

# DIGITAL DIRECTIONS



Discussion on  
the findings of  
Google Canada's  
Indigenous-led  
Business Poll

Fall 2022



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# 1. Executive Summary

Indigenous businesses in Canada are extremely resilient in their operations. While they were formerly pushed to the economic edges, Indigenous peoples today contribute more than \$31 billion to Canada's GDP, with the private sector adding more than \$12 billion. This path is predicted to result in a \$100 billion economy by 2025.<sup>1</sup> However, as the Canadian economy shifts to digital, Indigenous businesses adapting to the digital economy face new hurdles. As the COVID-19 pandemic proved, not only adequate but also fast and inexpensive internet access is required to ease the transition to virtual work, commerce, education, and social interactions. The work done as part of the partnership between Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and Google Canada helps to provide a clearer picture of how Indigenous businesses use digital products and services. It also shows where they need support and research to get the most out of digital technology.

CCAB and Google Canada have made a lasting partnership by continuing to work together to help Indigenous businesses go digital and build digital skills across a wide range of industries. With support from Google Canada, CCAB has administered an Indigenous Business Grant over the past two years (2021-22 and 2022-23) that provides funding and a CCAB membership to help Indigenous businesses thrive despite the COVID-19 pandemic. This program contributes to Google Canada's goal of organizing the world's knowledge and making it accessible and helpful to all.<sup>2</sup>

In the summer of 2022, CCAB advised Google Canada and the policy and research consultancy, Public First, on a survey of Indigenous businesses in Canada to inform the Google Canada Economic Impact Report (EIR) for 2021.

"Canada's transition to the digital economy is already unfolding, and this survey adds to the evidence that Indigenous peoples are poised to lead the way," said Tabatha Bull, President & CEO, Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. "Indigenous business owners are resilient innovators and have taken the initiative to rethink their business operations in the digital era, but they cannot do it alone. Additional support informed by Indigenous-focused research is required to ensure that they are prepared to meet the challenges of the new economy."

**CCAB President & CEO, Tabatha Bull**

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<sup>1</sup>Amato, D. (June 18, 2020). Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Canada: The Impact and the Opportunity. <https://discover.rbcroyalbank.com/indigenous-entrepreneurship-in-canada-the-impact-and-the-opportunity/>.

<sup>2</sup>CCAB. (2022). Indigenous Business Grant 2022-23. <https://www.ccab.com/indigenous-business-grant-2022/>.

## a. Brief methodology

This report presents the results of a poll conducted with 174 Indigenous business leaders from across Canada between June 24 and July 29, 2022. The sample was supplemented from an extensive list of Indigenous businesses produced and maintained by CCAB. This inclusion ensured that the sample was large enough to report on, while shedding light on this comparatively small and difficult-to-reach population. There was no statistical weighting applied to these findings for Indigenous businesses.

The comparisons with the Indigenous business population are based on a poll of 2,000 senior business leaders from small, medium, and large businesses from a variety of industries, including Indigenous businesses. Thus, we compared Indigenous business characteristics to “all businesses” or the “Canadian business average.” Please see the Methodology section in the EIR’s appendix for a more in-depth look at how the study was done.

This poll also drew on a sample of respondents with internet access. Given that both the advertisement for and the poll itself took place online, the “digital gap” remained an issue that must be addressed. This digital gap deserved attention because data alone could not convey the story of Indigenous people excluded from the digital economy due to a lack of internet access. CCAB recognized that many Indigenous communities lack reliable internet connectivity and should not be left out of the conversation regarding digital equity.

## b. Objective

The EIR aims to better understand Canadian businesses and how they interact with various Google web and business service products. Google assembles various nationally targeted economic impact reports each year to clarify how companies manage the global digital transformation underway in advanced capitalist economies.

The goal of CCAB is to use our large network of Indigenous businesses to collect more detailed information about this unique sector of the Canadian economy. To better support Indigenous businesses accessing digital markets, CCAB wants to know how often Indigenous entrepreneurs adopt new technology and online tools, how much they value them in their businesses, and what obstacles stand in their way. This information is given further context to account for the disparities in internet access across Canada.

