

Métis Women's Council on Economic Security

2016 Report and Recommendations and Government of Alberta Response



Advisory Framework Métis Women's Council on Economic Security | Introduction

The Métis Women's Council on Economic Security was formally established by Ministerial Order to provide advice and recommendations to the Government of Alberta on strategies to improve the economic security of Indigenous women in Alberta.

The Council's 2016 Report and Recommendations builds on themes established in the Council's 2014 Report and Recommendations, and puts forth new cost-conscious recommendations that align with government priorities.

Priorities

Through in-depth discussion, research, and the establishment of working groups tasked with exploring specific initiatives, the Council identified the following three areas of recommendation to address Métis and Inuit women's economic security in Alberta:

- Government Procurement
- Indigenous Tourism and the Arts
- Trauma-informed Care

The Council participated in discussions with government subject-matter experts from departments such as Service Alberta, Alberta Culture and Tourism, and Alberta Health. External therapists were engaged to discuss their thoughts on health and wellness. While examining potential recommendations in the area of social enterprise, a working group of Council members also engaged with Indigenous tourism operators, a representative from Business Link and entrepreneurs.

The following recommendations were designed by the Council to address specific challenges on the continuum of barriers to economic security.

Government Procurement

Closing the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Albertans will be facilitated by increasing opportunities for Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs in Alberta. This can be achieved by the Government of Alberta instituting preferential procurement strategies that will benefit Indigenous businesses while still adhering to Alberta's obligations under domestic and international trade agreements. While the trade agreements have an exception regarding measures adopted or maintained relating to Indigenous peoples, this exception is up for interpretation and more can be done for providing Indigenous businesses a helping hand.

Several of Canada's provinces and territories have established or experimented with procurement policies that have focused on increasing opportunities for Indigenous businesses. There is also the federal government's Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) which has awarded more than 100,000 contracts with a total value of \$3.3 billion to Indigenous businesses since 1996. Under the PSAB, qualified Indigenous companies can bid on government procurement contracts through several business arrangements, such as sub-contracting and joint ventures with other companies. Under the PSAB, contracts that serve a primarily Indigenous population are set aside for competition among qualified Indigenous businesses. Alberta can examine these examples for inspiration and information on how to best benefit Indigenous-owned businesses.

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Develop a preferential procurement policy for Indigenous businesses that is consistent with Alberta's trade agreement obligations.

RATIONALE:

A preferential procurement policy as well as supporting practices can help stimulate Indigenous business development and build relationships between Indigenous businesses, the mainstream business community, and government. Consideration could also be given to having organizations, such as Business Link, provide training to Indigenous businesses on government procurement processes.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA RESPONSE:

ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE

The Alberta government believes it is important to support groups underrepresented in the economy, and to encourage all to bid on government contracts.

A procurement policy for Indigenous businesses is consistent with Alberta's trade agreements with neighbouring provinces, such as the Agreement on Internal Trade and the New West Partnership Trade Agreement.

The Government of Alberta is currently reviewing its procurement policies. In this context, the Cross-Government Procurement Policy Review Team will look at policies for Indigenous peoples.

Treasury Board and Finance will need to identify key directives and legislation that may need to be changed to accommodate such a procurement policy.

Culture and Tourism will procure the help of ceremonialists, and advice from Elders, for services and consultation.

Finally, and most important, leadership from **Indigenous Relations** will be crucial to engaging key community stakeholders needed for the creation of an effective procurement policy.

Indigenous Tourism and the Arts

The Council's 2014 report recommended a working group be established with representation from government, business, and the Métis and Inuit community to develop a business plan for a Métis Women's Social Enterprise Cooperative to promote Indigenous arts and crafts and protect the authenticity and integrity of their work. The working group's discussions led to the development of this report's more general recommendation to bolster Indigenous tourism in Alberta through a variety of means and incorporate opportunities for artisans to promote authentic Indigenous art and crafts through tourism.

While Alberta is involved in a number of initiatives geared at improving tourism in Indigenous and remote communities, there is no overarching strategy to support Indigenous tourism in the province. Canada is currently ranked 160th out of 194 countries on the World Travel and Tourism Council's global list, causing the country to miss out on lost revenue that could potentially be in the billions.

In January 2016, then Culture and Tourism Minister, David Eggen, issued a statement in response to the Canadian Council of Tourism Ministers' meeting in which he said, "I applaud the federal government's commitment to support continued growth of Indigenous tourism in Canada. Alberta is working closely with Indigenous communities to further develop its own tourism industry." The Council encourages the Alberta government to continue to act on this commitment.

