

Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services Association

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025



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Message from the Board Chair: Rising in Strength: 25 Years of TCETSA Impact



“Thank you to everyone who has walked with us - community members, partners, funders, and friends. Your belief in our people has made all the difference.”

Deion Blackman, Board Chair

It is with deep pride and heartfelt gratitude that I write to you as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Tribal Chiefs Employment & Training Services Association (TCETSA). This milestone is more than a reflection of time; it is a powerful testament to the strength, resilience, and unity of our Nations.

Over the past year, we have continued to walk in the direction of our ancestors' hopes and our children's dreams. We have seen lives transformed through training, employment, education, and healing; each success rooted in the belief that our people deserve every opportunity to thrive. Whether it was a young mother stepping into her first job, an Elder sharing sacred knowledge with youth, or a tradesperson returning to school to grow their skills, these moments reflect the purpose that grounds our work.

I want to honour the leadership of the Chiefs and Councils of our TCVI member Nations. Your unwavering commitment to your communities has laid the foundation for this success. To our Elders, thank you for walking beside us; your wisdom, stories, and sacred teachings are the medicine that strengthens every path we build.

To the TCETSA team: your dedication has been the heartbeat of this journey. Each resume helped, every barrier removed, every training delivered; these are acts of love, service, and nation-building. Because of your efforts, more of our people are entering the workforce with confidence, and more of our Nations are becoming economically empowered.

A special thank you is due to our Executive Director, Eva Joh-Gladue. Eva, your passion and tireless commitment to uplifting others have created ripple effects far beyond what we can measure. Your ability to make meaningful connections and see possibilities where others see challenges is a rare gift—and one that continues to shape the future of this organization and our Nations in powerful ways.

As we reflect on the past 25 years, we also look forward with excitement, responsibility, and vision. There is still work to do. There are still doors to open. But I believe that with continued unity, cultural grounding, and a clear purpose, the next 25 years will be even more impactful.

Deion Blackman, Board Chair

25 Years of Indigenous Empowerment in Action

As we close out the 2024–2025 year, I reflect on not just the milestones we've achieved but the movement we've built. This year marked 25 years of transformative, Indigenous-led programming that has opened doors and empowered generations. What began as a vision has become a powerful reality—one rooted in culture, driven by purpose, and sustained by community.

Across every initiative, we've witnessed transformation. Our ISETS program continues to lead the way, connecting Indigenous participants to meaningful training, education, and career opportunities. With support from Employment and Social Development Canada, we've opened doors to trades certifications, leadership growth, and digital skills, meeting people where they're at and helping them build toward futures they never thought possible.

Our Xpression's Arts & Design program reminded us that art is more than expression—it's a sacred act of resistance, healing, and resurgence. With support from Alberta Jobs, Economy, and Trade, this program has become a movement, lifting youth and adults to explore their identity, reclaim their stories, and reconnect through Indigenous culture and the Arts. It's not just about creativity, it's about cultural pride and empowerment.

TEAMS Alberta expanded our reach across the province, bringing mentorship, trades tutoring, career counselling, and job referrals directly to Indigenous learners. Thanks to Alberta Indigenous Relations, we've empowered dozens with the tools to build confidence, skills, and long-term success. This mobile model continues to break down barriers and meet people where they are.

This year, we also celebrated a transformational milestone: co-founding IndigiConnect, a bold digital platform made by and for Indigenous people. This is more than a professional network; it's an innovative ecosystem connecting communities, accelerating Indigenous businesses, and Indigenous leadership across Canada's digital landscape.



Eva John -Gladue, Executive Director

We are leading the way in Indigenous sustainability. Our Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Training (CEMT), delivered with University of Blue Quills and funded by ESDC, blends Traditional Knowledge with science to train land protectors grounded in cultural teachings. This work is a testament to Indigenous innovation, self-determination, and the strength of our knowledge to guide the future.

While we have much to celebrate, our work is far from over. The path to equity, reconciliation, and Indigenous prosperity continues—and we remain rooted in our values, ready to lead with boldness and heart.

To our Chiefs, board, team, partners, funders, Elders, and every community member who's walked beside us—thank you. You are why this work matters.

“Here’s to 25 years of impact, and to the next 25 years of transformation.”

About Us: Increasing the Indigenous Workforce



Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services Association (TCETSA) is an award-winning organization, rated optimal by Employment Social Development Canada (ESDC), that serves Indigenous people and all Albertans. For over 25 years, we have connected people to meaningful careers and skill development opportunities that meet the needs of employers.

Our Vision

Meaningfully employed people and economically empowered Nations.

Our Mission

To be the premier Indigenous-run organization offering future-focused employment and training services to our Nations and all Albertans.

Treaty Model

TCETSA's award-winning T.R.E.A.T.Y. Model is an integrated service delivery approach that fosters Indigenous community development.

Our Five Core Values

Impact

We are fueled by the positive and immediate impact we can have on other's lives and livelihoods, businesses, and communities.

Empathy

We listen and understand, recognizing the challenges people face and meeting them where they are.

Empowerment

We see the economic, social, and personal benefits of an individual becoming stronger, more confident, and more in control of their life.

Reconciliation

We believe in the wisdom of Indigenous perspectives, the strengths of combining Indigenous and Western worldviews for everyone, and in reconciliation on the job site.

Collaboration

We cannot do anything without our partners or without each other. Together, we make a difference.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services Association (TCETSA) plays a pivotal role in guiding our organization toward achieving its mission of providing meaningful employment opportunities and economic empowerment for our Nations.

Together, the Board and Elders work to ensure TCETSA remains focused on its mission and delivers meaningful impact to Indigenous communities.

From left to right, back: Garret Monias, Michael Lameman, Deion Blackman, Rodney John, Dallas Waskahat, Front: Louise Hunter



Key responsibilities include:

- Strategic Leadership
- Governance
- Financial Oversight
- Policy Development
- Advocacy
- Performance Monitoring
- Support and Guidance

Knowledge Keepers play an integral role in TCETSA by providing wisdom, sharing their cultural knowledge and insights to guide decision-making, and ensuring that programs respect and incorporate Indigenous traditions and values. Their mentorship offers invaluable guidance and support, not only to the board but also to the broader community, helping to maintain cultural integrity while fostering growth and understanding within our initiatives.

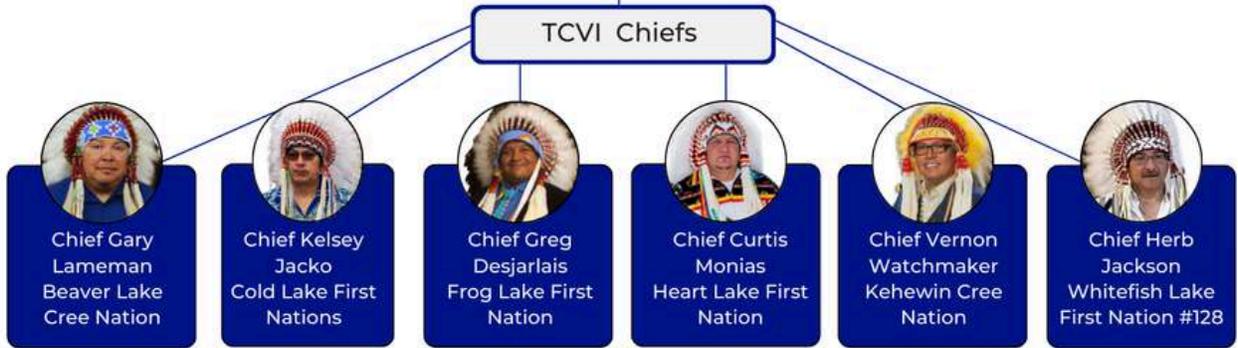
Image below: Judy Nest, Knowledge Keeper



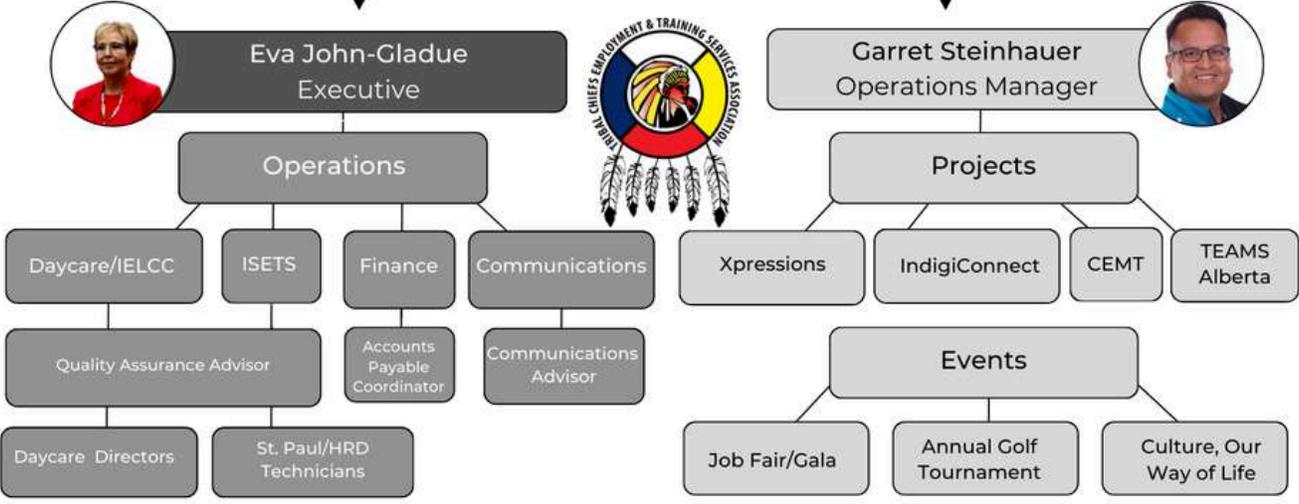
Looking to the Future

As TCETSA celebrates its 25th anniversary, we acknowledge and honour the visionaries, staff, leadership, and community members who have made this journey possible. From its humble beginnings in 2000 to its current role as a regional leader in Indigenous workforce development, TCETSA remains committed to the principle of supporting First Nations people in reaching their full employment and educational potential.

TRIBAL CHIEFS VENTURES INC. MEMBERSHIP
 Proudly serving the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nations, Frog Lake First Nation, Heart Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, and Whitefish Lake First Nation #128



Tribal Chiefs Employment Training Services Association



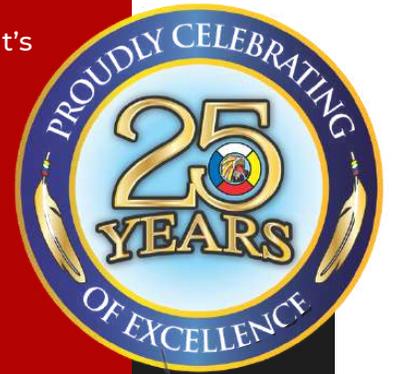
25 Years of ISETS Impact: Building Futures In Our Nations

For 25 years, the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ISETS), proudly overseen by TCETSA, has been more than a program. It's a powerful, community-led force for change across the six Nations we serve.

By meeting people where they are, ISETS brings vital training, career coaching, and job supports directly into Indigenous communities; removing barriers and creating real opportunities. From safety tickets and wage subsidies to entrepreneurship and digital skills, ISETS is building stronger, self-determined futures rooted in local culture and strength. But our impact goes beyond employment.

Through partnerships with community-run daycare centres, ISETS also supports one of the most critical, but often overlooked, aspects of workforce development: childcare. By ensuring families have access to safe, culturally grounded childcare, we're helping entire households step into education, careers, and financial independence.

As we celebrate 25 years of impact, we honour the resilience, growth, and leadership within our Nations. ISETS is more than job training; it's a pathway to empowerment, healing, and prosperity for generations to come.



Tracking Our Impact: 2024–2025

Program Milestones

TCETSA and our six member Nations, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nations, Frog Lake First Nation, Heart Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, and Whitefish Lake First Nation #128, use Accountability Resource Management System (ARMS) to track client progress and outcomes.

The chart below provides a snapshot of key milestones for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, with each individual counted only once, regardless of the number of times they accessed services. While this data provides a valuable overview, it doesn't capture the full story.

Many of our clients return multiple times as they work toward long-term employment and personal goals. Throughout this report, you'll see those deeper stories. The repeated engagement, progress, and perseverance demonstrate the true impact of TCETSA's programs.

We walk with each individual every step of the way, and their journeys are a powerful reflection of our shared commitment to transformation and opportunity.

