

BRIEFING NOTES: GOING THE DISTANCE



Further Education Society
Strengthening Communities

GOING THE DISTANCE PROJECT OVERVIEW:

This multi-year project is National in scope and has already begun addressing underrepresentation of Indigenous people in the labour force, specifically in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Businesses are developing better understanding of Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) needs and designing and implementing customized training solutions to address these needs. The project is being led both nationally and regionally by Indigenous groups who are informing project development and providing insight and expertise. Employers are building skills to recruit, retain, and advance Indigenous employees, and Indigenous people are building skills to find employment, meet on-the-job demands, to succeed, and advance at work.

Together, Indigenous community members, LES specialists, employers, and employees are developing a training model that is transferable, replicable, and adaptable to regions across the country.

Going the Distance is led by the Further Education Society (FESA) and funded by the Government of Canada through the Adult Learning, Literacy, and Essential Skills Program, ESDC, Ottawa.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

By May 14, 2022, the Further Education Society, with the support of local communities, will:

- engage employers, partners, and stakeholders to develop, test, and evaluate a practical, customized, training model, that is transferable, replicable, and adaptable to regions across Canada.
- aid communities in obtaining the necessary skills to develop a localized response to the LES needs of Indigenous populations in the workplace.



**CELEBRATION
OF SUCCESS
WAS THE BEST
TRAINING I'VE
SEEN IN
39 YEARS.**

—Employer, GD Project

BUILDING COMMUNITIES:

Going the Distance partners with Indigenous communities who guide and support the work done with, and by, the hospitality and tourism workforce, to develop solutions to Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) needs and challenges.

Indigenous organizations, members, and Elders, in each region, drive the project to meet the unique local needs and ensure the design, development, and delivery models reflect the realities and traditions of the community.

By working with locals from the 'inside-out', we learn from them while simultaneously building capacity to deliver LES training after the project has ended. Going the Distance 'gives away' the training model and curriculum so the community can continue to grow programs to meet their own needs and goals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: GD INTERIM EVALUATION



Further Education Society
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BACKGROUND:

The Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA) is a not-for-profit organization that believes literacy and foundational learning affects all aspects of family and community life - including employment, finances, health, education, social welfare, and justice - and that low-literacy must be addressed to ensure the success of our communities. Over the past 20 years, FESA has delivered strength-based programming and community capacity initiatives to help address literacy and essential skills (LES) gaps throughout Canada. Much of this work has been in partnership with Indigenous communities, including those remote and isolated, across Canada.

Leveraging their experience delivering LES programming and supporting adult Indigenous learners, FESA received funding from the Federal Government through the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skill Program (ALLESPP) under Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), an Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) program, for the Going the Distance project in May 2017. This multi-year project was designed to begin to address the under-representation of Indigenous people in the Tourism and Hospitality industry through developing and piloting a transferable, replicable and adaptable training model that would support:

- Employers in building the skills needed to recruit, train and advance Indigenous employees; and
- Indigenous people in building the skills needed to find employment and meet on-the-job demands to succeed and advance at work.

This was to be done through establishing innovative partnerships with Lead Organizations, community advisory groups, educational organizations, and other community resources (who might not otherwise be connected) to learn and discuss LES from an Indigenous perspective, and to work to develop and evaluate an innovative, collaborative solutions, specific to individual regions across the country.

EVALUATION CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY:

In order to effectively develop, assess and update a new customized and replicable framework across Canada, FESA hired Dig Insights (Dig) at the beginning of the project to conduct a developmental evaluation. As the project is now in its third year, an interim evaluation was conducted focusing on the developmental properties of evaluation (e.g., relevance, design and delivery) and achievement of preliminary outcomes.

To effectively track the learning and outcomes achieved to date, Dig worked collaboratively with the team at FESA to develop a logic model and evaluation framework to guide the evaluation. To ensure a robust evaluation, Dig implemented a mixed method approach which included a document review, administrative data analysis, key informant interviews (N=8), various surveys (e.g., IWLC participant survey, train the facilitator, manager training), Photovoice (N=5 links) and three focus groups.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. RELEVANCE:

The Going the Distance project is seen to be extremely relevant to Indigenous communities. The project provides tailored LES training that is culturally sensitive and relevant to on-reserve Indigenous communities, a population continuously identified as having low literacy. Its ability to align traditional skills to Western LES is seen to be fundamental to the project's success as participants are able to recognize their own skill and build confidence while enhancing their LES.

The project also aligns with the needs of employers as it aims to develop current and potential employees' skill sets to be successful in addressing the labour gap in the hospitality and tourism sector. The project also provides employers with the skills and tools needed to better support their Indigenous employees in their workplaces.

Finally, the Going the Distance project's focus on LES development to support employment and future career success is in direct alignment with the objectives of OLES and ESDC whose focus is to help Canadians improve their literacy and essential skills to better prepare for, get and keep employment.