Alberta can learn from provinces like British Columbia which has made the conscious effort to support and promote Indigenous tourism, particularly in the past decade. It's estimated that in 2006, Indigenous tourism in BC was worth \$20 million, and by 2014 this had grown to \$60 million. The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia also launched its Authentic Indigenous Arts initiative to promote and support authentic Indigenous artworks in the marketplace.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Foster and support Indigenous Tourism in Alberta through a comprehensive plan that supports Indigenous artisans and tourism operators. Initiatives under this approach could include:

- Work with Alberta Culture and Tourism and Travel Alberta to prepare tourism entrepreneurs to meet tourist expectations and tourist operator requirements.
- Create opportunities for Indigenous tourist operators and artisans to promote their product through existing tourism and entrepreneurial conferences, such as art exhibitions and/or competitions around existing conferences, symposia, and other sporting and cultural events.
- Create and support a provincial Indigenous tourism and arts association.
- Provide business training through organizations such as Business Link to help Indigenous artisans and tourism operators become 'market ready'.
- Partner with the Imagination Group of Companies to leverage the existing research and processes that resulted in a trademarked 'Authentically Aboriginal' seal. This process ensures that Indigenous Canadian art is exclusively represented, and inauthentic appropriations are filtered out.

- Invite Indigenous artists to join an online catalogue/digital platform of artisans to sell their crafts.

RATIONALE:

While the Council's initial recommendation was aimed at protecting artisans against the misuse of traditional Indigenous designs and promoting their work, improving Indigenous tourism in general will help Métis and Inuit women participate more fully in the economy. Many Aboriginal artisans work in rural Alberta and have limited means to sell their product. This recommendation would support individuals who work from home, particularly in remote locations.

Partnering with existing conferences and symposia will help keep this recommendation's implementation costs reasonable, and supporting Indigenous tourism now will likely result in a positive financial and social benefit for the province in the future. Consideration could be given to pairing a conference or symposium such as the annual Growing Rural Tourism conference, which teaches participants business knowledge with an Indigenous art exhibition or contest which celebrates and profiles their work while advertising their wares at the same time.

It is important to take steps to reach the artists who are not business savvy and are currently unaware or unable to afford existing events and training. The willingness of Alberta to celebrate its Indigenous art and tourism opportunities by organizing events such as an art contest held during Aboriginal Awareness Week will go far in celebrating Canada and Alberta's unique heritage.

The Council noted a lack of Indigenous artwork in the visitor's gift shop in the new federal building. Council is pleased to report management has since reached out to Indigenous artisans in northern Alberta who currently supply the shop with arts and crafts. The Council encourages Alberta retailers who support the tourist industry to make similar alliances with Indigenous artists to promote our rich culture and heritage and authentically Aboriginal artwork.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA RESPONSE:

ACCEPT

The Alberta government believes in supporting the growth of Indigenous art and tourism products. Culture and Tourism is examining ways it and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) could improve arts programs and support systems for First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples in Alberta, including opportunities to raise awareness of current programs.

Indigenous artisans are currently eligible for a number of AFA programs:

- *Alberta Future Leaders* - Indigenous communities have access to the Alberta Future Leaders sports, recreation, leadership and arts development program, coordinated by Alberta Sport Connection. This program engages youth to learn from established artists for a three year program cycle. Nine Indigenous communities in Alberta currently participate each year, although the program can accommodate up to 10 eligible Indigenous communities each year under its current budget. This program is also a vehicle for promoting other initiatives and arts development opportunities in Indigenous communities.
- *Aboriginal Individual Project Grant* – This grant stream supports Indigenous artists with up to \$15,000 for major works, training/master classes, marketing or research. Since its 2009 inception, this program has received an average of 11 applications for each semi-annual deadline. In 2015-16, 13 grants were distributed for a total value of \$178,112. AFA is identifying ways to increase awareness of this grant, including through the Alberta Future Leaders program.
- *The Alberta Foundation for the Arts' 2016-18 Curatorial Plan* is focused on increasing the depth and breadth of Indigenous artists – historical, contemporary or emerging – based on gaps in collection holdings and usage trends in exhibition loans and placements. The AFA collection currently contains 198 artworks by 57 artists self-identified as Indigenous.

Indigenous people are also represented through a number of additional initiatives and programs at Culture and Tourism:

- Indigenous people are a key priority in the Cultural Industries Action Plan, in development. Cultural industries (film, television and digital media; sound recording; and book and magazine publishing) are effective ways of sharing the cultural

diversity, experiences, and history of Indigenous peoples. While further research and consultation is required, this plan will help support the creation and communications of Indigenous culture through formalized initiatives or funding programs.

