
Coming Full Circle:

Evaluating the Success and Sustainability of our “Pathways for Indigenous Learners” Model

Executive Summary

In 2013, Indigenous educators from Confederation College, First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI), and Trent University established a partnership to increase access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners across the province of Ontario. The “Pathways for Indigenous Learners” project was launched. This project has since undergone second and third iterations, embracing “Second” and “Third Circle” partners; the full circle of partners now includes 16 colleges and universities and an Indigenous Institute, from across Ontario. The model has been given the name *Ayaakwaamisiin* as a reflection and expression of our commitment to shared values, practices and commitments, relationship building, building common ground, and collaborative and informed action.

While our work has succeeded in identifying a diverse list of pathways, only six pathways agreements have been created to date. Thus it was incumbent upon us to explore those challenges to getting pathways in place and sustaining them. With three iterations of project partners and a desire to understand project successes and areas for improvement, the CFC Project undertook research to critically examine the success and sustainability of our model for creating pathways for Indigenous learners. Through this evaluation we have had an opportunity to tell the story of our work and the people involved. While, we highlight our accomplishments, we are honest about the areas that we need to improve. Findings from this project highlight successes, wise practices, challenges and area of improvement for our model and for implementing pathways across our partnering institutions. Additionally, our research highlights key measures to include when monitoring the success and sustainability of pathways. These measure were integrated into an evaluative tool that will be used to guide and monitor our pathways for Indigenous learners.

Through this latest phase of our collaboration, we have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges to implementing pathways as well as the limitations that exist within our own model. Our most critical learning is that as this group gets larger and as more pathways are created this work cannot lose sight of the original processes and values instilled by the First Circle partners. We have to ensure that pathways meetings are grounded by our commitments to Indigenous learners and the shared processes and values instilled among the First Circle of partners.

In the next phase of this work we will seek to address and integrate our key findings. We also propose to promote knowledge mobilization through the creation of a resource guide for implementing pathways for Indigenous learners, and by working with external Indigenous communities, groups and organizations to exchange knowledge about this work and about increasing access to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners across Ontario.