

DIGITAL DIRECTIONS:

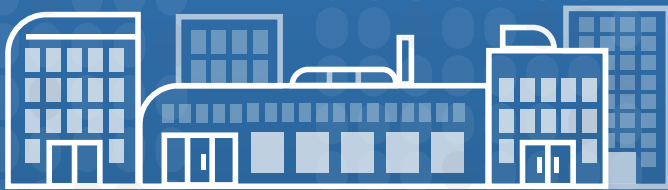
Towards skills development and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the new economy

Digital technologies are transforming every industry around the world and will enhance the way work is performed today, allowing employees to be more efficient and productive, and creating many new jobs that don't yet exist. Indigenous business owners and workers have made impressive gains in Canada, now including more than 43,000 businesses. The Indigenous population is the youngest, fastest growing demographic in Canada, with more than 46% under the age of 25. While these exciting changes are under way, an important point is that by 2022, 52% of all jobs are expected to require cognitive abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning and problem sensitivity as part of their core skill set.

With the ever-evolving nature of work and increasing demand for participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related professions, Indigenous Peoples are facing certain challenges in engaging with the Canadian economy and workforce. Awareness and preparation through times of change may allow Indigenous businesses and workers to adapt and succeed in the evolving digital economy – solidifying them as a driving force in competitive global markets.



\$31B
Contribution to Canada's GDP annually
by the Indigenous population



43,000+
Indigenous businesses in Canada



46%+
Of the Indigenous population are
under the age of 25 in Canada



The Indigenous population with a post-secondary education lags behind their non-Indigenous counterparts by

16 percentage points



52%
Percentage of all jobs expected to require cognitive abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning and problem sensitivity as part of their core skill set

The Challenge

Many of the industries that Indigenous firms have excelled in are expected to evolve with the technology revolution. In 2011, Indigenous workers were over-represented in industries such as construction, mining, and oil and gas. However, businesses in these industries face the challenge of emerging skills gaps and a contracting labour force resulting from the adoption of exponential technologies. In addition, there are the well documented systemic barriers to Indigenous Peoples in education, which, if not addressed, will create significant headwinds for Indigenous firms adapting to the digital economy. By 2022, 52% of all jobs are expected to require cognitive abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning and problem sensitivity as part of their core skill set. Within this context, it is important to note that preserving the economic value of businesses and communities will rely on investment in the capacities of individuals, especially in digital fluency and computational thinking, and enhancing the potential of individuals to access future-proof and productive employment.

The Opportunity

The uptake of exponential technologies will free workers from the many, repetitive and dangerous day-to-day tasks, and create the opportunity to use our uniquely human traits, such as creativity, problem solving and empathy. The new economy values these traits and they are the hallmarks of the Indigenous economy. Private sector actors understand how to harness and support these traits in order to reskill and upskill the Indigenous workforce to ensure their inclusion in the future of work.

The cross-functional skills valued in the new economy will enable greater mobility across occupations and industries. While STEM skills, including numeracy and the ability to work with empirical data, are critical components of the new economy; however, where Indigenous artistic and design related skills are integrated with STEM education and training models, these intersections can lead to innovation and new ways of thinking. The private sector is uniquely positioned to support retraining and upskilling initiatives since they have the clearest line of sight on market trends and technological advances shaping the industry.

Recommendations



All Stakeholders

Develop national, culturally appropriate training content with flexible structures to be adapted locally. These local structures should ensure the engagement of key community groups, including youth, political leadership and community leaders, such as Elders.

Corporate

Private sector actors must engage through a holistic community engagement, co-created by the actor and community of interest. In the past, parachute programs have resulted in temporary and uncertain outcomes, and the erosion of community trust. Skills training programs should be inclusive of professional development support for Indigenous educators and role models for Indigenous students through public-private partnerships and apprenticeship opportunities.



Government

Public sector actors must work with industry and Indigenous stakeholders to establish relevant traditional connections to STEM curricula with adequate funding, scholarship opportunities, educational support, and a plan for sustainability delivered to Indigenous communities.



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