ISET Report by Agreement Holder							
Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services Association							
Measures	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Cumulative
Total Clients	1,112	749	707	841	824	1034	5267
Gender							
Female	393	270	248	321	327	416	1975
Male	718	478	459	520	496	615	3286
Unspecified	1	1	0	0	1	3	6
Persons with Disabilities	8	2	5	9	9	30	63
Youth	573	406	375	421	405	532	2712
Clients Served-Total	946	642	655	766	724	955	4688
Clients Served EI	538	356	380	465	423	493	2655
Clients Served CRF	408	286	275	301	301	462	2033
Employed-Total	381	348	348	402	333	544	2356
Employed-EI	219	230	215	261	219	349	1493
Employed-CRF	162	118	133	141	114	195	863
Gender							
Female	126	118	89	133	110	195	771
Male	253	229	257	268	220	346	1573
Unspecified	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Persons with Disabilities	5	1	5	4	4	11	30
Youth	152	146	150	156	123	206	933
Returned to school-Total	105	70	44	22	40	22	303
Gender							
Female	52	28	28	9	18	13	148
Male	52	41	16	13	22	9	153
Unspecified	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Youth	79	58	35	15	31	10	228
Interventions Completed	1011	781	759	799	779	1123	5252
Persons with Disabilities	6	2	7	11	9	20	55
Youth	517	406	400	373	354	569	2619
EI Unpaid Benefits	520084	918654	1095408	646119	605966	883662	4669893
Non-EI SAR Savings	17275	7637	15619	8848	43077	345481	437937

First Nations LMI Project: Strengthening Our Future Through Data

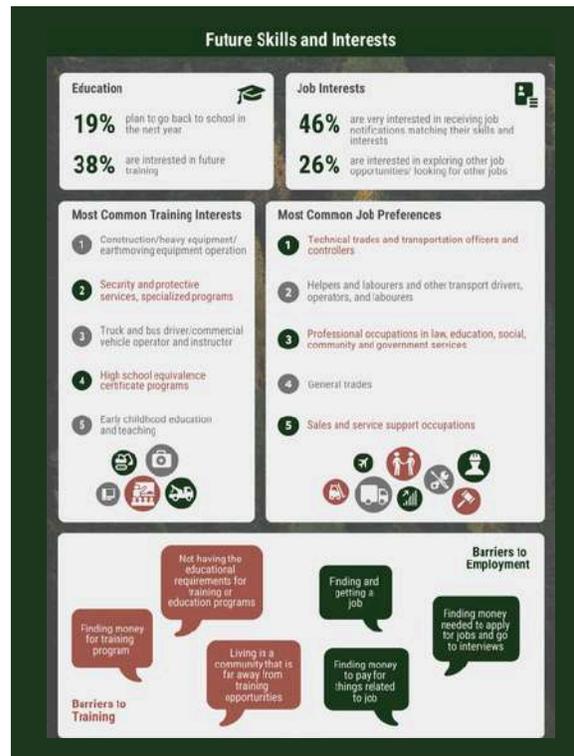
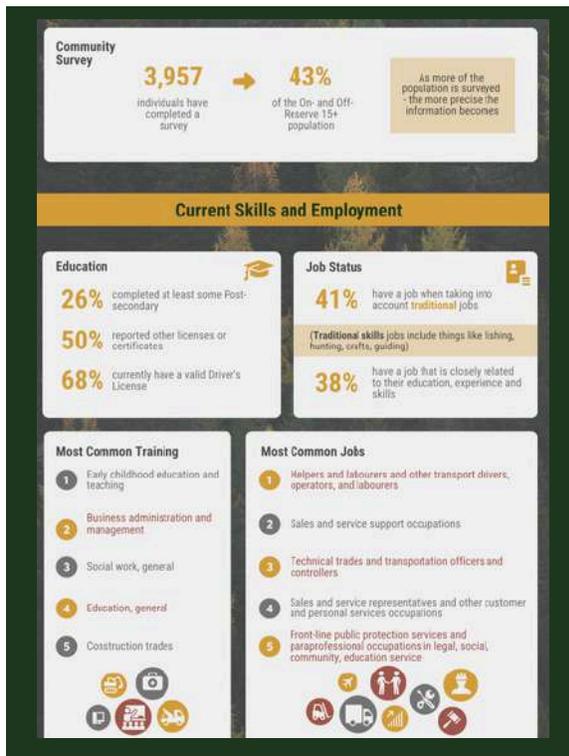
In 2019, TCETSA partnered with Aboriginal Employment Services (AES), funded by the ESDC, to launch a pilot Labour Market Information (LMI) project. The goal is to gather timely, community-driven workforce data to better understand employment trends, training needs, and barriers in First Nations communities, thereby aligning with the Nation's strategic planning.

Six Nations participated: Beaver Lake, Cold Lake, Frog Lake, Heart Lake, Kehewin, and Whitefish Lake #128. Surveys collected data from members aged 15 and above, on and off reserve, covering employment history, education, skills, and more. To date, 6,744 surveys have been completed. This vital data enables leadership to make informed decisions that accurately reflect the true needs of their people.

We thank the surveyors, Candice Jackson, John Gladue, Andrea Dion, Lincoln Quinney, Jay Landstrom, Raynelle Lavallee, and community members, whose commitment is helping build stronger, future-focused strategies across our Nations.

Sample Labour Market Infographic

Below is a sample LMI infographic summarizing collective trends across the participating Nations from January 2019 to January 2025. This template will be customized with specific data from each Nation, allowing leadership to visualize progress, identify training priorities, and support funding proposals with real numbers.





Celebrating 25 Years of Empowering Indigenous Futures (2000–2025)

Over the years, TCETSA has delivered labour market programming under several federal funding frameworks:

- 2000–2005: Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA I)
- 2006–2010: Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA II)
- 2010–2015: Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)
- 2015–2020: ASETS Extension / Transition to Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ISETS)
- 2019–2029: ISETS 10-Year Agreement, a significant milestone reflecting long-term investment in Indigenous-led employment programming

Where the Vision Began

Long before “economic reconciliation” became a national conversation, the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations envisioned something bold: an Indigenous-led labour market strategy rooted in self-determination. Out of this vision, Tribal Chiefs Ventures Inc. took the lead, planting the seeds that would grow into what we now know as Tribal Chiefs Employment & Training Services Association (TCETSA). On April 25, 2000, TCETSA was established, poised to build capacity, foster independence, and uplift future generations.

Laying the Groundwork

With a small but mighty team led by Jackie Houle, TCETSA got to work distributing funds, managing data, and supporting community daycare and employment departments. Behind the scenes, individuals like Glen Youngchief and James Jackson played a crucial role in shaping the early direction, ensuring that TCETSA was more than just administration; it was a launchpad for Nation-based capacity and empowerment.

A New Chapter of Growth: Leadership, Culture, and Community (2008–2019)

In 2008, a new era began when Eva John-Gladue stepped in as Manager of TCETSA. With vision and heart, Eva led a powerful expansion of services, stronger reporting systems, and increased Nation-led training efforts. After a brief pause in 2012, her return in 2013 brought renewed energy and stability to a rapidly evolving organization.

This decade marked a turning point. TCETSA began weaving in new, culturally grounded programs through Government of Alberta proposals and Strategic Partnership Fund initiatives. One standout was the “Walk With Us” program (2011–2012), which opened doors to deeper, community-based learning centred in Indigenous values.

A Force for Change: Over 40 Programs and Counting

Over the past 18 years, TCETSA has launched more than 40 community-driven training and employment programs. These aren't just checkboxes; they're life-changing opportunities. Some of the programs include:

- Service Rig Training
- ArrowMight Literacy Training
- Scaffolding Training
- Canada World Youth Internship
- Tiny Home Building
- Trades Training
- Xpressions Arts and Design
- Waste Management Training
- Class 7 Training
- Assisted with the development of Carriage Mobile Driving School
- Northeast Alberta Apprenticeship Initiative (NEAAI)
- Financial Literacy
- Small Business Development
- TREATY Model Employment Training
- Community Environmental Monitoring Training (CEMT)
- Building Service Worker Training
- IndigiConnect Indigenous Business Hub
- TEAMS Alberta (Technology Employment Apprenticeship Mobile Services)
- Charting Careers Pathways in Commercial Real Estate (in partnership with BOMA and Oteenow)
- Job Fairs
- Heavy Equipment Operator Training
- Labour Market Surveys
- Early Childcare Training
- Culture, Our Way of Life Protocol Training
- Walk With Us Program

Every initiative is designed to meet real needs, build real skills, and open real doors.

Securing the Next Chapter: A 10-Year Strategy for Indigenous Workforce Success

With the signing of the 10-year ISETS agreement in 2019, TCETSA entered a new era of stability and long-term planning. The association has since continued to expand programming, staff capacity, and partnerships to better meet the needs of its member Nations.

TCETSA now plays a key role in regional Indigenous employment strategy, not only funding and supporting training programs but also building relationships with industry and government stakeholders to ensure long-term prosperity for Treaty Six communities.

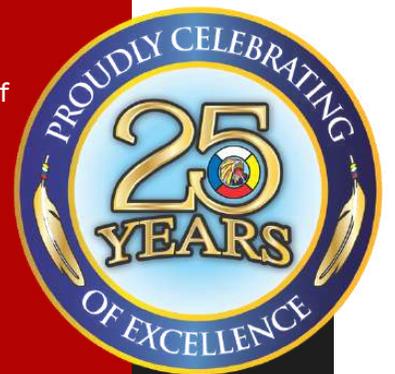
Events That Move Us Forward (Special Projects)

At TCETSA, events are not just dates on a calendar; they're moments of transformation, community, and purpose. Each gathering we host is a step toward strengthening Indigenous workforce development and economic inclusion across our Nations.

Our events are carefully crafted to bring together people from diverse backgrounds, including community members, job seekers, industry leaders, and employers. Whether it's Alberta's largest Indigenous Job Fair, our Partner Recognition Gala, or the Annual Networking Golf Tournament, every event serves a deeper purpose: building trust, deepening connections, and creating real opportunities for growth.

These are the spaces where job seekers shake hands with employers, where youth see new possibilities, and where Indigenous talent is uplifted and valued. It's where training providers learn what communities truly need and where partnerships are born that continue long after the event ends.

With each gathering, we grow a movement. One that empowers careers, builds self-reliance, and opens doors across Treaty 6 territory.



Annual Networking Golf Tournament Event



SWINGING FOR OPPORTUNITY: A DAY OF GOLF AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Every dollar raised was reinvested directly into client programs, supporting job training, skills development, and employment assistance for First Nations participants across the region.

The 2024 Annual Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services and IndigiConnect Networking Golf Tournament wasn't just about hitting the greens; it was about driving change.

Held on July 25 at The Ranch Golf and Country Club, the tournament brought together over 144 golfers and 36 teams. The rain couldn't dampen the spirit of connection as players, sponsors, and supporters teed off with one shared goal: to build bridges between industry and Indigenous communities.

An Investment In The Future

What set this event apart was its intentional design. Along the course, representatives from First Nations and Nation-owned businesses were stationed at select holes, creating natural, meaningful spaces for conversation and collaboration. Every handshake, every laugh, every exchange had the potential to spark new partnerships, and that's exactly what happened.

Former Edmonton Oiler Jason Strudwick made a special appearance on behalf of the Oilers Alumni Association, bringing excitement and recognition to the day. Comedian Conway Kootenay kept the crowd laughing as MC, turning the dinner into a celebration of unity and purpose.

To our sponsors, partners, and every golfer who showed up rain or shine: Thank You! Your support helps Indigenous success stories flourish, and we look forward to doing it again next year.

The Job Fair: Where Opportunity Meets Culture and Empowerment

Once a modest initiative, the TCETSA and IndigiConnect Indigenous Job Fair has grown into one of Alberta's most significant and most impactful employment events dedicated to Indigenous workforce development. Held inside the West Edmonton Mall Ice Palace on November 18–19, 2024, this was more than a job fair; it was a movement. With over 2,200 Indigenous job seekers and 73 employers from sectors such as oil and gas, construction, education, and technology, this event demonstrated just how far we've come and how much further we can go.

The job fair served as a powerful bridge between talent and opportunity, creating space for on-site interviews, direct employer engagement, and workshops focused on career development. Employers didn't just show up; they returned. With a 97% employer return rate from 2023, it's clear that companies see real value in attending and investing in Indigenous inclusion.

