talent4energy

OPIMOYASO GROUP

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Building Indigenous Pathways in Energy

Foundation for Systems Design

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

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Prepared by: Opimoyaso Group & Talent4Energy

In partnership with an all-Indigenous Steering Committee comprised of Indigenous leaders, workforce champions, community representatives, and advisors with lived experience in the energy sector.

With funding from the Province of Alberta working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

Community reflections were gathered during engagement sessions. Comments and quotes were provided anonymously with consent and are used to ground system analysis in lived experience.

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- **Paige Boivin** Anishinaabe-Métis artist and graphic designer with deep family roots in Treaty 1 territory, Manigotagan, and currently residing in Treaty 2 territory (Roblin, MB)
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- **Reg Potts,** Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Reg Potts & Associates Ltd.
- Report designed by Saltmedia

Canada Alberta

"The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services."

About the Artist

Paige Boivin is an Anishinaabe-Métis artist and graphic designer with deep family roots in Treaty 1 territory, Manigotagan, and currently resides in Treaty 2 territory (Roblin, MB). A self-taught creative, Paige has been drawing and creating since she was a young girl, and has been working professionally in design for the past two years — guided by a strong connection to Spirit.

Through her work, Paige aims to bring life, story, and spirit to every design. Her art reflects the strength and beauty of Indigenous identity — centering voices, teachings, and experiences that deserve to be seen and heard. She believes creativity is not only a form of expression but also a form of care — a way to honour Spirit, inspire healing, and nurture community wellness through visual storytelling.

Rooted in both tradition and contemporary design, Paige's work highlights and embodies a deep respect for the relationships that connect us all.

About Saltmedia

From Angie Saltman, President at Saltmedia

Saltmedia is honoured to have had the opportunity to select the Indigenous artist for this report and to lead the report design.

As an Information Design Expert, I'm grateful to Talent4Energy for trusting Saltmedia to collaborate on this work and to practice reconciliation through action. Thank you. We value opportunities to share our expertise and Indigenous worldviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations in meaningful, respectful ways.

We deeply believe in collaborative advantage and in embracing diverse perspectives and lived experiences. When we do this well, we can cultivate honest and safe spaces for learning; spaces that recognize different ways of being and draw on the strengths of many viewpoints to support real, lasting change.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity, and truth, we acknowledge that this work was developed on the traditional territories of the Peoples of Treaty 7 in southern Alberta. These Peoples include the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani), the Stoney Nakoda Nations (Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), and the Tsuut'ina Nation.

We acknowledge Moh'kinsstis, now known as Calgary, as a significant gathering place, travel route, and home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial.

We also recognize that this land is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3, within the historical Northwest Métis homeland.

We further acknowledge all Nations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who live, work, and care for this land. May we move forward together in meaningful, reciprocal, and responsible relationships grounded in respect, relational accountability, and a shared commitment to reconciliation.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures was developed in partnership with Indigenous Nations whose lands continue to sustain community, ceremony, governance, and economic life. We recognize that the energy sector operates on Indigenous territories across Turtle Island, and that workforce participation cannot be separated from land, rights, and responsibility.

This work is offered in recognition that Indigenous Peoples are not stakeholders in the energy sector; they are Rights and Title Holders whose governance, consent, and leadership shape the conditions under which development occurs.

This document is intended to guide organizational systems change and shared understanding. It neither creates, modifies, extinguishes, nor reinterprets Treaty rights, constitutional protections, Indigenous legal orders, or Nation-specific governance authority.

Acknowledgement of Two-Eyed Seeing (Etuaptmumk)

Two-Eyed Seeing, or Etuaptmumk, is a guiding principle introduced by Mi'kmaw Elders Albert Marshall and Murdena Marshall of Eskasoni First Nation in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia).

Elder Albert Marshall, a respected Mi'kmaw knowledge holder, has shared this teaching across academic, environmental, and community settings. With him, Elder Murdena Marshall, a Mi'kmaw Elder, educator, and fluent language speaker, has grounded this principle in lived experience, cultural continuity, and the need for balance between different knowledge systems.

Two-Eyed Seeing refers to seeing with one eye the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and, with the other, the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and using both together for the benefit of all. This teaching is both a principle and a responsibility, one that calls for respect, reciprocity, and the weaving together of knowledge systems without diminishing either.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures is rooted in this teaching. We respectfully acknowledge the contributions of Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall, whose guidance continues to influence how this work is understood and carried forward.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Introduction - Positioning & Governance

Before we begin this work, we pause. We recognize that *Shared Energy, Shared Futures* does not emerge in isolation, but from land, relationship, history, and responsibility. The words that follow are shaped by Indigenous governance, community voice, and the territories on which this work was carried forward.

Indigenous Governance & Steering Committee Leadership

Shared Energy, Shared Futures was developed with guidance from an all-Indigenous Steering Committee comprised of Indigenous leaders, workforce champions, community representatives, and advisors with lived experience in the energy sector.

The Steering Committee did not serve as symbolic advisors.

They provided:

- Direction on scope and priorities
- Cultural and governance oversight
- Validation of themes and language
- Accountability to community realities
- Guidance on how this work should be positioned within the energy industry

Their leadership reflects Indigenous governance principles grounded in relational accountability, collective responsibility, and intergenerational responsibility. This Framework carries their direction forward.

Indigenous governance shared not only what is included in this work but also how it is structured, sequenced, and intended to be used.

Community Voices & Lived Experience

In addition to Steering Committee guidance, community engagement sessions were held to gather lived experience directly from Indigenous workers, job seekers, and community members.

Participants were invited to name:

- Barriers to entry and advancement
- Experiences of harm or exclusion
- Gaps in training and opportunity
- Conditions required for safety and dignity

Reflections were gathered anonymously and with consent.

Selected quotes are included throughout this document. These reflections are not anecdotal additions; they are evidence. They anchor systems analysis in lived reality and ensure that recommendations are grounded in community voice rather than external interpretation.

Community input informed:

- Identification of structural barriers
- Inclusion measurement design
- Safe workplace guidelines
- Trauma-informed HR practices
- Workforce pathway models
- Procurement and Indigenous business inclusion strategies

This work reflects both lived experience and systems analysis.

Why this Project was developed

This project emerged from a clear need: Indigenous workforce participation in the energy sector has too often been approached through short-term hiring targets, isolated training initiatives, or symbolic engagement.

Community and industry conversations revealed consistent tensions:

- Recruitment without readiness erodes trust
- Training without employment pathways causes harm
- Inclusion without governance reproduces colonial patterns
- Safety without accountability remains performative

Shared Energy, Shared Futures was developed to respond to these realities.

Its purpose is to shift workforce participation from transactional engagement to relational systems change.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Two Companion Documents

To support understanding and usability, *Shared Energy, Shared Futures: Building Indigenous Pathways in Energy* is organized into two companion documents. These complementary documents are intended to be used together: foundational understanding must come first, followed by practical application within organizational systems.

The first document:

- **Foundation for System Design** supports organizations in developing the foundational understanding required to shift systems. It addresses worldview, governance considerations, structural barriers, cultural safety, and relational accountability, identifying what must change within organizational systems to make Indigenous relationships, partnerships, and workforce inclusion safe, ethical, and sustainable.

The second document:

- **Seasonality Framework** demonstrates how these commitments translate into practice, through recruitment models, mentorship systems, advancement pathways, procurement inclusion, and other practical employer tools that support attraction, retention, and advancement of Indigenous talent.

What *Shared Energy, Shared Futures* is – and is not

It is:

- Indigenous-led
- Grounded in lived experience
- Guided by Two-Eyed Seeing
- Designed for long-term systems transformation
- Adaptable to local context

It is not:

- A compliance checklist
- A one-time training solution
- A reconciliation branding tool
- A substitute for a relationship

It is an invitation to redesign workforce systems that honour Indigenous governance, safety, and long-term participation.

What we are working toward

This work seeks to:

- Embed Indigenous voice into structural decision-making
- Align the energy industry systems with Indigenous governance and rights
- Reduce harm and increase cultural and psychological safety
- Strengthen long-term economic inclusion
- Support cyclical, relational workforce pathways
- Ensure participation does not require identity compromise

Indigenous workforce participation must be safe to enter, sustainable to remain within, and possible to return to across life stages and responsibilities.

Intellectual Property & Authorship

Shared Energy, Shared Futures was developed by Opimoyaso Group and Creative Links Inc. in collaboration with Indigenous Steering Committee members, community participants, and project partners.

All original content, modules, language, and structural frameworks remain the intellectual property of Opimoyaso Group and Creative Links Inc. unless otherwise agreed in writing. Community reflections are included with participant consent and remain grounded in lived experiences.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures may be implemented, adapted, or referenced with appropriate acknowledgement, but it may not be reproduced, redistributed, or repackaged without permission.

Funding Acknowledgement

Shared Energy, Shared Futures was made possible through the Talent4Energy project which was funded by the Province of Alberta working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services, and partnership support. While government funding enabled the development of this work, the content, structure, and recommendations reflect Indigenous governance guidance and community voice.

Implementation of *Shared Energy, Shared Futures* requires ongoing partnership, accountability, and sustained investment beyond initial project funding.

A Living Document

Shared Energy, Shared Futures is not static.

Its strength depends on:

- Continued Indigenous leadership
- Transparent implementation
- Honest measurement and reflection
- Willingness to shift power where necessary
- Long-term relational commitment

Further iterations will evolve as relationships deepen, lessons emerge, and communities continue to guide the direction of this work.

Indigenous workforce inclusion is not achieved through intention alone. It requires governance, accountability, courage, and a sustained relationship.

Module 1 – Foundation

Worldview & Relational Foundations

Section 1.0 – Introduction: Walking Together in a Good Way

Purpose, Worldview, Two-Eyed Seeing, Relational Accountability

Rooted in Relationships, Reciprocity, and Two-Eyed Seeing

Purpose of this Module

Shared Energy, Shared Futures was created to support stronger, more respectful, and more effective partnerships between Indigenous Peoples and the energy sector. It is built on the understanding that true success is relational, not transactional, and that Indigenous Peoples must be centred not as stakeholders, but as Rights and Title Holders, Knowledge Keepers, innovators, and leaders in this work.

This is not a technical manual. It is a relational guide, shaped through:

- The lived experience of Indigenous workers and leaders
- The wisdom of Elders and community advisors
- The insights of Indigenous Steering Committee members
- Guidance from Indigenous workforce champions
- Lessons learned from decades of community and industry engagement

Community Voice and Lived Experience Integration

This Foundation for Systems Design is grounded not only in academic research and policy analysis, but also in lived experience shared through community engagement. During facilitated sessions, participants were invited to identify barriers, risks, and opportunities within the energy workforce system. Reflections were gathered anonymously and with consent.

Selected quotes are included verbatim throughout Modules 1-4 to anchor systems analysis in lived reality. These reflections are not illustrative anecdotes; they are evidence of how workforce systems are experienced. Where quotes appear, they represent themes echoed across participants rather than isolated perspectives. Their inclusion is intentional and signals that Indigenous voice informs not only consultation processes, but structural design decisions.

Through Two-Eyed Seeing, the Framework weaves together:

- The Indigenous Eye, which sees connections, systems, relationships, ancestors, land, and long-term wellbeing.
- The Western Eye, which sees structure, policy, timelines, accountability, and operational systems.

Both perspectives are needed for systems transformation.

The document honours Indigenous worldview by grounding every module in:

- Kinship
- Cultural Safety
- Relationship
- Context
- Governance
- Ceremony
- Reciprocity
- Future Generations
- Collective wellbeing

It also equips industry partners with:

- Practical tools
- Clear frameworks
- Measurable indicators
- Step-by-step approaches
- Organizational commitments
- Structural change pathways

Shared Energy, Shared Futures is a living document. It will grow, shift, and evolve through the ongoing guidance of Indigenous Nations, workers, youth, Elders, and partners. We expect, and welcome, future versions shaped by deeper relationships, new stories, and additional community teachings.

This Framework is an invitation:

- To act with humility
- To engage with courage
- To build trust with intention
- To walk slowly where needed
- To share power where appropriate
- To listen deeply
- To lead ethically
- To transform systems
- To ensure that Indigenous Peoples thrive

This is how we walk together, in a good way.

Section 1.1 – Two-Eyed Seeing: A Guiding Framework

Understanding how Indigenous and Western systems can work together in a good way

Purpose of this Section

Two-Eyed Seeing is one of *Shared Energy, Shared Futures'* core guiding principles. It teaches us to see the strengths of both Indigenous and Western worldviews, without asking one to dominate the other. It provides a foundation for working together in ways that honour Indigenous knowledge systems while navigating Western structures, policies, and organizational realities.

This is not a metaphor. It is a relational practice shaped by humility, balance, respect, shared responsibility, and long-term thinking. Two-Eyed Seeing prepares organizations to hold complexity with care rather than collapsing everything into Western logic.

What is Two-Eyed Seeing?

Two-Eyed Seeing, or *Etuaptmumk*, is the guiding principle introduced by Mi'kmaw Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall that teaches us to see with one eye the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and with the other eye the strengths of Western ways of knowing, for the benefit of all. It is a practice of holding multiple truths at once: recognizing the relational, land-based, spiritual, and intergenerational dimensions of Indigenous knowledge while also acknowledging the structural, procedural, and technical strengths of Western systems. Two-Eyed Seeing does not blend worldviews into sameness; it respectfully weaves them together in ways that uphold relational accountability, ethical decision-making, and long-term community wellbeing *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Simpson, 2017).*

The Western Eye is how Western systems have been taught to see the world: through structure, policy, timelines, measurement, and organizational accountability. It focuses on what can be organized, documented, and quantified, such as performance indicators, budgets, regulations, and procedures *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Parmenter, 2015)*. These tools can support clarity and consistency, but when the Western Eye operates on its own, it can overlook relationships, history, land, and spirit, and can unintentionally produce colonial patterns by centring only Western forms of knowledge and authority *(TRC, 2015; Smith, 2021; Borrows, 2016)*. In a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, the Western Eye is not discarded; it is guided and balanced by the Indigenous Eye so that structure and measurement are used in service of relationship, community wellbeing, and long-term responsibility *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Wilson, 2008).*

The Western Eye is shaped by systems that prioritize:

- **Structure, order, and systems:** policies, departments, governance hierarchies, and codified procedures *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996).*
- **Measurement, performance, and accountability:** Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), audits, indicators, logic models, and reporting frameworks *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Parmenter, 2015).*
- **Linear planning and rational decision-making:** breaking problems into parts, sequencing actions, and following standardization processes *(Schön, 1983; Smith, 2021).*
- **Individualism and personal accountability:** focusing on individual achievement or behaviour more than communal or relational responsibilities *(Smith, 2021).*
- **Formal authority and written agreements:** contracts, laws, regulations, and documented commitments as the primary source of legitimacy *(Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021).*

These characteristics are not "wrong"; they are strengths that offer clarity, consistency, and accountability, especially in large organizations, regulatory systems, and complex projects *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Parmenter, 2015).*

However, when the Western Eye operates on its own, without the relational and holistic balance of the Indigenous worldview, it can:

- Overlook emotional, historical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions
- Prioritize speed, efficiency, and outputs over readiness, protocol, and relationship
- Misinterpret Indigenous consensus processes as "delay"
- Assume Western ways of knowing are universal
- Recreate power imbalances by centring only Western authority and logic
- Unintentionally repeat colonial patterns of decision-making and exclusion

(TRC, 2015; Smith, 2021; Allan & Smylie, 2015)

These tensions appear across workforce systems, consultation processes, HR practices, performance reviews, engagement timelines, and governance structures, not due to ill intent, but because the Western worldview was never designed with the Indigenous worldview in mind *(Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021).*

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Two-Eyed Seeing calls upon organizations to use the strengths of the Western Eye, of structure, clarity, planning, and measurement, in service of the Indigenous worldview, not in dominance over it *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.

When guided by the Indigenous Eye, the Western Eye can support:

- Predictable agreements and transparent decision-making
- Consistent follow-through and clear communication
- Resourcing community priorities
- Measuring long-term outcomes in accountable ways
- Building stable structures that uphold relational trust

But without relational accountability, the Western Eye becomes extractive. With relational accountability, it becomes a tool for equity, reciprocity, and long-term partnership.

What Two-Eyed Seeing makes possible

Two-Eyed Seeing creates the conditions for people, communities, and organizations to work together in a way that honours both worldviews without forcing either one to shrink. It opens space for ethical relationships, shared learning, and collective problem-solving that would not be possible if one knowledge system dominated the other *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.

Through Two-Eyed Seeing, organizations are able to:

Create Ethical Space for Collaboration

Two-Eyed Seeing invites both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems to meet in a space of mutual respect rather than hierarchy. This "ethical space" *(Ermine, 2007)* allows partners to explore ideas, decisions, and responsibilities without positioning one worldview as the default or the authority.

This Matters because without ethical space, Western systems often unintentionally overshadow Indigenous processes, values, and governance.

Strengthen Decision-Making

By weaving together relational, land-based Indigenous teachings with Western technical and structural tools, decision-making becomes more grounded, holistic, and long-term *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008)*.

Two-Eyed Seeing enhances decision-making by ensuring they consider community wellbeing, impacts on future generations, land and water responsibility, technical requirements, structural feasibility, and timeline and implementation systems.

This supports more stable, sustainable outcomes, not just efficient ones.

Guide Systems Transformation rather than Quick Fixes

Western systems often respond to challenges with policies, training, or procedural adjustments. Two-Eyed Seeing shifts this approach by emphasizing relational accountability, context, and deeper historical and cultural roots of issues *(TRC, 2015; Smith, 2021)*.

This shift prevents shallow or token solutions, reveals root causes of barriers, and helps organizations redesign systems rather than adjust symptoms.

It is what allows change to take root.

Reduce Unintentional Cultural Harm

When decisions are made solely through Western logic, they can accidentally reproduce colonial patterns, such as centring efficiency over readiness, or privileging written policy over Indigenous protocol *(Smith, 2021; Borrows, 2016)*.

Two-Eyed Seeing mitigates this by ensuring that the Indigenous worldview guides decision-making, determines who should be involved, establishes appropriate timelines, and establishes accountability.

This protects relationships, community trust, and cultural safety.

Enhance Learning and Leadership across Both Worlds

Two-Eyed Seeing helps individuals and teams develop cultural humility, self-awareness, and the ability to move across worldviews with integrity. This is essential for working with Indigenous Nations and also strengthens leadership overall *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Wilson, 2008)*.

Leaders become more relational, more reflective, more patient, more thoughtful, and more balanced in their use of power.

This improves workplace culture and team dynamics.

Build Stronger, More Trustworthy Partnerships

Trust is built through consistency, respect, and shared understanding. By recognizing the validity of both worldviews and honouring Indigenous governance and decision-making patterns, Two-Eyed Seeing creates the relational foundation for long-term partnership *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

Partnerships deepen when Indigenous People see that their worldview is respected, their leadership is valued, their governance processes are upheld, and their knowledge is treated as equal, not supplemental.

Support Accountability and Measurable Change

Two-Eyed Seeing explicitly supports the creation of success metrics that honour both Indigenous and Western ways of evaluating impact, which becomes especially important in Module 2 Section 2.2 *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.

This ensures that organizations measure not only numbers but also belonging, safety, trust, cultural grounding, relationship quality, and long-term benefit.

Two-Eyed Seeing connects what is counted with what is felt.

Less Spoken Realities

Through conversations with Indigenous leaders, it is clear that systems break down when organizations try to solve relational issues with technical tools or when they rush processes that require ceremony, protocol, or time. Two-Eyed Seeing protects against these harms, reminding organizations to pause, reflect, and honour Indigenous rhythms alongside Western structures *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008)*.

Section 1.2 – Indigenous Worldview & Value Systems

Kinship, Ceremony, Time, Governance, Intergenerational Responsibility

Purpose of this Section

Indigenous worldview is not an "add-on" to Western systems; it is a complete knowledge system with its own laws, ethics, governance, protocols, and sciences. While each Nation is distinct, shared values across many Indigenous worldviews include relational accountability, reciprocity, kinship, ceremony, stewardship, and responsibilities to future generations *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Simpson, 2017)*.

Understanding these principles is essential for culturally grounded engagement, ethical decision-making, meaningful partnership, community safety, relationship building, and trauma-informed practice.

This section introduces core elements of the Indigenous worldview that shape how Indigenous Peoples relate to the land, each other, systems, time, and work.

Kinship and Relational Identity

In many Indigenous worldviews, kinship extends far beyond the Western concept of family. It refers to a network of relationships that connect people to community, ancestors, land and water, plants and animals, spirit, and responsibility.

Kinship forms the foundation of Indigenous identity and shapes how individuals understand themselves in relation to the world *(Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Wilson, 2008)*. Kinship also influences decision-making, leadership roles, communication styles, responsibilities at home and work, emotional labour carried by workers, and expectations around care for others.

