** should be reflected in how private and not-for-profit sectors as well as the government work with Indigenous communities, particularly youth.

The day was then structured around small group discussions that were focused on incorporating the learnings from the FNMI Youth gathering, to identify ways that cross-sector organizations can better involve FNMI youth across their processes and program and articulate their commitment to collective

---

actions (e.g., achieving more together than separately). As Jennifer Brennan from the Mastercard Foundation stated in her opening remarks,

*This is an opportunity for each sector to stand up and take responsibility, to be strategic and incentivize, to encourage, to amplify each other's work, to move out of models of competition. How can we understand the bigger challenge, and how can we work together more strategically and effectively? It means getting out of our silos, which makes me excited about this cross-sectoral group here today. It's about how do we sustain this conversation and understand what's working and what's not working. All of this informs where we need to move going forward.*

In reflecting across these two gatherings, there are definite synergies between FNMI youth and allied organizations (e.g., education leaders, public sector, private sector, etc.) that align to support the “good life” for FNMI youth. Within these discussions, three factors are key. 1. Sustained and trust-guided relationships, 2. Respect for local context (e.g., a one-size approach to a national strategy is *not* what youth are asking for), and 3. Reciprocity in sharing knowledge and resources with youth-led initiatives.

### Opportunities for and with FNMI Youth

*“I'd like a future where Indigenous youth know their place in society.”*

(Cross-sector participant)

Those at the cross-sectoral gathering represented a diversity of groups from post-secondary education, health, non-profit organizations, government(s), and most importantly, Indigenous-led organizations and/or Indigenous representatives from other organizations. The private sector was under-represented at the gathering and there is a clear intention to bring their voices to future collaborative dialogue sessions with multiple sectors present.

There was an acknowledgement that to respond to and support the visions of FNMI youth presented from the Regina gathering, we must be bold in our LISTENING + LEARNING + ACTING. Funding must not be reactive but proactive and preventative, it must also be sustainable and multi-year to continue the good work.

Attendees were asked to share what is currently happening in their sectors, specifically what are the good examples and what are the challenges<sup>5</sup>. There was a long list of great examples of programming and services from across the country provided by participants at the gathering in Ottawa and also by the interview participants (e.g., land-based programming; Indigenous-specific academic programming; Indigenous cultural support services; tuition waiver policies for youth exiting the foster system and related support programs; Indigenous Guardians; Nunavut Sivuniksavut and other Inuit specific-programming). In the work of changing colonial systems, one group reported that the gathered participants need to get out of the way of FNMI youth by creating flexible reporting structures that not only build capacity with youth but are also grounded in Indigenous values. This group suggested creating new rules to make this work meaningful and sustainable. Several other participants suggested letting go of control and expected outcomes, and instead shifting their priorities to create flexibility to learn from what unfolds.

Some points shared about what is currently helpful and hindering the support of FNMI youth, were:

Helpful	Hindering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having Indigenous representation and voices at each level across each sector.</li> <li>● Recognition and value of the FNMI economies across Canada.</li> <li>● Language revitalization and land-based education is key to fighting colonization and white supremacy.</li> <li>● Having a broader understanding of the impact of diverse programming on communities (e.g., financing a healthy community can be inclusive of many sectors).</li> <li>● Education is lifelong learning – PSE is one option within that perspective; education needs to be culturally grounded, connected to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cuts to national programs hurt youth in communities (e.g., National Youth Program).</li> <li>● Lacking safe places for Indigenous youth to gather— requires sustained funding and programming.</li> <li>● Government reporting structures limiting in scope and nature (based on their agenda rather than that of FNMI youth).</li> <li>● Colonial bureaucracies constrain potential of collective collaborations.</li> <li>● Limited instances of thinking “outside the box” – racism and token actions.</li> <li>● Current funding models from the federal government are not working.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> These discussions were held in small groups with a person from each group reporting to the larger group. Some nuances of the discussions therefore may not be captured in this thematic summary.

---

community and culture (land, spirit, ceremony, language).

- Language and cultural experiences build self-esteem and confidence and can lead to employment opportunities.
- Mentoring matters (e.g., alumni speaking to younger youth).

- Lack of action results in disengagement of youth.
- Systems that are inflexible – colonial constructs that are “immovable” to understanding Indigenous perspectives.

In providing more opportunities for youth inclusion across a variety of sectors (e.g., youth advisory boards, youth membership within existing boards) it was noted by one group that cross-sector partners must recognize that culturally, *“standing out isn’t something [FNMI] value. We want to empower the whole community. Each member’s strength will lead to a more sustainable approach where the youth will be engaged for the long term. Youth need to be engaged not just as participants, but in building the model from A to Z.”*

Cross-sector participants recognized that it is easier to get short-term funding/investments which is helpful but also a hindering aspect of accessing sustainable funding. It was also pointed out that the reporting structure imposed by funding agencies (whether government or non-profit) is not reflective of evaluation that matters to the youth running the programs. There was a push back on reporting structures that are not aligning with FNMI community and youth needs. *“We are going to create our own box, and the government needs to figure out how to fund it.”* Funding partners who were in the room also saw the barriers of the current way of operating funding programs, one participant stated *“a mind shift is required in funding generally. We need to start at the community level rather than mandating what programs need to look like.”* Accountability for FNMI programs needs to be based by and for the community in which it is operating.