Partnerships for Employers

Beyond its role as a recruitment event, the Job Fair fosters long-term partnerships between businesses and Indigenous communities. It facilitates direct engagement, promotes Indigenous hiring strategies, and strengthens relationships that lead to sustainable workforce development. Employers met qualified candidates and gained valuable insights into Indigenous recruitment strategies, procurement opportunities, and workplace diversity initiatives. Employers also established new partnerships, such as the Bank of Montreal (BMO), which is now exploring Indigenous employment opportunities in Alberta branches, and Bison Property Services, which identified Indigenous talent for key roles in administration, building operations, furnace cleaning, and custodial services. The event became a true engine of economic reconciliation.

The Resume Center continued to be a vital hub, supporting job seekers in polishing their profiles to increase hiring chances. The cultural presence, smudges, drumming, and language reminded everyone that this is not just about jobs. It's about belonging.

Coming in 2025: The Job Fair is expanding to 98 employer booths to accommodate growing demand. Bigger. Bolder. More impactful than ever.



The TCETSA and IndigiConnect Gala

Under the shimmering lights of West Edmonton Mall's Jubilations Dinner Theatre, the 2024 Partner Recognition Gala unfolded. Building on the momentum of the TCETSA & IndigiConnect Job Fair, employers who spent the day connecting with Indigenous job seekers at the Ice Palace came to the gala to network, learn, and grow. A gathering of over 200 guests, including Indigenous leaders, government officials, business executives, and community changemakers, the evening marked a milestone in advancing economic reconciliation and Indigenous workforce development.

The theme of the night, "Unity in Diversity: Bridging Communities for a Better Future," came alive in every moment, from the warm welcomes to the heartfelt speeches. This wasn't just about recognizing employers or projects. It was about honouring the people behind the partnerships; those who believe in inclusion not just as a policy, but as a path forward.

The gala created a culturally safe space for dialogue, laughter, reflection, and real connection, proving once again that true progress is made when we walk together. Guests didn't just shake hands; they shared stories, sparked collaborations, and deepened their commitment to Indigenous economic empowerment.

Honouring Our Unsung Heroes

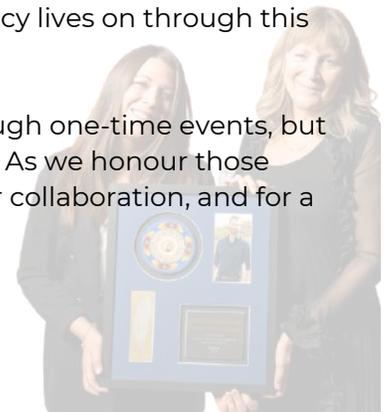
Every school day, rain or shine, our Nation's school bus drivers ensure children arrive safely, ready to learn, grow, and connect with their culture. These dedicated drivers are more than just transportation - they are guardians of education, trusted by families, and loved by the children they greet each morning.

At this year's gala, we proudly recognized the unsung heroes behind G & L Busline, Maynard & Sons Bussing, and Agnes Dion for their years of faithful service. Their daily commitment to safe, reliable transportation plays a vital role in keeping our communities strong, our children safe, and our future bright.

The Jordan Turko Memorial Award

The inaugural Jordan Turko Memorial Award was a powerful moment of the evening, celebrating Jordan's bold advocacy for Indigenous entrepreneurship. His mother and sister accepted the award to a heartfelt standing ovation, ensuring his legacy lives on through this annual tribute.

The evening reminded us that true reconciliation isn't achieved through one-time events, but through ongoing relationships rooted in respect and shared success. As we honour those helping to close the gap, we also open new doors; for opportunity, for collaboration, and for a stronger future led together.



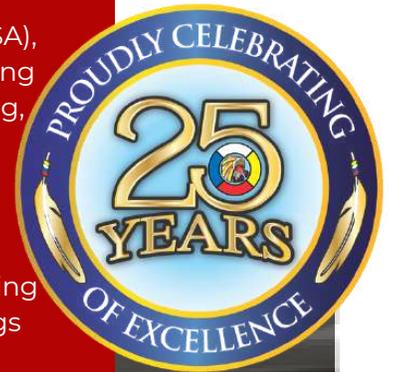
TCETSA Staff Capacity Training

At the Tribal Chiefs Employment & Training Services Association (TCETSA), our work extends far beyond delivering training programs and organizing employment events. We are building something more profound: a living, breathing commitment to walk in step with our member Nations, grounded in the values that define who we are as Indigenous people.

This past year, 2024 to 2025, was a time of reflection, reconnection, and renewal. We did not just talk about change; we lived it. From participating in ceremonies and learning on the land to attending national gatherings and hands-on workshops, our team has been actively engaged in the kind of internal development that strengthens our organization's foundation.

We showed up in spaces where our voices mattered. We gathered knowledge from Elders, shared teachings, and opened our minds to new ways of working that honour both tradition and innovation.

The moments we experienced this year have shaped us into a stronger, more resilient team. Together, we are walking a path that not only serves the present but also creates a lasting legacy for future generations.



Walking With the Land: Land-Based Cultural Teachings at kihcihkaw aski
Edmonton, AB | 📅 May 29–30, 2024

Our staff returned to sacred ground for two days of ceremony, learning, and reflection at kihcihkaw aski - Sacred Land. We gathered teachings that would guide not only our work, but also our spirit.

Lifting Up Our Littlest Leaders: TCVI IELCC Childcare Gathering
Banff, AB | 📅 May 30–June 2, 2024

Our team joined others across the region for a powerful exchange of stories, strategies, and support in Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare. We returned from Banff more connected, more inspired, and more determined to support children through a lens of culture, identity, and belonging.

Listening, Reflecting, Leading: Annual General Meeting
Hotel Dene, Cold Lake | 📅 July 31, 2024

At our AGM, member Nations gathered to review milestones, share insights, and co-create the path ahead. This wasn't just reporting—it was accountability in action.

Treaties in Action: Treaties 1-11 Gathering
Hosted by CLFN & BLCN | 📅 August 26–30, 2024

We stood with other Nations to honour our ancestors, assert our rights, and commit to education that reflects truth and treaty.

Drums, Healing, and Unity: Staff Cultural Retreat – Drum Making & Wellness
Red Deer, AB | 📅 September 18–20, 2024

In Red Deer, our team gathered not to work, but to restore. We made drums, shared teachings, and took time to care for ourselves and each other.

Growing Our Leadership: AFOA Financial Training
Enoch, AB | 📅 October 15–18, 2024

We invested in our team's financial literacy and governance knowledge, ensuring that our organization remains strong, transparent, and accountable.

Raising Our Voices Nationally: AFN National IELCC Meeting
Halifax, NS | 📅 October 18, 2024

TCETSA leaders joined the national conversation on Indigenous childcare. From policy updates to program funding, we advocated for the needs of our communities and gained new insights to bring home to our local programs.

Creating Inclusive Classrooms: Autism Workshop: TCVI Training Centre
Edmonton, AB | 📅 October 2024

Our staff and educators came together to explore culturally appropriate ways of supporting children with autism. Inclusion is more than access; it's understanding.

Building Culture into Care: Indigenous Childcare Workshop with Alder Academy
Edmonton, AB | 📅 November 27, 2024

Childcare directors and educators explored deeper ways to center land, language, and culture in their day-to-day work.

TEAMS ALBERTA



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TWELVE YEARS OF INCREASING THE INDIGENOUS WORKFORCE

As part of TCETSA's broader vision, TEAMS Alberta builds strong partnerships and delivers community-based services to create lasting employment opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across northeast Alberta.

TEAMS Alberta, formerly known as the North East Alberta Apprenticeship Initiative (NEAAI), is a future-focused, award-winning employment and apprenticeship program that has been proudly operated by Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services Association (TCETSA) since 2013.

Rooted in the mission of TCETSA to support the employment and training goals of First Nations communities, TEAMS Alberta plays a vital role in building bridges between Indigenous job seekers and industry opportunities.

TEAMS is more than a name. It represents the values that shape our work and drive our impact.

- **Technology:** We embrace innovation while honouring tradition, helping clients build careers that blend modern tools with cultural identity.
- **Employment:** Our top priority is helping job seekers find meaningful work, supporting over 100 individuals each year.
- **Apprenticeship:** We believe in learning by doing. So far, we've helped 38 clients become certified journeypersons.
- **Mobile Services:** We meet clients where they are, offering on-the-go support through programs like our Driver's Initiative and Trades Tutor Services.

Every Number Tells a Story

Over the past year, TEAMS Alberta continued to support Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients on their journey into the trades:

- 2,452 people received trades information
- 112 individuals participated in Class 7 Learner's sessions
- 39 earned their Class 7 Learner's License
- 10 clients attended technical training
- 1 client is scheduled for upcoming technical training
- 2 clients became registered in a trade
- 1 apprentice completed their year in March
- 36 clients were indentured into trades apprenticeships
- 4 clients achieved Journeyman certification
- 302 non-trades clients received support, resulting in 205 successful job placements

Each of these numbers reflects the commitment, resilience, and progress of TEAMS Alberta clients and the team that walks alongside them every step of the way.

Empowering Journeys: The Support Behind Every Success

At TEAMS Alberta, no one walks the path to apprenticeship alone. From the very first conversation, staff are there to guide individuals through every step, whether it's exploring trade options, building resumes, preparing for interviews, or understanding the requirements of the trades. Support doesn't stop at paperwork. Staff help applicants create personalized apprenticeship plans, prepare for exams, navigate registration, and connect with employers and journeymen. They advocate on behalf of clients, check in with training institutions, and solve problems as they arise; acting as mentors, motivators, and bridges to opportunity.

A Message of Gratitude

TEAMS Alberta works closely with businesses to match them with job seekers, support training, and meet workforce needs, building strong partnerships that open doors in the trades.

We're proud to share this report and thank our dedicated partners, staff, apprentices, and training institutions. Your dedication has driven this year's progress. Special thanks to our Steering Committee and all partners whose insight and support guided our work throughout 2024–2025.

From Kehewin to Berlin: Nakita's Journey

"I'm Nakita Watchmaker from Kehewin Cree Nation. After completing the Hairstyling program at MC College in 2022, I began my apprenticeship at Cherish Hair, working hard toward my Journeyman Certificate. With TEAMS Alberta's support, I stayed focused; even when it got tough. In 2024, I officially became a certified Hairstylist and soon after, travelled to Berlin, Germany, to take part in an international fashion and hairstyling show. From a small community to the global stage, my journey shows what's possible with passion, perseverance, and the right support."



Nakita Watchmaker

Rising Through Adversity: My Path to Becoming a Journeyman

“My name is Shane WhiskeyJack, and I’m from Saddle Lake Cree Nation. I started my journey in the trades back in 2020 after earning my HVAC Technician certification from NAIT. It wasn’t an easy road.

There were times I struggled, times when it felt like the obstacles might be too much. But I never gave up on my goal of becoming a Journeyman.

With the support of TEAMS Alberta, I was able to keep going. They believed in me, even when I was having a hard time believing in myself. They helped me find placements in Foster Creek and Conklin, Alberta, and walked with me through every challenge I faced - always offering guidance, encouragement, and real support.

Eventually, I did it. I earned my Journeyman Certificate in HVAC, and that moment meant everything to me. It wasn’t just a piece of paper; it was proof that I could overcome adversity and achieve something big.

My story is a reminder that success doesn’t always come easy, but if you keep pushing forward and surround yourself with the right support, you can accomplish more than you thought possible.”

From Uncertainty to Leadership: Tyler’s Journey with TEAMS Alberta

When Tyler walked into the Cold Lake First Nations job fair in October 2024, he was looking for a break. With labour experience and safety tickets in hand, he was ready, but needed the right opportunity. That’s when he met the TEAMS Alberta team.

We helped him update his resume and complete CSTS 2020 and WHMIS. A couple of months later, Ellis Don reached out with openings on the CFB Hangar project, and Tyler’s name was one of the first submitted. Trade Pathways stepped in to cover his wages, gear, and extra training, removing any barriers.

By January 2025, Tyler was working full-time. Today, he’s thriving, leading a team, working steady hours, and dreaming of management. “TEAMS broadened my horizons,” he says. “Now I’m building something real, not just on-site, but in my life.”



Funded by 

KEYS TO OPPORTUNITY: CLASS 7 DRIVER'S TRAINING



DRIVING CHANGE IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

In Cold Lake, Heart Lake, and Whitefish Lake alone, 50 people enrolled in Class 7 courses this year. These are more than stats; they're the sparks of independence, leadership, and future careers.

