



SECTOR UPDATE
SOCIAL BRANCH: LANGUAGES AND LEARNING SECTOR
ISSUE: FIRST NATIONS LABOUR MARKET

July 2022

What is the history of this issue and how does it impact First Nations?

Resolution 25/2018, *Next Steps on a Distinct First Nations Labour Market Strategy* provides direction to the AFN and Chiefs Committee on Human Resource Development (CCHRD) to affirm First Nations' rights to better economic and social circumstances, mandating measures to eliminate personal and institutional impediments to First Nations' access to labour market opportunities and supporting access and alternatives for greater economic independence.

As outlined in the November 2020 Fall Economic Statement, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the First Nations labour market led to a federal announcement of \$144.2M for the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program. The initial investment in the ISET program assists the First Nations Labour Market in the immediate term. However, it is essential to continue advocating for further support to meet the needs of the First Nations workforce as determined by First Nations. To do so, an effort is required to monitor and evaluate the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the First Nations Labour Market.

In addition to COVID-19 considerations, other efforts require determining research that will further identify First Nations Labour Market needs and the path forward to transfer First Nations jurisdiction and governance over Labour Market services for First Nations. First Nations leaders in partnership with Canada are seeking to improve socio-economic outcomes for First Nations, and a key component of this depends on the inputs, activities, outcomes, and the overall Performance Measurement strategy of the First Nations Labour Market Strategy.

How has the AFN's recent advocacy affected this area?

Resolution 25/18, *Next Steps on a Distinct First Nations Labour Market Strategy*, directed the CCHRD to call on the Government of Canada to work with First Nations on a new approach for human capital development centered on a government-to-government relationship that recognizes First Nations jurisdiction and authority to govern and provide services.

The Government of Canada has acknowledged the importance of a distinctions-based approach that recognizes the unique needs of First Nations. ESDC launched the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program on April 1, 2019, which included a distinct First Nations Labour Market stream. The CCHRD communicated to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour that the long-term investments (10 years) realized in Budget 2018 was a good starting point and relief on the freeze on investments in place since 1999. The CCHRD and the Minister agreed that work to support additional indexed investments for governance capacity,



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and new fiscal instruments that respond to inflation and population growth will need to be completed. Ideally, this will be before the next FNLM budget cycle (2023).

First Nations leadership has made progress on establishing a Distinct First Nations Labour Market Strategy within the ISET program, starting in 2019-2020. This includes investments of \$1.1 billion over 5 years, 10-year agreements for longer term planning, a small increase in funding, and opportunities to improve the strategy through an evergreen approach.

Where do we hope to go in the future?

The AFN Languages and Learning Sector with advice from the CCHRD and the Technical Working Group (TWG) is planning to co-develop a workplan focused on new agreement implementation, performance measurement, capacity building assessment and monitoring, enhancement for labour market information and research to undertake the effects of inflation and population growth, and ongoing pandemic recovery in time for the next First Nations Labour Market Strategy budget cycle in 2023. These efforts will also include advocating for First Nations accessing new investments as it relates to the overall economic recovery efforts as result of the COVID-19 pandemic. All this work will support First Nations' rights to improved economic and social situations and promoting access to greater economic independence for First Nations.

Advocacy efforts carried out by the AFN, CCHRD and Technical Working Group will include seeking ongoing investments and additional support for training and employment, including youth employment and will ensure priorities outlined in the 2021 Speech from the Throne and Minister's Mandate Letter are upheld and acted upon.

In March 2022, ESDC returned to Treasury Board with an update on the co-developed Performance Measurement Strategy. The Sub-Technical Working Group on Human Resource Development provided feedback on the need to include qualitative data and data driven by agreement holders. Success stories of the ISET program cannot solely be told through quantitative data and a mechanism needs to be put into place to allow for ISET holders to share their stories. Feedback also addressed funding shortfalls due to population increases, and the ongoing rise in the cost of living and inflation.

Affirmed by Resolution 25/18, the CCHRD will continue to call upon the Government of Canada to work with First Nations on implementing a new approach for human capital development centered on a government-to-government relationship that recognizes First Nations jurisdiction and authority to govern and provide services.