

# Indigenous Social Enterprise & Youth Employment



This research brief identifies characteristics of indigenous and youth social enterprise to inform employment and transition opportunities for Indigenous youth and young adults.

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Social enterprise (SE) can play an important role in employment development for people with barriers. Indigenous SE integrates Indigenous ways of knowing into the business.

### KEY POINTS

- ❑ Different forms of SE include: training for people facing challenges in the workplace, employment for marginalized populations, non-profits that house and subsidize SEs, and businesses owned and operated by Indigenous communities.
- ❑ Indigenous social enterprise integrates social, economic, environmental, and cultural goals. This is called the quadruple bottom line.
- ❑ People with barriers are often excluded from the job market and social enterprise can provide an opportunity to earn an income, contribute to society, and improve overall quality of life.
- ❑ Indigenous ways of knowing include community knowledge and accountabilities.

- ❑ SEs have a higher level of social and ethical responsibility.
- ❑ Most SEs in BC were successful because of their high quality products and services not for their social mission.
- ❑ Need to reconceptualize appropriate forms of SE in Indigenous communities. Include Indigenous ways of knowing.
- ❑ Primary barriers to success of Indigenous SE: poor organizational governance; lack of financial planning, financial literacy, and ongoing support for entrepreneurs.
- ❑ Successful characteristics of Youth SE include: relentless outreach, creating a safe haven, wrap around services, long standing community presence, and committed staff.
- ❑ SEs that provide youth with higher-level, relevant career skills may be more successful in attracting and retaining youth.

*Indigenous people living off-reserve are one of the groups at highest risk of social exclusion in Canada. (Fleury, 2002)*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- ❑ Most vulnerable youth are better served by programs that are multifaceted and long lasting.
- ❑ Street involved youth SE programs include mentoring, job training, clinical services, and harm-reduction strategies. Strategies aim to replace street-survival behaviours with marketable job skills.
- ❑ Two challenges: time the organization is able to spend with youth in their programs and additional support required to meet the needs of some youth.
- ❑ In one study, what the youth valued most was the ability to utilize the skills they had acquired in real work situations and the support and help they received from staff.
- ❑ Many SEs integrate literacy development for youth into skills development.

- ❑ Indigenous SEs include the quadruple bottom line in organizational goals.
- ❑ SEs consider the health, job satisfaction and happiness of employees for job retention and career development.
- ❑ Decision-making is complex as both financial and social needs are considered.
- ❑ SEs are at a disadvantage for long term financial success.
- ❑ Successful Indigenous and youth social enterprises tend to belong to a larger group of businesses within a parent organization.
- ❑ Best practices with youth include integration of workplace and job skills, life skills and other wrap-around supports, and creating entry-level positions leading to future opportunity.
- ❑ Recommended partnership model whereby SEs work with parent organization, other existing community organizations, including educational institutions.

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Friendship Centres are often the first formally incorporated Indigenous social enterprises in most Canadian cities and they have been the incubator for additional Indigenous social enterprise.