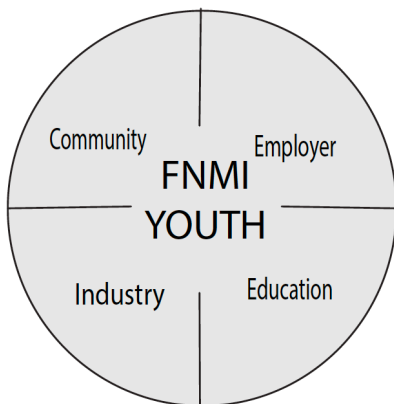
Funding becomes limiting when designated for specific operations or projects; capacity funding is needed to encourage cross-sector collaboration to pursue alternative forms of expertise, funding, and more importantly, establish relationships with others that are reciprocal and balanced. Investment needs to be made into dreaming and potential rather than the day-to-day survival of the organization itself.

---

## Relationship Building

*“If you don’t have youth giving you feedback right now, something needs to change... Engagement isn’t about checking the box—it’s more holistic. It is not about counting either. It’s not about having systems and making them work for Indigenous people... Youth need to be reflected in the policies and the policies need to reflect youth.” (Cross-sector participant)*

The cross-sectoral participants strongly emphasized the value of relationship-building between and within the sectors for FNMI youth; this relationship-building allows for collaboration and coordination of efforts. It was emphasized that FNMI communities must be at the centre of any collaboration and that Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners need to work together to tackle the broader system change called for by the TRC (2015) and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007). It was also clearly stated by several groups at both gatherings that systemic racism must be addressed in communities and across organizations – this was part of the collective responsibility in supporting Indigenous youth.



*Figure 2: Wholistic Collaborative Engagement*

Adapted from Pidgeon’s (2008) Indigenous wholistic framework, the above model is limited in its ability to capture the wholeness of the conversations, but it is presented to help think through the function of the collaborative partnerships envisioned by the cross-sectoral

participants to support FNMI youth. Some may want to present this model within a medicine wheel framework or connect it to the teachings of the Wampum belt or situate within Métissage. It should be adapted based on the cultural teachings of the Indigenous peoples that is culturally sensitive, relevant, and respectful of their ways of knowing and being.

Community (inclusive of community organizations), industry, employer, and education initiatives (Traditional Knowledge/Indigenous education, K-12, PSE) must include Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships. Participants from both gatherings reiterated the importance of working with the community to coordinate efforts. Within each of these sectors, work can be done to better support

---

FNMI youth. For example, increasing employer engagement from the recruitment to the retention of FNMI employees. In walking with FNMI youth, participants recognized that networking is key to supporting FNMI youth organizations that already exist – building relationships across these groups would be key to increasing opportunities for collaboration, collective advocacy, and partnerships.

### Education, Training, and Career

Educational programming that has strict funding regulations and predetermined outcome requirements are constrained in their ability to be responsive to changes in the pathways of FNMI youth. The result can be a loss of services or even the inability of youth to access the funds.

Training was recognized as important for the capacity building of FNMI youth, particularly those youth who are not choosing to go on to college or university. Life skills programming and workplace skills (e.g., resume building, interview skills) would be particularly helpful to these FNMI youth. For employers (and educators across the K-12 and PSE system), diversity and inclusion training along with cultural safety (or intercultural training) were recognized as necessary to support FNMI youth as they transition from school to work.

Furthermore, there were several ideas around educational opportunities that extended to FNMI communities, particularly those in the rural/remote areas so that youth who want to stay home to study can do so. This might involve community-based programming combined with capacity building and training of staff members built into the partnerships between institutions and Indigenous communities. It may also include extending opportunities for distance education, while recognizing the limitations of internet access in remote areas. Recognizing that relocating to pursue further education puts up multiple barriers for some FNMI youth, a group that included representatives from post-secondary institutions posed the question: *“How do you create opportunity for distance education, or bite-size pieces that allow people to stay in their communities?”* Recognizing the emotional impact of moving away for education, another in the group suggested *“it’s a huge disincentive when you have to disconnect from all your supports and everything that makes you feel good.”*

Additionally, evaluating the mentoring and advice young FNMI students are receiving in their elementary years (e.g., grades 6-8) regarding their futures (e.g., careers, course choices) would help to better address the needs of the next generation. There is a growing number of land-based education



---

opportunities being developed across the country and several interview participants spoke of the positive impact such programs were having on school attendance, motivation, and learning.

#### Required Resources

Participants also identified the need for more opportunities to gather and create nation/organization connections to influence sustained change and mobilize resources. Such mobilization would also recognize and support community economic development that helps build capacity and infrastructure for employment and education within FNMI communities. It was suggested by one group that what is needed is *“creating new rules in response to the challenges we face as organizations in different sectors.”*

Across the conversations, participants shared an acute awareness of the need for wrap-around supports and services (e.g., housing, childcare, food security) to increase youth persistence through all levels of education and into their careers. Development of financial programming and resources that address debt-aversion would be important for supporting FNMI Youth going on to further study. Others suggested that FNMI youth need safe spaces to be within their communities, particularly for those for whom home life and/or school is not safe. Such supports recognize that many FNMI are first-generation attendees to college or university and may also be the first in their families to enter a professional career. Having not had previous role models for balancing work and life, some Indigenous youth need employers who have already considered and planned for cultural accommodations. For example, it matters that employers respect the cultural and ceremonial needs of FNMI employees (e.g., hunting season, big house time). After one group discussed culture, they pointed out that *“it’s not an add on, cultural immersion should be paid work. Connecting land and language to employment opportunities ...connecting youth to opportunities to stay home and stop the brain drain. Respecting hunting seasons and ceremonial seasons as a type of professional development.”*

Participants emphasized that moving forward also requires better data collection and assessment across the board to support and advocate for FNMI youth. A long-term cumulative evaluation and assessment is needed to assess the impact that extends beyond a program mandate to discover the influence of that program on an individual’s life over time. Culturally informed assessment training and metrics for program evaluations must be developed to ensure they are appropriate for the Indigenous communities they support. Further to this, the question was posed *“what does it mean to have a ‘good life?’ and what ‘metrics’ (if any) should be used to assess this concept if this is the collective goal of the gathered*

---

*participants?”* In addition to these questions, there was a recognition of the need for sustained funding, and that a long-term investment for meaningful change was needed. There was also understanding that training FNMI youth in financial management and program evaluation would strengthen their own skills and abilities and allow them to contribute those skills to organizations and communities.

