

Project Details

Location

New Brunswick

website

<http://www.jedinb.ca>

Contact

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Community

Urban

Scope of Project

National, Provincial / Territorial

Target Audience

First Nations, Youth (15-30 yrs), Adults (31-49 yrs)

Initiative Impact

What is the overall impact of the initiative and how is this measured?

Participant outcomes:

- Success with learning
- A few students were able to stay drug and alcohol free through their participation in the program and encouragement from their classmates
- Making concrete plans to pursue further education and/or having clear personal goals in place
 - Of the 20 students who completed the program, 13 demonstrated active pursuit of continuing education/training at follow-up
- Successfully securing employment after the program
- Positive changes in motivation, attitude, self-esteem, and self-confidence including confidence to pursue their career goals
- Successes in participant's personal lives that they attributed to the program (e.g. obtaining a driver's license, obtaining the testing and tools to assess and deal with learning disabilities.)
- Developing positive relationships with teachers, coaches and other students. Students from both sites had a desire to meet each other and strengthen their NBAWES community.
- Becoming role models for their children. Being able to make contributions to their families or communities, e.g. helping kids with homework, writing a grant proposal for a community.

What challenges have you faced and how were these overcome?

- Curriculum development delays
- Diversity of student needs
 - Those wanting a GED and those that didn't
 - Wide variety of Essential Skills levels in the class

- Variety in student commitment levels
- Learning disabilities and addictions issues
- Limited access to resources to support these needs
- Absenteeism
 - Addictions issues
 - Family emergency issues
 - Family care issues
- Lack of Clarity between NBAWES and PETL re: Student Allowances and Supports
- Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities between staff members
- No budget for classroom resources or materials
- Transportation challenges in Miramichi
- Moving to participate in program
 - Little notice and support funding delayed
 - Difficulty finding affordable housing
 - Difficulty setting up utilities
- Social distractions at the Fredericton site caused some students to lose focus and concentration
- Office and classroom facilities were not optimal for the needs of the program
- Work placement issues
- Policies having to be developed as problems were encountered
- Human Resources Related Issues
 - Difficulty finding and retaining staff
 - Limited communication between outgoing and incoming staff (e.g. new teaching staff not knowing what previous staff had covered)
- Reporting Requirements and Accountabilities to OLES kept changing depending upon which of the 6 OLES project and financial officers they were working with at the time.

What are 3 key lessons you learned from developing or delivering your initiative? What advice from those lessons would you share with others?

- Give yourself time to plan. Create reasonable timelines and etch out the key deliverables for each phase of the work plan. Planning helped the staff keep on track and provided direction to everyone involved in the development and delivery of the project;
- Have a human resource strategy and policies so that everyone is clear about the expectations of the project and their roles and responsibilities;
- A blended ES and technical training model works well. Initially, in the NBAICT project had six weeks of the ES training (the NBAWES shortened program) followed by six weeks of technical training. They found that the transition from ES to technical skills training was difficult for learners. Instead, they now use a blended model with two weeks at the beginning of the course focussed on ES training followed by a slow transition with less ES training and gradually more ICT technical skills training introduced during weeks three to nine. Weeks 10-12 are solidly focused on ICT technical training. NBAICT also maintained the ES instructor throughout the program, having them teach ES during first six weeks and then transitioning into the role of an ES coach for the remainder of the program to assist students and maintain their progress.

What have participants, stakeholders and partners thought, felt and/or said about your initiative?

“It’s been a really very positive experience, it really has. I haven’t had a network of being in the Aboriginal community for a long, long time. So [through] this course and through meeting people that are like me, I feel like they are my family, and feel like they care about me, and I’m doing positive things...” – Corinna Merasty-Gallant, Participant from the NBAICT project, now taking the Mobile Application Development program

“The curriculum was profoundly important in setting the vision, and provoking all of us to think: What does it mean to engage the First Nations learner in a meaningful way?” Everyone- the instructors, curriculum developers the PSE institutions - was motivated to ask themselves and try to answer the questions: How is it different and how does it have to be different?” - Eugene Rolfe, Project Coordinator, JEDI, and past NBAWES instructor

“Our role [as instructors] is to help learners to have remarkable, unforgettable experiences that will help them identify with, and perhaps overcome the fear of developing ES and, as an instructor, to do this means that you have taught the essence of the program,” - Eugene Rolfe, NBAWES instructor

Incorporation of Essential Skills

Which Essential Skills are covered by the initiative?

Reading Text

Document Use

Numeracy

Writing

Oral Communications

Working with Others

Thinking Skills

Computer Use

Continuous Learning

How are the Essential Skills integrated into your initiative?

ES were taught through short lectures, group discussions, personal discovery, class work, group work and experiential learning that made connections between the ES content and learners' life and cultural activities.

The integration of ES called on the instructors to make use of 'teachable moments' to help learners grasp links between cultural learning and the development of the ES in their everyday life. The more an instructor could facilitate these connections, the more confidence participants had in developing their ES.

How do you assess participant Essential Skills?

During the pilot phase of the NBAWES Project, TOWES was used for pre and post assessments on learners. In more recent deliveries and through partnership with the Province of New Brunswick, CLAE is used.

Project Components

What are the components of the initiative?

Occupation-specific skills training

Academic upgrading

Work-integrated learning (i.e., internships, co-ops, work placements, etc.)

Life skills

Cultural, language, and tradition awareness and/or training

How do you support participant success in the program?

Job placements

How was Indigenous culture integrated into the program content or delivery?

ES are integrated into cultural-based activities such as the making of a dreamcatcher. Students are taken out to the forest to pick red willow for the dreamcatcher. Cultural teachings are shared during the field trip. Upon returning to class, students are taught how to make a dreamcatcher and, at the same time, the ES of numeracy (i.e., geometry) is connected to the activity as the instructor talks about putting the willow into a circle and the other shapes (e.g., triangles, pentagons, octagons, etc.) that the sinew is making in the centre web of the dreamcatcher.

Instruction and the learning environment for the program was First Nations-centered, with consistent application of culturally-based learning processes. For example, students in the classroom participated in talking circles throughout the training to provide a way for them to discuss challenges, support one another, and identify solutions. The Instructors found that the circles and other First Nations approaches to learning really made a difference in the morale of the students and positively impacted their motivation levels.

What do you think are the most important competencies and attributes for staff involved in this initiative to have?

Staff need to be able to foster connections between essential skills, cultural learning, and everyday life. The NBAWES project team was composed of experienced educators (most of whom were First Nations people with either Bachelor or Master's degrees in Education, and who were from the local communities).

Who are your partners, and what is their involvement in the initiative?

First Nation ASET Holders in NB (Mawiw Tribal Council; North Shore Mi'kmaq District Council; St. John River Valley Tribal Council; NB Aboriginal Peoples Council) – Providing oversight direction on the project

GNB – Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat – Providing oversight direction on the project

St. Thomas University and New Brunswick Community College – Host locations for pilot sites in two regions of the province