For many Indigenous people in remote communities, the road to economic independence begins with one small but powerful step: getting a driver's license.

That's why TEAMS Alberta put Class 7 training at the heart of its employment readiness efforts. Across six Nations, we saw the same challenge repeating—individuals ready to work or go to school, but unable to get there. Long distances, no vehicles, and no license meant relying on others or missing opportunities entirely.

Getting a Class 7 learner's license might sound simple, but for many, it's not. Some clients had failed the test over ten times before coming to TEAMS. Through culturally grounded support, mentorship, and practice tests, we helped them prepare and pass their exams. The impact? Life-changing.

After completing the TEAMS course, 39 people received their learner's permits in 2024–2025. Many individuals go on to earn their Class 5 license, unlocking job opportunities, access to schools, and greater freedom of movement.

And it's not just about a license - it's about mindset. We've seen clients transition from feeling stuck and unmotivated to becoming reliable and confident workers. They show up on time. They stick with the job. They believe in themselves again. From driving clients to testing centers ourselves to cheering them on after each attempt, we meet people where they are.

INDIGICONNECT



JOIN INDIGICONNECT AND BE PART OF A MOVEMENT BUILDING INDIGENOUS BUSINESS, CAREERS, AND FUTURES. CONTACT: 780-984-0494

THREE YEARS OF ADVANCING INDIGENOUS BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT

Where Indigenous talent, entrepreneurs, and allies come together to build an inclusive economy founded on empowerment and inclusion.

In an era when reconciliation is increasingly part of public discourse, IndigiConnect is actively working to turn words into action.

Created by Indigenous people, for Indigenous communities, IndigiConnect is a powerful community.

We were created to help remove systemic barriers, foster visibility, and create tangible opportunities for Indigenous businesses, workers, and Nations.

Our Mission

To build a more vibrant economy that honours Indigenous customs while embracing innovations.

Our Vision

An ecosystem that enhances economic opportunities and cultural restoration in Indigenous communities.

Our Values

Connection. Collaboration. Communication. Motivation. Economic Strength. Reconciliation.

First Nation Representation

IndigiConnect proudly supports a growing network of entrepreneurs and changemakers, including 109 privately owned Indigenous businesses, 50 Nation-owned enterprises, and 2 non-Indigenous community-based sponsor members. Together, they represent a vibrant ecosystem of innovation, culture, and economic empowerment.

2024–2025: Momentum in Motion

This year marked a powerful chapter of growth, connection, and vision for our organization. From launching new initiatives to deepening partnerships, 2024–2025 was all about turning ideas into impact.

- **Official Launch & Community Engagement:** We officially launched IndigiConnect in Q1, receiving a strong and inspiring response from community members, Indigenous businesses, and regional partners—proof that this work is both needed and embraced.
- **Leadership & Strategic Growth:** We built a strong foundation by hiring a Director of Operations to lead strategy, outreach, and momentum, while shaping a plan grounded in reconciliation and connection.
- **Building Industry & Municipal Partnerships:** We welcomed two new Sponsor Members - City of Cold Lake and Lac La Biche County, strengthening our regional presence and reinforcing our commitment to reconciliation and Indigenous economic inclusion.
- **Capacity Building & Skills Development:** We brought on a Skills Development Specialist to deliver community- and employer-aligned workshops designed to create lasting, on-the-ground impact.
- **Podcast Series Launched:** We launched the IndigiConnect Podcast, a storytelling platform to spotlight Indigenous-owned businesses, Nation-led initiatives, and collaborative sector successes from across Alberta.
- **Community Empowerment Workshops:** Our Personal & Professional Development Workshop empowered participants to reflect, reset, and realign with their goals, supporting both workplace wellness and personal confidence.
- **Community Outreach & Job Fair Presence:** We showed up in person, visiting our member Nations for direct engagement and awareness-building around IndigiConnect's services. We also supported over 73 vendors at the Annual TCETSA/IndigiConnect Job Fair, offering on-site guidance to employers working toward Indigenous inclusion and economic reconciliation.
- **Collaborative Business Development:** Through partnerships with AICC, Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs (IWE), and Winfire Business Services, we provided Indigenous businesses with resources, training, and access to grants, lending, and entrepreneurship support.
- **Ongoing Visibility & Promotion:** We delivered consistent job postings, marketing campaigns, and industry engagement, while maintaining strong collaboration with industry partners, ensuring Indigenous talent and businesses are seen, supported, and celebrated.

Indigenous Business Development and Community Engagement

Our team delivers services that help businesses grow and scale, such as strategic planning, access to procurement opportunities, one-on-one mentorship, and professionally designed marketing materials. Businesses can recognize increased visibility as a result of our support.

Over the past year, IndigiConnect supported 107 departments and organizations across seven First Nations. We held in-person info sessions focused on employment, entrepreneurship, and strategic development.

Our team also collaborated with TEAMS to provide cross-referrals between departments, job seekers, and employers. Stakeholder departments also use our platform as a tool to post jobs and share community announcements, recognizing IndigiConnect as a trusted workforce partner.

How We Help

- **Community Engagement:** We visit Nations quarterly to identify training and job needs.
- **Skills & Business Workshops:** We offer sessions on digital tools, job readiness, and entrepreneurship.
- **Industry Networking:** We connect job seekers and businesses at quarterly symposiums.
- **Business Support:** We help Indigenous businesses grow through training and recruitment tools.
- **Partner Collaboration:** We meet with industry regularly to share jobs and improve hiring practices.
- **Promotion & Visibility:** We spotlight Indigenous success stories and businesses through campaigns.

Funding and Growth

We would like to thank the Government of Alberta for providing core funding to IndigiConnect through strategic program grants that support Indigenous business development and workforce inclusion.

Events like the Job Fair and Golf Tournament not only bring our communities together but also help offset ineligible expenses and raise awareness of our mission.

These events have played a key role in expanding our network and reinforcing our role as a trusted economic development partner.

Real People, Real Change

“As an Indigenous woman in business, the journey hasn’t been easy. There were funding gaps and barriers in industries not built for us. But IndigiConnect offered more than support. They gave me real tools: free advertising, a professional website, and a podcast feature that raised my business’s profile in ways I never imagined. Thanks to their platform, Indigenous Stone Corp gained visibility, credibility, and new connections. I wasn’t just building a business; I was being seen and celebrated. That exposure changed everything.” – April Stone, Founder of Indigenous Stone Corp

“Being part of the IndigiConnect steering committee as a member, I have found the services offered by IndigiConnect to be a very helpful advantage to the general public and various companies in achieving their goals and markets. I am very proud of the forward direction that IndigiConnect focuses on.” – Eugene Badger, Pimee Well Servicing LP



Funded by 

COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROGRAM



CEMT 2024: WHERE LAND TEACHES AND CULTURE LEADS

This year, the Community Environmental Monitoring Training (CEMT) program celebrated another powerful cohort of learners who embraced both science and spirit in their journey toward becoming environmental monitors and leaders.

In partnership with the University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills (UnBQ), the CEMT program provides environmental monitoring training through a holistic approach that reflects Indigenous perspectives and worldviews.

Funded by ESDC over five years, the curriculum blends Indigenous knowledge with Western science, focusing on land, water, air, and wildlife monitoring across all four seasons.

Empowering Environmental Stewards Through Knowledge, Culture, and Community

From computer skills and certifications to land-based teachings and Elder wisdom, the 2024 cohort walked a path few programs can offer; one grounded in culture, strengthened by education, and guided by the land. Students engaged in real-world experience throughout the year. Students in the Wild + Pine Vertical Farming Training gained hands-on experience caring for starter plants using Mini-Prism self-watering units. They also led cultural camp sessions for local youth, sharing knowledge about birds, seeds, and plants through guided nature walks.

Workshops in leadership, drone operation, technical writing, and grief and loss further expanded their skills. Fieldwork with Alberta Land Management Services and attendance at conferences like the Alberta Forestry Products Association gave the students valuable insight into real-world industry practices and professional networks.

Wisdom Shared, Knowledge Gained

Students earned core certifications, including:

- ENVM 101 – Mapping & Navigation
- ENVM 102 – Wildlife Monitoring
- ENVM 103 – Vegetation Monitoring
- ENVM 104 / COMM 201 – Communications
- ENVM 105 – Environmental Regulatory Processes
- ENVM 106 – Water & Snow Monitoring
- ENVM 107 – Air Monitoring
- ENVM 108 – Habitat Monitoring
- ENVM 109 – Soil Monitoring
- ENVM 110 – Drone Training
- Computer Essentials
- Numerous other complementary training applicable to the field, including Safety tickets

Each course was delivered through a hands-on, culturally relevant approach - on the land, in the community, and always connected to the teachings of the Elders.

Program Successes

In the 2024 cohort, the CEMT program began with 18 students, and despite different barriers that led to program withdrawals, 10 students completed the full year. Of these, eight were immediately eligible for graduation, and the remaining two returned, completed their outstanding requirements, and graduated with the group in June 2025. Throughout the year, students worked closely with the TEAMS employment counsellors, ensuring they received guidance on career opportunities and post-program supports.

Students were appreciative of the opportunity and reflected on their personal growth, crediting the program for equipping them with technical skills, resilience, and cultural understanding.

Special thanks to our partners:

We gratefully acknowledge Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) for their vital support through the Skills for Success Program, helping expand access to skills and employment opportunities. Together, these partnerships made the program a meaningful success.

- University of Blue Quills (UnBQ) – Lead program partner delivering culturally grounded instruction.
- Wild + Pine – Supported environmental training and assisted with a mini-prism for fieldwork.
- Summit Liability Solutions Inc. – Co-led wildlife monitoring training with industry expertise.
- LICA – Provided hands-on air monitoring training.
- Alberta Environment & Protected Areas – Delivered sessions on regulatory processes and compliance.
- Beaver Hills Biosphere – Hosted a land-based learning camp with job shadowing, academic, and cultural teachings.

Life Changing Experience

The CEMT program has been more than just an educational experience—it's been a turning point in my life. It opened my eyes to the inner workings of the environment, its systems, and the science that sustains it. But beyond the technical knowledge, the most powerful part was how it reconnected me to my culture. I was gifted with teachings, stories, and a deeper understanding of traditional knowledge that grounded me in my identity and heritage.

Throughout the program, I built strong connections with classmates, mentors, and community members, who supported and inspired me. They offered different perspectives that expanded my way of thinking and helped shape my vision for the future.

On a personal level, CEMT gave me something I didn't expect: stability during challenging times. The teachings helped me find balance and face adversity with more confidence. It also sparked new goals in both my career and personal life.

This program isn't just about skills - it's about healing, growth, and purpose. I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who helped create and support CEMT. It's a 10/10 in my books, and I'd recommend it to anyone ready to walk this path.

I can't wait to return for year two and continue this journey. The future feels brighter now, and I'm ready to make a difference. - *Anthony Neapetung*

YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE.

Ready to Protect the Land and Build Your Future?
Join the 2025 CEMT Cohort!

The Community Environmental Monitoring Training (CEMT) program at UNBQ is more than education; it's a 10-month journey of land-based learning, cultural connection, and career growth.

- Winter & Spring Semesters + 2-Month Summer Co-op
- Field Study Program at University nuhelot'jine thaiyots', nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills (UNBQ)

FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR TCVI MEMBERS!

Apply Today. Contact Garret at garrets@tcetsa.ca



XPRESSION ARTS & DESIGN TRAINING PROGRAM



CELEBRATING SEVEN YEARS OF CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

The impact of Xpressions would not be possible without the generous support of Alberta Jobs, Economy and Trade.

The Xpressions Art & Design Program, led by TCETSA, is more than an art program; it is a movement to preserve cultural identity, foster healing, and create genuine economic opportunities for Indigenous artists.

This program has become a powerful pathway for emerging Indigenous artists and designers to turn their creativity into careers.

Xpressions: Art as Legacy, Healing, and Livelihood

Xpressions equips aspiring Indigenous artists with more than just materials; it provides mentorship, workshops, and the tools needed to thrive in the arts industry. From marketing and business training to proposal writing and quality control, artists are guided not only in perfecting their craft but in building sustainable careers rooted in creativity.

For many, this journey is also one of healing. Xpressions recognizes the challenges that Indigenous youth, women, and underrepresented groups face. Art becomes a space of restoration, where grief is given colour, where stories take form, and where self-worth is rebuilt. Participants reconnect with themselves, their culture, and their community.