### Collective Actions

*“Changemakers are the youth...we are enablers.”* (Cross-sector participant)

Understanding that 1 + 1 can equal more than 2 recognizes that the collective can be stronger than individual actions. It was clear from both gatherings that some fundamental paradigm shifts are needed to undertake the work of reconciliation. The truth of the impact of colonization and the need for all of Canada to decolonize was heard throughout the gatherings. Just as the Indigenous youth advocated for their presence at any table that is discussing their lives, cross-sector participants also argued for the inclusion of Indigenous leadership and decision makers, including youth, at these tables. One discussion group reported that it's important to create new rules for this work; they encouraged a letting go of control and embracing a process without targeted outcomes to allow for the co-creation of something that works. It was also recognized that Canada is approaching the five-year anniversary of the TRC Calls to Action and that marking this anniversary requires reconnecting and renewal, understanding of what work has been done and what work remains. A sharing from one group at the cross-sector gathering suggested the work ahead is *“about changing the status quo. There are deep structural challenges in terms of reconciliation. Many have to do with legislation and policy and processes. No one of us can take these on alone. We must figure out how to do a coalition approach, but in the right ways. Building capacity where it needs to be – with youth... all of us stepping back [from our various perspectives] and realizing it's not about any one piece – it has to be a collective effort.”* The following suggestions were presented and organized around the actions of leveraging, amplifying, and supporting FNMI youth.

### Leveraging

**Relationships are key!** Identifying common and/or reciprocal goals was one way of leveraging resources (human or financial) for FNMI youth. This may involve creating positions for FNMI youth within the governance structures of more organizations to developing more national knowledge mobilization efforts (e.g., sharing of resources). As one group reported, *“Partnerships are key to making opportunities happen, including support of people in groups saying go for it.”* It was suggested by some participants

---

that going forward we think outside the box, consider working relationships that are a collective effort, and create networking partnerships to enact meaningful change. Participants also saw a responsibility to support lobbying efforts at the federal level for FNMI programs, policies, and initiatives.

*“Indigenous youth hold us accountable! Need to create processes and evaluations to hear those voices!”* (Cross-sector participant)

The cross-sector participants advocated for leveraging of data to inform such collaborations and lobbying efforts. A limitation within our current system is the lack of consistent and informed data from Indigenous perspectives and methodologies. They argued that research needs to be part of any process going forward to uncover the impact of successful collaborations and initiatives. FNMI youth would be then able to use such data to advocate for change across all levels of government. Culturally informed assessment and metrics that are based on Indigenous perspectives and methodologies (e.g., move beyond quantified metrics to a holistic understanding of issues) are a necessary part of this process.

It is important to consider relationship-building in the context of reconciliation as well. For example, who are the Indigenous business owners across the country and how can the Federation of Independent Business, Chambers of Commerce, and service clubs take up their responsibilities in reconciliation? Small business owners may not be aware of the important benefits in hiring FNMI youth. It was recognized that while some sectors are just beginning their work on reconciliation, some others (e.g., philanthropic community) have already moved forward by providing investors clear means to engage with Indigenous communities (e.g., the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada), allowing FNMI communities to decide how the funding is spent. It was recognized by some non-profit sector participants, that *“people are looking to engage at the level they want to engage in—whether they want a seat at the board table or just want to write a cheque.”*

Relationships are also important in connecting to culture, language, and land. A cross-sector participant noted that considering the spirituality and cultural aspects of Indigenous peoples is key to thinking through what it means to live a good life and suggested that Elders must be part of this conversation to support FNMI youth. Another participant added this perspective: *“In order for us to shift the paradigm [from survival to thriving], we need to spend more time with youth and Elders and not an annual event but a strong, constant relationship”*. In the group discussions of what it meant to live a good life, many participants acknowledged that there are multiple pathways, and that education is just one of the options. Several participants placed value on *“being able to be more meaningfully engaged as a person*

---

---

and as a community” (Cross sector participant). Their group emphasized the need to focus on relationships and sustained relationship building.

### Amplifying

*“We believe young Indigenous people have the solutions to the things that impact them in their lives, and we believe it so much we’re going to support them and get out of the way. We’re putting our money where our mouth is.”* (Cross-sector participant)

**Advocacy is key!** We need to support youth and get out of their way. Others built on this idea by suggesting that, as partners, we should form a coalition to move beyond advocacy to positions of leadership and action. This also means holding up the good work that has gone before and continuing to build on such work (e.g., Feathers of Hope research). By amplifying and adding to the good work being done across this country (e.g., national database; multi-pronged communication strategy that brings the work to the communities) we can give key stakeholders access to strategies that work and support innovation and growth.

The idea of amplifying FNMI youth voices was also connected to leadership opportunities for these youth, whether volunteer or employed positions, to ensure that they are at the table with the cross-sector partners. It was cautioned that one of the responsibilities of the cross-sector partners is to ensure that such opportunities are available to all youth and not to overburden some youth. Ensuring a network of care and support, and care for each other, will amplify not only their voices, but also FNMI youth well-being.

### Supporting

Building on the ideas of leveraging and amplifying, the cross-sector partners were clear they were there to support FNMI youth.

*“We believe in Indigenous youth’s vision for themselves and we will provide funds and resources to them for Indigenous solutions to community needs”* (Cross sector participant).

