INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP: A journey to success

The following roadmap utilizes findings from CCAB's Skills for Inclusive Workplaces and the Advancement of Indigenous Peoples' report, which surveyed 25 Indigenous business leaders between February and March 2023. It is intended to serve as a useful tool that Indigenous entrepreneurs and corporate leaders can reference along their journey, and non-Indigenous leaders can use it to inform their workplace actions when seeking to create inclusive environments. This tool is not a checklist for success but a detailed description of Indigenous Peoples' experiences and valuable strategies for overcoming challenges in corporate workplace settings. The contents can be used by established or aspiring Indigenous leaders; however, certain aspects are meant to be internalized by non-Indigenous leaders seeking to create a more equitable workplace that supports Indigenous employees on their journey toward leadership roles.

Representing these values for the next generation of Indigenous leaders and entrenching Indigenous representation as necessary and distinct from corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Charting your career path and assessing the steps to successful leadership.

Experiencing

career path and assessing the THE steps to successful **LEADERSHIP** leadership. **LIFECYCLE**

> **Identifying your** skills and working on strategies to help you perfect your leadership craft.

Charting your

and reflecting on the value of relationship-building.

Recruitment of Indigenous Peoples with

challenges and barriers in the workplace that require resiliency to overcome them.

Building connections to make the journey

flow more smoothly

the goal of Indigenizing the company.

5 Common Themes or Strategies Related to Recruiting Indigenous Peoples for **Leadership Roles**

Applying for an open position through a job posting, as many postings go unfilled simply due to a lack of qualified applicants responding.

Linear progression through promotions.

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Referral by an internal employee.

Linear progression through promotions.

Building a reputation as a potential leader within an organization.

1.The Foundation

Before ascending to a leadership position, it is important to incubate your success by laying the necessary foundations. Many factors enable career advancement into senior-level positions. Indigenous leaders from our research detailed some of the prerequisites for carving a pathway to leadership roles:

> Building a reputation as a potential leader within an organization.

2. Hatchling Stage

After laying the foundations and reaching a senior-level position, it is important to begin honing your skills to become the most effective leader you can be. Indigenous leaders cite continuous learning, on-the-job experience, and Indigenous-specific training programs as key developmental tools to become well-rounded leaders. The following are some examples of strategies that Indigenous leaders use to sharpen their skills and strengthen professional development:

3 Professional **Development Tools Employed by** Successful **Indigenous** Leaders

CONTINUED LEARNING:

It is important to consistently work on **YOURSELF**. This strategy can be achieved through additional education, certificates, or other professional development means. The leaders we talked to detailed scenarios in which they are constantly progressing toward exemplifying a more well-rounded employee and leader.

ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE:

Observing and learning from others in a field can benefit individuals looking to expand their first-hand knowledge and expertise. On-the-job experience enables individuals to participate in various practical settings and apply their skills to the real world. This process ensures that rising leaders lead with confidence and a thorough understanding of working-level employees' experiences.

INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC TRAINING:

Indigenous leaders from our research mentioned the importance of seeing themselves reflected in training and mentorship opportunities. Seeking Indigenized support facilitated by Indigenous mentors operating in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies is a valuable professional development tool.

SOFT SKILLS INDIGENOUS LEADERS EMPLOY IN THEIR ROLES

- Effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Analytical skill
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Resiliency and determination Incorporation of Indigenous culture
- and traditions

for leadership positions outside these areas.

INDIGENOUS LEADERS' DEFINITION OF A "GOOD **LEADER**"

- Humility Strong vision and innovation
- Compassion and empathy
- Respect and kindness • Flexibility

As you maneuver the corporate world, you will face internal (within yourself) and external barriers in the workplace. When you can recognize the most likely sources of obstacles, you will have the courage to confront them. Indigenous leaders highlighted a variety of barriers that exist, including the following:

undertake leadership positions, causing feelings of being unequal or treated unfairly.

3. Surviving in The Unknown

LACK OF REPRESENTATION: Noteworthy concern exists regarding the lack of representation of Indigenous Peoples in senior or

Indigenous leaders or perpetuate a continuous cycle of non-diverse leaders.

executive-level leadership roles. Within organizations and corporate boards, a lack of diversity can affect the advancement of aspiring

TOKENIZATION: Indigenous leaders from our research found that, within certain organizations, Indigenous Peoples can sometimes be tokenized or "pigeonholed" into specific roles or Indigenous-related sectors. Indigenous Peoples' abilities and qualifications are frequently underappreciated, resulting in their being overlooked

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS: While combatting overt racial discrimination, it is also important to recognize unconscious biases, which are ingrained attitudes or stereotypes about specific racial or ethnic groups. From the insights gathered, unconscious biases seem to exist across many of Canada's corporate leadership networks, contributing to the lack of diversity in leadership and disadvantaging Indigenous Peoples looking to advance their careers

GENDER BIASES: Besides racial discrimination and unconscious biases, Indigenous women face additional barriers due to prejudiced behaviours perpetuated against women. These biases negatively influence the possibility of promotion for Indigenous women seeking to

> progress in their careers. Factors ranging from lack of access to job training and internet connectivity further hinder Indigenous leaders' advancement. The impact of these issues is especially heightened for those who live on reserve or in rural areas, where there is often inadequate infrastructure.

disparities contribute to the limited opportunities for Indigenous individuals wanting to

STRUCTURAL/SYSTEMIC BARRIERS: Educational gaps and other socio-economic



4 Strategies for **Overcoming Barriers**

PRACTICING HARD WORK AND DETERMINATION "Having to work three times as hard [as a non-Indigenous person] to get the credential — that carries through into every career path or every step. If I was

going to get a promotion, I feel like I had to work harder [than others] to earn that promotion."

PURSUING EDUCATION/TRAINING "I had a very positive introduction to education and to academics. By the time I got to school, I knew that I needed to find resources to help me succeed. I collect information that is helpful for

my career advancement."

"I picked myself up and said there's better things out there for me, being optimistic. I'm looking for that other opportunity that might be around the corner, always preparing myself

LEARNING SELF-ADVOCACY (THAT IS, "KNOWING YOUR WORTH")

and expanding my knowledge." "It is hard to advocate for yourself, so I met with women in leadership or Indigenous people in leadership to get advice. I had to understand those barriers and how to come across them. I had to ask for opportunities and demonstrate how I would be a benefit. It goes against [for

STAYING OPEN-MINDED

Indigenous people] the values of humility to put yourself out there."

"I'm finding different opportunities, or some opportunities will present

themselves to me." "Ultimately, what I had to do was to find new opportunities and explore

options for places I could work that would value me."