Why Two-Eyed Seeing Matters within the Energy Industry?

Kinship responsibilities may shape when someone can travel, accept a job, be away from the community, or participate in important roles. These responsibilities are not optional; they are cultural obligations.

Failing to recognize kinship as a valid responsibility can lead to misunderstandings, shame, or unintended harm *(Hare & Anderson, 2010)*.

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Ceremony and Connection to Spirit

Ceremony is a central part of many Indigenous worldviews. It is not a "special event." It is a way of living that renews relationships, restores balance, and maintains spiritual, emotional, and communal well-being *(Simpson, 2017; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*.

Ceremony influences when decisions can be made, how leaders prepare for responsibilities, what support individuals need, how communities heal, and how teams ground themselves.

A ceremony also creates clarity, connection, humility, purpose, and alignment in community.

Why does this matter in systems work?

Ceremony brings forward teachings that guide decision-making and relational responsibility. Many Indigenous workers need space to participate in ceremony, grieve, fast, pray, or gather during times of loss or transition.

Supporting ceremony supports identity, belonging, and safety.

Indigenous Concepts of Time

Indigenous concepts of time are cyclical, seasonal, relational, and grounded in land-based rhythms *(Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Simpson, 2017)*. Time is experienced as movement through cycles, responding to season, honouring community readiness, aligning with ceremony and protocol, and pacing decision relationally, not urgently.

Western systems value speed, efficiency, deadlines, and predictability.

Indigenous systems value readiness, alignment, relational clarity, and community pacing.

This does not mean Indigenous Peoples "move slowly." It means decisions are made in a way that respects relationships, spirit, and community responsibility.

Why does this matter in partnerships?

When communities do not respond quickly, it is not a lack of interest. It is respect. It is a process. It is governance. It is a responsibility.

Misinterpreting Indigenous time through a Western lens leads to pressure, mistrust, and harm *(TRC, 2015)*.

Governance and Collective Decision-Making

Indigenous governance systems are relational, consensus-based, protocol-driven, intergenerational, land-based, and accountable to the community.

Leadership is not individualistic; it is relational, humble, and service-oriented *(Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021)*.

Indigenous governance considers community priorities, spirit and ceremony, relational impacts, future generations, and collective wellbeing.

This is different from Western governance, which centres on formal authority, speed, risk management, documentation, and individual responsibility.

Why does this matter?

When companies pressure Indigenous leadership to "sign quickly," skip protocol, or collapse timelines, they unintentionally violate foundational governance practices. Consultation may take time because Elders must be consulted, the community must be informed, relationships must be strengthened, ceremonies must be held, and consensus must be reached.

This is a strength, not a barrier.

Land, Water, and Place-Based Knowledge

For Indigenous Peoples, land and water are not resources; they are relatives, teachers, and living relations *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Wildcat et al., 2014)*.

Place-based knowledge includes teachings from land and water, stories tied to place, medicine knowledge, environmental stewardship, responsibilities to protect, ecological cycles, and land-based skill development.

What does this mean for the energy industry?

Because energy development affects land and water, it shapes identity, governance, safety, and community well-being. Understanding place-based knowledge is essential for ethical partnership.

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Intergenerational Responsibility

Many Indigenous Nations make decisions with seven generations in mind, which means honouring ancestors and preparing for those yet to come *(Simpson, 2017)*.

This worldview influences environmental decision-making, workforce decisions, timelines, consultation, leadership choices, and community priorities.

Why does this matter?

Western systems often ask, "What is the fastest and most efficient solution?"

Indigenous systems ask, "What is the most responsible and relational solution for the long term?"

These are not competing priorities; they are different forms of accountability.

Reciprocity and Balance

Reciprocity is a core moral principle across many Indigenous worldviews: what is taken must be returned in a way that sustains balance, respect, and relationship *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*.

This includes land-based reciprocity, relationship reciprocity, economic reciprocity, and emotional and cultural reciprocity.

Reciprocity is not charity; it is obligation, relationship, and ethics.

Why does this matter?

Communities feel when partnerships are extractive, one-sided, or transactional. Reciprocity ensures balance, fairness, trust, and long-term alignment.

Less Spoken Realities

Many understandings, harms, and broken relationships occur because the Indigenous worldview is treated as "context," while Western systems are treated as "the default." When organizations ignore worldview, Indigenous Peoples often carry shame, misunderstanding, invisibility, emotional labour, and pressure to translate or justify their worldview.

Understanding worldview reduces harm, deepens trust, and prepares organizations to work in ways that honour Indigenous Peoples as Rights and Title Holders, not stakeholders *(TRC, 2015; Smith, 2021)*.

During the community engagement session, participants expressed that their voices are often unheard in employment and industry conversations.

One participant stated plainly:

> ***"My voice is never heard in places I want to explore."***
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Others asked whether engagement processes genuinely amplify community voice or merely collect input without driving change. These reflections reinforce that the Indigenous worldview must be centred, not symbolically but structurally.

Module 2 – Understanding the System

Understanding the System, Barriers, and Realities.

A Two-Eyed Seeing exploration of the systemic, historical, cultural, and relational realities that shape Indigenous participation in the energy industry.

Purpose of this Module

Module 2 helps organizations understand the historical, cultural, relational, and systemic factors shaping Indigenous participation in the energy industry. Through Two-Eyed Seeing, it brings together Indigenous and Western worldviews to highlight why barriers persist, what often goes unsaid, and what must change to build ethical, culturally grounded, long-term partnerships.

What this Module covers

- Systemic, cultural, governance, and workforce barriers
- Less Spoken Realities informed by lived Indigenous experience
- Two-Eyed Seeing reflections on structure and relationship
- Cultural competency foundations and practices
- Success Metrics & Seasonality Framework
- Indigenous-Centered and Western measures of progress
- Process Metrics that ensure the work is done with integrity

Why this Module Matters

This module lays the groundwork for reconciliation-driven workforce development.

It supports organizations by:

- Understanding systems barriers in their historical and relational context
- Recognizing Indigenous Rights and Title
- Building cultural safety and trauma-informed practices
- Strengthening relationships through humility, accountability, and shared decision-making
- Measuring success in ways that honour both Indigenous worldviews and Western accountability systems

Guiding Worldviews

The Indigenous Eye sees barriers through relationships, land and water, intergenerational experience, emotional truths, cultural continuity, and community well-being.

The Western Eye identifies barriers in policies, processes, timelines, structures, and operational systems.

Together, these perspectives provide a balanced, ethical, and comprehensive understanding of the system.

Section 2.0 – Barriers being faced

Community, individual, and industry barriers and “Less Spoken Realities” sections

Purpose of this Section

Section 2.0 describes the truths and lived realities Indigenous communities, workers, leaders, and youth experience across the energy industry. These realities are not shortcomings of Indigenous Peoples; they are the result of historical harm, systemic design, cultural differences, resource limitations, and structural inequities that persist today *(TRC, 2015; RCAP, 1996; Milloy, 1999; United Nations, 2007; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014)*.

Grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing, introduced by Mi’kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall that encourages the simultaneous consideration of Indigenous and Western perspectives (Marshall et al., 2015).

This section helps readers understand:

- The Indigenous Eye is relational, historical, intergenerational, cultural, emotional, and land-based *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017; Kovach, 2009; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*
- The Western Eye, that is structural, regulatory, procedural, and operational

Viewing barriers through both worldviews makes clear why these patterns persist and what must change to achieve ethical and culturally grounded partnerships. This section draws on the lived experiences of the Indigenous Steering Committee, community members, labour market experts, and leaders across Nations *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

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How to read this Section

Section 2.0 is organized into paired components, Key Barriers and Less Spoken Realities, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of each issue.

- Key Barriers describe the visible, structural, or operational challenges that persist across communities, industry processes, and workforce pathways.
- Less Spoken Realities describe the lived, emotional, cultural, and relational experiences that lie beneath the surface. These perspectives come from the Indigenous Steering Committee, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, community leaders, and workers whose experiences are often unrecorded in Western systems *(Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

This paired approach helps readers develop a Two-Eyed understanding of the system that acknowledges structural issues and honours the lived truths of Indigenous Peoples *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012).*

How this Section should be used

Section 2.0 prepares organizations to:

- Reflect honestly on the systems they operate within and how those systems affect Indigenous Peoples.
- Recognize the historical, cultural, and structural factors that shape Indigenous participation, trust, and readiness *(TRC, 2015; United Nations, 2017; RCAP, 1996; Milloy, 2009).*
- Understand which barriers can be influenced, supported, or removed by industry partners, HR teams, and leadership.
- Design workforce pathways, partnerships, and engagement approaches that are relational, culturally grounded, and trauma-informed *(Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Allan & Smylie, 2015).*
- Build readiness for Section 2.1 (Cultural Competency) and Section 2.2 (Success Metrics & Seasonality Framework).

By clearly naming these realities, this section lays the groundwork for reconciliation-driven workforce development and long-term Indigenous-industry collaboration *(Papillon, 2012; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2015).*

Barriers experienced by Indigenous Communities

The realities that shape participation, partnership, and workforce development

These barriers draw on lived experience across Nations, community workforce programs, and guidance from the Indigenous Steering Committee *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc., personal communication, 2025).* They cannot be understood through Western systems alone; they must be understood through lived, relational, and intergenerational realities *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017).*

Historical & Relational Barriers

Key Barriers

- Generations of harm from extractive development, exploitation, and broken promises
- Legacy of distrust toward industry and government institutions
- Engagement fatigue from repeated consultations that result in limited meaningful change
- Trauma responses that shape communication, trust, timing, and participation

Less Spoken Realities

Communities carry the weight of centuries of disruption, including the loss of land and language, child apprehension, cultural suppression, and the erosion of autonomy, as well as the ongoing impacts of colonial policy *(RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2025; Milloy, 1999; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014).* These experiences are not in the past; they shape every meeting, every email, and every request for "input" today. When industry approaches communities without understanding this history, it unintentionally reopens wounds.

Many Indigenous leaders show up to the table carrying grief, community crises, funerals, and generations of emotional labour. They continue to engage not because trust has been fully restored, but because they are determined to protect and advance opportunities for the next generation. Their presence is an act of courage, and their caution is an act of wisdom *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Cultural & Governance Barriers

Key Barriers

- Misalignment between Indigenous cultural/seasonal cycles and Western timelines
- Cultural obligations (ceremonies, funerals, feasts) not recognized in HR policies
- Internal community diversity misinterpreted as division
- The responsibility for connecting Indigenous and Western systems often falls to a few individuals, placing heavy cultural, relational, and emotional demands on them

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous governance is relational and collective. Decisions are grounded in ceremony, kinship, community priorities, and obligations to land and ancestors *(Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2017; Borrows, 2010)*. Unlike Western linear decision-making, Indigenous governance requires time, consultation, and respect for diverse internal voices.

When industry pressures Nations to make quick decisions or speak with one unified voice, it overlooks these relational processes and perpetuates harmful patterns of exclusion. Communities have long memories of being ignored or overridden *(RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015)*.

Many community staff work beyond regular hours, responding to industry emails at night, resolving internal tensions, preparing briefing notes, supporting Elders, and fulfilling cultural responsibilities. This labour is emotionally demanding and often invisible to external partners *(Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Workforce & Skill Barriers

Key Barriers

- Limited access to technology (phones, laptops, internet, data, cell phone minutes)
- Difficulty writing resumes or navigating digital systems
- Driver's license barriers due to costs, distance, or limited access to testing facilities
- Childcare, transportation, and pre-employment expenses create financial strain
- Lack of after-hours mentorship or problem-solving support
- Workers are often placed in unfamiliar settings without a buddy or support partner, increasing isolation and diminishing their sense of safety
- Financial strain before first paycheque (PPE, travel, lodging, tools, clothing, cellphone minutes)
- Limited pathways to advancement (post-secondary/training/certificates) beyond entry-level roles

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous job seekers often navigate realities that Western HR systems overlook. These include housing instability, shared devices, limited connectivity, poverty, trauma, caregiving, systemic discrimination, and living in rural or remote locations that lack basic services such as banking or a post office *(Statistics Canada, 2020; Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, 2021; ISED Canada, 2020)*. A missing driver's license may not reflect irresponsibility but rather a lifetime of limited access to instructors, testing locations, or funds. A resume may not exist because lived experience, land-based knowledge, and cultural leadership have never been properly recognized in Western hiring systems *(Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018; Howard & Edge, 2021; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*. When workers struggle with digital portals or fail to respond to late-night emails, it is often because they lack stable connectivity or share one device with multiple relatives. Many workers carry pride and fear simultaneously; they want to succeed but do not want to let their community down. When they "no show," it is usually not due to disinterest but because the system did not support them when they needed help most *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Economic & Resource Barriers

Key Barriers

- Limited administrative capacity to manage complex industry relationships
- Short-term, fragmented funding that destabilizes long-term planning
- Infrastructure limitations (housing, training space, connectivity)
- Overreliance on a single nation to support regional industry activity, which intensifies existing capacity constraints

Less Spoken Realities

Communities often feel stretched thin, pulled between government reporting requirements, industry demands, internal community needs, and crisis management. A single administrator may juggle dozens of competing priorities while fielding emails from multiple companies that assume capacity exists. Funding streams often dry up after a year, leaving programs half-built and trust damaged. These experiences reflect long-standing critiques of fragmented funding models and capacity pressures in Indigenous workforce development *(Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, 2018; Auditor General of Canada, 2011; RCAP, 1996)*. Communities want to participate fully, but participation requires stable resources, not last-minute funding or unrealistic expectations. When Nations decline opportunities, it is rarely a lack of interest. It is often a quiet acknowledgement that they cannot take on one more responsibility without risking the stability of what already exists *(Papillon, 2012; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Barriers Experienced with the Energy Industry

Understanding organizational, systemic, and cultural constraints

The barriers reflect patterns across multiple industry contexts and insights from the Steering Committee *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Structural & Operational

Key Barriers

- Resumes disappear into HR "black holes" with no follow-up
- Credential-heavy requirements undervalue lived experience
- Siloed departments (HR, Indigenous Relations, Operations, and Procurement) create inconsistent approaches
- Overreliance on apps, portals, and digital systems
- Corporate language and technical jargon lead to misunderstandings
- No coordinated structure for trainees transitioning from programs to employment

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous candidates enter Western hiring systems that seem designed to keep them out. When an application goes unanswered, it is not merely inconvenient; it confirms a lifelong pattern of being overlooked. Research on Indigenous labour market participation consistently shows that rigid HR systems, credentialism, and digital-first recruitment practices disproportionately exclude Indigenous applicants *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018; Howard & Edge, 2021)*. Online systems that assume digital literacy inadvertently punish those without stable internet access or experience with these tools. Within companies, Indigenous Relations may be trying to build trust while HR unknowingly undermines it with rigid processes *(Statistics Canada, 2020; ISED Canada, 2020)*. These misalignments reflect broader systemic patterns identified in the Indigenous workforce literature, where policies and practices fail to account for the lived realities of Indigenous applicants *(Howard & Edge, 2021)*. Workers fall through cracks not because they are unqualified, but because the system was never built with them in mind.

One participant captured this tension simply:

> ***"No experience in a position; they don't offer training."***
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

These underlying disconnects erode confidence and reinforce the belief that Western workplaces are unwelcoming or unsafe *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*. The complexity and rigidity of HR and procurement systems often signal to Indigenous candidates that the workplace was not designed with them in mind, discouraging entry before a relationship can even begin.

Cultural & Relational Barriers

Key Barriers

- Limited awareness of the Indigenous worldview among HR and leadership
- Racism, sexism, microaggressions, and tokenism
- Indigenous hiring is perceived as "taking someone else's job"
- High turnover in Indigenous Relations roles, Nation Chief and Council positions, and corporate leadership, coupled with the absence of succession planning, disrupts relationship continuity and weakens long-term trust.
- Organizations rely on Indigenous Relations staff to carry all relational responsibilities, resulting in recruitment and engagement processes that lack shared ownership, human connection, and clarity across departments.

Less Spoken Realities

Relationships between Nations and industry are built through people, not paperwork. Research consistently shows that culturally unsafe environments, microaggressions, racism, and tokenism create emotional and psychological harm that directly affects Indigenous retention and participation *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Jones & Williams, 2020; Napoleon & Friedland, 2014)*. Yet the individuals who carry these relationships, including Indigenous Relations staff, the Nation Chief and Council, and corporate leaders, often move in and out of their roles. Each transition requires communities to re-explain their history, protocols, concerns, and commitments, sometimes for the third or fourth time. This constant restarting is exhausting and disrespectful, especially when communities have invested years in building trust with someone who is suddenly gone. Frequent turnover, whether among Indigenous Relations staff, the Nation Chief and Council, or corporate leadership, creates constant relational resets. Indigenous communities often have to re-explain history, protocols, priorities, and previous commitments to new representatives. This dynamic is well documented in Indigenous governance and engagement research, where institutional instability erodes trust and places a disproportionate burden on Indigenous Peoples to maintain continuity *(Papillon, 2012; Smith, 2021)*.

Less Spoken Realities

These disruptions are compounded by the lack of succession planning on both sides. When turnover occurs, there is rarely a structured process to transfer relationships, history, cultural context, or commitments. Communities are left to maintain continuity while organizations reset, forcing Nations to repeat stories, renegotiate understanding, and rebuild trust from scratch *(Cornell & Kalt, 2000; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*. The absence of succession planning signals that relationship maintenance is not yet embedded at the systems level.

When turnover occurs within companies, Indigenous communities experience it as instability, inconsistency, and a lack of seriousness about the relationship. When it occurs within Nations, corporations may misinterpret it as disinterest or disorder rather than recognizing the governance cycles, cultural protocols, and community realities that shape leadership transitions. On both sides, people carry the emotional weight of relationships that systems fail to support *(Clark, 2020; Papillon & Rodon, 2017)*.

Turnover also widens existing gaps. New staff often arrive without a full context, unaware of past harms, unfulfilled promises, or agreements already in motion. Communities carry the memory of what came before, while new corporate representatives begin with a clean slate, unintentionally reopening old wounds or repeating mistakes. The burden of continuity falls disproportionately on Indigenous Peoples, who must hold the history, so the relationship does not collapse *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

This instability becomes even more harmful when organizations rely on a single staff member to shoulder all relational responsibilities. Without shared ownership, documentation, or succession plans, partnerships remain fragile and dependent on individual effort. Achieving real cultural safety and long-term relational accountability requires organizations to build systems, not personalities, so relationships remain strong even when people change.

Governance & System Misalignment

Key Barriers

- Indigenous Peoples treated as stakeholders rather than Rights and Title Holders
- Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is often misunderstood, ignored, or treated as optional rather than as an Indigenous right that requires meaningful consent before decisions are made. As a result, Nations are frequently asked to validate decisions they did not co-create or are engaged too late in processes that should require their approval before anything moves forward.
- Corporate timelines prioritize short-term outcomes, whereas Indigenous Seven Generations Thinking considers the impacts on future children, grandchildren, and descendants. This misalignment creates pressure and undermines long-term decision-making.
- Western decision making not inclusive of shared governance

Less Spoken Realities

When companies treat Indigenous Nations as “interest groups,” they perpetuate the colonial mindset that has caused centuries of harm. FPIC, as affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), is not a procedural step but a fundamental expression of sovereignty and self-determination *(United Nations, 2007; Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021)*. Indigenous leaders carry a memory of historical exclusions from decisions affecting their land, governance, and people, a pattern well documented in reconciliation and Indigenous governance literature *(TRC, 2015; Smith, 2021; RCAP, 1996)*. FPIC is not a box to check; it is a living expression of sovereignty and relationship. Corporate timelines that prioritize speed and efficiency often clash with Indigenous governance, which is relational, consensus-based, and accountable to many generations. This misalignment does not reflect resistance to development; it reflects the responsibility Indigenous Peoples hold to ensure decisions protect both ancestors and future generations *(Simpson, 2017)*. This misalignment creates tension not because communities resist progress, but because they protect future children they will never meet, an expression of relational governance and long-term thinking *(Papillon, 2012; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Barriers experienced by Indigenous Individuals

Barriers that affect Indigenous women, youth, leaders, and workers

Drawing on leaders such as Dan George, Allen Tobber, Leigha Parsons, Richard Sparvier, Lacey Yellowbird, Reg Potts, Shawn Harding, Tyson Pylypiw, and many others *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Community reflections included in this Framework were gathered during engagement sessions. Comments are included anonymously with consent and are used to ground system analysis in lived experience *(Community Engagement Session, 2026).*

Representation & Leadership Barriers

Key Barriers

- Indigenous women shoulder a disproportionate leadership load in communities
- Indigenous employees expected to act as cultural interpreters
- Limited Indigenous role models in technical and leadership roles
- Indigenous leadership styles are rooted in relational, consensus-based, community-centred approaches that are undervalued or misunderstood in hierarchical Western corporate systems, limiting recognition and advancement

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous workers enter corporate roles without seeing themselves reflected in leadership. Research shows that Indigenous leadership is often relational, humble, community-oriented, and grounded in collective responsibility, qualities frequently undervalued within Western corporate hierarchies *(Brown & Strega, 2015; Kenny, 2012; Wilson, 2008).* They often come from communities where leadership is relational, humble, and service-oriented, where decisions are made collectively, accountability flows in all directions, and leaders are measured by how well they support their people.