It was suggested, as part of building on the good research already done, that we examine the good examples of organizations who are already doing what FNMI youth are asking (e.g., The Circle provides training to Indigenous youth on grant applications and financial management that is Indigenous-led and managed). In mentoring and supporting FNMI youth, effort is needed to make time for transfer of

---

knowledge (e.g., intergenerational mentoring); the passing on of skills and knowledge to prepare the next generation. Participants were also mindful of the responsibility being placed on FNMI youth leaders, and the tensions resulting from being asked to lead without having the appropriate support system in place.

Therefore, one group proposed the following questions to this tension, as a responsibility that the cross-sector participants need to be considering in the work ahead. *“How do we navigate that responsibility, to not put demands on youth to figure everything out but respecting their voices and being actors.”*

Another group posted the question, *“How do we move the commitment [here at this gathering] to help Indigenous young people succeed?”* In other groups, it was recognized that coalition-building is also key to supporting Indigenous youth. In some respects, having a diverse cross sector representation in the room to hear what youth were saying was the beginning of that coalition building. One participant recognized this in their closing remarks; *“Asking for help is one of the hardest things, but I’m realizing there’s a whole group of people that want to help and it’s a matter of figuring out how. This is where do we see the future of Indigenous youth in 10 years? In 50 years? We need help—allowing the group to come forward and say here’s what we can do, here’s what we can take on, and let’s work in partnership to amplify the work that’s already happening.”* Another group shared the idea of having to *“leave our logos and egos at the door. We have to put forward the cause that we’re all working for”* as a way to take up the work that began at the two convenings and carry it forward in a good way.

The recommendations provided in this report include those that were put forward by the cross-sector groups in terms of *how* to leverage, amplify and support FNMI youth.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

What is evident from reviewing the literature on Indigenous youth experiences, and from those youth who participated throughout these consultations, is that Indigenous youth have been telling “us” (Canadian society, governments, leaders, organizations and service providers) for decades what they want. The issue has been that FNMI youth voices have not been heard by those in positions of power to enact and support change.

---

Despite the challenges, Indigenous youth persist in raising their concerns and wishes for the future while pursuing their rights as Indigenous peoples. Moreover, as evidenced by the leaders who gathered at First Nations University, Indigenous youth have been working at building a stronger Canada. FNMI youth call on all involved in this process to be clear on intentions and more importantly, call on all to follow these good intentions with clear and decisive actions. The 10 recommendations should not be seen as discrete actions; in fact, thinking holistically about the interconnections across the recommendations and relationships between various partners (e.g., FNMI youth, Elders, organizations, educational institutions, government, private and public sector) is critically important for creating the future lives FNMI youth imagine for the next seven generations.

The Rideau Hall Foundation's intention in this report, and in the activities over the past year, is to deeply listen and most importantly, act by mobilizing, networking, and activating solutions FNMI youth want to see in their respective communities, organizations, and society. It was reinforced at both gatherings that this is just the beginning of this collective work and the following recommendations are being put forward to challenge all of Canada to take up the work in response to the TRC (2015) Calls to Action and the MMIWI (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry, 2019) Calls for Justice:

#### Recommendation 1

**“Nothing About Us...Without Us”.** This statement requires youth involvement in any matter affecting Indigenous youth. Any meeting, consultation, or decision must involve FNMI youth. Youth self-determination in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the programs and services they need is paramount. This will take mentorship, professional development and support, but must be youth envisioned and youth-led. Mentoring has to be a key aspect of this work of collaborating with youth to develop and support their capacity and skill development (e.g., intergenerational mentoring, knowledge transfer and mobilization).

We must:

- Build and sustain relationships with FNMI people and organizations, particularly youth;
- Create paid entry-level employment opportunities for FNMI youth, not just internships or volunteer opportunities;

- 
- Provide ongoing professional development and training for FNMI youth to enrich their capacity for self-determination and help funders connect with grassroots youth organizations with a view to enhancing FNMI youth leadership and capacity building;
  - Create professional development opportunities and mentorship for FNMI youth who are being asked to step into leadership roles;
  - Ensure that all FNMI youth are fully represented, reaching beyond the successful post-secondary students, to include non-completers of K-12 (or post-secondary education), FNMI youth in care, homeless FNMI youth, and incarcerated youth.

## Recommendation 2

**Multi-year renewable funding to be established for FNMI youth programs and services.** One-time funding puts youth and their organizations in precarious circumstances and more importantly, puts the lives of the youth they support in dire risk. Multi-year renewable funding would allow for continued programming and supports in sustainable ways that allow for growth, professional development of staff, and security for youth who are served by this programming. This recommendation directly connects to Call to Action 66, *“We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices”* (TRC, 2015)<sup>6</sup>.

This should include:

- A national program that offers the services of grant proposal writers accessible to FNMI youth and organizations. This program should include ongoing mentorship for FNMI youth on grant/report writing and facilitation.
- A decentralized model of funding to increase accessibility to these resources across the country.

---

<sup>6</sup> In the 2019 Federal Budget Canadian Roots Exchange received 15.2 million over three years to develop and implement the Indigenous youth pilot project in response to Call to Action #66.

This announcement provides the needed multiyear funding that too many Indigenous youth organizations lack. The investment should inspire confidence in private and philanthropic sectors that may otherwise be cautious of investing in less established youth led organizations.

Reconciliation for this generation will come from the bold ideas of youth, backed by bold investments from government, philanthropists, and the private sector.

- 
- Development of a comprehensive listing of funding organizations that contains examples of past successful grant applications, and other related resources (e.g., webinar tutorials on grant applications; culturally appropriate assessment for program evaluation by and for Indigenous communities/organizations).
  - Exploring social financing models (e.g., investing capital to generate social cost savings). Such models would consider flexible funding that moves with the ebbs and flows of youth programming (e.g., renewable micro-grants).
  - Providing funding within a “safe to fail” environment. This would allow Indigenous youth-led social entrepreneurship and would demonstrate faith and trust in FNMI youth.