### c. Key findings

This analysis of 174 Indigenous businesses and comparison groups of all the businesses that were surveyed reveals the following:

- 58% of Indigenous business leaders say they were early adopters of new technologies, while only 25% of business owners overall say the same thing.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of Indigenous businesses say that at least half of their new customers found them through an online search.
- About half (49%) of Indigenous businesses say they have hired programmers or developers, and 42% say they have hired data scientists or analysts, compared to 23% and 11% of all surveyed businesses, respectively.
- The Indigenous businesses we surveyed report using online tools more than the average Canadian business, selling products or services online (66% vs. 57%) or taking payments (77% vs. 68%).
- 57% of Indigenous businesses report having maintained or increased their Google Ads spending since March 2020.
- Indigenous businesses are making use of online tools, such as online search (75%) and online advertising (61%), to reach new customers.
- When asked how difficult it is to find skilled staff, 44% of Indigenous businesses say it is hard to find people with good digital skills. Only 31% of the businesses as a whole say the same thing.<sup>3</sup>

### d. Significance and impact

The preliminary findings of the Indigenous-led businesses Poll, commissioned by Google Canada, add another piece to the jigsaw of understanding the digital behaviours of Indigenous businesses, what they are already doing, and what they need to prosper and grow.

This research is one of the few, if not the only, surveys of Indigenous business leaders about their use of technology in their businesses and thus provides some of the most up-to-date information on the subject.

Studies like this one are valuable because they show how small and medium-sized businesses in Canada are adjusting to the increasing digitalization of the economy. For CCAB, the research demonstrates the strength of the Indigenous business sector and the risks of failing to seize the opportunity of the digital economy. While the data provides a largely optimistic image of Indigenous businesses and their use of digital technology

to boost efficiency, certain caveats remain. It is important to remember that digital adoption among Indigenous businesses is not the standard across the board. There is a significant digital gap in Canada that prevents Indigenous entrepreneurs from realizing the benefits that those with access to good internet take for granted.

Indigenous businesses frequently struggle to expand their economies due to difficulty finding qualified staff, obtaining finance, and lacking physical and digital infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous entrepreneurs are innovative and motivated to overcome these challenges, but the allies of Indigenous peoples and businesses must do more. The EIR should be viewed as a positive indicator of Indigenous business resilience. It demonstrates the value of and urges more resources to be invested in Indigenous businesses and the impact of practical assistance to close the gaps in running a business in the digital age. CCAB will use this information to better customize its tools and financing to the needs of its members who run Indigenous businesses and enhance grant support to help them improve their technology and grow their online businesses.

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<sup>3</sup>Google Canada. (October 2022). Google's Economic Impact in Canada 2021. <https://googlecanada.publicfirst.co/>. Public First. Pages 36-37.

<sup>4</sup>National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association. (Feb 14, 2017). RESEARCH MODULE 3: Barriers to Aboriginal entrepreneurship and options to overcome them. The Conference Board of Canada- Northern and Aboriginal Policy. [https://nacca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Research-Module-3\\_NACCA-BDC\\_Feb14\\_2017.pdf](https://nacca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Research-Module-3_NACCA-BDC_Feb14_2017.pdf). Pages 9-19. 2.



## 2. Indigenous businesses are tech forward

Indigenous businesses embrace all types of innovation, so being a first mover in online tools and digital technologies is nothing new to them.

One of the most important things learned from the survey is that Indigenous businesses are much more likely to use new technology to run their businesses. A reported 58% of Indigenous businesses claim to be early adopters of new technology compared to 25% of businesses as a whole. This finding is not unexpected, considering past research on the propensity of Indigenous businesses to innovate. In fact, Indigenous businesses are more likely to be innovative than the broader business population. A 2017 TD Economics report indicates that compared to non-Indigenous businesses, Indigenous businesses are more than twice as likely to have introduced a new product or service over the prior three years and nearly three times more likely to have brought in a new way of doing things.<sup>5</sup>

In 2019, CCAB updated its survey data on Indigenous business characteristics. Among the most positive findings of the survey is the degree to which Indigenous entrepreneurs value innovation. Half (51%) of Indigenous businesses say they recently introduced or are currently considering introducing new technologies into their businesses. More than half (54%) of the business leaders surveyed report introducing new products or services (43%), new processes (32%), or spending on R&D (25%) in the previous three years.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>TD Economics Special Report on Aboriginal Businesses Increasingly Embracing Innovation. (2017). <https://www.ccab.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/AboriginalBusiness2017.pdf>. Page 3.

