

Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC) Update to the Community - January 2017

Where we left things

In the last WPRC Update to the Community in May 2016, we told you about the launch of **End Homelessness Winnipeg** as a stand-alone organization, and with that, the opportunity for WPRC to consider a new area of focus.

We shared that the WPRC chose an initial focus on the aspiration, **'Independence through Income'**, and described the community consultations that followed, which many of you participated in. Those meetings, plus literature and demographic reviews, led the WPRC to a theme which we called **Bridges to Employment** focussing primarily on Indigenous youth. *Bridges to Employment* was described as "...building relationships that will support people moving from training to employment."

Since then

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* report includes 94 Calls to Action. Call to Action #92 speaks directly to the issue of Indigenous employment. It calls upon the corporate sector to:

"...ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector and....provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools...(and conduct) skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."

This Call to Action reinforces the relevancy and urgency of Indigenous employment and for the WPRC, it is a touch point and guide for our work going forward.

Starting in January 2016, WPRC staff set out to learn about Indigenous youth employment by meeting with organizations and people who have experience, expertise or knowledge related to Indigenous youth employment. We wanted to find out what was already going on, what was working well, where the gaps were, where potential resources were and what the opportunities were, with the goal of developing a course of action.

The major themes emerging from these consultations were:

- There are numerous community-based organizations training Indigenous youth for the workforce. They shared that they have difficulty linking their graduates to good jobs.
- Private sector business leaders recognize that there exists an urgent need to create good job opportunities for Indigenous youth due to the rapidly growing, very young Indigenous population in Winnipeg. They want to be part of the solution by providing employment opportunities.
- Typically we may think that it is the youth alone that need to be trained and prepared for the workforce, but we heard that workplaces also need to be prepared so that youth are coming into welcoming and culturally safe environments.
- One of the most important factors to ensuring long term successful employment for individuals facing barriers, is post-employment support.

Consultations will continue as we learn about new people and resources, but the themes that have emerged to date provided clear direction for WPRC going forward.

In October 2016 the WPRC confirmed a plan of action called **TRC92: Youth Employment**, named after the 92nd Call to Action in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Report.

TRC92: Youth Employment focuses on supporting learning and awareness about issues related to Indigenous employment within private sector companies, and creating linkages with community-based groups who are training youth for employment opportunities. Starting with a small cohort of youth and businesses we will work to develop an employment plan, learn from it and build, with the aim of including more and more businesses and youth into the future.

Progress to date

The role of the WPRC in **TRC92: Youth Employment** is to seek out and convene people, groups and resources, facilitate planning and evaluation, and ensure on-going discussions and consultations with all stakeholders.

To date WPRC has talked to well over 100 individuals including **30** private sector employers and human resource personnel, **44** community and youth agencies representatives, **20** government employees, **20** Indigenous leaders, **31** youth, as well as several individuals from post-secondary education, labour and research/academia regarding employment opportunities and supports for Indigenous youth.

Eight community-based organizations who train Indigenous youth, and up to ten private sector businesses through the Business Council of Manitoba, have agreed to participate in the first stage of **TRC92: Youth Employment**.

WPRC staff is learning about new tools, through Social Innovation and other theories that can be utilized to map out the details of what needs to occur, where unidentified gaps and blockages might be and where new resources may need to be brought in.

A series of learning sessions is in the planning stages. It is designed primarily for business leaders and human resource personnel to learn about issues related to Indigenous youth employment.

Next steps

Setting up an initiative like **TRC92: Youth Employment** requires on-going communication with stakeholders, collaborative planning and continuous learning as the initiative progresses.

In the coming months WPRC will convene meetings with the trainers and businesses to begin planning how best to move forward, and launch the series of learning sessions.

We look forward to reporting on further progress in future.



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