Within Western corporate structures, leadership is often hierarchical, individualistic, and performance-driven. These systems reward assertiveness, visibility, and self-promotion, which can conflict with Indigenous values of humility, quiet strength, consensus-building, and collective recognition. In corporate environments that prioritize visibility, individual performance, and competitive advancement, Indigenous leaders may find their leadership approach overlooked or misunderstood. This mismatch between governance worldviews is well documented in Indigenous leadership literature, which highlights how Western workplaces often fail to recognize or support Indigenous leadership approaches *(Perkins, 2010; Simpson, 2017).*

Less Spoken Realities

As a result, Indigenous employees may be overlooked for leadership roles not because they lack capacity but because their leadership style does not align with Western expectations. Their strengths in patience, listening, community accountability, and long-term thinking often go unnoticed by those unfamiliar with Indigenous governance.

Indigenous employees carry an additional weight; they know that when they fail, the system may interpret it as a reflection on all Indigenous Peoples. When they succeed, they often do so within a structure that neither recognizes nor creates space for Indigenous leadership approaches. This pressure is exhausting, rarely acknowledged, and deeply tied to the absence of Indigenous leaders across corporate spaces *(Joseph, 2019; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Career Pathway Barriers

Key Barriers

- Limited advancement pathways
- Unionized seniority systems often require Indigenous apprentices to begin at entry-level positions at each job site, limiting continuity and advancement
- Challenges balancing community responsibilities and work schedules
- Under recognition of lived, land-based, or cultural expertise
- Limited access to mentorship, especially during evenings and after hours, when most support needs arise
- Training programs that do not translate into employment

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous workers are eager to advance but are repeatedly placed in entry-level positions despite their skills, experience, and motivation. In unionized environments, seniority rules often require apprentices to start at the bottom at each new work site. Research on Indigenous apprenticeships and labour mobility shows that rigid seniority and jobsite rules disproportionately affect Indigenous workers, particularly those entering trades later in life or moving between regions *(Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2019).* As a result, Indigenous workers can restart their careers multiple times, watching their earnings, confidence, and opportunities reset again and again. These repeated restarts feel less like new beginnings and more like being held in place.

Less Spoken Realities

Over time, they can erode confidence and create a sense of stagnation rather than growth. This dynamic is also reflected in broader labour market studies, which highlight how systemic barriers, rather than individual capability, shape Indigenous mobility and advancement *(Howard & Edge, 2021; Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018)*.

Training programs can also create a cycle of "false hope." Workers complete certificates and meet all expectations, only to find no job available to them. This experience reinforces the belief that the system was never designed to help them succeed.

Mentorship is one of the most important supports for career growth, yet it is rarely available in ways that align with the realities Indigenous workers face. Many issues requiring guidance arise after hours, on evenings or weekends, when workers are navigating family responsibilities, community crises, transportation challenges, or unfamiliar work environments *(Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018)*. Without after-hours support, workers face these challenges alone, and small issues become major barriers.

At the same time, Indigenous workers are balancing ceremony, caregiving, kinship obligations, and community responsibilities that Western schedules do not accommodate. When pathways do not honour these realities, advancement becomes a distant possibility rather than an achievable goal. The result is not a lack of talent or ambition; it's a misalignment between the system and the lived experience of Indigenous workers *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Wellness & Identity Barriers

Key Barriers

- Racism, discrimination, microaggressions
- Lack of cultural and psychological safety
- Pressure to mask identity
- Emotional and mental burnout tied to being "the only one"

Less Spoken Realities

During community engagement, participants identified how exclusion compounds across identity and circumstance.

One participant wrote:

> ***"Being a woman trying to work a man's job."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Another shared:

> ***"Having a criminal record."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

These reflections highlight that workforce exclusion is rarely a single-issue phenomenon. Gender, criminalization, Indigeneity, and access to opportunity intersect within hiring systems.

Indigenous workers often enter workplaces bracing for harm, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes from lived experience passed down through generations. They may carry trauma from family histories, prior workplaces, or personal experiences that shape how they navigate conflict or authority. Research shows that racism, microaggressions, and cultural invalidation directly contribute to psychological distress, workplace withdrawal, and reduced retention among Indigenous employees *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Jones & Williams, 2020; Curtis et al., 2019)*. When expected to perform under pressure without acknowledging these realities, they may withdraw, shut down, or disconnect emotionally. Cultural safety is not a preference; it is a requirement for Indigenous workers to thrive. Without it, even the most skilled workers eventually leave. Many Indigenous employees have learned to scan their environment quickly, assessing whether a workplace feels culturally safe or whether masking parts of themselves is necessary for survival. Cultural safety literature emphasizes that harm occurs not only through overt discrimination but also through subtle interpersonal dynamics, silence, or the erasure of identity *(Curtis et al., 2019)*. The emotional toll of being "the only one" in a department or team is well recognized across Indigenous workforce studies. Isolation, vigilance, and the pressure to represent an entire people create burnout that Western HR systems rarely account for *(Reading & Wien, 2009; National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, 2013; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Systemic Patterns across the System

What's consistently not working

Across communities, industries, and individuals, several recurring barriers appear

Key Barriers

- Short-term, transactional engagement
- Overreliance on a single individual to manage all Indigenous relationships, creating bottlenecks, burnout, and fragile, one-person-dependent partnerships
- Western HR models that gatekeep Indigenous applicants
- Misaligned governance and decision-making timelines
- Lack of culturally safe workplaces
- Limited advancement pathways for Indigenous workers
- Community burnout and capacity strain
- High turnover within industry roles that maintain relationships
- Lack of succession planning for key relationship-holding roles leads to repeated relationship breakdowns, loss of trust, and constant restarts when staff turnover occurs
- Persistent information gaps between communities and companies

These systemic patterns are critical to understanding where shifts are needed.

Less Spoken Realities

Across the energy sector, Indigenous communities often experience industry engagement as short-term and transactional. Research shows that short-term, project-based engagement undermines trust and reinforces extractive patterns, particularly when companies disengage once immediate needs are met (Newman, 2017; Papillon & Rodon, 2017; TRC, 2015). Many companies appear only during project phases, then disappear once approvals, data, or labour needs are met. This inconsistency erodes trust and creates a cycle in which relationships never mature beyond surface-level exchanges.

Less Spoken Realities

Much of the relationship work is carried out quietly and without recognition by a single individual within the organization. This person becomes the "bridge" between two worlds, expected to translate culture, hold history, navigate conflict, and manage expectations for everyone else. When the entire system relies on one person, the work becomes emotionally heavy, structurally fragile, and deeply unfair to both the worker and the community. Overreliance on a single relationship-holder is a well-documented structural issue in Indigenous-industry relations. When organizations fail to distribute relational responsibility, the emotional and cultural burden falls disproportionately on Indigenous Relations staff or a single point of contact, resulting in burnout and fragile partnerships *(Clark, 2020; Wilson, 2008; Smith, 2021)*.

The absence of succession planning exacerbates this fragility. When a key relationship-holding employee leaves, takes leave, or becomes overwhelmed, the partnership often collapses, not because trust was lacking but because responsibility was never shared across departments or leadership. High turnover intensifies this fragility. Indigenous communities must repeatedly re-explain governance, protocols, history, and commitments to new company representatives. This dynamic is widely noted in Indigenous governance and engagement literature as a primary factor undermining long-term relational continuity *(Smith, 2021)*. This repetition feels disrespectful and reinforces a long memory of industry inconsistency.

Western HR systems add another layer of exclusion. Digital portals, credential requirements, rigid communication norms, and inflexible timelines often screen out our Indigenous applicants before they can demonstrate their strengths. These systems rarely consider Indigenous realities, such as limited connectivity, community obligations, land-based expertise, or alternative pathways to skill development *(Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018; Allan & Smylie, 2015; Howard & Edge, 2021)*. What is interpreted as a "talent gap" is often a design flaw in the system itself.

Governance misalignment also emerges early and often. Corporate decision-making moves quickly, follows linear timelines, and prioritizes efficiency over relationships. Indigenous governance is relational, community-driven, and honours protocols, consensus, and long-term impacts. When companies push for quick decisions, communities feel pressured, unheard, or disrespected, deepening the gap between the two systems *(Simpson, 2017; Borrows, 2016; Alfred, 2005)*.

Less Spoken Realities

In workplaces, cultural and psychological safety remain inconsistent. Indigenous workers often assess, within the first moments of onboarding, whether they feel safe, seen, or merely tolerated. When racism, microaggressions, or identity pressures surface, even subtly, advancement pathways narrow, workers may withdraw or leave entirely, and retention declines sharply *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Reading & Wien, 2009)*. The emotional toll of being "the only one" in unsafe environments is rarely acknowledged but deeply felt.

Capacity strain within communities further complicates these system gaps. Nations juggle consultations, training requests, community needs, emergencies, and limited staff capacity. Burnout is common, not because communities lack commitment, but because they are asked to shoulder disproportionate responsibility without adequate support *(Auditor General of Canada, 2011; RCAP, 1996)*.

Finally, persistent information gaps reinforce the perception that engagement is one-sided. Communities are often asked for input but receive little follow-up, no context, or last-minute requests. When industry fails to share information transparently or consistently, it signals that Indigenous partners are included only when convenient rather than as true collaborators *(TRC, 2015; Papillon, 2012)*.

Together, these realities show that the challenges are not the result of individual shortcomings but of systems designed without Indigenous Peoples in mind *(Wilson, 2008; Smith, 2021; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*. Real transformation requires organizations to build structures, not just relationships, that distribute responsibility, embed cultural safety, honour governance, share information transparently, and create stable, long-term pathways for Indigenous workers and communities.

What is working across the System

Strengths, successes, and pathways to amplify

Across communities, companies, and Steering Committee organizations, clear patterns of success have emerged.

Community-Led Models

- Nation-owned economic development corporations and joint ventures
- Community-based training and employment centres
- Indigenous-led stewardship and monitoring programs
- Local workforce access programs (e.g., amplifying these programs established by Maskwacis Employment Center, Siksika, & Doig River First Nation)

Less Spoken Realities

Community-led models succeed because they reflect Indigenous governance, relational accountability, and local priorities *(Kenny, 2012; Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008)*. These initiatives honour community autonomy and the intelligence within Nations.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Practical Barrier Removal

- Transportation supports, shuttles, and mobile onboarding
- PPE/tool support and financial bridging
- Safety ticket programs delivered in the community
- Employer-provided mentoring
- Work-ready materials

Less Spoken Realities

These concrete supports deliver immediate, meaningful improvements in participation and retention (Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018; Howard & Edge, 2021).

Community members emphasized the importance of access to safety certifications and information, noting:

> ***"Offer the Indigenous Awareness ticket and more info."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Long Term Relationships

- Multi-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs)
- Consistent engagement with Nation leadership
- Deep relational trust built through presence, humility, and accountability

Less Spoken Realities

Trust is built on predictability, presence, and actions, not words. Long-term relationships thrive when organizations move at the speed of trust *(Simpson, 2017; TRC, 2015; Wilson, 2008)*.

Indigenous Leadership as System Shifters

Indigenous leaders across communities and industries demonstrate:

- Cross-cultural fluency
- Values-based leadership
- Systems navigation
- Alignment-building between worlds

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous leaders walk in two worlds, constantly translating, mediating, and aligning cultures. This work requires immense emotional and relational labour *(Kenny, 2012; Joseph, 2019; Brown & Strega, 2015)*.

Western organizations often undervalue Indigenous leadership styles, yet these very approaches of humility, collective care, consensus, and long-term responsibility are what shift systems *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008)*.

Indigenous leaders shoulder responsibilities that their non-Indigenous counterparts rarely experience, including representing their entire Nation. Their ability to bridge worldviews is often key to partnership success *(Smith, 2021; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Youth Driven Pathways

Programs that invest early in youth through mentorship, land- and water-based learning, and trades exposure are effective and sustainable.

Less Spoken Realities

Early investment in youth through mentorship, land- and water-based learning, cultural teachings, and meaningful exposure to the trades creates pathways that are grounded, effective, and long-lasting. Research supports the importance of culturally grounded, community-based youth programming, which strengthens identity, belonging, and long-term success in education and employment *(Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Hare & Anderson, 2010; Wildcat et al., 2014)*. From an Indigenous worldview, supporting youth means supporting the whole circle around them, including family, community, land, water, and identity. Water holds teachings of movement, clarity, flow, and renewal, which help youth as they navigate transitions, responsibilities, and future pathways.

This also includes acknowledging the quieter realities many young people carry, such as stepping into adult roles early, supporting extended family, navigating housing or financial pressures, or walking between the worlds of community and industry. Programs that honour these truths and adapt to youth's lived context offer more than skills; they provide belonging, dignity, and a path that strengthens the community for generations to come.

Studies show that Indigenous youth often face layered responsibilities, including caregiving, financial pressures, and navigating both community and Western systems, all of which significantly influence education and career pathways *(Restoule et al., 2013; Greenwood et al., 2015)*. These lived experiences echo what many communities have long expressed: that youth need relational, culturally safe supports that honour their realities *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Programs that honour these truths and adapt to youth's lived context provide more than skills; they foster belonging, dignity, and long-term community well-being.

Two-Eyed Seeing Reflection

Bringing both worldviews together

Through the Indigenous Eye, barriers are understood in their full relational, historical, cultural, emotional, and community context. This perspective recognizes that challenges are connected to the land, water, family, identity, governance, memory, and the lived experiences carried across generations *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*. It sees the person within their circle and the barrier within its story.

Through the Western Eye, barriers are understood in terms of structure, policy, process, and systems. This perspective examines how programs, regulations, timelines, data, and organizational design shape outcomes, focusing on the operational and procedural factors that influence participation and success.

Together, these two ways of seeing create a more complete understanding of the system, because each honours truths the other cannot fully hold on its own *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.

Two-Eyed Seeing

Helps organizations and communities recognize:

- Both worldviews hold truths
- Neither worldview on its own is sufficient
- Transformation happens when both are honoured and integrated
- Solutions must be co-designed, relational, and long-term

Less Spoken Realities

Behind strong relationships, youth successes, and Indigenous leadership are countless hours of unseen labour, emotional work, and cultural responsibility. These relational dynamics echo the Mi'kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall's concept of Two-Eyed Seeing, which guides the bringing together of the strengths of Indigenous and Western knowledges *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015)*. Long-term partnerships form because Indigenous leaders and community members continue to show up, even when trust has been broken. They carry the weight of past harms while building new pathways that honour their Nations' future. Research confirms that Indigenous relational accountability, grounded in history, land, kinship, and community responsibility, plays a critical role in sustaining partnerships across systems *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

Programs succeed not because the system is easy to navigate, but because Indigenous leaders work tirelessly to translate worldviews, soften the impact of rigid structures, and advocate within systems not designed for them. Their efforts often go unrecognized, even though they are foundational to every example of progress *(Smith, 2021; Brown & Strega, 2015; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Youth pathways flourish when communities step in to fill structural gaps by offering mentorship, land-based learning, cultural grounding, and relational support that Western systems do not provide. These programs endure because community members invest emotionally, culturally, and relationally in their young people *(Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Wildcat et al., 2014; Hare & Anderson, 2010)*.

Two-Eyed Seeing works only when both sides show humility and openness. Indigenous leaders often hold this balance, ensuring that their worldview is not overshadowed by Western systems. The progress we see across sectors exists because Indigenous Peoples continue to lead with patience, strength, and a commitment to future generations *(Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Section 2.1 – Cultural Competency

A relational and values-based foundation for ethical Indigenous industry partnership

Foundation, principles, relational practices, and cultural safety

What's in Section 2.1

- Foundational Principles of Cultural Competency
- Cultural Competency in Practice
- Cultural Safety in Practice

Purpose of this Section

Cultural competency is not training. It is not a checklist. It is not a certificate.

Cultural competency is a lifelong commitment to relational accountability, grounded in humility, respect, reciprocity, and the understanding that the Indigenous worldview is not an add-on; it is a fundamentally different way of relating to people, land, time, decision-making, and responsibility *(Kirmayer et al., 2011; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008)*.

This section supports organizations to build:

- Cultural safety
- Trauma-informed practices *(Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014)*
- Shared decision-making structures *(United Nations, 2007; Borrows, 2016)*
- Humane HR systems
- Relationship first approaches *(Wilson, 2008)*
- Two-Eyed Seeing leadership *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015)*

It draws on the lived experience and leadership of Steering Committee members, community leaders, and Indigenous workforce champions across the country *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

How to read this Section

This section is structured to help organizations understand cultural competency as a relational practice rather than a checklist.

- Foundational Principles introduce the values that must guide all interactions, like trust, reciprocity, humility, and respect for Indigenous Rights and Title.
- Less Spoken Realities reveal the lived experiences and relational impacts that are often invisible in Western systems.
- Skill Areas outline the behaviours and competencies required across HR, leadership, community engagement, and daily operations.
- Cultural Safety in Practice shows how these principles must show up across the entire employment journey.
- Organizational Commitments describe what must be sustained over time for cultural competency to be authentic, not performative.

Together, these sections define cultural competency, explain why it matters, and outline how organizations must change to uphold it with integrity *(Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

How this Section will be used

This section will help organizations:

- Build cultural competency as an ongoing practice grounded in relational accountability.
- Understand Indigenous worldview, governance, and Rights and Title as foundations of ethical partnership.
- Create culturally safe workplaces where Indigenous employees can bring their full identity without harm or tokenism.
- Strengthen HR, leadership, and operational systems so they support, not burden, Indigenous workers.
- Apply trauma-informed, humane, and relationship-first approaches at every stage of the employment journey.
- Honour Indigenous leadership principles such as consensus building, humility, and long-term responsibility.
- Embed Two-Eyed Seeing into program design, decision-making, and workforce development *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Wilson, 2008)*.

Ultimately, this section supports a shift from transactional engagement to ethical, long-term, relationship-based partnerships *(TRC, 2015; United Nations, 2007; Smith, 2021)*.

Foundational Principles of Cultural Competency

These principles must guide every system, policy, and interaction.

Move at the Speed of Trust

Trust is the cornerstone of Indigenous-industry relationships. Indigenous communities have endured generations of broken promises, extractive development, and harm disguised as "opportunities" *(TRC, 2015; RCAP, 1996; Milloy, 1999)*. Trust develops through consistent presence, follow-through, and relational transparency. It cannot be rushed to meet project timelines or funding conditions. Trust grows through everyday actions: returning calls, attending funerals, showing up in community, honouring commitments, and speaking truthfully, especially when it's uncomfortable *(TRC, 2015; Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008)*.

Less Spoken Realities

Communities remember every time an outsider made promises and then disappeared when funding dried up or leadership changed. Trust is slowly rebuilt through actions that show, "We will stay even when it is inconvenient." Many Indigenous leaders quietly test organizations, observing whether they show respect in small moments. When companies push for speed, they disrupt the natural rhythm of trust-building and risk repeating historical harm *(TRC, 2015; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Indigenous Peoples are System Thinkers

The Indigenous worldview holds that everything is interconnected, including land, water, community, governance, spirituality, economy, and relationships. No system stands alone. Every decision affects multiple layers of community life.

Strategies, workforce initiatives, and partnerships must be designed with, not for, Indigenous Peoples, as their systemic understanding reveals impacts and opportunities that Western systems overlook *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

Less Spoken Realities

Western systems often try to separate issues: HR handles hiring, Indigenous Relations handles relationships, and Operations handles work. The Indigenous worldview sees no such divisions. When organizations design programs in silos, communities feel the fragmentation immediately. They see the gaps, the discounts, and the lack of relational coherence. This is why Indigenous Peoples must be involved from the beginning. They are the only ones who can see how all parts of the system intersect on their land, in the community, and in the lives of their people *(Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Indigenous Peoples are Rights and Title Holders – NOT Stakeholders

This distinction is fundamental. Stakeholders have interests. Rights and Title Holders have inherent jurisdiction.