<sup>6</sup>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2021). Understanding Intellectual Property Awareness & Use by Indigenous Businesses: 2019 Intellectual Property Survey of Indigenous Businesses. [https://www.ccab.com/research/publications/innovation/ip\\_awareness\\_and\\_use/](https://www.ccab.com/research/publications/innovation/ip_awareness_and_use/). Page 15.



### 3. Workers' digital skills

The Indigenous workforce is youthful and ready to prosper in the digital economy.

Indigenous peoples are Canada's youngest and fastest-growing demographic group. From 2016 to 2021, the Indigenous population increased by 9.4%, while the non-Indigenous population increased by 5.2%. Indigenous peoples are, on average, 8.2 years younger than non-Indigenous people, and 17.2% of Indigenous employees are between the ages of 55 and 64, or nearing retirement. This contrasts with the non-Indigenous population, which is 22.0%.<sup>7</sup> In 2021, there were 1.8 million Indigenous people in Canada, accounting for 5.0% of the total population. Statistics Canada anticipates that the Indigenous population will exceed 2.5 million by 2041.<sup>8</sup> If properly supported, Indigenous youth may help fill critical gaps in the labour market as an increasingly large segment of the country's workforce enters retirement age.<sup>9</sup>

According to the First Nations Technology Council, the average age of workers in the information and communication technology sector is relatively young. Indigenous youth may be well-suited to perform a variety of technology-related jobs and may have a more open mind when it comes to the benefits of technology. This fact might explain the enthusiastic acceptance of technology in Indigenous businesses, as well as their need for a diverse set of digital skills. The same research by the First Nations Technology Council finds increased optimism among Indigenous communities about their chances of success in a tech-related career.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Government of Canada. (Sept 21, 2022). "Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed". The Daily. Accessed on October 24, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>. No locatable pagination.

<sup>8</sup>Government of Canada. (Oct 6, 2021). Indigenous population in Canada – Projections to 2041. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2021066-eng.htm>. No locatable pagination.

<sup>9</sup>Government of Canada. (April 27, 2022). "In the midst of high job vacancies and historically low unemployment, Canada faces record retirements from an aging labour force: number of seniors aged 65 and older grows six times faster than children 0-14". The Daily. Accessed on October 24, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427a-eng.pdf?st=WyG-HcR9>. Page 12.

<sup>10</sup>Jang, T., Larocque, A., Patsey, G., Patsey, M. (2019). First Nations Labour Market Preliminary Study: Indigenous Engagement and Leadership in the Technology and Innovation Sectors. Final Report: Phase 1. First Nations Technology Council. [https://technologycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LMP-Phase-I-Final-Report-Master-Copy\\_May\\_2019.pdf](https://technologycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LMP-Phase-I-Final-Report-Master-Copy_May_2019.pdf). Page 12.

The 2022 National Indigenous Economic Strategy emphasizes that technology will disrupt 25% of Canadian occupations over the next decade, demonstrating that digital skills training is a major priority for Indigenous community and corporate leaders.<sup>11</sup> In comparison to 50% of other organizations across the country, 70% of senior decision makers in Indigenous businesses indicate intermediate digital skills would be useful for someone taking over their present post.

Geography may be a significant factor in Indigenous businesses' strong tendency to innovate and be early adopters of new technologies.