Xpressions is designed for Indigenous youth transitioning out of high school, women rebuilding their lives, individuals living with disabilities, and those seeking purpose and income through creative paths. Whether pursuing self-employment, traditional employment, or further education, graduates leave with real skills and a renewed sense of possibility.

NEW HORIZONS FOR SENIORS PROGRAM



ELDERS GUIDING THROUGH CULTURE AND LEARNING

At Tribal Chiefs Employment & Training Services Association (TCETSA), Elders are not just knowledge keepers; they are catalysts for healing, identity, and action.

Thanks to the support of Employment and Social Development Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP).

Because of your support, we've been able to uplift their voices across two transformative programs: Community Environmental Monitoring Training (CEMT) and Culture: Our Way of Life.

Land Is the Teacher, Elders Are the Voice: Wisdom in Environmental Monitoring

In our Community Environmental Monitoring Training (CEMT) program, Elders played a vital role in bridging traditional teachings with Western science. Held in partnership with the University of Blue Quills, this initiative empowered Indigenous learners to become stewards of the land, with Elders guiding every step of the journey.

Through sacred teachings, storytelling, and seasonal knowledge, Elders helped participants understand water, wildlife, and environmental health not just as data, but as a vital part of life.

Through this initiative, we trained over 200 individuals during the year, and are proud to have met that goal with strong participation from across the communities and our industry partners. More importantly, more than 15 Elders took part throughout the year, sharing their experience, cultural knowledge, and mentorship. Their involvement added tremendous value to both the Culture: Our Way of Life program and the Community Environmental Monitoring Training, ensuring that participants benefited from the wisdom and guidance of respected knowledge keepers.

Culture: Our Way of Life Cultural Protocol Training

Through Culture: Our Way of Life, Elders led a transformative experience that brought participants face-to-face with the richness of Indigenous heritage. Supported by the New Horizons for Seniors Program, this training went far beyond education—it offered healing, reconnection, and cultural revival.

Including ceremony, language, and land-based knowledge, the program created powerful opportunities to experience Indigenous protocols in an authentic, respectful setting. Elders and Knowledge Keepers guided participants through the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental dimensions of Indigenous identity, sharing teachings that have sustained Nations for generations.

Participants engaged in:

- Sacred sharing circles
- Medicine Wheel teachings
- Protocols
- Traditional laws and values
- Storytelling that connected past, present, and future

But it wasn't just Indigenous participants who were transformed. We also welcomed partners, professionals, and staff from various organizations into a deep dive into Indigenous ceremonial protocols, fostering cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity.

Through this training, learners built cultural competency, empathy, and respect - key ingredients for more inclusive workplaces and communities.

Together, we are building bridges; with our Elders at the heart of the work. We're not just teaching. We're remembering. We're healing. We're rising.

Let's walk the path of respect, truth, and reconciliation together.

Step into a powerful learning experience rooted in Indigenous knowledge. This unique training invites participants into sacred sharing circles, Medicine Wheel teachings, traditional laws and values, and storytelling that bridges past, present, and future.

Open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, this session fosters deep cross-cultural understanding through ceremonial protocols and cultural teachings that stay with you long after the training ends.

Book now by calling 780-481-8585.

CREATING CAREER PATHWAYS IN COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE (CCPCRE) TRAINING



A NEW PATH IN COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Through real estate training and employment, we're fostering equity and understanding across the industry.

The Creating Career Pathways in Commercial Real Estate (CCPCRE) is a visionary collaboration led by Lisa Baroldi (BOMA Edmonton), Roberta Bearhead (Oteenow Employment and Training Society), and Eva John-Gladue (Tribal Chiefs Employment & Training Services Association).

Together, they're opening doors for Indigenous participants and representation.

Opening Doors: Creating Career Pathways in Commercial Real Estate

In June 2024, six Indigenous participants took a bold step into a new world, the world of commercial real estate. The Creating Career Pathways in Commercial Real Estate (CCPCRE) Internship was more than a job placement. It was a carefully designed six-month journey into a high-demand, often overlooked industry, one where Indigenous talent has been historically underrepresented. The program vision was simple yet powerful: to provide real-world opportunities that lead to meaningful, long-term careers.

Building the Pathway

The Creating Career Pathways in Commercial Real Estate Internship didn't just open doors. It helped people walk through them with confidence, purpose, and pride. Three interns not only completed the program, but they also secured permanent positions with their host companies. Each participant was provided with training, mentorship, and encouragement to believe in their potential.

The internship officially began on June 17, 2024, with months of preparation behind the scenes. Partner companies were carefully selected, job descriptions were created, and career development workshops were planned. BOMA, TCETSA, and OETS collaborated closely to match each participant with a host company, sharing resumes, conducting facility tours, and ensuring that all necessary police clearances were in place.

By June 24, interns were stepping into their new roles, working hands-on as Building Operators, Facilities Technicians, Property Managers, or Administrators. This wasn't just shadowing. Interns were paid a fair salary through BOMA and supported every step of the way with career check-ins, training, and resources from OETS and TCETSA. They were also invited to BOMA educational events and networking opportunities, something few newcomers to the industry receive.

From Internship to Impact: Real Lives, Real Change

Charlene, a Kehewin Cree Nation member, had been forced to leave her previous career due to a medical condition. She entered the program unsure of her future but eager to make a change. Her internship revealed not just a new career path, but a new purpose. She thrived as a Commercial Building Operator and was later sponsored by BOMA to attend NAIT's Fifth Class Power Engineering Certificate Program.

Today, she's a permanent employee at the very company that trained her.

A New Path, A New Purpose

When Alexis, a single mom of a preschooler, joined the CCPCRE internship through TEAMS Alberta and Alberta Supports, she had no experience in property administration. Still, she had the drive to build a better life.

With dedication and determination, she quickly stood out for her professionalism and leadership. Six months later, Alexis is now working full-time as a Property Administrator and applying for membership with Heart Lake First Nation.

"This opportunity gave me confidence I didn't know I had. Now I have a job I love and a future I can build on." – Alexis

Her story shows what's possible when Indigenous women are supported with real opportunities.

From Uncertainty to Opportunity

When Shawna from Sturgeon Lake First Nation joined the CCPCRE internship, she was ready for a fresh start after years of physically demanding work. Unemployed and unsure of her next step, she entered the program with an open mind and was placed as a Property Administrator. Though new to the field, Shawna quickly found her stride—and a new passion. She discovered a love for the operations side of commercial real estate and began to envision a future in facility management.

By the end of the six-month internship, Shawna had secured full-time, permanent employment with the company that trained her. Today, she's on a steady path toward a career she's proud of; proof that it's never too late to start again.

ISETS, First Nations, and Daycares

For the past 25 years, TCETSA has proudly delivered culturally grounded training and employment programs that go beyond job readiness; they help build sovereignty, self-worth, and long-term opportunity within our Nations. These programs aren't one-off solutions; they are powerful investments in people, communities, and the future of Indigenous-led success.

Whether we're guiding individuals toward meaningful careers, launching new pilot initiatives, or weaving traditional knowledge into modern workforce development, every effort is focused on a shared vision: strong, self-sustaining communities built through opportunity, culture, and care.

Behind every milestone is a team of people who believe deeply in this mission. Our Chief and Council, staff, funders, and community stakeholders, your leadership, commitment, and partnership are the foundation of this work. And our front-line staff, facilitators, and trainers, your dedication continues to uplift our members and inspire real change.

Together, we've helped build pathways where there once were barriers, Nation by Nation, story by story, job by job.



Beaver Lake Cree Nation: Rooted in Community

Located northeast of Edmonton, Beaver Lake Cree Nation (BLCN) is expanding its workforce and empowering members through hands-on training and meaningful employment opportunities. At the heart of these efforts is Shirley Paradis, the community's dedicated Education and Employment Coordinator, who works tirelessly to support members in achieving their career goals.



Honouring Our Leaders and Supporters

This work would not be possible without the support and trust of our leadership and community.

Thank you to:

- Chief Gary Lameman and Beaver Lake Cree Nation Council, including Headmen Leonard Jackson, Cole Gladue, and Michael Lameman
- The BLCN Finance Office and Administration Team
- Our Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Community Members
- And most importantly, our Youth, for trusting us to walk alongside you as you shape your futures—we believe in your journey.

Our Impact

This year, 80 participants have been trained in high-demand safety certifications, and many are seeing the results in the form of full-time employment.



Training That Transforms

BLCN delivers a wide range of job-ready certifications and employment supports, including:

- First Aid
- H2S Awareness
- Global Ground Disturbance
- Fire Tack
- Security Training
- Job Start Supports
- Scaffolding & Insulation Program

Thanks to ISETS, supports such as fuel and PPE have made it easier for participants to start and sustain employment. One shining example is a participant from the Scaffolding & Insulation Program, who is now working full-time at Jackfish Lake, demonstrating the real-life impact of accessible training.

Partnerships That Build Futures

In Lac La Biche, strategic partnerships with Multi Test, Modern Wears, and local service providers continue to open doors for training and on-the-job experience. One participant is currently gaining hands-on skills at a local shop. Each session begins in a good way, with ceremony led by Elders Kurtis and George Gladue, grounding the work in culture and community.

Breaking Barriers, Creating Opportunities

Transportation remains a challenge, but Beaver Lake Cree Nation is taking action. Plans to bring Class 7 and Class 5 Driver Training directly to the Nation will help remove a major barrier to employment and mobility for members.

Real Stories, Real Impact

Jolee Koebel's path started with the Pre-Employment Welding program at Portage College. With ISETS support covering her costs, she committed fully, and now works full-time alongside her father, building both skills and family legacy.

Devon Boucher rediscovered his passion for scaffolding through ISETS and 7 Lakes. After completing the 4-week program, he landed a full-time job at Jackfish Lake. "This changed my life," Devon shares. "I believe this is my calling."

Serena's journey began in 2022 with the first-ever CEMT program. Her passion for land protection led her to NAIT's GIS Technician program, where she's now gaining advanced skills to combine technology and traditional knowledge. Her goal is clear: to walk alongside Nations in protecting and reclaiming the land for future generations.

Together, these stories demonstrate what's possible when culture, community, and opportunity converge.

Beaver Lake Early Learning & Childcare Center



Contact us for open childcare spots! Lillian Lewis-Gladue (780) 623-3110

HONOURING OUR CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY

Led by Lillian Lewis Gladue, alongside the dedicated team of Ivy Cardinal, Sabrina Candline, Sheena Gladue, Deneya Blood, and Yvonne Noskiye, we are proud to nurture our youngest community members with respect, safety, and cultural pride.

Beaver Lake Daycare is a space grounded in love, laughter, and the cultural strength of our people.

Guided by the belief that children thrive when they are free to play, learn, and grow at their own natural pace, our center is more than just childcare; it's a home for early learning, a celebration of culture, and a foundation for future leaders.

Tiny Steps, Big Milestones

This year, our little learners filled the center with laughter, energy, and beautiful growth, from taking their first steps to learning their first Cree words. Every milestone, no matter how small, reminded us of the power of love, play, and culture in shaping a child's journey. Although we're a small center, we're actively involved in the community—attending Harvest Camp, band meetings, awareness walks, and visiting the health center, school, and hall, where children learn by exploring their surroundings.

Our team also grew professionally, completing CPR/First Aid training and attending the Connecting Common Threads Conference. Through monthly newsletters and Evening Literacy Classes, we support families as well as children, building stronger ties between home and the center. One unforgettable moment? A toddler who started barely walking now races across the room shouting "API!" during circle time—proof that big strides often start small.

With Gratitude

Thank you to Beaver Lake Health Services, our Health Director, Chief Gary Lameman, and the Council, as well as our parents, caregivers, and children - you are our heart and our future.

Cold Lake First Nations

At Cold Lake First Nations, over 3,000 members carry forward a legacy deeply rooted in the land. With more than 1,300 members living on-reserve, our Nation proudly operates a primary school, daycare, and health centre that nurture the next generation with care and purpose.

Our way of life, rooted in sacred practices like hunting, fishing, gathering medicine, and living off the land, continues to guide us. At the same time we're moving forward with a bold Economic Development Plan to create opportunities and uplift our people.