Success requires organizations to recognize Indigenous sovereignty, uphold Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and honour Treaty and inherent rights across all interactions *(United Nations, 2007; TRC, 2015; Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021).*

Less Spoken Realities

When companies treat Indigenous Nations as stakeholders, they inadvertently perpetuate centuries of marginalization. These framing signals that Indigenous voices are optional rather than foundational. Communities feel the weight of this disrespect deeply, as it touches on identity, survival, and the ongoing fight for recognition. Cultural competency requires organizations to shift from "consulting" Indigenous Peoples to sharing decision-making power with them. Ultimately, meaningful partnership requires honouring the principles long expressed by Indigenous Peoples and justice movements alike: nothing about us, without us *(Smith, 2021; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Relationship, Reciprocity, and Relational Accountability

Relationships come before tasks. Reciprocity comes before transactions.

The Indigenous worldview teaches that relationships must be nurtured with care, humility, and continuity. Reciprocity means giving back what you take, including time, resources, support, opportunities, knowledge, and presence *(Wilson, 2008; Kenny, 2012).*

Relational accountability means that once a relationship is formed, you are responsible for how your decisions affect that person or community.

Less Spoken Realities

Communities can sense when an organization shows up only for its own benefit. They also sense when someone arrives with sincerity and heart. Many Indigenous leaders carry relational responsibilities that span multiple Nations, clans, and families. When companies treat relationships as business transactions, they break cultural law. Success requires honouring relationships as living beings, worthy of protection, nourishment, and long-term care *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Long-Term Thinking (Seven Generations)

Indigenous leadership is guided by responsibility to ancestors and future generations.

Decisions must support the well-being of those yet unborn.

Employment, projects, and partnerships must strengthen:

- Land & Water
- Language
- Culture
- Community
- Economic sovereignty

This is long-horizon thinking that guides ethical decision-making *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008).*

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Western timelines demand urgent decisions, rapid onboarding, and quarterly milestones. Indigenous leaders bear a different responsibility, one anchored in safeguarding their nation's future. When pressured, leaders often feel compelled to choose between immediate opportunity and long-term well-being. Cultural competency recognizes that "no" is sometimes an act of protection, not resistance *(TRC, 2015; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Cultural Safety and Respect

Cultural safety is a felt experience, not a policy.

A culturally safe workplace is one where Indigenous workers feel:

- Valued
- Respected
- Recognized
- Free from racism
- Able to be fully themselves
- Supported in identity, community roles, and cultural practices

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous employees often enter workplaces bracing for harm because they have experienced it before. A single disrespectful comment, joke, or assumption can cause deep emotional injury. Cultural safety requires more than tolerance; it requires courage, accountability, and action. Workers leave when they feel unseen or disrespected, long before HR metrics reflect an issue *(Allen & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Reading & Wien, 2009; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Trauma-Informed HR

Trauma is not an excuse. It is a reality. It lives in bodies, families, and communities.

Trauma-informed HR practices:

- Recognize intergenerational trauma
- Avoid punitive responses to distress
- Understand Indigenous communication patterns
- Provide compassionate flexibility
- Build trust through predictability and presence

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous workers make decisions from a place shared by trauma, not because they want to, but because trauma lives in the nervous system. When HR misreads trauma responses as "unprofessional," "disengaged," or "unreliable," it reinforces colonial harm. Trauma-informed approaches prevent workers from being punished for wounds they did not choose *(Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Allan & Smylie, 2015).*

Context Matters – Territory, Protocol, and Governance

Every Nation is different.

Cultural competency requires understanding:

- Territory
- Protocols
- Leadership structure
- Internal governance
- Kinship systems
- Community priorities
- Local history
- Current realities

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Communities often feel disrespected when companies assume pan-Indigenous sameness. Protocol mistakes can fracture relationships built over years. When organizations don't take the time to understand the context, they signal that the relationship isn't worth the effort. Cultural competency begins with humility, "Teach me. I'm here to listen." *(Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Cultural Competency in Practice

These abilities must be cultivated across the organization. Cultural competency is not training; it is a practice lived through behaviour, consistency, and relational accountability.

Relational Competency

- Showing up consistently
- Following up respectfully
- Communicating with clarity and humanity
- Listening more than speaking
- Understanding kinship responsibilities
- Approaching conflict relationally, not defensively

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous people assess trustworthiness through quiet observation, noting how you speak, how you act under pressure, and how you treat others. Relational competency is not taught; it is lived. Organizations that build relational strength see smoother projects, deeper loyalty, and stronger partnerships *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Community Competency

- Plain language
- Avoiding jargon, acronyms, and overly technical explanations
- Telling the whole story, not only the Western perspective
- Ensuring candidates understand what is required
- Using multiple communication formats (phone, in-person, community meetings)

Less Spoken Realities

Western communication often relies on emails, apps, and portals that many Indigenous workers cannot access consistently. Communities appreciate phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and personal follow-up because these methods align with a relational worldview. Communication competency means honouring how Indigenous Peoples prefer to receive information, rather than imposing Western methods on them *(Kovach, 2009; Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, 2021; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

HR Competency

- Recognizing Indigenous Rights (bereavement, harvesting, hunting, taxation)
- Eliminating resume "black holes"
- Trauma-informed responses to behaviour
- Multiple forms of mentorship (not only 1:1)
- After-hours support capacity
- Removing isolation (pairing workers)
- Supporting workers without devices, data, or internet

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous workers fall out of recruitment pipelines for reasons unrelated to ability. Rather, it's about no phone minutes, no laptop, no transportation, and no follow-up. These systemic barriers are invisible to Western HR but deeply felt by Indigenous candidates. Cultural competency requires HR to step outside traditional processes and build humane, practical pathways *(Standing Committee on HUMA, 2018; Allan & Smylie, 2015; Howard & Edge, 2021; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Leadership Competency

- Practicing humility and self-awareness
- Sharing decision-making
- Addressing racism and sexism immediately
- Understanding Indigenous governance and protocols
- Supporting Indigenous leadership development
- Empowering rather than controlling

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous employees often watch leaders closely, assessing whether they truly walk in good ways. A leader's ego, avoidance, or insensitivity can undermine entire initiatives. Conversely, a leader who listens deeply, admits mistakes, and acts with humility can transform a workplace into a safe space where Indigenous talent can thrive *(Kenny, 2012; Brown & Strega, 2015; Allan & Smylie, 2015; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Cultural Safety in Practice

This section outlines what cultural competency looks like throughout the employment journey.

Before Recruitment

- Build relationships before opportunities appear
- Understand Nation context deeply
- Clarify job expectations honestly
- Co-design postings with communities
- Offer resume and technology support
- Make hiring processes relational and accessible

Less Spoken Realities

Communities see through performative outreach. They also notice when an organization invests time in understanding their realities before asking for workers. Recruitment is successful when trust is established first; otherwise, it feels extractive *(Wilson, 2008; Papillon & Rodon, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

During Recruitment

- Face-to-face engagement
- Phone calls instead of relying on apps
- Clear explanation of job duties, risks, and expectations
- Immediate follow-up on all resumes
- Paired or group interviews when culturally appropriate

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous candidates feel deep anxiety during recruitment, not because they lack capabilities but because they have previously been dismissed or misunderstood. Human connection reduces that fear. When candidates experience relational respect, they lean in. When they encounter silence or bureaucracy, they withdraw *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Onboarding

- Include ceremony if appropriate
- Introduce Indigenous Relations early
- Offer mentorship team (not only 1:1)
- Support with phone/data access if needed
- Provide work-ready materials and supplies, or pre-employment financial support

Less Spoken Realities

Onboarding is often the moment when Indigenous workers subconsciously decide whether they belong. Cultural cues, tone, and warmth matter deeply. A welcoming ceremony, such as a short opening prayer, a smudge (if appropriate), an Elder offering words, or simply acknowledging the worker's Nation and inviting them to share what they are comfortable with, can create a sense of safety and recognition. Likewise, a clear introduction to Indigenous Relations staff can make the difference between staying and leaving *(Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Reading & Wien, 2009; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Workplace Cultural Safety

- Address racism and microaggressions immediately
- Provide Elders or cultural advisors
- Honour kinship responsibilities
- Allow flexibility for cultural ceremony
- Pair workers to prevent isolation

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous workers feel isolated in Western workplaces, navigating systems that neither see nor celebrate them. When cultural safety is absent, workers often leave quietly. When it is present, they blossom into leaders *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, 2013; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Advancement

- Recognize cultural and land-based strengths
- Create Two-Eyed Seeing leadership pathways
- Provide cohort-based mentorship
- Celebrate Indigenous innovation and leadership

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous advancement requires environments where people feel safe enough to lead authentically. Without cultural safety, Indigenous workers may never reach their full potential, not because they lack talent but because the system does not yet make space for their gifts *(Kenny, 2012; Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Joseph, 2019; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Organizational Commitments

To practice cultural competency, organizations must commit to:

- Moving at the speed of trust
- Building programs and strategies with Indigenous Peoples
- Trauma-informed and relational HR
- Recognizing Indigenous Rights
- Transparent communication and accountability
- Eliminating digital and bureaucratic barriers
- Ensuring cultural safety at all levels
- Investing in long term relationship and reciprocity
- Creating space for Indigenous leadership

Section 2.2 – Success Metrics & Seasonality Framework

Two-Eyed Seeing metrics, seasonal wisdom, and qualitative/quantitative balance

A Two-Eyed Seeing approach to defining success that honours community, relationships, and long-term impact *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015)*.

What's in Section 2.2

- Success Metrics & Seasonality Framework
- What Success is from an Indigenous Worldview
- The Seasonality Framework
- Indigenous Success Metrics Framework

Purpose of this Section

This Indigenous-Led Energy Framework uses a Success Metrics Framework grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing, a relational approach that integrates Indigenous knowledge systems with Western accountability structures. It defines what meaningful inclusion, reconciliation, and Indigenous leadership look like in the energy sector and ensures that success is measured in ways that honour Indigenous worldviews *(Bartlett, Marshall, Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*.

Success for Indigenous communities is rooted in belonging, trust, cultural safety, relationships, reciprocity, continuity, and intergenerational well-being. It is not rooted solely in numerical outputs or performance statistics. The metrics in this section reflect not only what organizations do but also how Indigenous Peoples feel as a result. They help organizations evaluate the balance among relational, cultural, emotional, and operational success *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*.

The Success Metrics Framework aligns with the Seasonality Framework (Spring – Attraction, Summer – Retention, Fall – Advancement, and Winter – Reflection & Renewal). Together, these models form a continuous cycle of growth, learning, reflection, and renewal that guides organizations toward sustainable, ethical, and culturally grounded workforce practices, informed by the wisdom of Steering Committee members and Indigenous leaders *(Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

This section introduces a Two-Eyed Seeing Success Framework that:

- Honours Indigenous worldview
- Aligns with Western accountability requirements
- Measures what matters to communities
- Supports employers in building sustainable Indigenous workforce pathways
- Guides organizations toward relational, ethical, and culturally grounded outcomes

How to read this Section

Each part of this section is designed to help organizations understand how success is defined, measured, and experienced through a Two-Eyed Seeing approach *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015)*.

- Western/Industry-aligned measures indicate what can be counted, tracked, and reported through HR, Sustainability, and corporate governance systems.
- Indigenous-centred measures highlight the relational, emotional, cultural, and community impacts that cannot be fully captured numerically but are essential to success *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Greenwood et al., 2015)*.
- Seasonality measures reflect the cyclical nature of growth, renewal, advancement, and reflection, and ground organizational practices in the Indigenous worldview *(Simpson, 2017; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*.
- Process Metrics (the "how") ensure that relationships, timelines, governance, and decision-making honour Indigenous knowledge and principles, not merely Western operational standards *(Smith, 2021; Borrows, 2016; Wilson, 2008)*.

Together, these components show not only what is being measured but also why it matters, how communities experience it, and how organizations can maintain integrity in both process and outcome.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

How this Section will be used

This section will support organizations to:

- Build a Two-Eyed Seeing measurement system that balances Western metrics with the Indigenous definition of success *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.
- Evaluate not only outcomes, but the quality, integrity, and relational accountability of the work *(Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008)*.
- Align HR, Sustainability, governance, and operational systems with culturally grounded practices across the seasons of Attraction, Retention, Advancement, and Renewal.
- Understand the lived experiences of Indigenous employees and communities, ensuring that growth is measured through belonging, cultural safety, reciprocity, and intergenerational impact.
- Implement metrics that guide continuous improvement, reflection, and renewal, rather than one-time reporting.
- Strengthen partnerships by co-developing metrics with Indigenous leaders, workers, and Oversight/Steering Committee members, ensuring cultural resonance and community benefit *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Ultimately, this section helps organizations shift from counting participation to measuring relational success. It provides a clear pathway for learning, accountability, and workforce practices that honour the Indigenous worldview and create meaningful, lasting change.

What Success is from an Indigenous Worldview

Success is not a milestone, a statistic, or a hiring target. It is a relationship shaped over time and strengthened through humility, respect, presence, and trust. Success feels like safety, belonging, listening, recognition, reciprocity, and shared decision-making. It honours Indigenous rights, culture, and values *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Simpson, 2017; TRC, 2015)*.

Below are expanded elements of success, shaped by Steering Committee guidance *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Success is Moving at the Speed of Trust

Trust cannot be accelerated by deadlines or funding cycles. It grows slowly through consistent action, community presence, transparent communication, and respect for Indigenous governance *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*.

Less Spoken Realities

Trust is fragile because history has taught Indigenous Peoples to be cautious. Communities remember the harm caused by broken agreements and unfulfilled promises. Today, trust is rebuilt not through words but through how organizations show up at crises, funerals, community events, and during slow seasons. Success means organizations understand that trust builds over years and can be lost in a single moment of disrespect *(TRC, 2015; RCAP, 1996)*..

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Success is when Strategy is built with Indigenous Peoples, Not for them

This principle reflects Indigenous systems thinking, the belief that all things are interconnected and that no system stands alone *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

Success includes:

- Indigenous Peoples at the table during planning, not just implementation
- Shared decision-making where appropriate
- Engagement rooted in reciprocity and transparency
- A recognition that Indigenous Peoples are Rights and Title Holders, not "stakeholders" *(United Nations, 2007; Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021)*

Less Spoken Realities

Communities can immediately tell when a project was designed without their consultation.

A participant asked:

> ***"When you go to other reserves, does this help their voice?"***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

They feel the energy of tokenism, the rush of a predetermined timeline, or the heaviness of being asked to validate something they didn't help create. Success is when communities see their worldview reflected in the framework itself, not retrofitted into Western plans already built *(Smith, 2021; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Success is defined by Shared Wellbeing, not just Metrics

Success measures must include:

- Cultural safety
- Sense of belonging
- Trust in the workplace
- Access to mentorship
- Opportunities for advancement
- Emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being
- Reciprocity between employer and community

Western key performance indicators (KPIs), such as retention rates, number of hires, and number of promotions, are important, but they tell only half the story.

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous workers have left workplaces where they met Western metrics but quietly suffered. They left because racism went unaddressed, their identity was questioned, they felt lonely, or they were forced to choose between cultural obligations and employment. If workers are staying but not thriving, the system is not successful. Indigenous definitions of success measure what cannot always be counted but can always be felt *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Reading & Wien, 2009; Wilson, 2008)*.

Success is Culturally Safe Workplaces

Cultural safety requires:

- Understanding Indigenous worldview
- Eliminating racism and microaggressions
- Honouring Indigenous Rights in HR policies
- Creating space for cultural practices, kinship, and community obligations
- Enabling workers to show up fully without fear

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Cultural safety is not a training module. It is a daily practice that requires courage, accountability, and humility. For Indigenous workers, cultural safety determines whether they enter the workplace with confidence or anxiety. A single remark, a dismissive gesture, or a lack of understanding can undo months of progress. Success is when Indigenous workers feel safe enough to stay, grow, and lead, not merely endure survival *(Curtis et al., 2019; Allan & Smylie, 2015; National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, 2013)*.

Success is Long-Term Thinking (Seven Generations)

Indigenous Peoples measure success over lifetimes, not fiscal quarters.
They ask:

- How will this decision impact our great-grandchildren?
- Will this partnership strengthen our Nation's sovereignty?
- Will this create opportunities for youth yet unborn?
- Will this protect or harm our land and water?

This worldview has been central to Indigenous governance and stewardship for thousands of years *(Simpson, 2017; Borrows, 2016)*.

Less Spoken Realities

Communities carry a deep responsibility to ancestors and future generations. When they decline rapid timelines or push for deeper engagement, it is not resistance; it is stewardship. Success requires the industry to honour these longer cycles of responsibility and relationship *(TRC, 2015; Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; United Nations, 2007; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

The Seasonality Framework

A living model rooted in Indigenous worldview

The Seasonality Framework reflects the cyclical nature of growth, reflection, and renewal. Each Season teaches us about workforce development, relationship building, and organizational responsibility. The cycle is continuous, not linear *(Simpson, 2017)*.

In many Indigenous traditions, the seasons reflect stages of life, learning, and growth. Aligning the Framework with this cycle offers a culturally grounded, intuitive visual representation of Two-Eyed Seeing. The cycle is not linear; each season flows into the next, just as attraction leads to retention, retention to advancement, advancement to reflection, and reflection to renewal, with the cycle repeating *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*.

Through this framework, we see the visual blending of Indigenous and Western perspectives: seasonality, land- and water-based teachings, animals, cycles of growth, energy systems, innovation, and measurable outcomes. These are expressed through natural elements such as land, water, air, and minerals, which transform into energy structures such as solar panels, wind turbines, pipelines, and drilling rigs, to name a few.

Each season is guided by core principles that connect cultural teachings to practical application. These principles ground the Framework's development and ensure that each phase reflects Indigenous values and relational accountability *(Kovach, 2009; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*. The following framework shows how cultural teachings translate into practical implementation steps for organizations.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Season	Cultural Theme	Talent Phase	Symbolic Meaning	Guiding Principles
Spring	Renewal & Awakening	Attraction	Growth, Curiosity, and Connection	Relationship & Trust
Summer	Growth & Strength	Retention	Energy, Belonging, and Balance	Participation & Representation
Fall	Harvest & Transformation	Advancement	Learning, Leadership, and Empowerment	Advancement & Empowerment
Winter	Reflection & Renewal	Reflection	Wisdom, Ceremony and Healing	Safety, Ceremony & Wellbeing
Center (All Seasons)	Reciprocity	Reciprocity	Return, Balance and Continuation	Reciprocity & Community Benefit

The Success Metrics Framework works in relation to the Seasonality Framework

While the Seasonality Framework provides a qualitative, cyclical lens for understanding growth and renewal, the Success Metrics Framework offers a way to track progress using both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Together, they balance story and data, ensuring progress is measured through both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.

Seasonality (the lens) ➜ Success Metrics (the measurement)

Bringing the Principles to Life in Practice

The Seasonality Framework connects cultural teachings with practical application. The following examples show how each season's guiding principles can be translated into Two-Eyed Seeing-aligned practices that attract, retain, and advance Indigenous youth in the energy industry, thereby bridging Indigenous knowledge and Western operational systems and turning values into action. The framework will consist of four seasons:

- Spring – Renewal & Attraction
- Summer - Growth & Retention
- Fall – Harvest & Advancement
- Winter – Reflection & Renewal

The companion document to Foundation to Systems Design is titled The Seasonality Framework. It has been designed to demonstrates how seasonal commitments translate into workforce practice, through recruitment models, mentorship systems, advancement pathways, procurement inclusion, and other practical employer tools that support attraction, retention, and advancement of Indigenous talent.

Spring - Renewal & Attraction

Guiding Principles: Relationship & Trust

Spring teaches us that new beginnings must be rooted in trust, clarity, transparency, and relational connection.

Two-Eyed Seeing in Practice

- Create paid internships, co-ops, and mentorship pairings that connect youth with Elders or Knowledge-holders within energy organizations
- Integrate capstone or co-op projects on real assets (e.g., microgrid maintenance, site remediation, land-based monitoring, etc.) that apply Two-Eyed Seeing rubrics, technical and land-based learning side by side
- Establish a presence in the community before recruitment begins
- Include community representatives on hiring panels and recognize land-based learning and cultural leadership as valued qualifications
- Encourage organizations to hold onboarding circles that introduce Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff through shared protocols and stories
- Humanized recruitment (face-to-face, follow-up, storytelling)
- Companies demonstrate authenticity by ensuring job postings and recruitment events reflect real, available opportunities

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous candidates carry past experiences in which recruitment felt extractive or dismissive. They have seen resumes disappear, promises that evaporate, and opportunities turn into disappointment. Some have attended career fairs or job events where companies present themselves as eager to hire Indigenous workers, only to discover afterward that no real positions exist.

Less Spoken Realities

As one community participant shared:

> ***"If companies do job fairs, commit to hiring from the community."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

These experiences feel disrespectful and reinforce the belief that engagement is more about public image than genuine opportunity.

For Indigenous candidates, attraction is not about posting jobs; it is about showing up consistently, demonstrating integrity, and ensuring opportunities are real and accessible. It is about ensuring candidates feel respected long before they enter the workforce, not being treated as part of corporate performance. When organizations overpromise and underdeliver, the impact is lasting; trust erodes, participation declines, and communities become protective of their people.