### Recommendation 3

**National networking and resource database.** Such a database would be accessible regardless of where you are in the country (considering access to internet may be important in design and accessibility). This database was envisioned as a connector of youth organizations and funders from across the country. This would allow for the sharing of best practices, and foster relationship building across organizations to support youth nationally, provincially/territorially, and regionally. This networking would also allow for inter-organizational collaboration for larger grants and funding opportunities. One suggested approach was the creation of a national map across all sectors to give a holistic picture – connecting relationships across education, health, social services, governments, organizations, etc. This mapping would then lead to national and regional networking, allow us to see gaps and opportunities, and to contribute to collective action.

### Recommendation 4

**Indigenous assessment for Indigenous programming.** Any Indigenous-focused programming, services, or initiatives should be evaluated using culturally appropriate evaluation tools. Indigenous research methodologies for culturally relevant assessment and financial reporting would further support the decolonization of bureaucratic structures that have tended to negate or ignore Indigenous perspectives on what matters. Indigenous methodologies rely on qualitative and quantitative forms of data collection.

Empowering the use of Indigenous forms of assessment and evaluation requires:



- 
- Training FNMI youth in these various forms of assessment, data collection, and analysis, particularly Indigenous research processes and methodologies.

#### Recommendation 5

**Policy.** National and provincial/territorial Indigenous youth-focused policy strategies are needed that take up the work of TRC Call to Action #66. These policy areas are connected to employment, education, culture, and media communication. Some suggestions included:

- An FNMI youth employment policy, with a required employer cultural safety training component that is responsive to regional needs.
- An on-land education and training policy (e.g., culturally based land-informed educational programming).
- An FNMI national language policy (e.g., access to language programming across the country, organizing, knowing, and sharing language revitalization practices and opportunities to learn/speak language). Indigenous languages should be equal to French/English.
- A National broadcasting platform and other associated social media platforms, specifically for FNMI youth.

#### Recommendation 6

**Mentorship.** While FNMI youth want to be equal partners and leaders, in their own self-determination they also recognize that they need support to build capacity in a variety of ways to take up this work and pass on that knowledge to other youth with whom they work. Effective mentorship strategies should include:

- Cultural mentors to support urban and rural FNMI youth
- Creating a National Indigenous Youth Leadership Institute
- Career and education mentors

#### Recommendation 7

**FNMI Employment.** It was recognized that getting that first job can be a huge stepping stone for many FNMI youths. Given the youth unemployment rate and the economic realities across many Indigenous communities (urban/rural/northern), more intentional action is needed on an Indigenous youth

---

employment initiative. Thinking holistically can ensure that FNMI youth are following their passions into meaningful careers that matter to them. Suggestions within this employment strategy would include:

- Life skills (e.g., resume writing, interviewing skills)
- Apprenticeship and experiential opportunities
- Inclusion of culture and protocol in orientation training, employment policies (e.g., leave for cultural ceremony), and professional development opportunities
- Career mentoring and supports
- Transition supports from education into the world of work

### Recommendation 8

**Strength through Cultural Integrity and Self Determination.** FNMI youth resiliency is connected to their cultural identities and sense of belonging. Cultural integrity refers to their whole sense of who they are as Indigenous peoples, holding their cultural teachings and practices through every aspect of their lives.

- National FNMI language strategy needed for youth
- Land-based education programming across the K-12 and PSE system

### Recommendation 9

**“Allyship”.** Youth and Indigenous-led organizations were clear in their call for “allyship” and mentoring with non-Indigenous peoples/organizations. This “allyship” requires giving without expectations. It also enables capacity and space for youth to self-determine their needs, goals, and outcomes related to youth-led initiatives. An important first step is:

- Cultural awareness and humility training across all sectors for all people

### Recommendation 10

**Collective Action and Responsibility.** There is a need for collective action and shared responsibility. Collective action does not assume that all cross-sector partners will be involved in one grand action, but it was clear through the gatherings that there are some priority areas in which various partners (inclusive of youth!) are interested. Aligning these synergies will ensure that each partner involved takes up their responsibility over the long term.

---

## References

- Abele, F & Delic, S. (2014) *Aboriginal Youth Employment in Northern Canada*. Ottawa, On: Carleton Centre for Community Innovation. Retrieved from <https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/Aboriginal-Youth-Employment-Report-March-20-2014.pdf>
- Andrade, M. S.. (2014). The Successful Educational Journeys of American Indian Women: Forming Aspirations for Higher Education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 16(1), 21-38.
- Aylward, E., Abu-Zahra, N., & Giles, A. (2014). Mobility and Nunavut Inuit youth: Lessons from Northern Youth Abroad. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(5), 1-16.
- Bingham, J. L., Adolpho, Q. B., Jackson, A. P., & Alexitch, L. R. (2014). Indigenous women college students' perspectives on college, work, and family. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(6), 615-632.
- Brandt, C. B. (2007). Discursive geographies in science: Space, identity, and scientific discourse among indigenous women in higher education. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 3(3), 703-730. doi:10.1007/s11422-007-9075-8
- Brant, J. (2012). *Aboriginal women in education : Honouring our experiences a vision of access to and success within the university*. Brock University, St.Catherines, Ontario. Retrieved August 3, 2018, from <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/handle/10464/3919>
- Brougham, D., Haar, J., & Roche, M. A. (2015). Work-family enrichment, collectivism, and workplace cultural outcomes: A study of New Zealand Māori. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 40(1), 19–34.
- Bruce, D., Marlin, A., & Raham, H. (2012). *Literature review on factors affecting the transition of Aboriginal youth from school to work*. Toronto, ON: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Retrieved from [https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/298/Literature-Review-on-Factors\\_EN.pdf](https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/298/Literature-Review-on-Factors_EN.pdf)
- Cahill, I. G. (2018). Indigenous access to skilled jobs in the Canadian forest industry: The role of education. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 9(2). DOI: 10.18584/iipj.2018.9.2.5
- CivicAction. (2014). *ESCALATOR: Jobs for youth facing barriers - Companies and youth moving up in the world*. Toronto, Ontario : CivicAction. Retrieved from <https://www.civicaction.ca/escalator/reports/>
- Clark, S. C. (2002). Employees' sense of community, sense of control, and work/family conflict in Native American organizations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(1), 92–108. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1846>
- Drummond, D., Sharpe, A, Murray, A & Mask, N (2017). *The Contribution of Aboriginal People to Future Labour Force Growth in Canada*. Ottawa, Ontario: Centre for the Study of Living Standards. Retrieved from <http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2017-07.pdf>
-