- Culture and Tourism is responsible for the Major Fairs Program, which provides annual, unconditional operational grants to Edmonton Northlands and Calgary Stampede and Exhibitions. Edmonton Northlands and Calgary Stampede and Exhibition have both featured an Indigenous component in many of their events in the past. For example, Klondike Days 2016 included a 10-day Pow Wow as a feature event, while Calgary Stampede and Exhibitions hosted a Family Festival and Pow Wow in June 2016.
- Culture and Tourism is cultivating the growth and development of Indigenous cultural tourism experiences, which are highly sought after by visitors to Alberta. A \$33.5-million capital investment at Fort Edmonton Park will support the development of facilities featuring Alberta's Indigenous People's Experience. This development was supported by the Métis Nation of Alberta Association and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations.
- Culture and Tourism is also assisting Heritage Park Historical Village on enhanced Indigenous programming, in particular around Métis and women's stories. They are also exploring opportunities for Indigenous artisans to sell arts and crafts in gift shops and at marketplaces held during Park events.

Culture and Tourism also supports Indigenous owned enterprises in other ways:

- Tourism Entrepreneur Seminars are held to provide resources and tools to tourism entrepreneurs from key partner organizations, in addition to the Government of Alberta. Over a one-year period ending in August 2016, nine formal seminars were held, with another five seminars presented at the request of communities. In May 2016, another 10 abbreviated seminars were presented during the Travel Alberta North and South town halls. In September 2015, Culture and Tourism collaborated with Indigenous Relations to deliver a presentation on the Tourism Entrepreneurship Program (TEP) to Stoney First Nation. In January 2016, Culture and Tourism delivered a second TEP presentation in Lac La Biche, which had a number of Métis Settlement representatives present.
- A Tourism Business Planning Guide has been created to assist operators with completing a business plan in order to approach an investor or lender.

- A Tourism Development Guide is also available to assist with navigating regulatory approvals for a tourism business.

Travel Alberta, a crown corporation responsible for tourism marketing, offers workshops and one-on-one consultation with tourism operators to prepare them for tourist expectations (market-ready), travel trade expectations (export-ready) and marketing.

Travel Alberta regularly features Indigenous tourism experiences – such as Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, Métis Crossing, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park – in its marketing materials.

Culture and Tourism will also continue to align its efforts with industry groups such as the Alberta chapter of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada to advance Indigenous tourism product development and supports for Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs.

Alberta Education is working with Indigenous Relations on an art contest to encourage Kindergarten to Grade 12 students to celebrate the various First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures in Alberta and showcase their beauty to the rest of the world through art. Indigenous Relations is exploring other opportunities to promote art that celebrates the strength and spirit of Indigenous women.

Health and Wellness

The importance of “Wellness” for the advancement of Métis Women is critical to the success of all involved. The Métis Women’s Economic Security Council has considered the concept of “Wellness” very seriously and at times has struggled to define it. The Council discussed issues ranging from murdered and missing Aboriginal women to childcare which made it difficult to find just one recommendation to put forward. The Council feels the farthest reaching recommendation we can make is having first contact professionals trained in a “trauma response model”.

As part of trauma informed care, training needs to include instruction on the clinical presentation of Historical Trauma Transmission (HTT) and resulting complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is commonly seen in Aboriginal people needing professional services. Aboriginal

people with these afflictions are often misdiagnosed by health care providers. Additionally, helping professionals require exposure to anecdotal experiences from Indian Residential School survivors and Métis, Inuit and First Nation Elders and wisdom keepers who can represent the historical and current experiences. A general overview of trauma and neurological factors with HTT across the developmental lifespan also needs to be included. Equally imperative, helping professionals need to understand and appreciate the strengths, resiliency and beauty of Métis, Inuit, and First Nations culture and teachings. These teachings will ensure culturally sensitive and informed services.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

Mandatory training for first-responders and first-contact professionals on how to provide trauma-informed care.

- Agencies that receive this training will be identified within the new Indigenous Programs and Services web portal on Indigenous Relations home page.

RATIONALE:

Trauma disrupts the healthy development of individuals, families and communities. Métis, Inuit and First Nation societies are riddled with the fall-out of colonization, subjugation, disease, violence and the systematic government sponsored destruction of Aboriginal culture. This included a generation of children who were ripped away from their families and communities and sent to Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The violence and despair in Indigenous communities is reflected in the over-representation of Indigenous people in the prison system and high rates of suicide, unemployment, substance abuse, mental illness, etc.

Trauma survivors can be re-victimized by service providers who do not understand the history of Indigenous peoples. It is imperative these professionals have a deep understanding of the historical impacts Indigenous peoples face daily: Colonization, IRS, the Indian Act, and the Sixties Scoop led to the loss of culture, ceremony, spiritual practices, land, language and identity, family practices and parenting skills, resulting in less respect for family roles, including the role of Elders. It also led to the escalation of family and lateral violence. These types of acts speak to the multi-generational aspects of trauma.