True attraction occurs when Indigenous jobseekers can see and feel that a company's intentions, timelines, and opportunities are authentic rather than symbolic *(Papillon & Rodon, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Participants also asked for clearer pathways into the industry:

> ***"I would like to know where I can get training for the oil and gas industry."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Summer - Growth & Retention

Guiding Principles: Participation & Representation

Summer teaches us that growth requires nourishment, balance, and an environment in which plants and people can stand tall.

Two-Eyed Seeing in Practice

- Co-design safety and operations meetings using both Indigenous and Western risk lenses, ensuring ceremony, story, and technical evidence share equal space
- Establish procurement and contracting gates that prioritize Indigenous-owned suppliers and local capacity building
- Maintain decision logs or reflection journals that document how Indigenous Knowledge and Western evidence are braided together in project planning
- Provide professional development rooted in relationship building and ongoing cultural safety learning, helping to create culturally safe workplaces
- Trauma-informed HR practices
- Mentorship that happens during and after work hours
- A buddy or support system that prevents Indigenous workers from being isolated during training, onboarding, or early employment
- Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous Relations support
- Policies that honour Indigenous Rights (bereavement, harvesting, hunting, kinship)
- Indigenous Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and other culturally grounded supports that create belonging, elevate Indigenous perspectives, and strengthen organizational learning

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Retention is not about whether Indigenous workers can adapt; it is about whether the workplace is safe enough for them to stay. Many Indigenous employees leave not because they lack skill or commitment but because the environment signals, sometimes subtly, sometimes directly, that they do not fully belong. Experiencing racism, microaggressions, pressure to mask their identity, or being the only Indigenous person in a department all take a cumulative psychological and emotional toll *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019).*

Belonging must be built intentionally.

Participants also expressed fear of being placed in training environments that feel unsafe or invalidating:

> ***"When we get training, please make sure it is legit, and we don't get embarrassed."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Less Spoken Realities

Structures such as mentorship, buddy systems, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous Relations support help reduce isolation and foster connection. Indigenous Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) further strengthen this by creating culturally grounded spaces where Indigenous employees can gather, share experiences, and support one another. These groups are not merely internal networks; they are sources of community, cultural affirmation, and collective safety *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Reading & Wien, 2009; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

ERGs also offer organizations something essential: truthful, lived insight into how Indigenous staff experience policies, practices, and workplace culture. When companies listen to these insights, retention improves not because employees toughen up, but because the workplace becomes a place where Indigenous People feel respected, represented, and valued.

Ultimately, retention depends on whether Indigenous employees can bring their full identity to the workplace without fear of harm, tokenism, or misunderstanding. When belonging is intentionally fostered and culturally grounded supports are embedded in organizational systems, Indigenous employees are far more likely to stay, grow, and lead *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Fall – Harvest & Advancement

Guiding Principles: Advancement & Empowerment

Fall teaches us that transformation is possible when people are supported, mentored, and recognized for their gifts.

Two-Eyed Seeing in Practice

- Develop cohort-based mentorship programs that include recognition or certification for Indigenous youth as they advance through stages of professional responsibility
- Design learning ladders that move participants from intern ➜ junior ➜ project lead, with competencies reflecting Two-Eyed principles (a balance of technical skills and cultural integrity)
- Advancement ladder that recognizes land-based knowledge, cultural experience, and relational or "soft" skills that Indigenous employees often contribute
- Track career progression, retention over 24 months (or over a course of time), and leadership representation among Indigenous employees
- Opportunities for Indigenous employees to lead projects, not just join them
- Highlight and celebrate stories of Indigenous innovation, governance, and community-led infrastructure/projects

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous workers often watch others be promoted while they remain stagnant, despite equal or greater ability. Advancement requires more than technical training; it also requires dismantling the biases and blind spots that prevent Indigenous employees from being recognized as leaders. Fall teaches us to harvest not only skills but also confidence, identity, and empowerment *(Kenny, 2012; Brown & Strega, 2015; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025).*

Winter – Reflection & Renewal

Guiding Principles: Safety, Ceremony & Wellbeing

Winter teaches us that true growth requires rest, reflection, accountability, and renewal.

Two-Eyed Seeing in Practice

- Hold seasonal reflection circles with staff and community partners to share learnings, evaluate metrics, and renew commitments
- Integrate ceremonial closure and renewal (smudging, prayer, storytelling) as part of project cycles, ensuring emotional and relational well-being are measured alongside deliverables
- Evaluate both quantitative indicators (retention, advancement) and qualitative measures (belonging, trust, community impact)
- Prepare findings collaboratively with the organization's Oversight/Steering Committee or equivalent governance body created to inform the next cycle of attraction and growth
- Transparent reporting back to communities
- Time and space to acknowledge mistakes and repair the relationship

Less Spoken Realities

Many Western systems avoid reflection because it slows progress. In the Indigenous worldview, however, reflection is part of the work, a time to pause, restore balance, and renew commitments. When organizations skip this season, they repeat the same mistakes. Winter creates space for humility, apology, and realignment with community values. This is where real change begins *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017; Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025; Schön, 1983).*

Centre – Reciprocity (All Seasons)

Guiding Principles: Relationship Before Resource

At the center of the cycle is reciprocity, the principle that:

- Benefits must flow both ways
- Relationship must be balanced
- Giving and receiving must be continuous

Without reciprocity, the cycle collapses.

This principle is foundational in Indigenous governance, ethics, and worldview *(Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*.

Indigenous Success Metrics Framework

A dual lens for measuring what matters

Shared Energy, Shared Futures builds on the many successes Indigenous communities and industry partners have already achieved together in creating meaningful, respectful workforce opportunities. It is designed to celebrate what is working while providing a clear structure for how we can continue to grow and strengthen these pathways. The measures uplift Indigenous worldviews of belonging, kinship, reciprocity, and cultural safety, and align with industry approaches to attraction, retention, advancement, and policy integration. By pairing these perspectives, we are creating a shared educational tool that honours Indigenous success and guides employers in continuing this important journey through partnerships.

The framework will consist of five categories:

- Indigenous-Centered Measures
- Western/Industry-Aligned Measures
- Systemic & Structural Metrics
- Two-Eyed Seeing – Dual Metrics
- Process Metrics (The “How” of the Work)

Success must be measured through two sets of indicators:

- Indigenous-Centered Measures (relational, emotional, cultural, qualitative)
- Western/Industry Measures (quantitative, trackable, operational) *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Parmenter, 2015)*

Both are essential. One without the other is incomplete *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*.

Indigenous-Centered Measures

These are qualitative, relational, and community-driven. They capture the felt experience of Indigenous employees and communities.

Belonging & Safety

- What percentage of Indigenous employees report a culturally safe workplace
- Stories of Indigenous employees feeling valued, respected, and able to bring their whole identity into the workplace.

Kinship & Connection

- Opportunities for employees to connect to the community, Elders, language, and land
- Employer practices that recognize Indigenous holidays, culture, ceremonies, and kinship responsibilities without penalty
- Employers supporting cultural ceremony and wellness

Kinship is central to Indigenous wellbeing and identity *(Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Hare & Anderson, 2010; Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

Reciprocity & Benefit

- How benefits from employment ripple into families and communities
- Employer investments back into Indigenous community-led initiatives
- Shared prosperity, not one-sided gains

Reciprocity is foundational in Indigenous worldviews *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*.

Self-Determination

- Indigenous employees represented in leadership and decision-making roles
- Indigenous partners guiding corporate strategies, not just reacting to them
- Indigenous employees in decision-making roles
- Indigenous Review Bodies validating outcomes

Self-determination is the foundation of Indigenous governance and rights *(United Nations, 2007; Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021)*.

Less Spoken Realities

Behind each of these measures are lived experiences that Western metrics often overlook. Belonging and cultural safety are not abstract; they are felt immediately in the first moments an Indigenous employee enters a workplace. Many Indigenous workers have learned to scan for safety by noticing tone, body language, humour, who holds leadership roles, and whether their identity will be respected or questioned. When workplaces fail to recognize ceremony, kinship responsibilities, or connections to land and community, employees often carry quiet stress, guilt, or a sense that they must choose between their job and their identity *(Curtis et al., 2019; Allan & Smylie, 2015)*.

Kinship and connection are central to Indigenous wellbeing. When employers support time with family, community, Elders, and cultural practices, it strengthens a worker's emotional, spiritual, and mental grounding. When these supports are absent, workers may appear disengaged, even though they are carrying responsibilities that Western policy frameworks were never designed to bear. The absence of cultural space is often misinterpreted as a lack of commitment, when it is actually a lack of cultural safety *(Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

Reciprocity and benefit are also deeply relational. Indigenous employees and communities notice when opportunities flow only one way. Real partnership is evident when benefits ripple outward, supporting families, youth, cultural programs, economic sovereignty, and community-led initiatives. When reciprocity is missing, the imbalance is felt long before it is named *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Self-determination is experienced not only through representation in decision-making but also through whether Indigenous voices genuinely shape strategy. Being invited to the table is not the same as being heard. Many Indigenous leaders have shouldered the exhausting burden of providing guidance without authority or being asked to validate decisions already made. Authentic self-determination is felt when Indigenous employees and partners see their worldview reflected in the outcomes, not just the process.

These realities remind us that Indigenous-centred measures are grounded in more than metrics; they reflect dignity, identity, wellness, and the relational responsibilities Indigenous Peoples carry into every space they enter. When organizations honour these dimensions, success is not only measured but also felt.

Western/Industry-Aligned Measures

These measures are quantifiable and can be integrated into HR and sustainability reporting frameworks used across the industry.

Recruitment

- Percentage increase in Indigenous applicants year-over-year
- Percentage of job postings co-developed with Indigenous organizations

Retention

- Turnover rates of Indigenous employees compared to non-Indigenous employees
- Average length of tenure for Indigenous employees

Advancement

- Percentage of Indigenous employees promoted within 2-3 years
- Percentage of Indigenous employees in supervisory, management, or executive role

Engagement

- Indigenous employee satisfaction scores from engagement surveys
- Percentage of Indigenous employees participating in training or leadership development

Less Spoken Realities

While Western metrics offer clear, quantifiable indicators, they often obscure the lived experiences behind the numbers. An increase in Indigenous applicants may reflect strong outreach efforts, but it does not reveal whether candidates felt respected, welcomed, or genuinely considered throughout the process *(Parmenter, 2015)*. High turnover rates may signal retention challenges, but they rarely capture the deeper reasons Indigenous employees leave, such as the exhaustion of being the only Indigenous person in a department, subtle racism, a lack of cultural safety, or the absence of mentorship during critical moments *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019)*. Promotion statistics show who advances, but they do not show who stays silent in meetings, who feels unseen, or who carries leadership qualities that Western systems overlook. Even engagement scores can mask the reality that many Indigenous employees do not feel safe sharing honest feedback in surveys or corporate settings *(Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

Numbers can tell part of the story, but they cannot measure belonging, cultural identity, emotional well-being, or the weight of navigating two worlds. They do not show whether Indigenous employees feel valued, heard, or supported, nor whether organizational systems have truly shifted to accommodate Indigenous worldviews. These measures become meaningful only when interpreted alongside Indigenous-centred insights, community feedback, and relational understanding. On their own, the numbers risk creating the appearance of progress without addressing the conditions that make progress real and sustainable *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996)*.

Systemic & Structural Metrics

These measures show how well the employer is embedding reconciliation into their systems, making clear that they are not just talking about "having a strategy" but about measurable, structural change within their HR and corporate policies. This balances Western accountability systems (metrics) with Indigenous priorities (cultural safety, reciprocity, and representation) *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)*.

Policy Integration

- Number of organizational policies formally updated to include Indigenous cultural safety, anti-racism, and reconciliation commitments
- Presence of a dedicated Indigenous employment or reconciliation strategy that anchors these commitments into corporate practice
- Policy areas that can be tracked:
  - Number of Indigenous hires per year
  - Recruitment & hiring (inclusive postings, Indigenous outreach)
  - Leave policies (cultural/ceremonial leave options)
  - Anti-racism & harassment (explicit recognition of anti-Indigenous racism)
  - Training & development (mandatory Indigenous cultural competency)
  - Procurement (targets for Indigenous-owned businesses)

Governance

- Representation
  - Percentage of governance bodies (boards, committees, advisory groups) with Indigenous representation
  - Decision-making
    - Existence of a formal mechanism for Indigenous voices to guide decisions (not just "consultation") *(Borrows, 2016)*
  - Accountability
    - Clear process for reporting back to Indigenous partners on decisions that affect them

Supplier & Economic Inclusion

- Spend Tracking
  - Percentage of annual procurement spend directed to Indigenous-owned businesses
  - Supplier Development
    - Number of Indigenous suppliers engaged in capacity-building partnerships
  - Policy Commitment
    - Existence of a procurement policy that prioritizes Indigenous vendors and contractors

Transparency & Reporting

- Public Accountability
  - Annual reporting on Indigenous workforce and procurement outcomes *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996)*
- Community Reporting
  - Mechanisms for reporting back directly to Indigenous communities (not just shareholders) *(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)*
- Validation
  - Indigenous Steering/Advisory groups review reports before release

Leadership & Capacity Building

- Leadership Representation
  - Number and percentage of Indigenous people in supervisory, management, and executive roles
- Development Pathways
  - Existence of formal mentorship and training programs for Indigenous employees, from Internship to the Board *(Reading & Wien, 2009)*
- Board/Committee Training
  - Percentage of leaders and managers who have completed Indigenous cultural competency training *(Curtis et al., 2019)*

Less Spoken Realities

System-level change often looks clean and straightforward on paper, with updated policies, oversight/steering committees, procurement targets, and training programs. Yet behind these measures lie deeper truths that Western systems rarely acknowledge. Policy integration, for example, may signal progress, yet Indigenous employees and communities often wait years for those policies to translate into consistent practice. A cultural leave policy means little if workers still fear judgment for using it. Anti-racism commitments fall flat when racist incidents go unaddressed, and mandatory cultural competency training is only meaningful when it shifts behaviour, not just checkboxes *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Kelaher et al., 2014).*

Governance metrics may show Indigenous representation on committees or advisory groups, but that representation does not necessarily translate into influence. Many Indigenous leaders have sat at tables where decisions were already made, with their role symbolic rather than meaningful. Without mechanisms to ensure shared decision-making, accountability to the community, and continuity through turnover, representation risks becoming performative rather than transformative *(Smith, 2021).*

Supplier and economic inclusion metrics can signal significant investment, yet communities often see the gap between transactional contracting and true economic partnership. A procurement policy might prioritize Indigenous vendors, but if contracts remain small, short-term, or administratively burdensome, the policy has not shifted the underlying imbalance. Community members stressed the importance of formalizing local hiring expectations in contracts:

> ***When communities hire companies to do work on the reserve, they should put in the contract that they use locals for labour and other positions.***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Less Spoken Realities

Similarly, supplier development programs may exist, but without long-term commitment, they do not build real capacity or economic sovereignty *(Kelaher et al., 2014; Reading & Wien, 2009).*

Transparency and reporting structures can also mask quiet tensions. Communities often receive information late, inconsistently, or in technical language that obscures impacts. Reporting "to shareholders" is not the same as reporting to the people most affected. When Indigenous oversight bodies are asked to validate outcomes without being involved in the process that shaped them, the relationship is strained, not strengthened *(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Smith, 2021).*

Leadership and capacity-building measures often report the number of employees trained or promoted, yet they rarely capture how supported Indigenous leaders feel. Many Indigenous employees are asked to lead within systems that continue to undervalue Indigenous governance principles, relational leadership, or community accountability. Training programs help, but they do not remove the emotional weight of navigating workplaces not designed with Indigenous Peoples in mind *(Curtis et al., 2019; Allan & Smylie, 2015).*

These realities remind us that structural change is not only about what systems say but also about what they do. Progress becomes real when policies, governance, procurement, and leadership practices consistently honour Indigenous rights, worldviews, and self-determination. Metrics can signal progress, but lived experience reveals whether it is truly felt.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Two-Eyed Seeing – Dual Metrics

Pairing the Indigenous worldview with Western key performance indicators to keep the balance.

Workforce Retention

- Western KPI
  - Percentage of Indigenous employees retained for 3+ years *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996)*
- Indigenous Measure
  - Do employees feel safe staying without sacrificing their cultural identity, family obligations, or values?
- How to Track
  - Combine HR retention data with Indigenous employee surveys/ interviews.

Leadership Representation

- Western KPI
  - Percentage of Indigenous employees in management or executive roles.
- Indigenous Measure
  - Are those leaders empowered to lead through Indigenous worldviews, not just assimilated into corporate culture?
- How to Track
  - Track promotions & qualitative feedback from Indigenous leaders on cultural safety in leadership.

Recruitment

- Western KPI
  - Percentage increase in Indigenous applicants year over year *(Parmenter, 2015)*
- Indigenous Measures
  - Are job postings co-designed with Indigenous communities, and do candidates feel they are approached with respect?
- How to Track
  - Recruitment data & Indigenous partner feedback on process

Community Impact

- Western KPI
  - Number of Indigenous hires per year
- Indigenous Measure
  - How has this translated into community wellbeing (e.g., ability to participate in ceremony, family stability, youth inspiration)?
- How to Track
  - HR data & storytelling circles with Indigenous employees and their communities

Less Spoken Realities

Two-Eyed Seeing reminds us that numbers alone cannot capture the lived reality of Indigenous employees, leaders, or communities. A workforce retention rate may indicate stability on paper, but it cannot reveal whether Indigenous employees feel safe, respected, or able to show up without having to mask parts of their identity. Many Indigenous workers do not stay because conditions are ideal, but because they feel a responsibility to their families or hope that things will improve. Others leave quietly, carrying the emotional weight of being misunderstood or unsupported, experiences that metrics rarely highlight *(Allan & Smylie, 2015)*.

Leadership representation metrics also tell only part of the story. An increase in Indigenous leaders does not automatically mean they are empowered to lead through their own worldview. Many Indigenous leaders work in environments where relational decision-making, humility, and accountability to community are undervalued. They often shoulder the hidden labour of educating colleagues, translating between cultures, or softening organizational practices that may harm community relationships. Western KPIs cannot measure the emotional and cultural weight of leading in two worlds at once *(Smith, 2021)*.

Recruitment numbers may reflect growth, but they do not reveal whether Indigenous candidates felt respected, informed, or genuinely welcomed. Many have long memories of outreach efforts that looked promising but led nowhere. For communities, co-designing a job posting is not a procedural step; it is a signal of whether the employer is truly committed to partnership or simply seeking applicants to fill targets. Respect is felt, not counted.

Community impact metrics can also be misleading when taken alone. A company may report a high number of Indigenous hires, yet communities may not experience meaningful benefits. The true impact shows up in the well-being of families, the pride of youth who see role models in industry, and the ability of workers to participate in culture, ceremony, and community life without penalty. These outcomes are relational and long-term. They cannot be fully expressed through annual reports *(Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Two-Eyed Seeing reminds us that success is not a straight line, but a cycle shaped by relationship, reciprocity, and reflection. When Western KPIs are understood alongside Indigenous measures, the picture becomes both complete and more honest. This balance naturally leads to the Seasonality Framework, where attraction, retention, advancement, and renewal are guided not only by numbers but also by the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples.

Ultimately, Two-Eyed Seeing requires organizations to interpret Western KPIs through the relational, cultural, and emotional truths carried by Indigenous Peoples. When both eyes are honoured, metrics do more than demonstrate progress; they reveal whether that progress is being felt, lived, and sustained.

