

Labour Market Gaps Research: Overview and Preliminary Recommendations

Prepared by:



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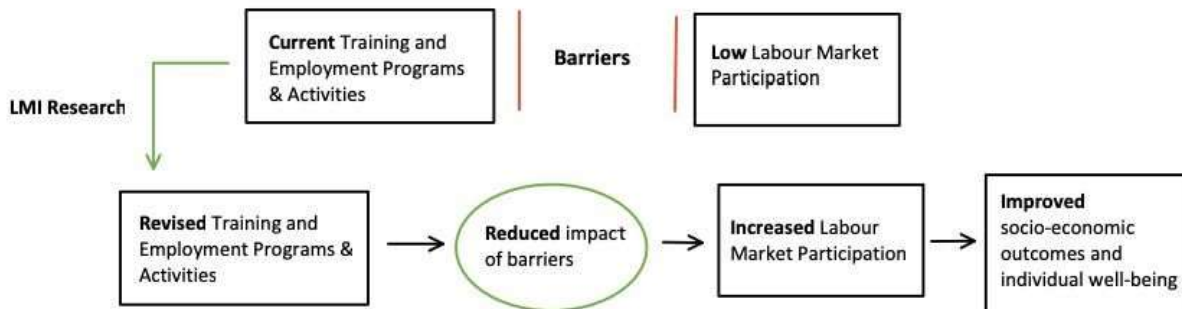
1. Background

The Nisga'a Lisims Government secured funding from the Province of British Columbia's Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (MAEST) to conduct a detailed review and analysis of labour market conditions, gaps, opportunities, and best practices in northwest British Columbia (NWBC).

The findings from this research will inform the priority training and employment activities of the Nisga'a Nation. More specifically, they will support Quality of Life initiatives for the Nisga'a Nation, and inform the work of Nisga'a Employment Skills and Training (NEST), a federally funded program to train Nisga'a citizens to prepare for labour market participation. This work will also provide important intelligence and insights for other local Indigenous Governments, organizations, and service providers tailored to help local and Indigenous clients find meaningful employment. The work equally benefits local employers and industry groups working in the region, as the report provides insight about labour retention strategies for Indigenous people.

Figure 1 illustrates the theory of change that is guiding this research. Currently, barriers stand in the way of labour market participation in NWBC, impacting the effectiveness of the training and employment programs that are being offered in the region. The Labour Market research conducted by the Nisga'a Lisims Government will shed light on these barriers and inform revised training and employment programs that will be more targeted and more effective in increasing labour market participation. In turn, this will translate into improved socio-economic outcomes and individual well-being.

Figure 1 - Theory of Change



2. Labour Market Survey Findings: Barriers to Labour Market Participation

Two labour market surveys were conducted as part of this research to identify employment experiences, as well as gaps, opportunities and best practices in attracting, recruiting, employing, and retaining Indigenous employees, including Nisga'a citizens. The first was conducted with 100 participants who are past and current partners of Nisga'a Employment, Skills and Training (NEST) in northwest BC, and the second was conducted with 55 Nisga'a employees.

What follows is a summary of identified barriers to labour market participation in the region.

2.1 Employer Perspectives

- Barriers to Hiring
 - 26% (26) of participants (100) said their top challenges/barriers in trying to attract and/or hire Indigenous people were lack of driver's license and lack of responsibility and/or reliability.
 - Employers further included "lack of education/training", "lack of communication skills", "addictions", "attitude, and performance", "work ethic and lack of follow-through", "lack of childcare", "competition from other employers", and "lack of basic and essential skills such as numeracy, literacy, and personable skills" as some of the biggest challenges in hiring locally.
- On-the-job Misalignment
 - 30% of employers interviewed said they enlist mentors, job coaches or Elders to support Indigenous workers on-the-job.
 - Employers indicated a reticence in asking employees to self-identify their ethnic background, impacting their ability to offer tailored resources to their Indigenous staff.
 - Half of the employers interviewed were not aware of the TRC and its Calls to Action, and 30% had reflected on the principles of the UNDRIP.
 - 28% said that they have reflected on the TRC and its Calls to Action by providing cultural awareness training and support at the workplace.
- Barriers to Retention
 - 42% of employers don't have retention strategies tailored specifically to the needs of Indigenous employees. 17% did not provide a response.
 - Employers identified "shortage of applicants", "issues accommodating family, culture, and personal needs", "lack of life skills", "reliability and responsibility", and "losing skilled co-workers to other employers" as retention challenges.
 - Most employers do not offer career progression/advancement opportunities tailored for their Indigenous employees, or provide career planning for Indigenous employees per se.