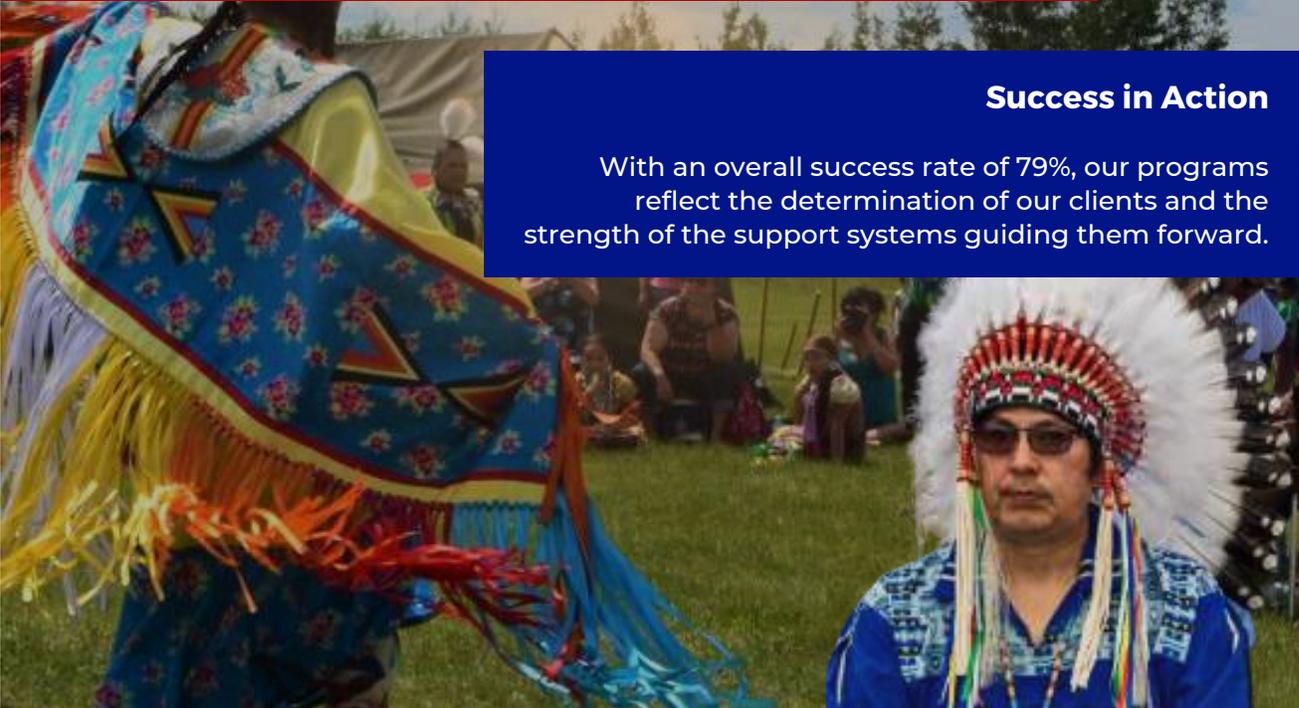


Strong relationships built across sectors

Thank you to Primco Dene, Comec, 7 Lakes Oilfield Services, Casino Dene, Maynard & Sons, Krues Busing, Portage College, NAIT, MC College, Legacy Bowes, Banff Centre, Blue Quills University, and many others.

Walking Together

To our Chief and Council, administration, and community partners, we extend our gratitude for your leadership and support in creating these opportunities. To our clients, your courage, determination, and trust fuel our mission. Masi Chok. We see you, we believe in you, and we're honoured to walk this path with you.



Success in Action

With an overall success rate of 79%, our programs reflect the determination of our clients and the strength of the support systems guiding them forward.

The Employment and Training Team

Behind every successful program is a team dedicated to walking alongside our members: Tammy Janvier – Manager, Kimberly Janvier – Employment Counsellor, Lovina Janvier – Receptionist. Together, they lead with compassion, knowledge, and commitment, ensuring each client receives the support they need to succeed.

Empowering Through Programs: Training, Education & Opportunities

We offered a wide range of programs in 2024–2025 to help our members gain valuable skills and take the next step in their career or education journeys:

- Adult Learning: GED and Grade 12 upgrading with CALP & Portage College
- Digital Skills: Ongoing workshops to boost employment readiness
- Youth Programs: Summer training in safety, resumes, driving, and job placements
- Cultural Learning: Hide Tanning and traditional teachings with Blue Quills
- Driver Training: Support for Class 1–7 licenses and safety certifications
- Career Training: Short-term programs in high-demand fields like EMR, Welding, HR
- One-on-One Support: Resumes, referrals, transport, and wraparound care

In 2024–2025, Cold Lake First Nations Employment and Training supported 331 community members on their path to employment. From driver training and safety tickets to career coaching and hands-on programs, our team provided tailored support to meet real needs.

Highlights include:

- 40 received direct employment support and coaching
- 28 completed driver training (Class 1–7)
- 105 were equipped with PPE for job readiness
- 89 earned safety certifications like First Aid and H2S
- 55 completed short-term training in diverse fields
- 7 advanced in trades through apprenticeships or pre-employment programs
- 7 youth gained work experience through summer placements

Each number reflects a step forward—and a stronger future for our Nation.

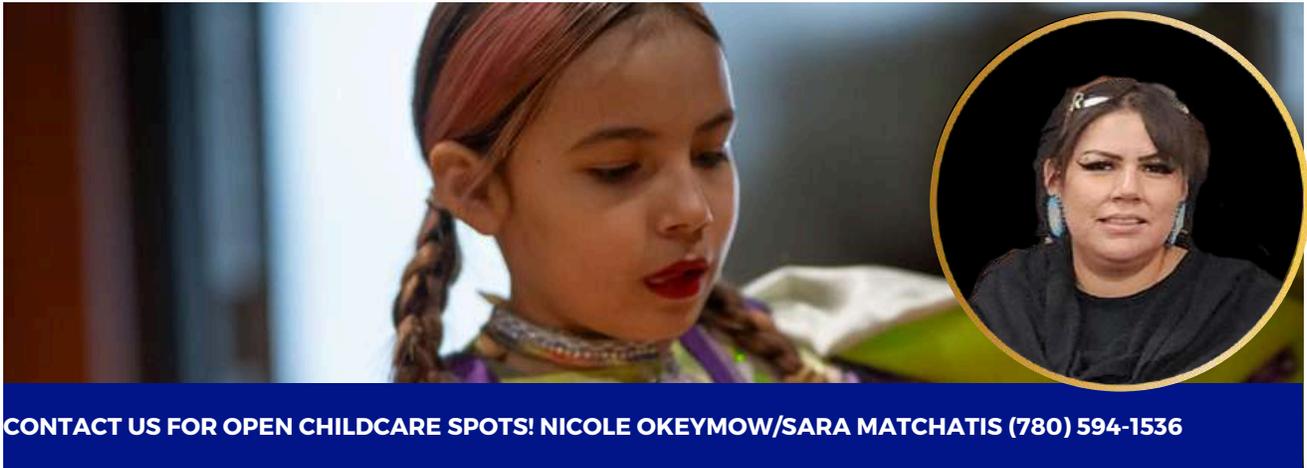
Stories of Strength & Support

Jordan was stuck, working hard but barely getting by. With Cold Lake First Nations Employment & Training by his side, he earned his Class 3 license and landed a well-paying union job. The stress lifted, and for the first time in years, he could breathe.

After relocating, Melanie transitioned from oilfield work to hands-on experience in farming and log hauling. With childcare support and training from Cold Lake First Nations, she successfully balanced work and family life with ease. Now, she's setting her sights on equine-assisted healing programs. Her message to women: "Embrace the change. The support is there."

Mariah attended a three-week hide tanning course to reconnect with sacred Indigenous practices. Guided by Elders, she learned not only the skills but also the spirit and ceremony behind them. "This was more than training—it was transformation."

Yagole Daycare: Cold Lake First Nations



CONTACT US FOR OPEN CHILDCARE SPOTS! NICOLE OKEYMOW/SARA MATCHATIS (780) 594-1536

A PLACE FOR CULTURE, FAMILY, AND GROWTH

Yagole Daycare is more than childcare, it's a cornerstone of Cold Lake First Nations' commitment to family and Indigenous employment.

At Cold Lake First Nations, Yagole Daycare stands as a nurturing bridge between tradition and tomorrow.

With a deep commitment to supporting both working families and the community as a whole, Yagole provides dependable childcare rooted in Denesuline language, cultural teachings, and the highest standards of safety and learning.

Learning Through Culture and Play

Children from 6 months to 4 years are welcomed with care, structure, and joy. Our daily routines are built to support healthy development—emotionally, physically, and intellectually—while also nurturing pride in identity through land-based learning and cultural expression.

Children at Yagole thrive in a calm, well-organized setting designed to help them learn at their own pace. Daily instruction in Denesuline builds early language skills, while cultural practices, such as gathering sage and offering tobacco, connect children to the land and their ancestors in meaningful ways.

Specialized play centers promote creativity, sensory exploration, and problem-solving skills. Outdoors, children learn through nature as they move, listen, touch, and discover. Even our infants benefit from cultural connection—lulled to sleep by gentle powwow songs.

A Committed, Growing Team

Led by passionate caregivers and administrators, Yagole's team is always learning. Many staff are advancing their education through Blue Quills' Indigenous early childhood education programs, bringing cultural richness into every aspect of their care.

Yagole Daycare is licensed to care for up to 80 children, currently supports 24 working or training parents, and has 6 children on the waitlist, with 13 part-time spaces available; its dedicated team includes 2 Child Development Supervisors and 4 Child Development Assistants.

Monthly team meetings provide a space for problem-solving and reflection, ensuring our learning environment evolves to meet each child's needs. Our cook prepares nutritious meals, guided by the Canadian Food Guidelines, providing children with the nourishment they need to grow strong in both body and mind.

Moments of Pride

From field trips to holiday dinners, Yagole is filled with moments that bring families and the community together. Parents helped build a Halloween haunted house that became a major success, raising enough to gift each child their own ribbon shirt or skirt.

Holiday feasts, such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, provide an opportunity for families to gather, celebrate, and reconnect with one another. These events turn our daycare into a place not just of learning, but of laughter, tradition, and belonging.

Staying Connected

Yagole uses the Lillio app to keep parents updated on daily routines and learning, while also supporting safe record-keeping and attendance. Staff members regularly complete training to strengthen their skills and ensure the program remains safe, current, and culturally rooted.

Community Support in Action

Yagole works closely with CLFN departments, educators, and therapists to meet every child's development where they're at. Children have access to:

- Speech and Language Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Jordan's Principle supports

These partnerships help children grow with confidence while ensuring families feel supported every step of the way.



Frog Lake First Nation: Empowering Careers, One Step at a Time

Frog Lake First Nation (Ayikisakahikan), located 210 km east of Edmonton, is a proud Treaty 6 signatory with two land bases, Unipouheos #121 and Puskiakiwenin #122, and a registered membership of 3,790. Led by an elected Chief and Council, Frog Lake is not only rich in culture and tradition but also in economic ambition, as it stewards ventures such as Frog Lake Energy Resources Corporation (FLERC) and collaborates with Tribal Chiefs Ventures Inc. and TCETSA to expand workforce opportunities for its people.



The Power of the ISETS Program

Led by Bryan Horse, ISETS Director, and Lincoln Quinney, Data Entry Clerk. Their work is more than administrative; it's transformative.

Thank you to Chief Greg Desjarlais and the Frog Lake First Nation Council for your unwavering support, leadership, and commitment to empowering our members through education, employment, and opportunity. Your guidance continues to open doors and inspire the next generation.



More Than A Program

ISETS is more than a program; it's a journey toward healing, stability, and long-term prosperity. In Frog Lake, the future is being built every day.

Client-Focused and Career-Ready

Frog Lake ISETS meets people where they are, whether they are entering the workforce for the first time or advancing in a trade. The team helps individuals build confidence, develop skills, and access real opportunities. One highlight is the Annual Career Fair, which brings together over 60 vendors and more than 300 attendees, with some securing jobs on the spot.

Training That Opens Doors

Over the past year, clients completed safety training (42 clients), PPE training (44 clients), and a wide range of career programs, including Power Engineering, Carpentry, Electrical, Office Administration, Web Design, Indigenous Addictions Counselling, and Drone Pilot Training. Some are now full-time employees or independent contractors.

Additional highlights:

- 4 hired as propane pump attendants at New Horizon Hockey Arena
- 4 artists joined the X-Pressions program
- 4 members completed bricklayer training

Stronger Through Partnership

Frog Lake ISETS collaborates with 37 industry partners and 16 entrepreneurs to connect clients with employers, mentors, and funding opportunities. The program is supported by a network of provincial, federal, and Indigenous allies working together to build long-term success. We extend heartfelt thanks to our Chief and Council, administration, and all collaborators whose leadership makes this possible. Your commitment helps build brighter futures, rooted in culture and community strength.