Process Metrics (The "How" of the Work)

Measuring the integrity of the journey, not just the outcome

Inclusion in Design

- Metric
  - Number of Indigenous voices included in project design and decision-making
- Indigenous Measure
  - Did Indigenous worldviews meaningfully shape the project design, rather than being consulted as an afterthought?
- How to Track
  - Meeting notes, advisory committee participation logs, Indigenous review sign-offs

Governance & Oversight/Steering Committee Accountability

- Metric
  - Level of satisfaction among Oversight/Steering Committee members (measured quarterly)
- Indigenous Measure
  - Do Indigenous members feel their guidance is prioritized over industry convenience?
- How to Track
  - Short posting-meeting reflection or anonymous check-ins

Timeliness & Transparency

- Metric
  - Percentage of milestones shared with Indigenous partners within agreed timelines *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996)*
- Indigenous Measure
  - Do communities feel informed, respected, and not "last to know"?
- How to Track
  - Track reporting dates & gather community feedback on timeliness/ clarity

Knowledge Reciprocity

- Metric
  - Number of meetings/events that include Indigenous protocols (opening/closing, Elder involvement, land acknowledgement with depth)
- Indigenous Measure
  - Do participants feel safe, respected, and grounded in culture?
- How to Track
  - Meeting agendas/logs & reflections from Indigenous member

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Process is where Indigenous partners feel the truth of an organization's intentions long before any outcomes are reported. Inclusion in design, for example, may appear strong in meeting notes, yet Indigenous participants often know instantly whether their worldview shaped the work or whether they were brought in to validate decisions already made *(Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008)*. Being consulted late or superficially can feel dismissive, and these experiences accumulate over years of engagement, making it difficult to rebuild trust *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

As one participant stated plainly:

> ***"My voice is never heard in places I want to explore."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Oversight and Steering Committees are not just governance bodies; they are relational spaces. When Indigenous members perceive that their guidance is routinely overridden for convenience, speed, or corporate preference, trust erodes silently *(Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*. Many Indigenous leaders carry the emotional labour of offering honest advice, knowing it may be set aside. Satisfaction metrics cannot capture the subtle yet heavy feeling of being heard yet not reflected in decisions *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Timeliness and transparency are also deeply relational. Communities pay close attention to how, when, and whether information is shared, and whether it arrives with clarity and respect. When milestones are communicated late or selectively, it signals that Indigenous partners are not treated as true collaborators *(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)*. Being the "last to know" is not merely inconvenient; it echoes long histories of exclusion from decision-making on their own lands.

Less Spoken Realities

Knowledge reciprocity, which honours protocols, ceremony, language, and relational practices, cannot be measured solely by how many meetings begin with an Elder or a land acknowledgement. Indigenous participants can feel when protocols are performed with sincerity and when they are treated as a checkbox *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*. True reciprocity is felt in the tone of the room, the care taken in relationships, and the willingness to slow down when cultural practices require time and presence *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

These realities remind us that process metrics are not administrative exercises; they measure relational integrity. When Indigenous partners experience consistency, respect, transparency, and cultural grounding at every step, the work becomes trustworthy. When they do not, no metric can repair the relational harm. The "how" of the work ultimately determines whether outcomes are meaningful, ethical, and sustainable *(Smith, 2021; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003)*.

Together, Two-Eyed Seeing – Dual Metrics and Process Metrics (The "How" of the Work) ensure accountability for balance and integrity.

- Two-Eyed Seeing checks that Western KPIs do not dominate *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*
- Process Metrics check that the journey itself is Indigenous-led, respectful, and inclusive *(Smith, 2021; Wilson, 2008)*

True success cannot be counted in numbers alone; it is seen in the faces of those who feel safe, included, and proud of who they are. When trust, belonging, growth, safety, and reciprocity are all present, the circle is complete *(Reading & Wien, 2009; Allan & Smylie, 2015)*.

Taken together, these measures show that meaningful progress requires more than hiring targets, compliance checklists, or policy updates.

It requires a balanced approach that honours Indigenous definitions of wellbeing *(Greenwood et al., 2015)*, centres on cultural safety and belonging *(National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health, 2013)*, strengthens relationships, and ensures systems evolve in response to community leadership *(Wilson, 2008; Smith, 2021)*. When organizations measure not only outcomes but also the integrity of the journey, including how decisions are made, how people feel, how relationships are tended, and how culture is respected, they move beyond transactional change toward transformation. These metrics remind us that reconciliation is lived through everyday actions that build trust, uphold rights, and create spaces where Indigenous employees and communities can thrive *(Opimoyaso Group & Creative Links Inc. Steering Committee, personal communication, 2025)*.

Module 3 – Creating Safe, Inclusive Systems

What Must Change Inside Organizations

Purpose of this Module

Module 3 translates the foundational principles from Modules 1 and 2 into organizational systems, policies, and daily practices. While Modules 1 and 2 focus on worldview, history, and understanding the system, Module 3 focuses on what must change within organizations to ensure Indigenous workers are safe, supported, and able to thrive.

This module is grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing and recognizes that cultural safety, inclusion, and equity are not achieved through intention alone but also through deliberate system design. It centres Indigenous lived experience, Rights and Title, and relational accountability, and offers clear guidance for HR, leadership, and operations teams.

This module is designed to be used by:

- HR and People & Culture teams
- Indigenous Relations teams
- Operations and field supervisors
- Leadership and governance bodies

How this Module will be used

This module is designed to support organizations to:

- Establish a shared understanding of what safety means for Indigenous employees
- Strengthen supervisor and leadership readiness
- Improve onboarding, mentorship, and retention supports (linked to Section 3.2)
- Inform policy and practice changes (linked to Section 3.3)
- Reduce harm, improve trust, and support long-term Indigenous workforce participation

Organizations should use these guidelines to hold reflective conversations across HR, leadership, Indigenous Relations, and operations, particularly in field, site, plant, camp, and project-based work environments where risks to Indigenous employees are often elevated due to isolation, power imbalances, and limited access to culturally informed supervision and supports.

Where possible, organizations should review these guidelines with Indigenous employees, community partners, or Indigenous advisory bodies to ensure the workplace approach aligns with lived realities and the local context.

Section 3.0 – Inclusion Scorecard

Indicators to measure belonging, equity, representation, cultural safety, anti-racism, and governance inclusion

Purpose of this Section

This section introduces the Inclusion Scorecard as a core accountability and reflection tool that helps organizations assess whether Indigenous inclusion is experienced rather than merely stated. While many organizations track diversity through hiring numbers, representation statistics, or training completion rates, Indigenous workers and communities consistently report that these measures do not indicate whether workplaces are safe, respectful, or culturally grounded.

The Inclusion Scorecard is grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing. It weaves together Indigenous ways of knowing, such as relational accountability, belonging, cultural safety (defined as whether a workplace is experienced as safe and respectful by Indigenous employees, rather than by organizational intent), and trust, with Western organizational tools, including indicators, measurement, and reporting. Its purpose is not to rank organizations or produce a compliance checklist but to support honest reflection, learning, and systems change over time.

This section builds directly on:

- Module 1's grounding in Indigenous worldview, relational accountability, and Two-Eyed Seeing
- Module 2's identification of systemic barriers, cultural harm, and "Less Spoken Realities" within workforce systems

Together, these foundations make clear that what is measured must reflect what truly matters to Indigenous Peoples.

How the Inclusion Scorecard should be used

The Inclusion Scorecard is intended as a learning and accountability tool, not a compliance exercise.

It should be applied:

- Over time, not as a one-time assessment
- With Indigenous participation and guidance
- Alongside qualitative stories and lived experiences
- In ways that support reflection, dialogue, and change

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Organizations are encouraged to review scorecard findings with Indigenous advisors, employees, or partners and to treat the results as invitations to adjust systems rather than as opportunities to defend existing practices.

Why an Inclusion Scorecard is needed

Many organizations believe they are making progress because they can point to Indigenous hiring targets, diversity statements, or reconciliation commitments. However, Indigenous workers often describe a different reality, one in which they may be present in the workforce yet feel unsafe, unsupported, isolated, or pressured to assimilate.

Western workforce systems tend to prioritize what is easy to quantify: headcounts, turnover rates, training hours, and compliance metrics *(Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Parmenter, 2015)*. While these measures provide useful information, they do not capture relational experiences such as belonging, respect, cultural safety, or trust. When organizations rely solely on these measures, they risk mistaking activity for impact.

From an Indigenous worldview, success is relational. It is evident in the quality of relationships, the presence of respect, the ability to bring one's whole self to work, and the strength of accountability to community and future generations *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Simpson, 2017)*. An Inclusion Scorecard is needed to bridge these worldviews, enabling organizations to evaluate inclusion in ways that are both meaningful and actionable.

Two-Eyed Seeing and Measurement

In a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, measurement is not rejected but reoriented. Western tools such as scorecards, indicators, and dashboards can support accountability when guided by Indigenous values and relational ethics.

Through the Indigenous Eye, inclusion is understood as follows:

- Feeling safe to express identity
- Being treated with respect and dignity
- Having cultural responsibilities recognized as valid
- Experiencing fair access to opportunity and support
- Seeing Indigenous knowledge, governance, and leadership valued

Through the Western Eye, organizations seek:

- Clarity on progress and gaps
- Consistency across departments and sites
- Evidence to inform decision-making
- Accountability to leadership and external partners

The Inclusion Scorecard brings these perspectives together by asking not only how many Indigenous employees are present but also how inclusion is practiced, who holds power, and whether systems are changing meaningfully *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012)*.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Core Domains of the Inclusion Scorecard

While each organization and Nation will define indicators within their own context, the Inclusion Scorecard is structured around several core domains that reflect Indigenous lived realities and workforce experiences.

Belonging and Cultural Safety

This domain assesses whether Indigenous employees feel welcomed, respected, and safe.

Indicators may include the presence or absence of racism and microaggressions, levels of psychological safety, opportunities to participate in cultural practices, and whether Indigenous identity is affirmed rather than undermined.

Equity and Fairness

This domain examines access to opportunity, advancement, pay equity, training, and support. It asks whether Indigenous employees face barriers that others do not and whether systems actively address historical and structural inequities.

Representation and Voice

This domain looks beyond numerical representation to assess whether Indigenous Peoples have meaningful influence. It considers Indigenous participation in decision-making, leadership roles, advisory structures, and whether Indigenous perspectives shape policies and practices.

Relational Accountability

This domain reflects Indigenous expectations of accountability to one another, the community, and future generations. It examines whether organizations honour commitments, respond to harm, and maintain relationships beyond individual employment transactions *(Wilson, 2008)*. Relational accountability emphasizes responsibility to people, relationships, and commitments over time, rather than to processes alone.

Governance and Shared Power

This domain assesses whether Indigenous governance, rights, and protocols are respected in organizational decision-making. It examines how policies are developed, who is consulted, and whether Indigenous Nations are treated as Rights and Title Holders rather than stakeholders *(Borrows, 2016; Smith, 2021)*.

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous workers often describe being counted but not supported. They may be celebrated in recruitment materials, even as they face racism, isolation, or pressure to educate others. When inclusion is measured only by numbers, these experiences remain invisible.

Poorly designed metrics risk harming Indigenous employees through surveillance, shifting feedback burdens onto them, or using their experiences to bolster organizational reputation rather than drive meaningful change. Implementing a culturally grounded Inclusion Scorecard requires careful, consensual, and relationally accountable approaches.

When used well, however, the Inclusion Scorecard can surface truths that organizations need to hear. It can make visible what has long been felt but unmeasured, and it can foster more honest conversations about power, responsibility, and transformation.

Barriers often compound across gender, criminalization, caregiving roles, and Indigeneity, creating layered forms of exclusion that cannot be addressed through single-issue solutions.

During community engagement, participants named how layered identities shape exclusion in workforce systems.

One participant wrote:

> ***Being a woman trying to work a man's job.***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Another shared:

> ***Having a criminal record.***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

This reflection reinforces that inclusion cannot be measured through single-axis metrics. Gender bias, criminalization, and Indigeneity intersect within hiring and workplace systems in ways that require a structural response.

Why this matters for Systems Change

Without tools that meaningfully measure inclusion, organizations tend to reproduce the very systems they claim to change. Inclusion Scorecard helps disrupt this pattern by aligning accountability with Indigenous values, lived realities, and long-term well-being.

By grounding measurement in Two-Eyed Seeing, organizations can ensure that what is counted reflects what is felt and that progress is defined not only by presence but also by safety, respect, and shared responsibility.

Section 3.1 – Safe Workplace Guidelines

Psychological safety, addressing racism, cultural protocols, conflict resolution, and protection of workers

Purpose of this Section

This section offers culturally grounded guidance for creating workplaces where Indigenous employees are not merely present but also safe, respected, supported, and able to thrive. It builds directly on Module 2's findings that barriers in the energy sector often stem not from ability or interest but from whether workplaces are psychologically, culturally, and relationally safe enough for Indigenous Peoples to stay *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019; Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

In *Shared Energy, Shared Futures*, a "safe workplace" is not defined by the absence of formal complaints or by the existence of policies on paper.

Safety is defined by whether Indigenous employees experience:

- Respected and dignity
- Absence of racism, microaggressions, and tokenism
- Consistent protection from harm and isolation
- Supported cultural identity, kinship and community responsibilities, and community obligations
- Clear pathways for addressing conflict, harm, and repair

This section is written to help HR teams, Indigenous Relations teams, leaders, and supervisors understand that safety is a system-design responsibility. It must be built into culture, processes, accountability structures, and everyday behaviour.

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Why Safe Workplace Guidelines are needed

Many organizations believe that anti-harassment policies, respectful workplace training, or diversity statements ensure safety. Yet Indigenous workers often experience harm that formal processes do not capture. Cultural harm is often subtle, cumulative, and relational. It can manifest as silence, exclusion, jokes, dismissal of Indigenous identity, pressure to "prove" belonging, or punitive responses to cultural obligations.

Research consistently shows that racism and culturally unsafe environments are directly linked to stress, withdrawal, lower retention, and inequitable career outcomes among Indigenous Peoples *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Curtis et al., 2019)*. These harms are exacerbated in settings where workers are isolated, supervisors are unprepared to respond to racism, and organizational culture normalizes "toughness" over well-being.

Safe Workplace Guidelines are needed because safety cannot be left to individual goodwill.

They require systems that:

- Anticipate harm rather than react after the fact
- Establish clear expectations and consequences
- Distribute responsibility across leadership, HR, and operations
- Support restoration and learning while prioritizing the well-being of those harmed

Two-Eyed Seeing and Workplace Safety

Two-Eyed Seeing helps organizations understand that workplace safety is experienced differently across worldviews.

Through the Western Eye, safety is often defined as follows:

- Compliance with legislation and policy
- Clear reporting procedures
- Incident investigation and corrective action
- Training completion and documentation

These components matter. They provide structure and accountability.

Through the Indigenous Eye, safety is defined by the following principles:

- Individuals feel respected and protected within a relationship
- Identity is affirmed rather than questioned
- Conflicts are navigated with care and responsibility
- Cultural responsibilities are honoured without penalty
- The workplace feels emotionally and spiritually safe

Indigenous worldviews emphasize that harm is not only a violation of rules but also a disruption of relationships and dignity. A Two-Eyed approach, therefore, requires workplaces to hold both truths simultaneously: policy must exist, and safety must be felt *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Wilson, 2008)*.

What Workplace Safety looks like for Indigenous Employees

Workplace safety for Indigenous employees is multi-layered, encompassing psychological, cultural, and relational safety.

Psychological Safety

- People feel safe asking questions, learning, admitting mistakes, and speaking up without fear of humiliation or retaliation
- Indigenous employees can raise concerns about racism or harm without being labelled "difficult

Cultural Safety

- Indigenous identity is respected, not treated as an inconvenience
- Cultural practices and responsibilities are honoured
- Indigenous workers are not pressured to educate others or to represent "all Indigenous Peoples"

Relational Safety

- People experience the workplace as human, where relationships matter as much as performance does
- Supervisors recognize that trust is built on consistency, humility, and follow-through

Cultural safety is widely understood as a felt experience shaped by the person receiving care or interacting with a system, rather than by the organization's intent *(Curtis et al., 2019)*. In workforce settings, this means safety must be evaluated through the experiences of Indigenous employees, not solely through organizational self-assessment. Two-Eyed Seeing allows organizations to retain Western safety tools while reorienting them through Indigenous values. This recognizes that a workplace can be physically safe yet culturally unsafe, and that harm can occur even in the absence of formal complaints or policy violations *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

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Core Elements of a Safe Workplace for Indigenous Employees

The following guidelines are offered as a culturally grounded foundation. They are not a checklist. They are commitments to be lived through daily practice. A safe workplace for Indigenous employees is one in which systems, leadership, and daily practices actively prevent harm rather than respond only after harm occurs.

Address Racism and Microaggressions Immediately

Racism in the workplace is not always overt. Indigenous employees frequently face microaggressions, stereotyping, exclusion from informal networks, questions about their competence, and pressure to represent all Indigenous Peoples. When these behaviours go unaddressed, they accumulate, leading to chronic stress and isolation *(Allan & Smylie, 2015)*.

Safe workplace guidelines must clearly state that racism, discrimination, and microaggressions are unacceptable and must establish clear, trusted pathways for addressing harm that do not place the burden solely on Indigenous employees.

Safe workplaces require leaders and supervisors to:

- Name harmful behaviour clearly
- Intervene early, not only when incidents escalate
- Hold people accountable without shifting the burden onto Indigenous employees
- Treat racism as a workplace safety issue, not an interpersonal disagreement

Prevent Isolation and the "Only One" Burden

Indigenous employees, especially in operational environments such as field, site, plant, facility, or camp-based settings, are often the only Indigenous person on a crew, in a camp, or in a department. This creates heightened visibility, pressure, and vulnerability. Safe workplace guidelines should include strategies to reduce isolation, such as peer networking, mentorship, and access to Indigenous supports, rather than relying on individual resilience or goodwill.

Organizations can reduce this risk by:

- Creating buddy systems or paired placements
- Ensuring Indigenous workers have safe points of contact
- Building mentorship supports to reduce isolation and support retention
- Ensuring early visibility and access to Indigenous Relations teams as trust points of contact
- Monitoring remote and high-risk environments closely

Isolation is not a minor discomfort; it poses a safety risk that affects mental well-being, retention, and vulnerability to harassment (Reading & Wien, 2009). Participants also described the vulnerability of entering male-dominated or culturally unfamiliar environments.

One participant wrote:

> ***"Being a woman trying to work a man's job."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Isolation compounds when gender, Indigeneity, and workplace culture intersect without intentional safeguards.

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Honour Indigenous Identity without Tokenism or Performative Inclusion

Many Indigenous employees experience tokenism, celebrated for optics while remaining excluded from meaningful influence. Others face pressure to "perform" Indigeneity or to educate colleagues. Indigenous employees are often hired into environments where they are the only Indigenous person on a team, at a site, or in a department. Without intentional support, this can lead to isolation, emotional labour (the ongoing emotional stress of managing others' expectations and educating colleagues), and tokenization (being included symbolically without meaningful influence or decision-making power).

Safe workplaces:

- Do not treat Indigenous employees as cultural translators
- Do not use Indigenous employees as proof of reconciliation
- Recognize Indigenous expertise in technical, leadership, and relational domains
- Create pathways for Indigenous leadership that do not require assimilation

Build Cultural Protocol Awareness into Workplace Norms

Protocol is not merely a symbolic gesture; it is part of Indigenous governance and relational responsibility.

Workplaces can enhance safety by normalizing respectful practices such as:

- Thoughtful openings and closings, where appropriate, without forcing Indigenous employees to lead
- Clarity around respectful language and behaviour
- Space for ceremony, grief, and community obligations
- Respect for Elders/Knowledge Keepers when they are present

Because Nations are distinct, cultural protocol must be approached with humility and context rather than pan-Indigenous assumptions *(Kovach, 2009)*.

Ensure Conflict Navigation includes Accountability and Relational Repair, not just Discipline

Western workplace systems often treat conflict as a liability. Indigenous approaches emphasize responsibility, relational repair (restoring trust and balance after harm), and accountability.

This does not mean excusing harm. It means ensuring that response pathways include the following:

- Support for the person harmed (first priority)
- Accountability and consequence when harm occurs
- Options for culturally grounded repair when appropriate and safe
- Learning and system improvement so that harm is not repeated

When harm involves racism or harassment, organizations must respond decisively and protect the worker. When misunderstandings involve culture or communication, repair-oriented approaches may support growth, provided Indigenous employees are not pressured to accept repair before they feel safe.

Embed Safety into Leadership Expectations

A safe workplace cannot rest solely on HR or Safety departments, even where Safety functions traditionally hold this responsibility. It must be embedded in leadership's performance expectations.

Safe workplace leadership includes:

- Demonstrating cultural humility and self-awareness
- Taking responsibility for workplace culture
- Responding to harm quickly and respectfully
- Ensuring follow-through (trust is built through consistency)

Trust grows when leaders behave predictably and take responsibility, not when they avoid discomfort *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*.

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How to assess safety in Practice

Organizations should evaluate workplace safety from multiple perspectives:

Quantitative indicators (Western aligned):

- Retention and turnover patterns
- Reporting rates and resolution timelines
- Performance review outcomes, including whether safety concerns or reporting are penalized or supported

Qualitative indicators (Indigenous-centered):

- Whether Indigenous employees feel a sense of belonging
- Whether workers feel protected when harm occurs
- Whether cultural identity is respected
- Whether Indigenous employees would recommend the workplace to family

Because cultural safety is a felt experience, ethical and pressure-free qualitative feedback is essential *(Curtis et al., 2019)*.

Why Safe Workplace Guidelines matter for Systems Change

Safe workplace guidelines are foundational to any meaningful effort to improve Indigenous workforce participation. Without safety, initiatives in recruitment, retention, mentorship, or leadership development will fail to deliver lasting change.