- 
- Gerber, L. M. (2014). Education, employment, and income polarization among Aboriginal men and women in Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 46(1), 121-144. doi:10.1353/ces.2014.0015
- Government of Alberta (2010, June). *Connecting the dots: Aboriginal workforce and economic development in Alberta*. Report of the MLA Committee on the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Workforce Planning Initiative. Retrieved from <https://work.alberta.ca/documents/connecting-the-dots-aboriginal-workforce.pdf>
- Greenaway, N. (2010, Apr 07). Education pays off for Canada's Aboriginal women: Study. *CanWest News*. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/docview/459073803?accountid=13800>
- Hall, H., Hessel, H., & Coates, K. (2015). *Knowledge synthesis: Aboriginal workplace integration in the North*. Saskatoon, SK: International Centre for Northern Governance and Development. Retrieved from <https://www.schoolofpublicpolicy.sk.ca/documents/research/archived-publications/icngd-publications/icngd-reports/Knowledge-Synthesis-Report-HallHessel.pdf>
- Hossain, B., & Lamb, L. (2019). Economic insecurity and psychological distress among Indigenous Canadians. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 53(1), 109-125. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jda.2019.0007>
- Julien, M., Somerville, K., & Brant, J. (2017). Indigenous perspectives on work-life enrichment and conflict in Canada. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 36(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-11-2015-0096>
- Indigenous Youth Voices. (2018). *A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66*. Ottawa, Canada.
- Indigenous Youth Voices and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society. (2019). *Indigenous Youth Voices: A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth* (pp. 1-20, Rep.). Ottawa, Ontario: First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada.
- Julien, M., Wright, B., & Zinni, D. M. (2010). Stories from the circle: Leadership lessons learned from aboriginal leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(1), 114–126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.10.009>
- Korteweg, L. & Bissell, A. (2016). The complexities of researching youth civic engagement in Canada with/by Indigenous youth: Settler-colonial challenges for Tikkun Olam—Pedagogies of repair and reconciliation. *Citizenship Education Research Journal*, 5, 14-26.
- Kulig, J. C., Duke, M., Solowoniuk, J., Weaselfat, R., Shade, C., Lamb, M., & Wojtowicz, B. (2010). Aboriginal science symposium: enabling Aboriginal student success in post-secondary institutions. *Rural And Remote Health*, 10(1), 1324, 1-7.
- MacKinnon, S. (2014). Making the case for an Aboriginal labour market intermediary: A community based solution to improve labour market outcomes for Aboriginal people in Manitoba. *Manitoba Law Journal*, 37(2), 277-302.
-

- 
- McCreary Centre Society. (2014). *Negotiating the barriers to employment for vulnerable youth in British Columbia*. Vancouver, BC: BC Centre for Employment Excellence. Retrieved from <http://www.cfeebc.org/reports/McCreary.pdf>
- McPhee, D., Julien, M., Miller, D. & Wright, B. (2017). Smudging, connecting, and dual identities: Case study of an aboriginal ERG. *Personnel Review*, 46, 1104-1119. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1108/PR-10-2015-0270>
- Moïse, H. & Parent, A-Y (no date). Round table analysis. Toronto, Ontario: Youth Fusion.
- Moyser, M. (2017). *Aboriginal people living off-reserve and the labour market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2007-2015*. Ottawa, Ontario: Statistics Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/71-588-x/71-588-x2017001-eng.pdf?st= DrVO6QL>
- Neeganagwedgin, E. (2013). A critical review of Aboriginal education in Canada: Eurocentric dominance impact and everyday denial. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(1), 15-31.
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2009) *Strengthening Aboriginal Girls' and Women's Success*. Ottawa, Ontario: Native Women's Association of Canada.
- Offet-Gartner, K. (2011). Rewriting HerStory: Aboriginal women reclaim education as a tool for personal and community, health and wellbeing. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 1499-1506.
- Ontario Provincial Child Advocate. (2013). *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations youth action plan*. Toronto, On: Ontario Child Advocate. Retrieved from <https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/initiatives/feathers-of-hope/foh-report.pdf>
- Paterson, B. & Hart-Wasekesikaw, F. (1994). Mentoring women in higher education: Lessons from the Elders. *College Teaching*, 42(2), 72-77.
- Pidgeon, M. (2016). More than a checklist: Meaningful Indigenous inclusion in higher education. *Social Inclusion*, 4(1), 77–91. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/si.v4i1.436>
- Pidgeon, M. (2008). Pushing against the margins: Indigenous theorizing of “success” and retention in higher education. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 10(3), 339–360.
- Policy Research Initiative. (2008). Hope or heartbreak: Aboriginal youth and Canada's future. *Horizons*, 10(1), 1-104. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Retrieved from <http://caid.ca/AboYou2008.pdf>
- Reading, C. & Wein, F. (2009). *Health inequalities and social determinants of Aboriginal peoples' health*. Prince George, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Retrieved from <https://www.ccsa-nccah.ca/docs/determinants/RPT-HealthInequalities-Reading-Wien-EN.pdf>
- Roche, A.M. Duraisingam, V. Trifonoff, A. & Tovell, A. (2013). The health and well-being of Indigenous drug and alcohol workers: Results from a national Australian survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 44(1), 17-26. doi:10.1016/j.jsat.2012.01.009
- Roy, L. (2014). Commentary: Leading a fulfilled life as an Indigenous academic. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 10(3), 303-310. doi:10.1177/117718011401000308
-