There is the belief that Indigenous businesses have generally recognized digital talents that enable them to overcome locational disadvantages associated with being based in rural and remote places.<sup>12</sup> Indigenous businesses are frequently confronted with barriers to connectivity that non-Indigenous organizations do not have to face. Factors contributing to locational disadvantage include transportation access problems, long cable construction, and harsh climate.<sup>13</sup>

Indigenous businesses need a variety of talents, including more sophisticated ones, to support their innovative business models, but digital skills can be hard to come by.

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<sup>11</sup>National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada: Pathways to Socioeconomic Parity for Indigenous Peoples. (June 2022). [https://niestrategy.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2022/05/NIES\\_English\\_FullStrategy.pdf](https://niestrategy.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2022/05/NIES_English_FullStrategy.pdf)  
Page 48.

<sup>12</sup>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2019). Indigenous-Owned Exporting Small and Medium Enterprises in Canada: A Joint Publication by the Office of the Chief Economist of Global Affairs Canada and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. Page 37.

<sup>13</sup>O'Donnell, Susan. Digital technology adoption in remote and northern Indigenous communities in Canada. Canadian Sociological Association 2016 Annual Conference. University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada. (2016) <http://firstmile.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016-ISED-FMCC.pdf>.  
Page 12-13.

Nearly half (49%) of Indigenous businesses report employing programmers or developers, while 42% hire data scientists or analysts. These percentages for the total number of businesses in the survey are 23% and 11%, respectively. This is in line with findings from other research. CCAB's 2019 survey states that Indigenous businesses report a need for a wide range of technical skills and knowledge to make effective use of new technologies, including but not limited to programming and coding (25%), general computer skills (19%), marketing and digital marketing (15%), IT networking and support (14%), and data analysis and management (11%).<sup>14</sup>

Despite the youth of Indigenous communities and their ability to incorporate technology into their businesses, finding and keeping digital workers remains a problem. The Google Canada Indigenous-led businesses Poll reveals that 44% of respondents report difficulty finding workers with adequate digital skills, compared to 30% of all business respondents.

The difficulty in locating talent in Indigenous communities has been extensively documented, as demonstrated by a CCAB-conducted national Aboriginal Business Survey in 2016. Over one-third (36%) of the more than 1,100 Indigenous business leaders surveyed report creating employment for others, and nearly all (83%) report employing at least one Indigenous person.<sup>15</sup>

However, since 2010, the number of businesses providing full-time or temporary jobs has decreased, as has the rate of Indigenous employment within these businesses. This might be owing to a broad recognition of the difficulty in obtaining qualified Indigenous staff, particularly among larger business owners. Indigenous business leaders with employees (68%) believe that recruiting qualified Indigenous personnel is challenging, but once hired, it is easier to retain them (54% think it is very or somewhat easy to keep their Indigenous employees).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2019). Understanding Intellectual Property Awareness & Use by Indigenous Businesses: 2019 Intellectual Property Survey of Indigenous Businesses. CCAB\_\_english\_FINAL\_DIGITAL-ERG.pdf. Page 17.

<sup>15</sup>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2016). Promise and Prosperity: The 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey. CCAB-PP-Report-V2-SQ-Pages.pdf. Page 19.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. Page 21.



## 4. Reaching customers

New communication technologies feature prominently in Indigenous business operations.

Indigenous entrepreneurs are adapting to bridge the digital divide in Canada by using social media platforms to manage their businesses. According to statistics from our poll of Indigenous business leaders, Indigenous businesses are far more likely to use social media to interact with customers or grow into new markets. Compared to the average Canadian business, Indigenous businesses increasingly rely on unconventional marketing strategies. This finding is especially true when looking at new forms of outreach like Facebook (64%), Instagram (44%), Twitter (30%), and TikTok (26%). When conventional marketing tools, such as email or newsletters, were investigated, social media use by Indigenous and all surveyed businesses was comparable.