In Their Own Words: Client Testimonials

"I was looking for more than just a job; I needed stability and purpose. With ISETS and the support of Bryan and Lincoln, I didn't feel alone. Today, I have a career I'm proud of and the confidence to mentor others. ISETS helped me find my confidence and my calling." Keith Faithful

"Through ISETS, I earned my Office Administration Certificate from Portage College and now serve as a Project Manager with the SAIT/Frog Lake partnership. It all started with a goal and the right support. Every certificate can be a stepping stone to leadership." Susan Cross

"Thanks to ISETS, I completed a 3-year Power Engineering program. Today, I'm working with Cenovus in Lloydminster. It's not just a job, it's the future I always wanted, and I'm proud to represent Indigenous talent in the trades." Justin Breland

Frog Lake Daycare: Where Every Child Blossoms



CONTACT US FOR OPEN CHILDCARE SPOTS! ALTHENA QUINNEY (780) 943-3912

CONNECTING HEARTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY

We strive to create meaningful moments of connection between children, families, and the community.

At Frog Lake Lilypad Daycare, every child is seen, cherished, and nurtured.

In 2024, our team continued to foster a warm, safe, and enriching space where little ones could learn, grow, and explore their identities, guided by both modern early childhood development practices and traditional Indigenous teachings.

Ongoing Commitment to Culture & Care

Frog Lake Lilypad Daycare remained committed to our long-standing goal: strengthening our early learning environment through language, tradition, and community connection.

Our staff continued to engage in:

- Seeking support from Elders and Knowledge Keepers to infuse traditional practices into our programming.
- Participating in training and workshops to stay current with both Indigenous and mainstream approaches to early childhood education.
- Finding creative ways to honour culture in everyday routines, despite limited resources.
- Building trusting relationships with families to strengthen home-to-program connections.
- Collaborating with community partners to expand access to learning materials and cultural tools.
- Reflecting regularly to ensure our work stays focused on care, inclusion, and growth.

Everyday Moments, Cultural Connections

Throughout 2024, children at Lilypad participated in a wide variety of hands-on, seasonal, and culturally grounded activities. These included:

- Land-Based Learning – From planting in the spring to snow play in winter, children experienced the rhythms of the land.
- Cree Language Songs & Lullabies – Music and rhythm supported early language development while revitalizing Indigenous knowledge.
- Elder Visits – Gentle wisdom flowed from the presence of Elders who shared stories, songs, and cultural practices with our little learners.
- Community Cultural Events – Children were invited to join feasts, harvesting camps, and mini powwows that celebrated their identity and roots.
- Support Services – Families continued to access programs like Jordan's Principle, ensuring wraparound care and inclusive services for all children.

These daily experiences weren't just educational—they were moments of belonging, connection, and cultural pride.

Moving Forward with Heart

Our work continues with heart and intention. Every gentle hug, every Cree lullaby, every shared meal or moment of learning is part of something much bigger: the weaving of identity, community, and love into the everyday lives of our children. These are the seeds of resilience, confidence, and pride we plant each day.

Frog Lake Lilypad Daycare is not just a program; it's a place where little ones are seen, heard, and uplifted. Where culture is not a lesson, but a living, breathing part of the classroom. Where laughter echoes through the halls, and language, tradition, and kindness shape the rhythm of each day.

To our families: thank you for your trust and your partnership. To our dedicated staff: your patience, presence, and passion are truly appreciated. And to the children: you are our greatest teachers. You remind us that strength can be soft, that joy is powerful, and that the future begins in the hands of the smallest among us.

As we move forward, we do so grounded in culture and care, and are committed to creating a safe and joyful space where every child can thrive.

"The support and care we've received have made a world of difference. From the warm, welcoming staff to the culturally grounded programming, we've seen incredible growth in our child's confidence and learning. It's more than just a daycare, it's a place where our children connect to their roots, feel safe, and are truly celebrated." - Parent

Heart Lake First Nation: Committed to Community

In the heart of northeastern Alberta lies a small but mighty Nation—Heart Lake First Nation. Just 65 kilometres from Lac La Biche, it is the smallest in Treaty 6 territory, with about 250 members. But what it lacks in size, it makes up for in culture, spirit, and determination.

At the centre of its progress stands Sandy Monias. For over 20 years, Sandy has led the ISETS program with passion and vision, opening doors to training, education, and employment opportunities. Her dedication has helped shape brighter futures for countless community members.

Guided by Leadership

None of this would be possible without the dedication of the Nation's leadership. A heartfelt thank you to:

- Chief Curtis
- Council Members Sheila and Garrett
- Band Administrator John Fleming

Your vision and support enable these programs and the people behind them to thrive.

To the community members walking these paths: your courage is our story.



Building Futures, Honouring Culture

We create opportunities that blend cultural strength with practical training for long-term employment.

Lifelong Learning, Local Success

Heart Lake's ISETS program offers more than skills; it offers hope. Over the past year, the program opened doors for 30 clients to explore training, certifications, and career-building opportunities. Community members accessed:

- Safety certifications including First Aid, WHMIS, H2S Alive, Confined Space, and Ground Disturbance
- Trades exploration and post-secondary readiness
- Childcare Levels 1 and 2
- Microsoft Office and remote work readiness
- Driver's license support through Portage College
- Office administration and small business marketing

Each program was thoughtfully selected to support both immediate employment and long-term career paths.

Success in Motion: Heart Lake ISETS Highlights

This year, Heart Lake First Nation's ISETS program supported 30 clients on their path to employment and education. Nine returned to school, ten secured steady jobs, and five enrolled at Portage College to keep learning.

Youth were also a focus; 14 gained valuable summer jobs, growing their skills and confidence. With tailored support like resume help and job shadowing, clients are not just finding work, they're building futures.

Rylie Monias, 23, is now working full-time with Heart Lake Construction after completing safety training. Craig Cardinal, 39, also completed safety training and joined the same team, contributing to community infrastructure.

"The safety training helped me get the job I have today. I'm proud to be working full-time with Heart Lake Construction and building a better future." – Rylie Monias

Partners in Progress

Heart Lake's accomplishments were made possible through strong collaboration. Fast Labour Solutions delivered critical safety training, while Public Works and Housing involved trainees directly in building new homes alongside skilled carpenters.

These partnerships provided practical experience while strengthening the Nation's workforce and infrastructure from within.

Nurturing the Future: Heart Lake Daycare Centre



WHERE CULTURE LEADS AND CHILDREN THRIVE

The Heart Lake Early Learning & Childcare Centre continues to be a place where little voices are heard, identities are nurtured, and the next generation is empowered to walk proudly in their culture and in the world.

The Heart Lake Daycare Centre, led by Director Charlotte Cardinal, is more than just a daycare; it's a safe, nurturing space where little ones are guided through their earliest years with compassion, intention, and cultural pride.

Each day, children are supported in their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development through activities that honour who they are and where they come from.

Welcoming Little Voices: Building Belonging from Day One

Serving children aged 0 to 6, the program is grounded in the belief that children learn best through play, connection, and cultural experiences.

The "All About Me" theme set the tone for the year, encouraging each child to share who they are, where they come from, and what makes them unique. These early activities were seeds of confidence and connection, helping relationships blossom between children and caregivers.

This past year at Heart Lake Daycare Centre was filled with moments that honoured land, culture, and community, helping our children grow in both confidence and curiosity. September began with connection, as families and community members gathered for a joyful barbecue at the local multiplex. It was more than just a meal; it was a celebration of togetherness, reminding us that this program is a circle of support. At the same time, our outdoor spaces were refreshed with a newly stained deck and repaired fences, creating a safer, more welcoming place for play and exploration.

At Heart Lake, this is more than childcare. It's a place of becoming; a place where little feet walk strong paths, and little hearts grow big with purpose.

Kehewin Cree Nation: Walking Forward Together

Kehewin Cree Nation, proudly situated on Treaty 6 territory, is building pathways for our people through careers, education, and community-led programs that reflect our identity. With support from the Indigenous Skills Employment and Training (ISETS), delivered through our partnership with Tribal Chiefs Employment & Training Services Association (TCETSA), we're doing more than training; we're transforming futures.



The Team Behind the Vision

At the heart of this movement is Phaedra Cardinal, ISETS Manager, who walks alongside Chief and Council, the Director of Operations, and community members to deliver programs that truly make a difference. She's now joined by Tarah Gadwa, our new Career Counsellor and Data Clerk, bringing even more personalized support to our Nation.

Together, they work with both on-reserve and urban members, connecting folks with labour market info, career planning, and training opportunities that lead directly to employment. Whether you're in Kehewin, St. Paul, or Edmonton, you're never on this journey alone.



How We Help Every Step of the Way

Clients are referred through our community networks, and we offer:

- Career counseling & goal setting
- Resume and cover letter building
- Action plans and job readiness programs
- Safety and skills training
- Class 7 & 5 driving support
- Summer student employment
- PPE and job retention supports

Programs That Build Confidence & Capacity

This past year, members participated in:

- Business Administration
- Safety Training (on and off-Nation)
- Class 7 and 5 driver training
- Employment Readiness and Life Skills
- STEM programs like Code Ninja and Pixel Blue
- Paradigm Esteem summer programs
- Early Childhood Development through Long Journey
- Custodial Training with Social Development

Looking Ahead with Insight and Intention

- We're currently surveying our community with help from John Gladue, who is gathering valuable data to guide future training and job opportunities tailored to the needs of Kehewin.
- As we move forward, we stay committed to one shared goal: empowering Kehewin Cree Nation members with the tools, training, and confidence to thrive on their own terms.

From the Ground Up: A Kehewin Apprenticeship Story

"My journey into instrumentation and control technology began with uncertainty, but the Kehewin Cree Nation ISETS program helped me find my path. With their support, I was able to attend trade school, gain hands-on experience, and build the confidence I needed to succeed.

Even during a tough year financially, ISETS stepped in to help with tuition when I needed it most. Now, as a proud seven-year apprentice with my own service truck, I'm grateful for the opportunities and trust I've received. This program didn't just support my education, it helped me believe in myself and build a future I'm proud of." By Kailin – Kehewin Cree Nation

Together, we rise. Together, we learn. Together, we lead.

Seasons of Growth: Kehew Awasis Daycare



CONTACT US FOR OPEN CHILDCARE SPOTS! SUSIE ANTOINE (780) 826-1790

LANGUAGE, LAND & LEARNING

At Kehew Awasis Daycare, every season is a celebration of learning, love, and legacy.

At Kehew Awasis Daycare, every day is a new opportunity for our little ones to grow, explore, and connect with who they are.

From the moment they step through our doors, children are welcomed into an environment filled with love, laughter, and learning rooted in Cree culture.

New Beginnings, Same Loving Spirit

As the sun blazed above, the summer months were filled with laughter, water play, and creativity. While crafts and activities filled their days, the team behind the scenes prepared for a big change: the move to our brand-new daycare space.

The daycare was filled with anticipation as we carefully transitioned, ensuring everything was ready for our little learners. The excitement was genuine, and stepping into our new space felt like stepping into a realm of possibility.

From the land to the classroom, our children are held in culture, care, and community - each step preparing them for a future filled with pride and possibility. Whether the children are speaking words in their ancestral language, guided by cultural educators like Tara Janz, or getting their hands dirty while planting seeds in the soil, each experience is designed to nurture both heart and mind. Safety and curiosity go hand in hand, as children also explore important life lessons.

With gratitude in our hearts, we also watched our playground take shape. New safety upgrades and thoughtful touches made our community feel stronger and more connected than ever.

Whitefish Lake First Nation #128: Building Futures, Creating Momentum

Whitefish Lake First Nation is a thriving community of nearly 4,800 members, with 3,000 living on-reserve. Known for its entrepreneurial spirit and growing workforce, the Nation is focused on building futures through trades, industry partnerships, and self-sufficiency.

At the heart of this work is the Whitefish Lake ISETS department, led by Rennie Houle and Nicole Halfe. Their team delivers responsive, market-driven programs that reflect the Nation's diverse talents and goals.

Fuelled by Partnership

Key partners helped drive success this year: Alliance Refractories and Local 92 offered bricklaying training, Krues Busing supported driver licensing, and Goodfish Lake Business Corp. and Scullion Resources provided firefighting training. Cam Industries is also paving the way for future opportunities in scaffolding and insulation.