2. DESIGN AND DELIVERY:

Through the ongoing implementation and evaluation of its pilot project, FESA has modified the design of their original proposal to better reflect the needs of the communities and learners. Instead of being led by a Lead Organization, FESA implemented a community-based model that better aligned with Indigenous philosophy. In this new approach, FESA is working in the community to find partners to support their work and identify change makers to be trained in delivering the program once project funding is complete.

As a result of the changed approach and in line with its original objective of providing participatory and community-based initiatives, the original timeline extended from 3.5 years to 4.5 years to be able to build sufficient relationships and to adjust to community and learner's needs regarding programming and timing.

The focus on being flexible and relationship building were seen to be key pillars to the program success, as FESA has worked with 5 employers and 5 service providers to date.

The perceived value of the training has also caused FESA to expand their employer-based training to the community to further develop the community's skill set.

As a result of these partnership, FESA has offered tailored training across three of their communities with 19 programs and trainings delivered to date including Celebration of Success (n=2), Indigenous Asset-Based Community Development (IABCD)/ Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) training (n=2), facilitator training (n=3), manager conversation Circles (n=2), manager training (n=2), and employee (n=3) and community (n=5) Indigenous Workplace Learning Circles (IWLC) programs. [continued]

All programs and trainings have been well received by participants as the material is seen to be relevant, engaging and reflective of their culture.

In addition to their programming, the Going the Distance project has also provide FESA with additional unexpected macro opportunities including: partnering with the Coady Institute to develop the IABCD training; creating a future article on best practices for Tourism HR Canada; hosting a presentation panel at an Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) conference about women leadership; and exploring potential collaboration opportunities with the Senate of Canada HR.

3. OUTCOMES:

To date the Going the Distance project has been effective at achieving its intended outcomes. The project has successfully increased program and training opportunities for Indigenous peoples in the tourism and hospitality sector with 19 programs and trainings delivered to date to 143 individuals attending. Employees who have attended the programs and trainings have seen improvements in their employability and essential skills. It has also increased employer engagement in LES training that is meaningful to their organization.

In addition to the intended outcomes, the project has been successful at increasing participants and employer's connection and awareness of Indigenous culture. This was especially important for employees who were able to create a sense of community with other Indigenous staff. The project has also allowed FESA to extend their national reach and increase their profile through working with the Coady Institute, and Tourism HR Canada. The evolution of the project to provide LES training to community members has also resulted in those who attended the IWLC program increasing their employability and literacy skills. In many cases the achievement of outcomes in the community-based program surpassed those achieved by employees likely due to them being further away from the labour market.

4. PROJECT FRAMEWORK:

Through developing the framework over the past three years, FESA identified the importance of establishing relationships and allocating sufficient time for community, employer, learner and employee engagement. While this has delayed timelines, FESA has identified 15 components to be included in the Going the Distance framework (or toolbox) including programs, trainings, and supplementary resources. Moving into the final year and a half of the project, FESA will work on refining the framework and determining the appropriate approach for disseminating the tools (e.g., open source, held by FESA).



*I USED TO BE NERVOUS TALKING TO 10-15 PEOPLE THAT I KNOW. PEOPLE NOW SAY I TALK A LOT AND I **CONFIDENTLY** GIVE TOURS TO 50-60 PEOPLE.*

–Participant, GD Project

NEXT STEPS:

1. CONTINUE TO DELIVER PROGRAMS & TRAININGS:

As evident in the preliminary findings of the report, the Going the Distance project has been successful in supporting community members, learners, employees and employers and should continue to be delivered as planned.

2. PRIORITIZE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:

As a core principle to the framework and a key driver to the success of the project to date, it is important that FESA continues to work to maintain and establish relationships with employers, employees and communities' members across their current and new sites to increase trust and cultural understanding.

3. CUSTOMIZATION IS KEY:

Each community and employer engaged in this project has its own unique strengths and gaps. Moving forward, FESA should continue to work collaboratively with its partners (employers and community) as well as employees and learners to determine what aspect of the framework is needed and how the curriculum can be best tailored to meet the participants' needs.

4. EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS NEEDED:

As seen through the results of the IWLC program and the effectiveness of projects to date, FESA should continue to work collaboratively with employers, employees, community organizations and learners to build relationships and provide the needed programs and trainings.

5. REMAIN OPEN TO OPPORTUNITIES:

As the project moves into the final years, it is important that FESA continues to remain open to these and new partnerships to help further shape the project and provide new opportunities for the organization to better support vulnerable populations even outside of the hospitality sector.

6. SEEK MACRO IMPACT IN THE SECTOR:

Moving forward, FESA should continue to seek out opportunities to share best practices and opportunities to collaborate with hospitality and tourism bodies and Indigenous groups to make a greater macro impact on the sector.

7. FINALIZE FRAMEWORK:

In line with the original proposal, FESA should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the framework components established to date, and work with their community and employer partners as well as employers and learner, to identify any potential gaps.

8. FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY:

As FESA's role in the project has continued to expand and develop throughout the project, it is important that the organization consider how they will support the framework in the future.