- Employers referred to retention challenges in the face of intensifying job competition, including inappropriate hiring practices by larger employers in the region and the inability to compete with higher wages.
- Employers indicated a desire for support in learning HR best-practices.

2.2 Employee Perspectives

● Barriers to Finding Employment

- 18% of participants have experienced bias / racism as a barrier to employment. 15% identified “lack of driver’s license”, and 15% listed “lack of training”. 13% referred to “lack of work experience”. Lack of regularized public transportation and substance abuse were also referenced as barriers, among others.
- Participants indicated a desire for higher NOC skill level employment and work outside of the resource sector.
- There is a need for essentials skills training (e.g. reading and writing, resume writing, computing skills, industry trainings such as occupational first aid, food safe, WHIMS), but:
 - On-the-job training is perceived as intimidating (lack of sensitivity to working with Indigenous people).
 - Online (coursework) training modules within industry are often described in negative terms such as “boring”, “outdated”, or “not effective”. Those working in the retail sectors noted this significantly.
- Networking was identified as a critical factor in finding suitable employment by employees. They suggest having a good network of peers is important in hearing about local job opportunities. Social media (Facebook and LinkedIn in particular) was reported as instrumental in creating/establishing local networks in the north leading to employment.

● Barriers to on-the-job Alignment

- Interviewees referred to persistent inequity, stereotyping and sentiments of racism across all sectors and within all levels of organizations as a primary barrier to employment.
- Interviewees indicated family responsibilities as a barrier to working on sites far from their communities.

● Barriers to Retention

- 64% of participants (55) indicated they have access to mentorships, job coaches, or other supports at their workplace.
- 38% of participants (55) work at an organization without a targeted strategy to retain Indigenous people.
- When asked about the challenges their organizations face in retaining Indigenous employees, 16% of participants (9) responded “none”, 13% responded “low pay”, and 9% referred to “lack of motivation”. “Improper management”, “lack of respectful

behaviour in the workplace”, and “lack of skills and qualifications” were also mentioned, among others.

3. Literature Review Research Findings

Increasing Indigenous employment in NWBC requires a coordinated effort and a firm commitment from all stakeholders: Indigenous government, provincial and local government, NEST, Indigenous communities, local businesses, and Indigenous people themselves. Adopting a holistic approach to Indigenous employment that includes a commitment to education programs, training, funding community projects, and good support systems within organizations are crucial to success.

Active labour market policies (ALMP) exist within the scope of NEST mandates, and can be as simple as job search assistance, or as complex as a fully guided education-apprenticeship-employment model. The most common ALMPs are job search assistance, essential skills training, formal classroom training, on-the-job-training, targeted wage subsidies, hiring bonuses, targeted employment, re-employment bonuses, and direct job creation.

Literature Review findings indicate considerable evidence that, for ALMPs to be successful, the needs and characteristics of the target group(s) need to be carefully considered during the design and delivery of an intervention (Martin and Grubb, 2001; Brown and Koettl, 2015).

