

FIRST NATIONS SUN



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Enhanced Service Delivery Project: Creating Employment Opportunities

The 2012-22 DOTC Strategic Plan adopted by the leadership of the Tribal Council identifies three main priorities- education, employment and economic development. The Tribal Council is aggressively working to help attain this objective.

While shortfalls in the workforce are anticipated in the regional economic centers such as Portage la Prairie; there is an excess supply within the First Nations of those people who are willing to work. All they require is supporting-hand to help individuals avail these opportunities. In other words, working together, both the First Nations and the regional centers and economies can meet each others' requirements.

Since 2013-14, the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council has administered an exciting project- the Enhanced Service Delivery Project. The project is part of an initiative introduced by the Government of Canada to assist First Nation individuals, aged 18-24 years, to overcome barriers to employment and, become "employment ready" to attain meaningful employment opportunities. Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council (DOTC) has previously undertaken Active Measures projects that have been a stepping-stone to the DOTC ESD Project. The previous project involved two DOTC member communities- Long Plain

First Nation and Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation- and primarily the Portage and District Chamber of Commerce. The ESD project involves two member communities- Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation and Long Plain First Nation. To date, the program has pre-assessed a total of 177 clients within the two participating communities. The project is managed by Jacqui Meeches.

The ESD project consists of a holistic approach placing the individual/prospective employee at the centre. Employability assessment tool is used to identify for the individual, their needs and the required actions. The staff brings together and works within the two aforementioned communities with programs such as education, employment and training, social development and health. This phase of the project lasts for 6 months. Activities undertaken during this phase involve completion of essential skills and literacy, mature grade 12, obtaining a drivers license and addressing other barriers that may preclude a person from becoming employment-ready.

When the candidate is deemed employable, the client-file is transferred to the First Peoples Development Incorporated. This program assumes then the responsibility for working with the individual and, connecting them to the appropriate business company and opportunity. The obvious goal is to ensure that the individual is prepared and equipped to avail a meaningful employment opportunity- hopefully on a sustained basis.

As optimists, we both believe ESD approach is a good starting-point. Applied appropriately, it should help address the needs of both employers and

the employees/First Nations. In this instance, the Tribal Council and the Portage and District Chamber of Commerce can play assume a major educational and communication role. They both can serve as liaison for the respective parties- the employee and the employers. Raising awareness and addressing issues arising in a timely and effective manner go a long way to building relationships and trust- a necessary building-block for any endeavour.

Increasingly, it is in our collective self-interest that we all work together to help to avail meaningful economic and employment opportunities. Otherwise, a crisis that begins within First Nation communities will not for long be so contained; it will seep out to the larger mainstream society- it will become a larger issue. We are all interdependent and therefore not immune.