OUR TEAM:

ELAINE CAIRNS



With over 25 years of experience in education, Elaine is a literacy specialist as well as a workplace learning specialist, facilitator, trainer and a recipient of Literacy Alberta's Lifetime Achievement Award for her outstanding contributions to the field of literacy. Elaine is the co-founder and the current Executive Director of the Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA). She is the co-author of the nationally recognized, award winning Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS) Program. For over 20 years, Elaine has assisted FESA to build community capacity and address gaps in parent education and Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) development throughout Canada. In 2013, FESA was awarded the Council of the Federation Literacy Award, which recognizes outstanding achievement, innovative practice, and excellence in literacy.

Elaine has extensive experience working with isolated and remote communities and providing mentoring and facilitator training for community workers and trainers. The Indigenous curricula she has helped develop over the years embraces Indigenous traditions and focuses on the sharing of information through a strength-based approach. Elaine recognizes that every community is different and that approaches to Indigenous LES development must reflect these differences. She works with local community members and leaders to incorporate the knowledge of Elders, to ensure the sharing of traditions and culture is the focus of the curricula. Elaine is honored to be the recipient of the 2017 Chief David Crowchild Memorial Award presented by the City of Calgary. This award recognizes and celebrates her work in Indigenous communities and her efforts to build cultural understanding between Non-Indigenous and Indigenous people.



I BELIEVE THAT IMPROVED LEARNING LEADS TO IMPROVED LIVES AND WITH HARD WORK, PASSION, AND DEDICATION WE CAN BRING LITERACY AND LEARNING TO EVERYONE. MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE LEARNER, ONE COMMUNITY, ONE ORGANIZATION AT A TIME.

—Elaine Cairns, FESA Executive Director

NINGWAKWE/E. PRISCILLA GEORGE (CHAIR – GD NATIONAL ADVISORY CIRCLE)

Ningwakwe (Rainbow Woman), aka Priscilla George, is a Deer Clan Anishinaabe Kwe from the Saugeen First Nation in Southern Ontario. She was the National Speaker for the former National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA). Ningwakwe worked with ArrowMight Canada and has been part of a team of Cuban and Canadian educators that developed literacy curriculum for delivery via DVD in various sites across Canada. Ningwakwe worked with the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre on their Nourishing the Learning Spirit Theme Bundle. She has been involved in Aboriginal literacy for over thirty years at the local, provincial (within the Ontario government), national and international levels. Ningwakwe has authored position papers, literature reviews and has conducted international research on literacy for indigenous peoples. In 2011, she received the Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Innovation in Ontario. [continued]

Ningwakwe advocates for the holistic approach to literacy/life, which means recognizing and nurturing Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body. Ningwakwe believes that literacy impacts on all areas of Life. Ningwakwe has two children – a daughter, Denise, a Wellness Coach, who has her B.A. in Sociology from UBC, and a son, Dennis, who runs his own dental practice in Southern Ontario.

TED NORRIS

(VICE CHAIR – GD NATIONAL ADVISORY CIRCLE)

Originally from Alberta, Ted is a proud Métis of Cree, French & Scottish heritage. Ted has had a varied and rewarding career since joining the workforce in 1971. Highlights include:

- District Recreation Coordinator for Edmonton’s inner-city communities.
- Multicultural Advisor for the City of Edmonton where he liaised closely with the 700+ ethnocultural community groups in that city.
- In Ottawa, between 1996 – 2006, worked for the Hon. Senator Joyce Fairbairn in her role as Minister for Literacy, as well as for the Hon. Ralph Goodale in his role as Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Ministers Bradshaw, Scott and Coderre.
- Prior to his departure from the federal public service Ted worked in operations for the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy from 2007-2012.
- Provincial Coordinator for the Ontario Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Program from 2013-2017. Ted continues to be actively involved with Indigenous issues across Canada.

For example, at present:

- National Aboriginal Advisory Committee member for the Chief Commissioner of Correctional Service Canada (CSC)
- Volunteer Facilitator for the National Table for Aboriginal Literacy & Essential Skills
- Circle of Change member for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Missing & Murdered Aboriginal Women national advisory committee
- Vice-Chair National Indigenous Circle – Further Education Society – Going the Distance project

Ted’s other interests include beekeeping / honey production, forge and metal work, Arts & Culture and the advocacy and promotion of Aboriginal issues in Canada.



AN IMPORTANT FEATURE OF THIS PROJECT IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES. I KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THE PROFOUND IMPACT THIS CAN HAVE IN ALL ASPECTS OF ONE'S LIFE.

– Ted Norris, Vice Chair – GD National Advisory Circle

CONTACT US:

If you are interested in this project or have further questions, you may contact any of the following project personnel:

ELAINE CAIRNS

Project Supervisor

403-250-5034

ecairns@furthered.ca

TEAL DRATOWANY

Project Manager

403-620-2701

tdratowany@furthered.ca

The *Executive Summary* included above is from the Going the Distance Interim Evaluation Report completed by Dig Insights.