Further findings show that:

- Higher cost interventions, such as skills development training, yield the highest returns in the long-run.
- The provision of incentives work – even if small. Support with childcare, food and travel vouchers, or a bonus for completing course work translates into better success rates and lower rates of attrition.
- Investment in training programs are not enough. Coordination and support from industry are critical. Further, Indigenous ownership in industrial projects, either as a lead employer or as a co-employer, translates into training and employment outcomes for Indigenous people.
- Targeted wage subsidies are an effective strategy for shorter-term gains in employment and employment income.
- Increasing awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures is critical to improved relationships between industry and First Nations.
 - Training which takes into account culture and geographic realities can empower more extended success for clients to complete training programs (specific examples suggests this also translates into improved employment outcomes).
- Networks, Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs), creating jobs that appeal to Indigenous workers, cultural accommodations, adapting company culture, a formal corporate vision statement, and community outreach in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous workers were all found to be important and effective.

4. Preliminary Recommendations

Note: The recommendations listed below are a result of this research, compiled from the literature review and the preliminary findings report, but their relevance and applicability is conditional on NEST committee feedback and discussion.

4.1 Preliminary Recommendations: Finding Employment / Hiring Employees

Job Search Assistance & Program Awareness

Recommendations:

- Encourage better connections between Nisga'a Lisims Government, the four (4) Nisga'a villages (Gitlaxt'aamiks, Laxgalts'ap, Gingolx, and Gitwinkshilkw), NEST, and employers to network together at local job fairs, or create similar events which stimulate local opportunity¹.
- Develop NEST radio ad campaigns to run on the local radio (CFNR) throughout the year. Use ads on radio to promote employer info events that take place throughout the year.
- Provide incentives and “nudges” for Nisga'a clients to attend job fairs and employer events, and promote prizes and winners on social media.
- Increase awareness of NEST's programs and services by diversifying social media channels, digital communications, updating website and/or keeping the Facebook page fresh and active with new feeds.
- Support NEST's brand awareness with print outreach materials including posters, handouts, success stories, pull up banners, and “swag” (travel mugs, pens, stickers, clothing, magnets, etc.).
- Create an online template for capturing NEST success stories (powerful imagery) – e.g. online videos have been very successful and encouraging to previous clients who take motivation from their peers.
- Introduce LinkedIn to broaden social reach to employers – include and add new employers to the region to NEST's network (track connections, posts, shares and stories).

Networking

Networking and relationship building are critical to cultivating patience, respect and opportunities to engage Indigenous people in the workplace. There needs to be more inclusionary ways to connect employers to employees in the northwest.

¹ In September 2017, NEST hosted a local job symposium and employment and information fair in Laxgalts'ap (Greenville) at the Laxgalts'ap Community Centre. Over 30 employers, educators and training providers attended and the event galvanized the networking opportunities available to many employers and (prospective) employees alike. Based on this research a similar event would serve the practical need to prompt further connections. See, <http://nisgaaworks.ca/2017/08/11/nest-employment-information-fair/>.

Recommendations:

- Continue offering job and career fairs, and hosting community events and symposiums with activities for families and children to communicate opportunities. Build from the successes of these events – e.g. learning from what works from each scheduled event.
- Support the inclusion of ISETS and other Indigenous focused training providers (Indigenous Governments) at regional economic development events and job fairs – similar in scope to that of Minerals North², a colloquium to support opportunities in the mining sector.
- Promote events throughout the year that focus on participation and engagement.
- Host more employment fairs, including single-employer information sessions, which are seen as equally advantageous as hosting/attending larger employment fairs (given cost implications for hosting larger events by NEST and as individualized employer information sessions can generate more in-depth conversations about specific sectors of interest for Nisga'a clients).
- Encourage the Province to facilitate, co-sponsor/fund, municipal, regional and industry development colloquiums to share in local employment opportunities and major project development updates.
 - Note: It was felt that more information sharing opportunities could be planned/held to help assist local employers and ISETs plan for major project developments on the horizon³.

Training & Education

The Literature Review findings show that having youth programs lead into post-secondary and apprenticeship programs sponsored by regional employers can create a direct path to employment, and a positive reinforcement cycle as intermediary goals are met.

