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First Nations Information Governance Centre
Le Centre de gouvernance de l'information des Premières Nations

FNREEES: DID YOU KNOW?



The FNREEES Did You Know? series feature data from the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES). Providing an unprecedented perspective on life in First Nations communities, the FNREEES helps fill data gaps in the areas of early childhood education and development, youth employment and education, and adult employment and labour force conditions.

This series brings FNREEES national findings to bear on pressing policy questions in areas the survey addresses. Its purpose is to help ensure that the collective views and experiences of First Nations people, as expressed in the FNREEES, point the way to positive change.

According to Statistics Canada, First Nations people make up the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population, with more than half of those living on First Nation reserve communities under the age of 25 (2011). And yet, many employment barriers for First Nation youth—and First Nation adults—remain.

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published 94 Calls to Action, with #7 calling on the federal government to develop "a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians." Six months later, the new Liberal government committed to implementing all of the recommendations included in the Calls to Action.

The FNREEES, which provides unprecedented access to new data on the education, skills and employment aspirations of First Nations people living on-reserve, offers a unique opportunity to help inform any such strategy.

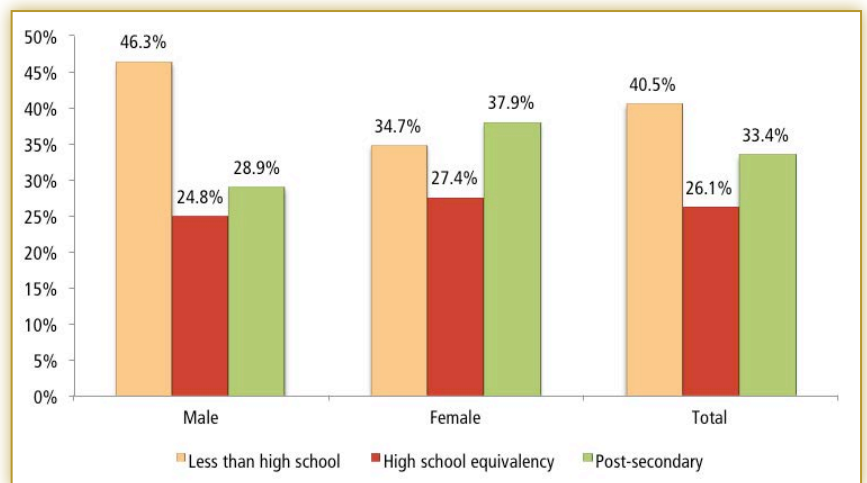
High School and Post-Secondary Education

Though educational achievement is not the sole factor influencing employment opportunities for First Nations people, it may be the most concrete predictor of future job success. As past research by FNIGC and the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board has shown, low levels of formal education have contributed to much higher levels of unemployment among First Nations adults compared to the non-First Nations population in Canada.

Results from the FNREEES support this, indicating that a significant percentage (41 percent) of First Nations adults (18 years and older) had not yet completed high school.

Within this group, men were much more likely to have not completed high school (46 percent) than women (35 percent). This gender disparity continued for post-secondary

First Nations adult education levels, by gender





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education completion, where 29 percent of First Nations men and 33 percent of First Nations women had completed post-secondary degrees.

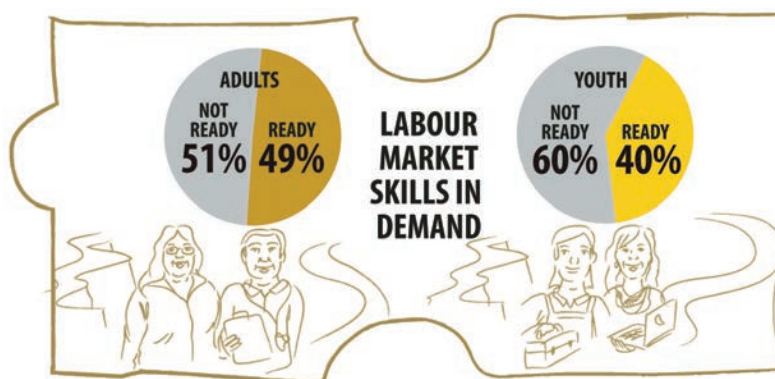
These findings suggest that a key component of any future employment strategy will be to encourage First Nations youth and adults to complete formal education.

Essential Skills Development

Essential foundational skills are everyday skills that contribute to education and employment success. They include reading, writing, numeracy, oral communication, computer use, and continuous learning, among others. According to Employment and Social Development Canada, more than two-thirds of the projected employment growth to 2022 will be in high-skilled occupations—or jobs that require a high proficiency in essential foundational skills. The demand for employment requiring lower proficiency in essential skills is also projected to grow, but at a much lower rate.

Historically, data about the essential skills of First Nations people has been limited, with questions about its relevance to First Nations cultures and economies. The FNREEES provides important insight into this topic.

According to the FNREEES, more than half (58 percent) of First Nations adults and more than two-thirds (69 percent) of First Nations youth indicated that they possess poor, fair or good (as opposed to very good or excellent) proficiency in five fundamental skills, including computer use, reading, oral communication, mathematics, and writing.



Though the areas in which First Nations youth and adults rated their needs differed, as the above graphic shows a large proportion of both groups (51 percent of adults and 60 percent of youth) could benefit from additional job skills training.

Conclusions

Much work remains to be done for a joint federal-First Nations employment strategy, as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, beginning with culturally relevant means to assess the essential foundational skills of First Nations adults and youth.

Overall, FNREEES data suggest there is a crucial need to address the future education and skills First Nations people require, including programs promoting high school completion, youth apprenticeships, economic development in First Nations, and other means to improve employment opportunities for young First Nations adults.

For more information about the FNREEES & FNIGC, please visit FNIGC.ca