With Gratitude to Our Leaders and Elders

Thank you to Chief and Council for your strong support, and to our Elders whose wisdom guides and grounds all that we do.



A Year of Results: Responsive Training, Real Impact

In 2024–2025, Whitefish Lake delivered a powerful range of hands-on training, including:

- Bricklaying & Scaffolding
- Chainsaw Operation
- Class 7 & Class 2 Driver Licensing
- Wildland Firefighting
- Entrepreneur Training
- Safety Certifications (WHMIS, First Aid, CSO, etc.)
- Security Training & Graphic Design
- Bookkeeping, Photography, and Audio Engineering

Courses were supported by resume help, job shadowing, coaching, and transportation to remove barriers and set members up for success.

Empowerment in Numbers

This year, the ISETS program made a measurable impact:

- 281 total clients served
- 140 members employed or self-employed
- 95 returned to school
- 80 participants have been trained in high-demand safety certifications, and many are seeing the results in the form of full-time employment

Celebrating Career Milestones

- Skilled Trades: 4 members reached Journeyman status in Scaffolding.
- Union Success: 11 joined Local 92 after pipeline training.
- Transportation: 4 earned Class 2 licenses and are now professional drivers.
- Emergency Response: 16 trained in Wildland Firefighting, with 13 actively working.
- Creative Enterprise: 1 client launched a full-time photography business in Edmonton.

Mentorship in Action

Whitefish Lake's Mentorship Program placed members in Housing, ISETS, and Social Services:

- 1 secured full-time employment.
- 1 is preparing for plumbing training.
- 1 started a beadwork business while studying entrepreneurship.

Success Stories

- Paul Memnook: Completed Marine Certificate training in Newfoundland and now works in the marine industry.
- Nature Memnook: Former mentee turned multimedia entrepreneur. Launched Medicine Media, combining cultural storytelling with design.

"Joining Local 92 was a big step for me. The pipeline training gave me the skills and confidence I needed, and now I'm working steady union jobs with great pay. This has opened up a whole new future for me and my family."



Whitefish Lake First Nation #128 Daycare



CONTACT US FOR OPEN CHILDCARE SPOTS! TINITA BULL (780) 636-2662

BUILDING FUTURES AT WHITEFISH LAKE

Whitefish Lake Daycare is a warm, welcoming space where the youngest members of the Nation, infants to age four, begin their lifelong journey rooted in love, language, and culture.

Goodfish Lake Daycare supports children aged 6 months to 4 years with culturally rooted care and early learning.

Led by Manager Tinita Bull and Head Start Coordinator Daniell Crier, the team comprises dedicated caregivers, one-on-one Jordan's Principle staff, a cook, and a bus driver, all working together to create a safe and nurturing environment for young children.

Voices of the Land: Learning Through Culture

From the moment children arrive, they are immersed in a world that celebrates their Cree identity. With signs around the daycare featuring Cree words and caregivers weaving the language into daily conversations, the children are surrounded by words that connect them to their heritage and identity.

Sensory play, number games, arts and crafts, name tracing, and picture memory games help children grow cognitively and emotionally, while dramatic dress-up and role-playing spark creativity and connection.

Keeping Families Connected

Parents stay engaged through the Lillio app, offering real-time updates on their child's activities and milestones, bringing peace of mind and a stronger home-school connection.

Care Beyond the Classroom: Community Partnerships in Action

Our children's well-being is supported by more than just our staff; it's a full-circle approach made possible by caring partners and programs.

- Pakan School helps bridge early learning and the education system.
- The Health Centre provides dental check-ups and supports our daily lunch program.
- Jordan's Principle ensures every child receives the health, social, and educational services they need, whether it's speech therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, or support with behavioural challenges.

We're wrapping children in care, helping them grow strong, inside and out.

Walking Into Strength: A Story of Resilience

When caregiver Myrdis Stamp first enrolled her son, he faced significant mobility challenges due to clubfoot. He couldn't walk. But with the daycare's commitment and the support of a visiting physiotherapist through Jordan's Principle, everything changed.

"Now, my son is walking. This place gave us more than support, it gave us hope." Her story is just one example of how healing, culture, and community can transform lives.

From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Building What's Next

Like many remote communities, we still face transportation challenges that limit our ability to take children on field trips. But we don't stop dreaming. We're now working to convert our multi-purpose room into a sensory sanctuary, a safe, enriching environment designed for emotional regulation, developmental exploration, and inclusive play. Every child deserves space to grow in their way.

Our Gratitude Runs Deep

None of this is possible without the support behind the scenes. Thank you to Chief Herb Jackson, our dedicated Council, Elders, the Band Office, the Health Centre, TCETSA, and the remarkable therapists who bring expertise and care into our daycare. To our parents, caregivers, and practicum students, your trust means everything. You're not just enrolling your child in daycare; you're investing in their future.

Together, we're raising a generation that will walk proudly, speak their language, carry their culture, and lead with confidence.

WHERE PATHWAYS BEGIN: ISETS IN ST. PAUL



GUIDING OUR PEOPLE FORWARD

Through the Indigenous Skills Employment and Training Program (ISETS), the St. Paul office supports community members from all TCETSA Nations as they move toward brighter futures with purpose, training, and guidance.

TCETSA is a registered charity. For more information, visit www.tcet.ca.

Fueling Ambition Through Skill and Support

From trades to ticket training, our office equips clients with the tools to step into new careers. We funded training in welding, carpentry, film production, rig work, mechanics, and more. We helped clients obtain Class 1, 3, and 5 licenses and supplied essential items, such as Personal Protective Equipment, to ensure safety and readiness on the job.

Behind every program was a deeper goal: supporting Indigenous individuals to move from uncertainty to confidence, and from job-seeking to job-ready.

Impact in Motion: By the Numbers

This year, we worked with 92 individuals; each one with their own story and goals.

- 51 completed their training
- 42 gained employment
- 15 returned to school
- 111 total services delivered, including career counselling, upgrading, apprenticeships, and diploma training.

We continue to navigate the rising cost of living. Training allowances often fall short in covering essential expenses such as rent, food, and transportation. While we wish we could support every client fully, limited funds mean we sometimes face tough choices. Still, we do our best, offering extra support when it matters most and always advocating for greater resources to meet the growing need.

Stronger Together: Partnerships That Work

We could not do this alone. Our partnerships with training centers, such as Portage College, NAIT, SAIT, and Trade Winds to Success, help clients access high-quality education. Industry leaders, such as Seven Lakes Oilfield Service and Pimee Well Servicing, go the extra mile by offering job placements directly following training.

Together, we delivered three large training projects this year. One standout program was the Scaffolding and Insulator program with Seven Lakes, which resulted in direct employment for most participants. Pimee's Rig Worker training also resulted in the whole hiring of all graduates. These collaborations prove what's possible when opportunity meets preparation.

Building Futures: Todd & Levi's Journeys

Over the years, I've had the honour of supporting some truly inspiring individuals through their training journeys. Two stories that stand out are those of Todd Pruden and Levi Tingey; both are determined, capable, and committed to building something better for themselves and their communities.

When Todd came to the office, he was working hard to improve his carpentry skills, but housing challenges were making it difficult for him to stay on track. I did what I could, helping him access the right supports, stay focused on his goals, and believe in the long-term vision. He stuck with it, finished his training, and is now using his skills in meaningful ways, including serving on his Nation's housing committee. Watching his confidence grow has been one of the most rewarding parts of this work.

Levi's journey was similar. He reached out, unsure if going back to school was the right choice. Together, we found a training path that made sense for him; pipefitting through TEAMS Alberta, and ensured he had EI support to manage along the way. Like anyone, he had moments of doubt, but he kept going. Today, he's doing well in his career and even shares advice with others just starting out. His story reminds me why this work matters.

I don't take credit for their success; they did the work. I just had the privilege of walking alongside them, helping clear a few obstacles and cheering them on. That's what we're here for. - Darlene Bellerose, Employment & Training Coordinator

TCETSA IELCC Report (2024–2025)

Tribal Chiefs Education and Training Services Association (TCETSA) oversees six Child Care Sub-Agreements supporting 342 childcare spaces across six First Nations. These programs provide high-quality, culturally grounded care delivered by trained staff. TCETSA ensures compliance through site inspections, licensing reviews, and quarterly meetings with Daycare Directors.

Core & Supplemental Funding Uses

- Core Funding: Wages, benefits, training, transportation, nutrition, facility operations, admin costs, developmental materials.
- Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare (IELCC) Funding: Supports wage top-ups and staff training.
- Repairs & Renovations: Focused on health/safety (e.g., hot water tanks, HVAC, mould removal), licensing compliance, and accessibility (e.g., ramps, sensory rooms, adaptive structures).

2024–2025 Site Upgrades

- Major upgrades include mould remediation (CLFN), HVAC systems (CLFN, WLFN), fencing (KCN, HLFN), and security (FLFN).
- Accessibility features added: ramps (KCN, BLCN), accessible washrooms (CLFN), sensory rooms (WLFN).
- Feasibility studies are underway for future expansions, including new buildings.
- Focus on natural light, calming colors, residential-style fixtures, child-friendly design, accessibility, safety, and long-term cost-effective renovations. Staff spaces are prioritized for comfort and functionality.

Cultural Programming Highlights

- Elder Visits: Weekly cultural teachings and smudging ceremonies.
- Arts & Crafts: Beading, tipi models, drum art linked to seasonal themes.
- Cultural Celebrations: Solstices, Orange Shirt Day, Treaty acknowledgements.
- Land-Based Learning: Nature walks and traditional ecological knowledge.

Language Revitalization

- Daily Cree, Dene, or local language use.
- Bilingual signs, songs, puppets, and language immersion activities.
- Local language instructors engaged for pronunciation and resources.

Kehewin Cree Nation Temporary Childcare Facility

Kehewin Cree Nation is currently operating its childcare services from a temporary facility of five connected trailer units. This relocation was necessary due to safety concerns arising from the proximity of above-ground gas and propane tanks, located approximately 50 meters from the former daycare building and playground. The move was implemented as a precautionary measure to ensure the health and safety of the children and staff.

In Closing: A Testimonial From Former Board Chair



“Together, we move forward with gratitude in our hearts and vision for the future.”

What I remember most about the early days of TCETSA is that it was always there for our people, especially those ready and willing to work. The Director, staff, and Board worked tirelessly to open doors, remove barriers, and connect community members to training, employment opportunities, and a sense of purpose. Back then, just like today, every decision was made with one goal in mind: **to lift our Nations through meaningful employment.**

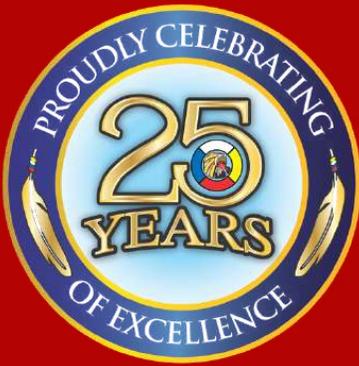
The creation of TCETSA was a turning point. It meant our members could find work in and around their communities, build partnerships, gain experience, and take pride in earning a living close to home. That pride still echoes today in the laughter of working families and the legacy of economic independence that continues to grow.

What makes me most proud is that the six Nations have come together in unity to reduce dependency and create opportunity. We’ve witnessed generations transition from assistance to independence, from mere survival to thriving. And in doing so, we’ve planted the seeds for a new working class, guided by pride, purpose, and possibility.

To the past Chiefs, to Eva John Gladue and her dedicated team, and to all those who helped build TCETSA from the ground up—your vision lives on in every success story. To the former Board members and leaders from each Nation, thank you. Your hard work is remembered and honoured. And to those who have journeyed on to the Spirit World, we continue to feel your guidance in all that we do.

I can’t say what the next 25 years will hold, but I do know this: as long as we continue to train, support, and uplift our people, the future is bright. TCETSA will remain a guiding light in employment and training, grounded in unity, strengthened by culture, and driven by the collective spirit of our Nations.

Chief Desjarlais, Frog Lake First Nation



If you have questions, would like to learn more about our programs, or are interested in future partnerships, we'd love to hear from you.

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Together, we're increasing the Indigenous workforce through employment and training.



Thank You to Our Funders and Sponsors

We extend our deepest gratitude to our funders and sponsors for your generous support. Your commitment makes it possible for us to empower Indigenous entrepreneurs, strengthen communities, and create lasting impact. Thank you for believing in our vision and walking alongside us on this journey.