- 
- Shankar, J., Ip, E., & Khalema, N. E. (2017). Addressing academic aspirations, challenges, and barriers of Indigenous and immigrant students in a postsecondary education setting. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2017.1409675>
- Shield, R. (2009). Identifying and understanding Indigenous cultural and spiritual strengths in the higher education experiences of Indigenous women. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 24(1), 47-63. doi:10.1353/wic.0.0022
- Shotton, H. J. (2017). "I Thought You'd Call Her White Feather": Native Women and racial microaggressions in doctoral education. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 56(1), 32-54. doi:10.5749/jamerindieduc.56.1.0032
- Statistics Canada. (2017). *The Daily: Aboriginal people and the labour market*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/170316/dq170316d-eng.pdf?st=jmen1RGT>
- Statistics Canada. (2017) *Labour Market Experiences of First Nations people living off reserve: Key findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2018003-eng.htm>
- Timmons, V. (2013). Aboriginal students' perceptions of post-secondary success initiatives. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 33(1), 231-237. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1498365973?accountid=13800>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Ottawa: TRC. Retrieved from <https://web-trc.ca/>
- UN General Assembly. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*. New York, NY: United Nations. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)
- Waterman, S. J., & Lindley, L. S. (2013). Cultural strengths to persevere: Native American women in higher education. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 6(2), 139 - 165. doi:10.1515/njawhe-2013-0011
- Waterman, S., Lowe, S. C., & Shotton, H. J. (2018). *Beyond Access: Indigenizing programs for Native American Student Success*. Virginia: Stylus.
- Whitley, J. (2014). Supporting educational success for Aboriginal students: Identifying key influences. *McGill Journal of Education*, 49(1), 154-181.
-

Appendix A: Graphic Recordings from the Youth Gathering



Youth Convening, Regina, February 14-15, 2019

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING | Drawing Change  
Michelle Buchholz



Youth Convening, Regina, February 14-15, 2019

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING | Drawing Change  
Michelle Buchholz

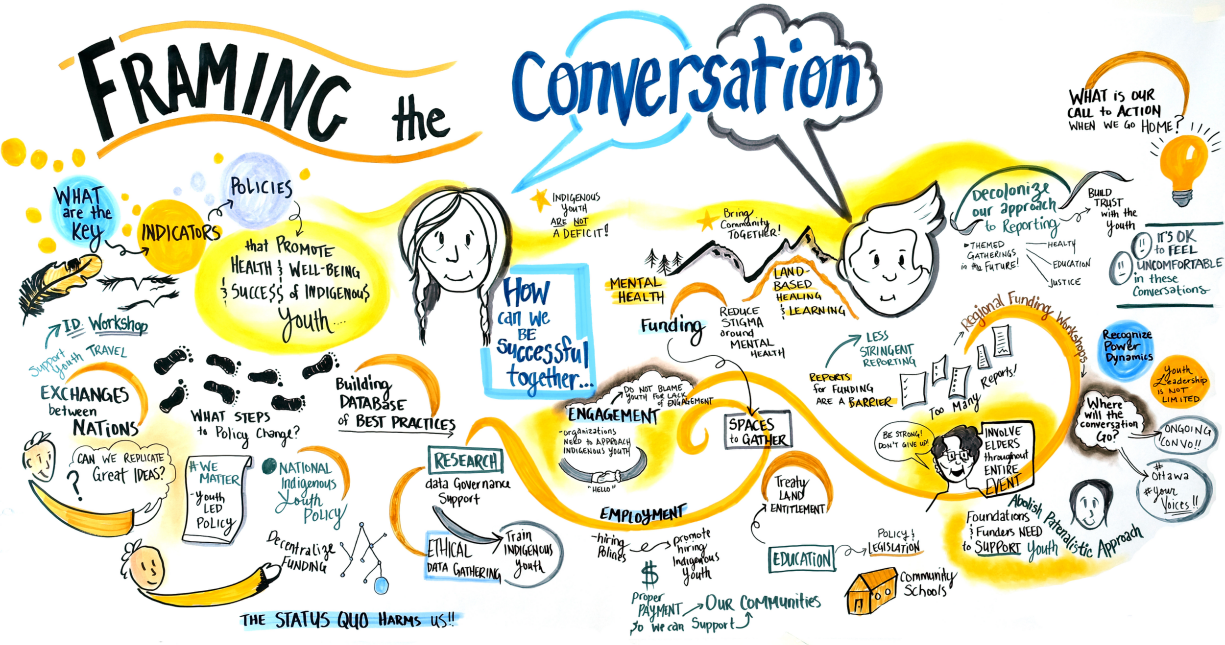
# Towards INDIGENOUS Futures



Youth Convening, Regina, February 14-15, 2019

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING | Drawing Change  
Michelle Buchholz