The Council Members recognize that there is a broad base of services already being provided in Alberta but there is a lack of understanding and a serious disconnect which needs to be addressed in a deeply committed way. This is not to say that the cultural training that is currently provided should be discontinued; rather, that the “trauma response model” needs to be incorporated. This will cast light on the very profound reasons why Indigenous people often do not access available Government services.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA RESPONSE:

ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE

The Alberta government supports the view that training first-responder and first-contact professionals in trauma-informed care will help enable these health service providers to better understand and provide care to Indigenous people.

Actions Underway

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is currently developing the Trauma Informed Care (TIC) education and training modules, which introduce learners to key concepts and practices of TIC. The intended audience for the voluntary training is anyone who works for AHS but the training is open to anyone external to AHS with access to the internet.

Next Steps

The Government of Alberta and AHS will develop a process to determine the feasibility of mandatory trauma-informed care training for applicable staff at AHS, and what policies and processes need to be in place to make sure everyone who requires training receives it.

Alberta Health will also hold discussions with the Alberta College of Paramedics with respect to developing mandatory trauma-informed care training for those first-responders and first-contact professionals not employed by AHS.

Further Considerations

Making trauma-informed care training mandatory will likely have implications under various AHS collective agreements, and further consultation with AHS partners will be required. Mandating such training will also likely require certification, tracking and evaluation, for which further exploration of implications and identification of resources will be necessary.

Human Services is developing a Cultural Understanding Framework. The purpose of the framework is to increase knowledge and cultural understanding across the ministry to ensure that culturally appropriate programs and services are being provided for Indigenous people across the province. Given that many Indigenous clients are believed to be directly or indirectly impacted by residential schools, the history and

intergenerational effects of colonization and residential schools will be an integral part of the framework's strategy. The ministry is currently piloting "Gently Whispering the Circle Back" training. This training aims to provide HS staff with an opportunity to learn about the intergenerational trauma resulting from residential schools and healing strategies for working with clients who have been impacted.

Alberta has implemented a Child Intervention Practice Framework (CIPF) to guide efforts in the child intervention system. The framework supports an environment where family strengths are recognized and children and youth are respected and supported. Six principles guide decision making and behaviour for staff. The principles relevant to this recommendation include:

- **Strengths-based:** Our approach is reflective, culturally responsive and strengths-based. Because all families have strengths and resources, we recognize and support the right and responsibility of parents to share in the decision-making process for them and their children.
- **Aboriginal Experience:** Aboriginal peoples have always had their own ways of ensuring that vulnerable members, including children, are safe, protected and nurtured. We honour this by recognizing their expertise in matters concerning their children, youth and families.

Honouring Aboriginal Children and Families: A two-day foster parent and kinship caregiver training has been developed by the Blue Quills First Nations College which includes curriculum on intergenerational trauma due to colonization, residential school experiences and destruction of Aboriginal culture. The training highlights the physical, emotional and cognitive effects of trauma as well as the effect on spirituality. It recognizes that separation from traditional ceremony and culture created generations of spiritual trauma. The multiple traumas that Aboriginal individuals and communities continue to experience add to the cumulative effect of previous intergenerational trauma. The descendants of those who have experienced historical trauma are more susceptible to dysfunction as a consequence of the experiences of their ancestors, regardless of their own life experiences.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA – NEXT STEPS

The Indigenous Women's Economic Security Cross Ministry Committee will report annually to the Councils and government on the progress made in the implementation of the accepted recommendations.

Appendix | Alignment to Government of Alberta Priorities

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT:

Alignment to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

- 7: We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
- 92: We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.

Alignment to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- 21.1: Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
- 21.2: States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

INDIGENOUS TOURISM:

Alignment to Alberta Culture and Tourism 2015-18 Business Plan

- Desired Outcome One: Alberta has a thriving culture that is valued by Albertans
- 1.2 Contribute to the implementation of recommendations outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Alignment to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

- 7: We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Alignment to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- 11.1: Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

Alignment to Alberta Health 2015-18 Business Plan

- Desired Outcome Two: The well-being of Albertans is supported through population health initiatives
- 2.6 Develop initiatives with Aboriginal partners and the federal government to improve health services.

Alignment to Alberta Health Human Services 2015-18 Business Plan

- Desired Outcome Three: Greater collaboration between government, communities and Aboriginal partners to strengthen services and achieve shared social outcomes
- 3.1 Work with Aboriginal communities, leaders and partners to strengthen relationships and develop collaborative strategies that support Aboriginal people.

Alignment to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

- 22: We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.

- 24: We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.
- 36: We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused.

Alignment to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- 24.2: Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.