When organizations commit to culturally grounded safety, they signal that Indigenous employees are valued not only for their labour but also for their humanity, identity, and knowledge. This builds trust, improves retention, and creates conditions for Indigenous leadership and innovation to flourish.

Ultimately, a safe workplace is not created by policy alone. It is sustained by consistent behaviour, accountable leadership, and relationships grounded in respect. This is how organizations begin to move from inclusion as an aspiration to inclusion as a lived reality.

Safety across different Workplace Contexts

Indigenous employees experience safety differently depending on where and how they work. Safe workplace guidelines must be adaptable across contexts.

Corporate and Office Environments

In office settings, harm often manifests as exclusion from decision-making, performative inclusion, cultural misunderstanding, and pressure to educate others. Safety requires clear expectations for respectful communication, shared responsibility for learning, and leadership accountability.

Field, Site, and Camp-Based Work

In field and camp settings, Indigenous employees may face heightened risks from isolation, hypervisibility, or a lack of culturally informed supervision. Safety in these contexts requires clear behavioural standards, trained supervisors, culturally informed incident response, and zero tolerance for harassment or racism.

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous employees do not report harm through formal processes. They may fear retaliation, being labelled as difficult, or being seen as the problem rather than the harm being recognized as the issue. Some have experienced systems where complaints were minimized, investigators lacked cultural understanding, or outcomes prioritized reputation over people.

In many cases, Indigenous employees leave quietly rather than fight a system that has historically failed to protect them. Organizations may interpret this as “turnover” or “lack of fit,” but it is actually a signal of cultural unsafety.

Less Spoken Realities

There is also a less spoken reality that some workplaces unintentionally reproduce colonial dynamics by expecting Indigenous employees to:

- Be grateful to be included
- Tolerate disrespect as part of "workplace culture"
- Educate colleagues while carrying their own workload
- Choose between their job and their identity

When Indigenous employees must mask their identity to stay safe, the system is unsafe.

As one participant stated plainly:

> ***"Being a woman trying to work a man's job."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

This statement reflects not only exclusion from opportunities, but also the psychological cost of feeling invisible within systems that claim to include. Cultural safety requires more than tolerance; it demands courage, action, and shared responsibility *(Allan & Smylie, 2015; Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

Some individuals describe exhaustion from continually evaluating the safety of disclosing their identity, addressing misinformation, or confronting inappropriate conduct. Over time, this emotional labour can lead to burnout, disengagement, and attrition.

Organizations often misinterpret Indigenous turnover as a recruitment problem rather than a safety issue. Without systemically addressing workplace safety, hiring more Indigenous employees simply increases the number of people exposed to harm.

Section 3.2 – Trauma-Informed HR & Human-Centred Recruitment

Hiring, onboarding, mentorship, and communication pathways

Trauma-informed practices recognize that systems, policies, and power dynamics can unintentionally cause harm and seek to design processes that reduce re-traumatization while maintaining accountability.

Purpose of this Section

This section supports organizations in redesigning human resources systems to be trauma-informed, relational, and human-centred, rather than procedural, extractive, or surveillance-based. It builds directly on the understanding of safety established in Sections 3.0 and 3.1 and responds to the reality that many Indigenous Peoples have experienced harm through institutional systems, including education, employment, child welfare, health, and justice *(TRC, 2015; Allan & Smylie, 2015)*.

In the workplace, trauma is often misunderstood as an individual issue rather than a systemic and historical reality. Trauma-informed HR recognizes that policies, processes, and workplace cultures can either reduce harm and support healing or, unintentionally, perpetuate colonial patterns of control, exclusion, and punishment.

Human-centred recruitment and HR practices do not lower standards or expectations. Instead, they remove unnecessary barriers, increase fairness, and create conditions that enable Indigenous workers to enter, remain, and advance in workplaces without sacrificing identity, dignity, or well-being.

How this Section will be used

This section is designed to help organizations:

- Evaluate recruitment, onboarding, and HR practices through a trauma-informed lens
- Reduce unnecessary barriers and bias in workforce entry and advancement
- Improve Indigenous employee retention and well-being
- Strengthen trust between employees, HR, leadership, and the community

These practices are most effective when developed and reviewed with Indigenous employees, advisors, or Nations to ensure they reflect lived realities and local context.

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Understanding Trauma in Indigenous Workforce Contexts

Trauma experienced by Indigenous Peoples is neither accidental nor isolated. It is the result of an ongoing colonial system that disrupted families, governance, land-based livelihoods, languages, and identities through policies such as residential schools, forced relocations, the Sixties Scoop, and ongoing overrepresentation in child welfare and justice systems *(TRC, 2015; Reading & Wien, 2009)*.

These histories continue to shape how Indigenous Peoples experience institutions today.

Workplace systems, particularly HR processes, can trigger trauma by:

- Relying heavily on surveillance, rigid compliance, or punitive responses
- Requiring individuals to repeatedly justify or disclose personal circumstances
- Dismissing cultural responsibilities as unprofessional or inconvenient
- Assuming workplace systems are neutral, despite evidence that they reinforce inequities and disadvantage Indigenous employees

Trauma-informed HR does not require organizations to become therapeutic spaces. Instead, it calls for recognizing power, history, and impact, and for designing systems that minimize harm while strengthening trust, clarity, and support *(Harris & Fallot, 2001)*.

Two-Eyed Seeing and Trauma-Informed HR

Through the Western Eye, HR systems are designed to ensure the following:

- Consistency (often equated with fairness)
- Risk management and compliance
- Documentation and defensibility
- Clear performance expectations

These goals are legitimate and necessary in organizations.

Through the Indigenous Eye, HR systems are perceived as:

- Gatekeepers to opportunity or exclusion
- Sources of safety or fear
- Signals of whether the organization values relationships over control
- Reflections on whether Indigenous identity is welcome or tolerated

Two-Eyed Seeing requires organizations to hold both perspectives simultaneously. Trauma-informed HR does not abandon structure; it uses structure to uphold dignity, fairness, and relationships. When Western HR tools are guided by Indigenous values of respect, reciprocity, and relational accountability, they become mechanisms for equity rather than sources of harm *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Wilson, 2008)*.

Human-Centred Recruitment: Removing Barriers at the Entry Point

Recruitment is often the first point of contact between Indigenous Peoples and an organization. When recruitment processes are overly rigid, opaque, or culturally disconnected, they can exclude qualified candidates before employment begins.

Common barriers include:

- Overemphasis on formal credentials over lived experience
- Jargon-heavy job postings
- Online-only application systems that disadvantage rural or remote communities where internet access is limited or unreliable
- Interview processes that privilege Western communication styles

Community members expressed frustration with hiring systems that require experience without offering pathways to gain it.

One participant captured this clearly:

> ***"No experience in a position; they don't offer training."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Another participant shared:

> ***"I would like to know where I can get training for the oil and gas industry."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Human-centred recruitment approaches include:

- Plain-language job descriptions that clearly explain roles and expectations
- Valuing transferable skills, community experience, and lived knowledge
- Flexible application pathways (e.g., in-person, supported, and community-based)
- Interview processes that are relational, transparent, and respectful

These approaches do not compromise quality. They expand access and reduce bias by recognizing multiple ways to demonstrate competence and readiness *(Kirmayer et al., 2014)*.

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Trauma-Informed Onboarding and Early Employment

The first months of employment are critical for retaining Indigenous workers. Trauma-informed onboarding focuses not only on policies and procedures but also on relationship- building, clarity, and support.

Effective onboarding practices include:

- Clear explanation of workplace expectations and supports
- Introduction of safe points of contact (HR, mentors, and Indigenous Relations)
- Early check-ins that focus on wellbeing, not just performance
- Explicit permission to ask questions and seek support

Onboarding should avoid overwhelming new employees with excessive documentation or assumptions about prior institutional knowledge. For Indigenous workers who may have experienced exclusion or punishment within systems, early relational safety is essential.

Participants emphasized that training environments must feel legitimate and safe, not humiliating or performative:

> ***"When we get training, please make sure it is legit, and we don't get embarrassed."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Training that undermines dignity or confidence can re-trigger past experiences of institutional harm and erodes trust before employment stability is achieved.

Mentorship, Support, and After-Hours Realities

Many Indigenous employees shoulder responsibilities beyond the workplace, including caregiving, ceremony, community leadership, and crisis response. Trauma-informed HR recognizes that life does not end at 5:00 p.m.

Organizations can support Indigenous employees by:

- Establishing mentorship and buddy systems
- Providing access to Indigenous or culturally informed supports
- Recognizing that emergencies or cultural obligations may arise unexpectedly
- Offering flexibility without requiring excessive disclosure

These supports reduce burnout and turnover while strengthening trust and loyalty. They signal that the organization recognizes Indigenous employees as whole people, not just workers.

Performance Management through a Trauma-Informed Lens

Performance management systems can be a significant source of harm when they prioritize punishment over development or overlook systemic barriers.

Trauma-informed performance management includes:

- Clear expectations communicated early and often
- Feedback that is specific, respectful, and growth-oriented
- Recognition of structural or contextual barriers
- Opportunities for learning and connection before discipline

This approach does not eliminate accountability. Instead, it ensures that accountability is fair, transparent, and grounded in a relationship rather than fear.

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous employees have learned to navigate workplaces by staying quiet, avoiding visibility, or leaving rather than raising concerns. Past experiences of not being believed, retaliated against, or labelled a problem inform these choices.

There is also a less-spoken reality that trauma-informed language can be misused, applied superficially without changing power dynamics or decision-making. When organizations adopt the language of care without altering systems, Indigenous employees may perceive it as performative rather than protective.

True trauma-informed HR requires courage. It requires organizations to reflect on how their systems may cause harm and to accept discomfort as part of the growth process.

Section 3.3 – Indigenous Rights in Employment & Policy Integration

Bereavement, land-based activities, kinship, taxation, free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), and leave structures

In employment contexts, Indigenous Rights refer to collective, inherent responsibilities and governance obligations that exist independently of organizational policies.

FPIC requires transparency, sufficient time, the ability to decline without consequence, and respect for collective decision-making.

Purpose of this Section

This section clarifies how Indigenous Rights must be reflected in employment policies, benefits, and organizational governance. It affirms that Indigenous Rights in employment contexts are not discretionary benefits or cultural accommodations but legal, ethical, and relational obligations. It supports organizations in integrating Indigenous Rights into workplace policies, benefits, governance, and decision-making in ways that are consistent, respectful, and accountable.

Building on Sections 3.0-3.2, this section clarifies that safety, inclusion, and trauma-informed practice cannot be sustained if Indigenous Rights are treated as exceptions or managed informally. Without structural embedding, Indigenous employees are left vulnerable to inconsistent interpretation, discretionary approval, or retaliation.

This section is grounded in Indigenous governance systems, Canadian and international legal frameworks, and lived workforce experience. It affirms that respecting Indigenous Rights in employment is the responsibility of organizations, not of individual Indigenous employees to negotiate or justify.

Recognizing Indigenous Rights is not an accommodation; it is a legal, ethical, and relational obligation.

How this Section will be used

This section is designed to support organizations in:

- Reviewing and revising employment policies through an Indigenous Rights lens
- Reducing harm caused by rigid or exclusionary frameworks
- Strengthening legal, ethical, and relational accountability
- Aligning workplace practices with reconciliation, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and Indigenous governance

Indigenous Rights integration should be treated as an ongoing responsibility, not a one-time compliance exercise.

Indigenous Rights and Employment: Foundational Understanding

Indigenous Rights predate and exist independently of employment contracts or organizational policies. These rights stem from Indigenous Peoples' inherent sovereignty, governance systems, and relationships to land, community, and future generations *(Borrows, 2016; UNDRIP, 2007)*.

In employment contexts, Indigenous Rights may intersect with:

- Cultural and ceremonial responsibilities
- Kinship and caregiving obligations
- Governance participation and leadership roles
- Land-based practices, harvesting, and seasonal activities
- Collective decision-making responsibilities

When workplaces fail to recognize these responsibilities as legitimate, Indigenous employees are often forced into impossible choices between employment and identity. Therefore, policy integration is essential to prevent harm and inequity.

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Two-Eyed Seeing and Rights Integration

Through the Western Eye, organizations manage rights as follows:

- Policies and procedures
- Collective agreements and benefit structures
- Legal compliance and risk management
- Documentation and consistency

These tools are necessary to ensure fairness and predictability.

Through the Indigenous Eye, rights are understood as follows:

- Responsibilities to family, community, land, and Nation
- Relational obligations rather than individual entitlements
- Collective rather than purely individual in nature
- Ongoing and intergenerational

Two-Eyed Seeing requires organizations to use Western policy tools to support Indigenous governance and responsibility, not to dominate them. When policies are flexible, transparent, and grounded in respect, they protect employees and organizations while upholding Indigenous Rights *(Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015; Wilson, 2008).*

Core Areas of Indigenous Rights Integration in Employment

The following areas highlight common points of tension where Indigenous Rights intersect with workplace systems. They are offered as guidance for policy integration, not as an exhaustive list.

Bereavement, Grief, and Ceremony

Indigenous concepts of grief and loss often extend beyond the immediate family to include community members, Elders, and collective loss. Ceremonies, gatherings, and extended periods of mourning may be required to restore balance and fulfill responsibilities.

Policies that narrowly define bereavement leave can unintentionally harm Indigenous employees by forcing them to choose between cultural responsibility and job security.

Rights-respecting approaches include:

- Broad definitions of family and community
- Flexible leave structures that recognize ceremony and mourning
- Clear communication that these leaves are legitimate and protected

Kinship and Caregiving Responsibilities

Kinship systems create responsibilities that extend beyond nuclear family models. Indigenous employees may serve as caregivers for children, Elders, extended family, and community members.

Organizations can uphold these rights by:

- Recognizing kinship-based caregiving in leave and flexibility policies
- Avoiding assumptions about availability or commitment
- Designing policies that accommodate collective responsibility

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Harvesting, Land-Based Practices, and Seasonal Responsibilities

For many Indigenous Peoples, harvesting, hunting, fishing, and other land-based practices are not hobbies; they are rights, responsibilities, and sources of sustenance, identity, and well-being.

Employment policies should:

- Recognize land-based practices as legitimate reasons for leaves
- Align flexibility with seasonal cycles where possible
- Avoid penalizing employees for fulfilling these responsibilities

Community members also highlighted the importance of embedding local hiring and community benefit directly into contractual structures.

One participant wrote:

> ***When communities hire companies to do work on the reserve, they should put in the contract that they use locals for labour and other positions.***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

This reflects an expectation that Indigenous Rights and economic participation are formalized through agreements, not left to goodwill.

Governance Participation and Leadership Obligations

Indigenous employees may hold governance roles within their Nations or communities, including council positions, committee roles, ceremonial responsibilities, or leadership roles related to land, language, or cultural continuity.

These responsibilities are expressions of Indigenous self-determination, not extracurricular activities. In many cases, governance obligations require preparation, travel, confidentiality, and extended time commitments.

Rights-respecting workplaces:

- Recognize governance participation as legitimate and protected leave
- Avoid penalizing employees for fulfilling leadership responsibilities
- Respect confidentiality, protocol, and collective decision-making timelines
- Understand that governance obligations may not align with Western meeting schedules or notice periods

Taxation and Status-Related Considerations

Some Indigenous employees are affected by distinct tax rules related to Indian Status, reserve-based income, treaty rights, or specific employment arrangements.

Misunderstanding or mishandling these considerations can cause financial harm and erode trust.

Organizations should:

- Ensure HR, payroll, and finance teams have accurate information
- Avoid placing the burden of explanation solely on employees
- Seek appropriate expertise rather than relying on assumptions
- Communicate clearly and respectfully about taxation practices

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in Employment Contexts

While FPIC is often discussed in relation to land and resource development, its principles also apply in employment contexts when Indigenous Peoples are asked to participate in initiatives related to Indigenous knowledge, community relationships, or representation.

This includes:

- Participation in pilots or programs linked to the Indigenous worldview
- Use of Indigenous stories, lived experience, or cultural knowledge
- Requests to represent Indigenous Peoples or Nations

FPIC requires transparency, sufficient time, the ability to decline without consequences, and respect for collective decision-making *(United Nations, 2007)*.

A participant asked:

> ***When you go to other reserves, does this help their voice?***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

This question underscores that engagement must strengthen collective voice, not extract input for isolated projects.

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous employees are often required to disclose personal, cultural, or community responsibilities to request flexibility or leave. This requirement can feel invasive or unsafe, especially when managers lack cultural understanding or discretion.

There is also a less-often-acknowledged reality that Indigenous Rights are sometimes framed as "special treatment," which can create resentment or backlash. When policies are unclear or inconsistently applied, Indigenous employees may face increased scrutiny rather than protection.

When rights are negotiated informally rather than embedded in the structure, outcomes depend on individual managers rather than on shared responsibility. This places Indigenous employees at risk and undermines trust.

Embedding Rights into Systems, Not Exceptions

To uphold Indigenous Rights ethically and consistently, organizations must:

- Embed rights into formal policies, collective agreements, and benefit structures
- Train leaders and supervisors on Indigenous governance and rights
- Ensure HR systems support flexibility without excessive disclosure
- Review policies with Indigenous advisors, partners, or Nations

Embedding rights into systems reduces uncertainty, prevents harm, and shifts responsibility from Indigenous employees to organizational structures.

Recap of Module 3 – Bringing this work together

Creating Safe, Inclusive Systems

Module 3 has focused on what must change within organizations to ensure Indigenous Peoples are safe, supported, and able to thrive in the energy sector. While previous modules in this Framework are grounded in worldview, history, and systems understanding, this module turns attention inward to the structures, policies, behaviours, and assumptions that shape the daily workplace experience.

Taken together, the sections in this module make one central point clear: Indigenous inclusion is not achieved through intention alone. It is achieved through systems designed to uphold dignity, safety, and Indigenous Rights in practice.

Inclusion as a Lived Experience

Section 3.0 introduced the Inclusion Scorecard to measure what is often overlooked: belonging, cultural safety, relational accountability, and shared power. This section challenges organizations to move beyond counting Indigenous employees and instead reflect on whether they feel included.

From an Indigenous worldview, success is relational. The Scorecard reframes accountability so that what is measured reflects what matters to Indigenous Peoples, rather than what is easiest for systems to count.

Safety as a System Responsibility

Section 3.1 explored what workplace safety truly means for Indigenous employees. Safety was defined not as the absence of complaints or conflict but as the presence of respect, protection, and cultural dignity. This section made visible the everyday harms, including racism, isolation, tokenism, and silence, that often go unaddressed within Western workplace systems.

Importantly, this section shifted responsibility from individuals to systems. It affirmed that safety is created or undermined by leadership behaviour, organizational culture, and the consistency with which harm is addressed.

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Trauma-Informed Practice as Structural Care

Section 3.2 examined how HR Systems can unintentionally reproduce harm when they prioritize surveillance, punishment, or rigidity over relationship and fairness. Trauma-informed HR was framed not as therapy but as an ethical system designed to recognize history, power, and impact.

Human-centred recruitment, relational onboarding, mentorship, and development-focused performance management were presented as ways to remove unnecessary barriers while maintaining accountability. This section reinforced that trauma-informed practice benefits not only Indigenous employees but also organizational trust, retention, and long-term stability.

Indigenous Rights as Non-Negotiable

Section 3.3 made explicit what is often left implicit: Indigenous Rights in employment are not accommodations or exceptions. They are obligations rooted in Indigenous sovereignty, governance, and international and domestic legal frameworks.

By naming areas such as ceremony, kinship, land-based responsibilities, governance participation, taxation, and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, this section clarified where harm most often occurs when policies are vague or discretionary. It emphasized that rights must be embedded in systems so Indigenous employees are not forced to negotiate their dignity one conversation at a time.

What this Module asks of Organizations

Viewed together, Module 3 asks organizations to reflect honestly on their readiness not only to hire Indigenous workers but also to take responsibility for their well-being, rights, and long-term participation.

It asks organizations to move from:

- Statements to systems
- Intentions to accountability
- Inclusion as optics to inclusion as lived experience
- Flexibility as discretion to rights as structure

From an Indigenous worldview, systems that cause harm must be changed, not endured. Module 3 offers a pathway for organizations to take responsibility for that change, guided by relationship, humility, and shared accountability.

Preparing for what comes next

With this foundation in place, Module 4 turns to pathways, practices, and tools. While Module 3 focused on making workplaces safe and just, Module 4 focuses on creating conditions for growth, mentorship, advancement, community-led training, and economic inclusion.

Without the work of Module 3, those pathways would not be safe to walk. With it, they become possible.

This is how systems begin to change, not all at once, but intentionally, relationally, and in a good way.

Module 4 – Pathways, Practices, and Tools

How to Operationalize Change through Pathways and Tools

Purpose of this Module

Module 4 focuses on how Indigenous workforce participation is supported, sustained, and strengthened over time. While Module 3 addressed safety, rights, and internal systems change, Module 4 shifts to pathways for growth, recognizing that Indigenous participation in the energy sector must be supported throughout the full employment journey.