# FRAMING the Conversation



Youth Convening, Regina, February 14-15, 2019

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING | Drawing Change  
Michelle Buchholz



---

## Appendix B: Recommended Further Reading

- Brant, J. (2012). *Aboriginal women in education: Honouring our experiences a vision of access to and success within the university*. Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. Retrieved August 3, 2018, from <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/handle/10464/3919>
- Drummond, D., Sharpe, A, Murray, A & Mask, N (2017). *The Contribution of Aboriginal People to Future Labour Force Growth in Canada*. Ottawa, Ontario: Centre for the Study of Living Standards. Retrieved from <http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2017-07.pdf>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, (2018) *Leaving no one behind*. Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/3/ca0274en/CA0274EN.pdf>
- Gaudet, J., & Chilton, C. (2018). Milo Pimatisiwin Project: Healthy Living for Mushkegowuk Youth. *IJIH*, 13(1), 20 – 40. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijih.v13i1.30264>
- Indigenous Youth Voices and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society. (2019). *Indigenous Youth Voices: A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and by Indigenous Youth* (pp. 1-20, Rep.). Ottawa, Ontario: First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada.
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (2011) *First Canadians, Canadians first: National Strategy on Inuit Education 2011*. Ottawa, Ontario: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. Retrieved from <https://itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/National-Strategy-on-Inuit-Education-2011.pdf>
- Julien, M., Somerville, K., & Brant, J. (2017). Indigenous perspectives on work-life enrichment and conflict in Canada. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 36(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-11-2015-0096>
- Native Women’s Association of Canada. (2015) *Aboriginal Youth Employment and Training Survey—Summary of Findings*. Ottawa, ON: Native Women’s Association of Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/NWAC-Aboriginal-Youth-Employment-and-Training-Survey-Summary-of-Findings.pdf>
- Ontario Provincial Child Advocate. (2013). *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations youth action plan*. Toronto, On: Ontario Child Advocate. Retrieved from <https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/initiatives/feathers-of-hope/foh-report.pdf>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Ottawa: TRC. Retrieved from <https://web-trc.ca/>
- UN General Assembly. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*. New York, NY: United Nations. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)
- Wien, F., Denis, J., Dockstator, J., Duhaime, M., Loppie, G., Loxley, C., . . . Castleden, Heather. (2019). First Nation paths to well-being: Lessons from the Poverty Action Research Project. *Global Health Promotion*, 26(3\_suppl), 6-16.

---

## Appendix C:

### Recommendations to Guide the Work Ahead: Reflections by the Author

The responsibility of witnessing is a task undertaken with humility and intention, and it requires much of the witness to listen not only with their ears but with their hearts. In observing the work of the convenings, there are some process recommendations that are being put forward to honour Indigenous ways of engaging in this work, and to enact the principle of “nothing about us, without us”. I put forward the following recommendations, as an Indigenous witness to the events with the responsibility to tell the truth and honour Indigenous voices and vision in this process.

First and foremost, any discussions about youth must contain youth in the planning, delivery, and reporting. While this was done to a certain extent, it was also obvious that there were gaps and opportunities to improve how organizations approach any future work arising from these activities. It has to be clear from the outset why youth are gathering, even if the nature of the conversation is directed/guided by the youth themselves. Some intention setting (with youth in the planning stages) would ensure they were feeling respected and heard. Indigenous Youth Voices provides clear direction in this matter in their report “A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and By Indigenous Youth”. The principles of ethical research with Indigenous peoples are not limited to the academic research settings; in fact, “research” with, by, and for Indigenous peoples is related to any “data-gathering” activity that involves Indigenous peoples and their territories (animate and inanimate). The process is just as important as the outcome- all of which needs to be Indigenous-led and Indigenous-directed.

Second, FNMI youth were also asked questions that are important to not only listen to but act upon: How are the Rideau Hall Foundation and other organizations caring for the youth they have called together? How can you help us with what we need? They called for sharing how their voices would be shared with those gathering in Ottawa in advance. They called for regular check-ins on the progress of the agenda and the work being done beyond the two national gatherings and requested they be part of all ongoing dialogue and actions. They set out an agenda for themselves by asking “what is our call to action when we go home? How do we as youth continue this conversation?” Leading by example, the youth then took it upon themselves to create a list of their social media accounts to ensure the conversations and connections continued (e.g., Twitter, Instagram).

---

Third, relationships matter, and taking the time for those relationships to build is key. While mindful of time limitations in a day or day-and-a-half event, there are some intentional processes to build into future events to ensure these relationships can be built and trust earned. These include:

- Circle of introductions can be done in smaller circles and then invite people to sit with others they don't know to expand that circle. Continue to find ways for participants to connect with others expanding the circle of networks.
- Provide photo, bio, and contact information of all participants in advance of the event so individuals know who will be in the room
- Provide opportunities to those who are not speaking to speak more through the establishment of some agreed protocols of process at the beginning of the event; reminding people of the protocol of circles (not assuming it is the same protocol for all nations is important, but have a conversation on what that protocol would be for those in the room).
- Provide opportunities for new voices to be at the table to expand on relationships and also empower capacity building within youth organizations.
- Be mindful of, and challenge, deficit discourses (i.e, assuming FNMI are the problem that needs fixing) rather than the systems that perpetuate inequities and biases towards Indigenous peoples. Decolonize perspectives to ensure the dual economy of FNMI peoples – *“we are not a resource to be extracted from”* (Youth participant). We must also understand what it means to work nation to nation and to be working with each other (FNMI youth and organizations, settlers, education, non-profit sectors, government, etc.).

As one cross-sectoral participant recommended, having a framework that brings FNMI youth together with cross-sector representatives allows for connecting and more importantly, for the youth to self-determine what the process and the work ahead means to them and for them.