These results are supported by CCAB's 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey, which found that new communication technologies play an important role in Indigenous business operations. According to data from the 2016 survey, about 67% of Indigenous businesses with an internet connection use social media to sell their products or services to their consumer base. Further, demographics were the most important factor influencing the frequency of social media use. Entrepreneurs under the age of 45, as well as women and owners with at least some post-secondary education, report greater rates of social media use for business objectives.<sup>17</sup>

This commitment to embracing the internet and social media as a marketing tool has borne fruit for Indigenous businesses. According to the Indigenous-led businesses Poll, approximately 35% of Indigenous businesses say that their online marketing efforts attract half of their new consumers. In comparison, just 19% of all respondents report obtaining new consumers through social media or internet marketing activities. These data points indicate that Indigenous businesses feel much more at ease promoting their businesses through online tools and resources. Most Indigenous businesses that export goods and services (54%) utilize at least one social media platform to find new customers abroad.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid. Page 39.

<sup>18</sup>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2019). Indigenous-Owned Exporting Small and Medium Enterprises in Canada: A Joint Publication by the Office of the Chief Economist of Global Affairs Canada and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. CCAB\_GAC-Indigenous-Exporting-SMEs-in-Canada-EN.pdf. Page 36.

Indigenous businesses are rapidly exceeding the national average in terms of the amount of money they spend on advertising. When asked how much they spend on advertising, 69% of Indigenous business respondents spend more than \$1,000, whereas 61% of all business respondents spend less than \$1,000. Further analysis reveals that 33% of Indigenous businesses spend over \$10,000 yearly on advertising. Social media as a primary advertising and marketing platform can avoid the prohibitive expense of traditional advertising methods. With no other options for spreading the word, businesses may increase their use of social media as part of a more comprehensive marketing strategy.

Indigenous businesses are rapidly branching out to discover new markets both at home and abroad.

Previous CCAB research has indicated that around 24% of Indigenous SMEs export their products or services to overseas markets, which is twice the national business average.<sup>19</sup> According to data from the Indigenous-led businesses Poll, 61% of Indigenous small businesses consider expanding into new markets in the coming year to be a major priority, while 51% of all surveyed businesses consider it unimportant.

This finding is consistent with a working hypothesis suggesting that Indigenous businesses are feeling constrained by their local markets, forcing them to experiment with new means of promotion and refocus their business plans to include international export activities. Indigenous businesses are leveraging the use of online marketing and social media to grow into global markets.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Page 4.



## 5. Other considerations for the digitization of Indigenous businesses

The next section examines Canada’s digital divide and why bridging it is critical for Indigenous businesses today and in the future. Indigenous peoples are at a disadvantage until widespread, low-cost internet connection is accessible. This is an opportunity for governments and non-Indigenous corporations to play a supportive role. If this is not done, the digital divide between Indigenous people living on reserves and people living in largely populated towns and cities widens, reinforcing disadvantages to Indigenous people’s economic growth, education, and employment.

### a. Canada’s digital divide

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the “digital divide” is the difference between people, households, businesses, and geographic areas with varying socio-economic levels in terms of their access to information and communication technologies and their use of the internet for a wide range of activities.<sup>20</sup> The internet is becoming a normal part of life as it is more integrated into our daily routines. People need to go online to find work, do their homework, use many government services, and stay in touch.

Indigenous populations in Canada are significantly underserved by the country’s digital infrastructure. More than two-thirds of on-reserve houses lack high-speed internet access. The situation is particularly acute in the north. Many communities in northern Canada rely on satellite internet service, which may provide slower speeds than other technologies. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) revealed in 2019 that fewer than half of Nunavut homes had internet speeds of 5Mbps, much slower than the government’s goal speed of 50/10 MBps.<sup>21</sup>

The digital gap is most pronounced in Indigenous communities. In 2019, 87.4% of Canadian households had access to services that met or surpassed the CRTC’s universal service goal. Only 34.8% of First Nations reserves have equal access.<sup>22</sup> This disparity in service quality and coverage disadvantages Indigenous citizens and the businesses they operate.

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<sup>20</sup>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2001). Understanding the Digital Divide 200. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/57/1888451.pdf>.  
Page 5.

