



OFIFC

Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres

OMSSA Employment Forum

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Friendship Centres across Ontario

- Over the past five decades, Friendship Centres in Ontario have been at the forefront of working to ensure the needs and wellbeing of urban Indigenous people are being met.
- 85 percent of Indigenous people living in Ontario live off-reserve in towns, cities, and rural communities.
- A network of 28 Friendship Centres across Ontario provide culture-based programs and services and support a strengthened connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- Friendship Centres offer pre-employment supports and employment and training programs.



Labour Market Landscape

- 2017 unemployment rates:
 - 15.4 percent of Indigenous youth in Ontario (aged 15-24) were unemployed compared to 12.2 percent for the non-Indigenous youth population.
 - 9.1 percent of Indigenous adults in Ontario (aged 25 years and over) were unemployed compared to 4.8 percent for non-Indigenous people.
- It is estimated that more than 100,000 Indigenous youth will come of age to enter the labour market by 2026.



Barriers to Employment for Indigenous People

- Loss of identity, intergenerational trauma, and mental health challenges (including anxiety and isolation);
- Poverty, inadequate housing, lack of transportation, and food insecurity;
- Systemic racism and discrimination;
- Lack of connection to community, mentorship opportunities, apprenticeships, and educational upgrading;
- Lack of access to systems of support and wraparound services (child care; healing programs; addictions services; etc.)



Building on Positive Trends

- Indigenous women living off-reserve have seen rising employment rates and labour force participation since 2007, and have seen sizeable improvements in education attainment over the last 20 years.
- Employment rates for Indigenous degree holders were above 80% in 2016.
- Indigenous youth unemployment decreased to 15.4% in 2017 from 19.4% in 2016.



Get to Know Your Local Friendship Centre

- **Apatisiwin Employment and Training Program**
- **Literacy Programs**
- **Alternative Secondary School Program**
- **Homelessness Partnering Strategy**
- **Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Program**
- As well as culture-based programming for: parents, children and youth; health, healing, addictions and mental health; cultural programming; child care etc.



Wise Practices Happening in Communities

- Cooperative case management between Friendship Centres and OW Case Workers with mutual clients.
- Collaboration on challenging cases to best support client employment and training goals.
- Inviting Friendship Centres to participate in client intake meetings to support Indigenous clients whenever appropriate.
- Monthly update meetings between organizations.
- Annual agency information sessions to share information and resources.



Partnerships in Action

- The Nishnawbe Gamik Friendship Centre in Sioux Lookout and their local OW office have been working collaboratively for over a decade:
 - Hosting skills development workshops at Friendship Centre
 - Co-hosting a holiday community feast at the Friendship Centre
 - Sharing information and case-collaborating
- The N'Amerind Friendship Centre in London has partnered with the local OW office to support Indigenous women enrolled in the Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound program.
- The Thunderbird Friendship Centre in Geraldton is partnering to offer OW services at their satellite office.



How to Build on these Successes:

- Pre-employment skills development is critical to address the complex barriers urban Indigenous people face in transitioning into employment.
- Become familiar with the range of Friendship Centre programs and facilitate referrals.
- Establish a key contact at the Friendship Centre who can relay information to clients who are transient or housing insecure.
- Provide services at the Friendship Centre on certain days of the week.
- Partner with your local Friendship Centre to co-host workshops and events at the Friendship Centre.



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