Training that connects youth to resource development, major project developments, economic development, one's culture and place should be encouraged. This training empowers and encourages growth and learning opportunities for further career advancement with employers that understand the importance of one's cultural identity and community. NEST has engaged in

^{2,3} <https://www.mining.bc.ca/minerals-north-2019>

Another idea was to support the connection between the BC ATEAM – and major project proponents in regional terms – E.g. in gathering these groups together to learn and share in best-practice with industry (<https://ca.linkedin.com/in/bc-a-team-203674116>). certain work along these lines and LNG Canada and others offering similar programming should be supported².

² In the past, NEST has provided programming in resources management to connect clients to the resource sector and industry. This programming encouraged 'back to the land' type training which incorporated cultural wellbeing and

Recommendations:

- Coordinate with School District 92 to plan and execute workshops on essential job skills readiness coaching. Speak with students candidly about expectations in the workforce.
- Communicate the need to obtain a driver's licence and have driver's training early on in school (even if it is simply that students take a mock driver's test at 14-15 years of age).
- Communicate the need to obtain a driver's licence and have driver's training early on in school.
 - Start driver's training in schools with early testing and mock drills, whether they be written tests or actual driving lessons. The earlier we educate younger people on the importance of driving and driving safely the better (even if it is simply that students take a mock driver's test at 14-15 years of age).
- Encourage access to early learning tutorial classes (online and free classes for parents and families) to have their children upgrade their numeracy and literacy. Provide incentives for those students who finish modules and encourage others to try to take them.
- Support work-life balance workshops in the schools early on about taking care of oneself – e.g. help students avoid behaviours that led to addictions (provide counselling and access to available services).
- Educate students early on the impacts of habits such as little sleep or unhealthy eating on performance in school and on the job.

Transportation

Recommendations:

- A more comprehensive look at local transportation routes and the supports to public transportation should be undertaken. This includes an analysis of the current routes, times, costs and the potential to stimulate certain entrepreneurialism by encouraging businesses to fill transportation gaps.
- A better market analysis of what consumers would pay in the north for transportation should be undertaken (perhaps by the Province) to understand how to encourage more reliable ways to move about communities for work. This is particularly important in the wake of Greyhound ending its routes, the rising costs of fuel, and the high prices people pay for rideshares, as noted by interviewees.

empowerment models as alternative ways to help clients gain confidence and stamina in seeking work while learning about training in the resource sector (See the BladeRunner's program on NEST's Facebook Page -

<https://www.facebook.com/NEST360>Program (OYEP) – (<https://www.lngcanada.ca/>. See also, [/](#)) LNG Canada is a proud supporter of the Outland Youth Employment

4.2 Preliminary Recommendations: On-the-Job Alignment

Development of Materials

Recommendations:

- Local ISET agreement holders in the area should work alongside other Indigenous support services to co-develop materials to offer employers relevant information on the benefits (and supports) in the regional area;
- Assistance by the Province in the provision of materials to company staff on the supports offered to the various Indigenous groups in regional locations; this recommendation is in direct response to our interviews with new employers/(sub)-contractors entering the region who may be unfamiliar with the various supports potentially offered on the role of ISETs (NEST, TRICROP), the supports offered by Nisg_a'a Valley Health, Kermode, Skeena Development, Work BC, Coast Mountain College, etc.

4.3 Preliminary Recommendations: Retention

Mentorship

Recommendations:

- Keep fostering mentorship opportunities to move apprentices trained into positions so they can be supported by leaders in the field
 - Continue networking opportunities within the trades sectors (ITA and training colleges) or with industry and larger scale developments (e.g. the mining sector, port authority, oil and gas and energy sectors, forestry, etc.)
 - Develop regional support mechanisms for apprenticeships to gain on the job experience (ideally work placements either in the short or longer term)

5. Case Study Recommendations

Four Case Studies were undertaken as part of our Primary Research collection. Four leading employers and organizations in the region were selected based on their long-term commitment to the Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG) and Nisga'a Employment Skills and Training (NEST) goal of supporting regional development and employment opportunities for Indigenous people. Of these four cases studies, three included recommendations regarding labour market participation, outlined below:

5.1 Pretivm Resources Inc.

- Continue to work with local agencies to ensure applicants' resumes are complete and current.
- Have employment agencies prepare applicants for the fitness test in advance of recruiting.
- Work with local agencies to describe employment expectations, work ethic, and provide Pretivm's policies regarding drugs, alcohol, and discipline.
- For the preliminary fitness testing, set up alternative testing areas to support applicants from a wider geographic area.
- Work with local physiotherapists to help applicants who struggled with the fitness test to understand how to increase strength and improve chances of success in future.
- Review travel options for applicants in partnership with local Indigenous groups.
- Continue providing information sessions describing the work shift rotation schedule and camp setting in partnership with support agencies and Indigenous groups.
- Continue proactively building up the snow removal roster by requesting that employees indicate future interest in permanent seasonal employment or employment in other areas of operations.

5.2 Progressive Ventures Construction (PVC)

- Prioritize providing more complex and critical job skills such as reliability and work ethic training rather than simple health and safety certificate training. The latter can be provided by the employer, but a lack of skills such as reliability can pose challenges to hiring and while on the job.
- A lack of a Driver's Licence poses significant barriers to Indigenous potential hires. Creative and collaborative solutions can help address this gap. For instance, Progressive has partnered with a First Nations through loaning them a truck for a Class 1 Driver training program, and has committed to providing three months of practical driving experience for the necessary "seat time" for graduates of the training.
- When negotiating impact benefit agreements, local employment and procurement strategies and minimum indigenous local content commitments should be part of the agreed to approach for proponents when tendering bids (e.g., a 20% local employment commitment as part of the bid contract).
- Consider different building options within Indigenous communities. For example, instead of using modular units for housing, another option would be to partner with a local company to build on site. While the initial price for modular construction is less, the employment opportunities and other benefits to the community from doing the work on site often provides a net benefit.

- While executing projects in the Nass Valley, it is likely to cost about 10% more because of remoteness. While the employment and business development benefits are more significant because of higher unemployment in the communities – the geographic nature of these communities poses challenges to the bottom line in delivering projects on budget.
- In the career assessment of Indigenous members, focus on the aptitudes and interests of individuals to help them determine what career path will work best for them, as well as what training or preliminary jobs will help them get there³[1].
- Focus on basic life skills and soft [essential] skills. The ability to show up for work with raingear and a packed lunch and demonstrating reliability by regularly attending work shifts and working conscientiously and respectfully all goes a long way to being considered for promotion and to be considered for further training opportunities.

5.3 Prince Rupert Lawn & Garden

We recommend that NEST become more active in participating in identifying Nisga'a citizens with underutilized skillsets. This could be achieved by allowing access to NEST's database of skilled and unskilled labour force to address the expanding needs of the center for finding local employees.

A suggestion was also made to offer more practical on-the-job skills that are not necessarily related to "certificates" but are nonetheless crucial for those to move ahead. Such skills include supporting interpersonal interactions that feel safe and respectful for all staff, coaching about the importance of reliability (e.g., the need to show up on time or provide adequate notice for one's absence, or other common "do not dos" at work, such as texting and swearing).

Overall recommendations to NEST/NLG included:

- To provide funding and assistance to younger Nisga'a to obtain their driver's licenses early (e.g., it was noted that "having a Class 5 is essential within our organization for our employees to receive a promotion and move beyond general labour").
- To improve the responsiveness, speed, and flexibility of wage subsidy programs so that new hires can be given additional onboarding resources and time to adjust to a new workplace.

³ NEST has found this point is critical, and has consequently employed qualified "advisors" to mentor and coach clients in choosing their career path.

6. Discussion

1. Are the barriers to labour market participation outlined in section 2 aligned with NEST's understanding of the region?
 - a. What barriers are most important / should be prioritized?
 - b. What barriers are missing?
 - c. What barriers fall within NEST's scope of activities?
2. Given NEST's understanding of these barriers, are the recommendations outlined in this document relevant?
 - a. Are there any gaps?
 - b. What recommendations are most important / should be prioritized?
 - c. What recommendations fall beyond the scope of NEST influence?