<sup>21</sup>Buell, M. (2021, January 19). Indigenous communities must have internet access on their own terms. Toronto Star. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/01/18/indigenous-communities-must-have-internet-access-on-their-terms.html>.  
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<sup>22</sup>Collier, B. (2021, December 8). Broadband internet in Indigenous communities. Hill Notes, Library of Parliament. <https://hillnotes.ca/2021/12/08/broadband-internet-in-indigenous-communities/>.  
No locatable pagination.

The absence of reliable internet creates several barriers for Indigenous businesses attempting to realize their full economic potential. It is a substantial barrier to employment, training or resources, and entrepreneurial opportunities in the digital economy.<sup>23</sup> According to CCAB's national Aboriginal Business Survey in 2016, issues related to internet connectivity are most frequently cited by Indigenous businesses in the Territories and Atlantic regions of Canada.<sup>24</sup>

Before COVID-19, the lack of broadband internet access impacted Indigenous communities in several ways, including Indigenous governments' ability to provide services to their communities and engage in business opportunities and Indigenous youths' ability to learn digital skills, which may affect their economic participation. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the digital divide's impacts, including challenges that come with working from home and businesses turning to internet sales.<sup>25</sup>

High infrastructure and maintenance costs, low provider revenues, difficulties in quickly resolving network issues in remote communities, and short shipping and building seasons for installing necessary equipment all contribute to the lack of reliable, affordable broadband internet in some Indigenous communities.<sup>26</sup>

Because Indigenous nations are politically independent, they must be in control of the services and infrastructure in their communities as much as possible. However, few internet service providers in Indigenous communities are owned by Indigenous people. Some Indigenous networks, like K-Net, a unique First Nations-owned and operated ICT service provider, have set up policies for sharing and managing limited bandwidth based on the priorities set by the communities.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Jang, T., Larocque, A., Patsey, G., Patsey, M. (2019). First Nations Labour Market Preliminary Study: Indigenous Engagement and Leadership in the Technology and Innovation Sectors. Final Report: Phase 1. First Nations Technology Council.  
[https://technologycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LMP-Phase-I-Final-Report-Master-Copy\\_May\\_2019.pdf](https://technologycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LMP-Phase-I-Final-Report-Master-Copy_May_2019.pdf).  
Page 13.

<sup>24</sup>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2016). Promise and Prosperity: The 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey. CCAB-PP-Report-V2-SQ-Pages.pdf.  
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<sup>25</sup>Collier, B. (2021, December 8). Broadband internet in Indigenous communities. Hill Notes, Library of Parliament.  
<https://hillnotes.ca/2021/12/08/broadband-internet-in-indigenous-communities/>.  
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<sup>26</sup>Ibid. No locatable pagination.

<sup>27</sup>K-Net. (2022). About us.  
<https://knet.ca/about-us/>.

Indigenous governments in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand have called for spectrum sovereignty to self-govern and self-manage how their communities engage in the digital economy and serve the needs of their residents.<sup>282930</sup>As a result, Indigenous businesses and communities should have the first right to spectrum over their territory. However, airwaves are a critical resource that has not been equitably distributed in Canada. Despite the proliferation of 5G networks, many Indigenous communities have yet to benefit from them due to a lack of internet access, affordability, consultation, and equity participation in broadband networks.

The National Broadband Strategy aims to connect 98% of Canadians to high-speed internet with download speeds of 50 Mbps and upload speeds of 10 Mbps by 2026 and all Canadians by 2030. However, it lacks a coordinated policy and regulatory framework to ensure Indigenous peoples have access to affordable and reliable internet.<sup>31</sup> Indigenous peoples continue to be disadvantaged in a quickly digitizing environment unless governments and private corporations proactively address the digital gap and promote Indigenous-owned projects to operate their own digital infrastructure.<sup>32</sup>

According to the 2022 National Indigenous Economic Strategy, reconciliation can only be realized when Indigenous peoples are meaningfully engaged in Canada's economy.<sup>33</sup> Bridging the digital divide will play a significant role in enabling Indigenous businesses to participate equally in new sectors of economic growth. Connectivity in Indigenous communities is a crucial step toward reconciliation since it supports Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and increases Indigenous economic engagement and leadership.

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<sup>28</sup>Hobart, J. & Woodhouse, C. (April 25, 2022). Bridge the Digital Divide for Indigenous Communities. The Tye. <https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2022/04/25/Bridge-Digital-Divide-Indigenous-Communities/>.  
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<sup>29</sup>Internet Society. (October 20, 2020). 2020 Indigenous Connectivity Summit Policy Recommendations. <https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2020/2020-ics-policy-recommendations/#::~:~:text=well%20as%20businesses.,Spectrum%20Rights%20and%20Sovereignty,the%20spectrum%20over%20their%20lands.>  
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<sup>30</sup>Harp, R. (June 21, 2010). Spectrum Sovereignty? Maori Treaty Rights to 4G Debated in New Zealand. <https://mediaindigena.com/spectrum-sovereignty-maori-treaty-rights-to-4g-debated-in-new-zealand/>.  
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<sup>31</sup>Abdelaal, N., & Andrey, S. (2021, April 15). Indigenous and remote communities can't wait any longer for high-speed internet. First Policy Response.  
No locatable pagination.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.  
No locatable pagination.

<sup>33</sup>National Indigenous Economic Strategy. (2021).  
Page 28.





## 6. Conclusion

The Indigenous-led Businesses Poll results are significant because they provide additional support for CCAB's research and recommendations on innovation, digital skills, and employment within the Indigenous economy. CCAB continues participating in research projects that raise awareness of and support Indigenous businesses in their digital transition. This collaborative project with Google Canada advances public knowledge of Indigenous businesses' present capabilities, barriers to development, and adaptation required to meet the demands of a shifting economic and technological environment.

### In light of the EIR results, CCAB recommends that:

1. the federal government supports connectivity solutions owned by Indigenous communities and ensures that they are consulted before any internet access project is built on or crosses their traditional lands. This would help the country meet its 50/10 Mbps commitment to connecting all Canadians to the internet by 2030; and
2. governments and non-Indigenous organizations fund Indigenous-designed or Indigenous-led digital training to help Indigenous peoples use the internet for its many benefits, including economic development and the preservation and renewal of Indigenous languages, arts, and other cultural expressions.

Please use the following link to read the full version of Google's Economic Impact in Canada 2021.

<https://googlecanada.publicfirst.co/wp-content/uploads/Google%27s%20Impact%20in%20Canada%202021.pdf>



## Appendix

### Indigenous-led business Poll Questionnaire

#### Indigenous businesses are tech forward

- Compared to the average business in your industry, would you say that your company is an early adopter of technology?
- We use online tools for the following purposes...
- We use digital technologies for the following purposes...
- As far as you are aware, does your business use any of the following Google products?
  - Gmail
  - Google Search
  - Google Workspace
  - Chrome
  - Google Maps
  - YouTube
  - Android
  - Google Cloud
  - Google Play
  - Google Ads
  - AdSense Workers digital skills

#### Workers digital skills

- Which types of digital skills are most important to your business? Please select up to three.
  - Documents or spreadsheets
  - Social media management
  - Online advertising/digital marketing
  - Project management
  - Building or upscaling a website
  - Data science/analytics
  - E-commerce
  - Digital content/graphic design
  - Programming or app development
  - User experience design
  - Don't know

- If you were hiring someone to take over your current role, how important or unimportant would the following be for an applicant?
- Does your company employ any of the following?
- How easy or difficult is it for your business to find staff with good digital skills?

## Reaching customers

- How important or unimportant would you say each of the following are as ways customers/clients find your business?
- How much does your business approximately spend on advertising a year? Think about digital advertising like online search, video, and social, as well as media like radio, TV, and billboards.
- In the next 12 months, how important or unimportant is it for your business to expand its international sales?
- Outside of paid advertising, do you use any of the following mediums to connect with customers?
- What proportion of your new customers would you estimate comes through online search?



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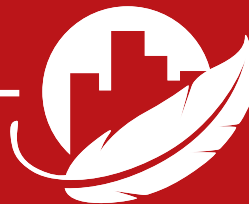
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