The module is grounded in an Indigenous worldview that understands work not as a linear transaction but as a relational, cyclical, and intergenerational process. Workforce pathways are shaped by community readiness, seasonality, kinship responsibilities, governance obligations, and long-term well-being.

Module 4 emphasizes that there is no single pathway that fits all Nations, communities, or individuals. Instead, it offers guiding approaches and practices that can be adapted through relationships, co-design, and context.

How this Module will be used

This section is designed to help organizations:

- Reflect on workforce readiness before recruitment
- Design pathways aligned with the Indigenous worldview
- Move from transactional hiring to relational workforce development
- Prepare for the mentorship, training, and tools outlined in the following sections

Organizations are encouraged to use this approach alongside Indigenous partners and communities, adapting pathways through dialogue and co-design.

Section 4.0 – Workforce Pathways & Readiness Approach

Applying the Seasonality Framework across the employment lifecycle

Attraction ➜ Retention ➜ Advancement ➜ Renewal

Purpose of this Section

This section presents an applied approach to understanding and supporting Indigenous workforce pathways throughout the full employment lifecycle. Rather than introducing a new framework, it operationalizes the Seasonality Framework from Module 2, translating its principles into practical workforce pathways, organizational practices, and readiness considerations.

While many workforce initiatives focus narrowly on recruitment, this section recognizes that long-term Indigenous workforce participation depends on whether organizations, systems, and communities are prepared, supported, and resourced to sustain engagement over time.

The Workforce Pathways & Readiness approach is guided by Two-Eyed Seeing and aligns with the Seasonality Framework's cyclical nature *(Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2015).* It helps organizations move beyond short-term hiring targets toward relational, long-term workforce development grounded in Indigenous definitions of success and well-being.

This section helps organizations ask:

- How do we hire Indigenous workers?
- Are our systems ready to support them?
- Are communities resourced and willing to engage?
- Are pathways aligned with Indigenous definitions of success and wellbeing?

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Indigenous Worldview and Workforce Pathways

From an Indigenous worldview, work is connected to identity, community, land, and responsibility *(Wilson, 2008; Simpson, 2017)*. Employment participation is shaped by seasonal cycles, ceremonies, governance roles, family obligations, and community priorities.

Indigenous workforce pathways are therefore:

- Cyclical rather than linear
- Relational rather than transactional
- Context-specific rather than standardized
- Intergenerational rather than individualistic

Success is not defined solely by upward mobility or continuous full-time employment. It is defined by balance, well-being, community contribution, and the ability to meet responsibilities across multiple roles.

Western Workforce Models and their limits

Western workforce systems typically conceptualize employment as a linear pipeline: Recruitment ➜ Onboarding ➜ Performance ➜ Promotion ➜ Retention

While this model offers clarity and structure, it often overlooks:

- Community readiness and consent
- Cultural and seasonal responsibilities
- Non-linear career movement
- Breaks for ceremony, caregiving, or governance
- Collective definitions of success

When applied without adaptation, linear workforce models can unintentionally exclude Indigenous Peoples or label them as “at risk” for failing to conform to Western norms.

Two-Eyed Seeing Approach to Workforce Pathways

The Workforce Pathways & Readiness approach integrates Indigenous and Western perspectives through Two-Eyed Seeing.

Through the Indigenous Eye, pathways are assessed based on:

- Relational readiness
- Cultural safety and support
- Alignment with community priorities
- Respect for time, seasonality, and governance

Through the Western Eye, pathways are assessed based on:

- Role clarity and expectations
- Training and competency requirements
- Safety, compliance, and certification
- Resourcing and operational feasibility

Two-Eyed Seeing ensures that Western workforce structures support Indigenous wellbeing and sovereignty, rather than forcing Indigenous Peoples to adapt to systems that were not designed for them.

The Workforce Pathways in Practice

This section presents a four-part pathway that reflects both Indigenous seasonality and Western employment stages:

- Attraction – Spring – Renewal & Awakening
- Retention – Summer – Growth & Strength
- Advancement – Fall – Harvest & Transformation
- Reflection – Winter – Reflection & Renewal

These pathways are not strictly sequential. Individuals may move among them over time, pause, return, or redefine success based on life stage, community needs, or opportunities.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Attraction: Entering the Workforce in a Good Way

Attraction focuses on how Indigenous Peoples encounter opportunities and decide whether engagement feels safe, meaningful, and worthwhile.

Effective attraction requires:

- Trust built through relationship, not branding
- Clear, honest communication about roles and expectations
- Engagement with communities before recruitment begins
- Respect for community readiness and consent

Community members consistently report that recruitment events without clear, available roles erode trust; ethical attraction requires that opportunities presented are real, resourced, and intended to lead to employment.

As one community participant stated:

> ***"I would like to know where I can get training for the oil and gas industry."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Ethical attraction requires more than presence at events; it requires transparent roles, real opportunities, and follow-through that strengthens trust rather than erodes it.

Participants also expressed the need for clearer entry points into the industry.

One individual shared:

> ***"If companies do job fairs, commit to hiring from the community."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

When pathways are unclear, attraction efforts risk becoming aspirational rather than actionable.

Retention: Staying where Safety and Support exist

Retention is not about convincing Indigenous employees to stay in unsafe environments. It is about whether workplaces are designed to foster belonging, dignity, and growth.

Retention is strengthened by:

- Safe workplace systems (Module 3)
- Trauma-informed HR practices
- Mentorship and relational support
- Flexibility aligned with Indigenous responsibilities

Advancement: Growing without Assimilation

Advancement pathways must support Indigenous employees' growth without requiring them to suppress their identity or disconnect from their community.

Advancement includes:

- Access to training and skill development
- Transparent promotion processes
- Leadership pathways that value Indigenous knowledge
- Recognition of diverse forms of expertise

Renewal: Cycles, Continuity, and Long-Term Relationship

Renewal recognizes that Indigenous workforce participation may include pauses, transitions, or returns influenced by life stage, ceremony, governance, or community needs.

Renewal pathways:

- Normalize non-linear careers
- Support re-entry after time away
- Maintain relationship beyond active employment
- Strengthen long-term trust between organizations and communities

Readiness: Assessing Conditions for Ethical Engagement

Readiness is a shared responsibility among individuals, communities, and organizations.

Organizations should assess:

- Internal readiness (systems, leadership, safety)
- Community readiness (interest, consent, capacity)
- Role readiness (training, supports, expectations)

Engagement without readiness risks harm, burnout, and broken trust.

Less Spoken Realities

Many workforce initiatives fail not because Indigenous Peoples lack interest or capacity, but because organizations move faster than relationships can keep up. Pressure to fill roles, meet targets, or demonstrate progress can override readiness.

There is also a less-acknowledged reality: Indigenous employees are repeatedly asked to adapt to changing systems, leadership turnover, and shifting priorities, while organizations rarely reflect on their readiness to sustain relationships.

Without readiness, pathways become extractive rather than supportive.

Section 4.1 – Mentorship, Coaching & After-Hours Support Models

Multi-layered mentorship, paired placement, Elder support, and crisis navigation

Purpose of this Section

This section recognizes mentorship and relational support as core conditions for Indigenous workforce success, not optional add-ons. It responds to consistent feedback from Indigenous workers and communities that retention and the ability to navigate advancement opportunities are shaped more by whether people feel supported, guided, and protected than by technical skill, particularly outside formal work hours.

Mentorship, coaching, and after-hours support are especially important in sectors such as energy, where work may involve remote sites, shift work, safety-sensitive environments, and high-pressure cultures. For Indigenous employees navigating workplace expectations and community responsibilities, the presence or absence of trusted relational support can determine whether employment is sustainable.

This section builds on the safety, trauma-informed, and rights-based foundations established in Module 3 and the pathway approach introduced in Section 4.0. It emphasizes that mentorship is not merely about career advice; it is about multiple, interconnected relationships, accountability, and shared responsibility.

Indigenous Worldview and Relational Support

From an Indigenous worldview, learning and growth unfold through relationships. Knowledge is transmitted through observation, storytelling, guidance, and shared experience rather than solely through formal instruction. Elders, Knowledge Keepers, family members, and community leaders have traditionally served as mentors, supporting not only skill development but also identity, responsibility, and well-being.

In this context, mentorship is:

- Relational rather than transactional
- Grounded in trust and reciprocity
- Responsive to life stages and responsibilities
- Oriented toward long-term well-being, not short-term performance

When Indigenous Peoples enter Western workforce systems that prioritize independence, competition, and self-navigation, the lack of relational support can lead to isolation and risk. Mentorship models aligned with the Indigenous worldview help bridge this gap.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Western Mentorship Models and their Limits

Western mentorship and coaching models often focus on:

- Individual performance and advancement
- Time-bound coaching relationships
- Formalized programs with limited scope
- Support confined to work hours

While these models can be effective for some employees, they often fail to address the realities Indigenous workers face, particularly in environments where:

- Workers are geographically or culturally isolated
- Power dynamics discourage asking for help
- Racism or cultural misunderstanding may be present
- Support is needed outside of standard business hours

Without adaptation, conventional mentorship programs risk perpetuating inequity by assuming all employees have equal access to informal support networks.

A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach to Mentorship and Support

A Two-Eyed Seeing approach integrates Western structures with Indigenous relational values.

Through the Indigenous Eye, effective mentorship and support:

- Are grounded in trust and relationships
- Recognize the whole person, not just the worker
- Allow space for cultural, family, and community responsibilities
- Include guidance through difficulty, not only success

Through the Western Eye, effective mentorship and support:

- Provide clarity on roles, expectations, and development goals
- Ensure accountability and consistency
- Are resourced and recognized within organizational systems
- Support safety, performance, and retention

Together, these perspectives support mentorship models that are both relational and reliable.

Core Mentorship and Support Models

The following models reflect practices that have demonstrated positive outcomes when developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and employees. Organizations may use one model or combine several, depending on context and readiness.

Paired Placement and Buddy Models

Paired placement connects Indigenous employees with a trusted peer or mentor from the outset of employment. This approach reduces isolation, supports early learning, and provides a safe point of contact for questions or concerns.

Effective paired models:

- Begin at onboarding and continue for more than six months
- Include clear expectations and check-ins
- Prioritize trust and confidentiality
- Are supported, not informal or ad hoc

Layered Mentorship Models

Layered mentorship recognizes that no single mentor can meet all needs.

Indigenous employees may benefit from access to a:

- Technical or role-based mentor
- Cultural or Indigenous mentor
- Leadership or career development mentor

Layered models distribute responsibility, reduce burnout, and provide more holistic support.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Elder and Knowledge Keeper Support

When appropriate and invited, Elders or Knowledge Keepers can provide guidance that fosters balance, resilience, and cultural grounding. Their role is not to resolve workplace disputes but to offer wisdom, perspective, and support.

Organizations engaging Elders or Knowledge Keepers must:

- Follow appropriate protocol
- Provide fair compensation
- Respect boundaries and confidentiality
- Avoid placing them in enforcement or HR roles

Coaching and Career Navigation Support

Coaching supports Indigenous employees in navigating organizational systems, understanding expectations, and pursuing development pathways without requiring assimilation.

Effective coaching:

- Is strengths-based and future-oriented
- Acknowledges systemic barriers
- Supports goal setting aligned with personal and community priorities

After-Hours and Crisis Support Considerations

Many challenges Indigenous employees face, such as family emergencies, racism, isolation, and safety concerns, do not occur neatly within work hours. While organizations are not responsible for employees' personal lives, they are responsible for ensuring employees are not left unsupported during moments of risk.

After-hours support considerations may include:

- Clear points of contact in emergencies
- Protocols for responding to incidents in camps or remote sites
- Access to culturally informed supports
- Flexible responses rather than punitive action

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous employees often feel unsure about whom they can safely approach when challenges arise. Fear of being labelled as weak, difficult, or unprofessional can deter help-seeking, particularly in male-dominated or safety-sensitive environments.

As one participant described:

> ***"My voice is never heard in places I want to explore."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Mentorship structures must therefore not only provide guidance but also create space for Indigenous employees to be heard, supported, and advocated for within organizational systems.

Participants also named gendered workplace pressures, including:

> ***"Being a woman trying to work a man's job."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

In environments where cultural and gender isolation intersect, layered mentorship and protective supervision become critical safeguards.

There is also a less-discussed reality that mentorship responsibilities often fall to Indigenous employees, who may be asked to support others without recognition, compensation, or protection. When mentorship is informal and lacks necessary resources, such as funding, staff, or materials, it can become a burden rather than a source of support.

Section 4.2 – Community-Led Training & Nation-to-Nation Capacity Sharing

Collaborative models, shared labour pools, and community-driven skill development

Training pathways must be legitimate, recognized, and clearly linked to employment outcomes; training disconnected from real opportunities is often perceived as harmful rather than supportive.

Participants emphasized that training must be credible, respectful, and linked to real outcomes.

One individual stated:

> ***"When we get training, please make sure it is legit, and we don't get embarrassed."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Training that undermines dignity or fails to connect to employment can deepen mistrust rather than build capacity.

Purpose of this Section

This section centres Indigenous Nations and communities as the rightful leaders, knowledge holders, and decision-makers in workforce training and capacity development and outlines the role of industry in supporting and aligning with that leadership. It responds to long-standing concerns that many workforce initiatives are designed for Indigenous Peoples rather than with them, often resulting in misalignment, short-term outcomes, or unintended harm.

Community-led training and Nation-to-Nation capacity sharing recognize and honour existing Indigenous leadership, shifting industry practices away from extractive labour models toward building shared capacity. These approaches respect Indigenous sovereignty, strengthen long-term relationships, and support workforce development grounded in community priorities rather than short-term industry needs.

This section builds on the Workforce Pathways & Readiness content in Section 4.0, and the mentorship supports outlined in Section 4.1, emphasizing that sustainable workforce development must be grounded in consent, governance, and community priorities.

In this section, Indigenous Nations lead the direction, priorities, and governance of training and capacity development. The industry's role is not to direct or control these processes but to support them with resources, technical expertise, flexibility, and long-term commitment aligned with Nation-defined priorities.

How this Section will be used

This section is designed to help organizations:

- Shift from industry-driven to community-led training and capacity development approaches
- Build ethical Nation-to-Nation workforce partnerships
- Strengthen long-term Indigenous workforce capacity
- Align training initiatives with Indigenous sovereignty and priorities

Organizations are encouraged to view community-led training as a shared journey guided by relationship, consent, and accountability. This section is not limited to training that occurs in the community or outside urban centres, nor is it restricted to pre-employment readiness. It applies to workforce training and capacity development before, during, and across employment, wherever training takes place.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Indigenous Worldview: Training as Collective Responsibility

From an Indigenous worldview, learning is relational, place-based, and collective. Knowledge is developed and shared to support community well-being, continuity, and self-determination. Training is not solely about individual credentialing; it is about strengthening the collective capacity of families, Nations, and future generations.

Community-led training, therefore:

- Reflects community priorities and timelines
- Builds skills that align with local economic and governance goals
- Supports intergenerational learning and mentorship
- Respects land, language, and cultural context

When training is disconnected from community governance and priorities, it risks reproducing colonial patterns of extraction by taking labour without building lasting benefits.

Limits of Industry-Driven Training Models

Industry-led training models often prioritize speed, standardization, and immediate labour needs. While these approaches can address short-term workforce gaps, they often overlook community readiness, capacity, and consent.

Common limitations include:

- Training designed without community input
- Programs that prepare individuals for roles that may not align with community priorities
- Lack of support once training ends
- Minimal investment in local training infrastructure or governance capacity

One participant captured a recurring concern:

> ***"No experience in a position; they don't offer training."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Requiring experience without providing accessible training pathways creates structural exclusion rather than opportunity.

When training initiatives bypass community leadership, they can erode trust and increase workforce churn rather than foster stability.

A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach to Capacity Sharing

A Two-Eyed Seeing approach recognizes that both Indigenous and Western systems have strengths to offer.

Through the Indigenous Eye, ethical capacity sharing:

- Respects Indigenous sovereignty and governance
- Centres consent and relationship
- Aligns training with community-defined success
- Builds capacity that remains in the community

Though the Western Eye, effective capacity sharing:

- Ensures technical competency and safety standards
- Provides access to certification and accreditation
- Aligns with regulatory and operational requirements
- Supports workforce mobility where desired

Together, these perspectives support Nation-to-Nation approaches that are both culturally grounded and operationally sound.

Community-Led Training Models

The following models reflect approaches that have shown positive outcomes when developed in partnership with Indigenous Nations. These models are not perspectives; they are examples of how capacity sharing can be done respectfully.

Community-Designed Training Programs

Community-designed programs are developed under the direction of Indigenous leadership and governance. Industry partners support these programs at the invitation and direction of Indigenous leadership, providing technical expertise, resources, and employment pathways.

Key features include:

- Training aligned with community economic priorities
- Delivery that respects cultural and seasonal calendars
- Inclusion of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or local mentors
- Clear pathways from training to opportunity, where desired

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Nation-to-Nation Partnerships

Nation-to-Nation capacity sharing recognizes Indigenous Nations as governments and partners, not stakeholders *(Borrows, 2016; United Nations, 2007)*. These partnerships are grounded in mutual respect, consent, and long-term commitment, and require the creation of an ethical space where distinct knowledge systems and governance approaches can engage without hierarchy *(Ermine, 2007)*.

Effective Nation-to-Nation partnerships:

- Are guided by formal agreements or protocols
- Share decision-making authority
- Invest in community governance and administration
- Commit to transparency and accountability

Such partnerships move beyond transactional agreements to build enduring relationships.

Shared Labour Pools and Regional Collaboration

In some regions, Nations may choose to collaborate on shared labour pools or regional training initiatives. These models can expand opportunities while respecting sovereignty.

They include:

- Clear governance structures
- Agreements on data use and mobility
- Respect for Nation-specific protocols
- Mechanisms for resolving disputes collaboratively

Building Local Training Infrastructure

Sustainable workforce development requires investment in local capacity.

This may include:

- Training facilities
- Local instructors and coordinators
- Administrative and governance capacity
- Access to technology and equipment

Investing in local infrastructure strengthens community self-determination and reduces reliance on external providers.

Less Spoken Realities

Many Indigenous communities have experienced repeated engagement by industry and governments that did not result in lasting benefits. Training programs may come and go, leaving little behind once funding ends.

There is also a less spoken reality that communities are often asked to shoulder significant administrative and relational labour without adequate resources. When capacity sharing is framed as a partnership but resourced as a charity, inequity persists.

True community-led training requires patience, humility, and a willingness to invest beyond immediate returns.

Community members frequently express that their voices are heard during engagement but not reflected in outcomes.

A participant asked directly:

> ***When you go to other reserves, does this help their voice?***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

This question reflects a broader expectation that engagement must strengthen collective voice across communities, not merely collect feedback.

This work is intended to close that gap by embedding Indigenous leadership into how workforce systems are designed, governed, and evaluated, not only how feedback is collected.

Embedding Community Leadership into Workforce Systems

For community-led training to succeed, organizations must:

- Respect community timelines and decision-making processes
- Invest in governance and administrative capacity
- Share power and information transparently
- Commit to a long-term relationship rather than short-term outcomes

When community leadership is embedded within workforce systems, training becomes a site for reconciliation, economic inclusion, and shared prosperity.

Section 4.3 – Employer Tools: Plain Language, Protocols, and Template

Job postings, onboarding sheets, cultural safety checklists, and communication guides

Purpose of this Section

This section provides practical, day-to-day tools to help employees turn commitment into consistent action. It addresses a common gap identified by Indigenous employees and communities: even when organizations have good intentions and strong policies, harm persists when expectations, processes, and communication are unclear or inaccessible.

Plain-language tools, shared protocols, and adaptable templates reduce reliance on individual discretion and interpretation. When designed with a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, these tools support fairness, consistency, and cultural safety while respecting Indigenous Rights and relational accountability.

This section builds on the system foundation from Module 3, and the pathway supports in Sections 4.0-4.2, offering concrete ways for organizations to operationalize their commitments without reducing Indigenous inclusion to a checklist exercise.

How this Section will be used

This section is designed to help organizations:

- Translate policy commitments into everyday practice
- Reduce inconsistency and reliance on individual discretion
- Support respectful, confident decision-making
- Strengthen safety, trust, and accountability

Organizations are encouraged to treat these tools as living resources, adapted through relationships, reflection, and Indigenous guidance.

Indigenous Worldview: Tools as Shared Understanding

From an Indigenous worldview, tools are not neutral instruments; they shape relationships, expectations, and power. Clear communication and shared understanding are essential for maintaining balance and trust. When tools are confusing, inaccessible, or inconsistent, Indigenous employees are often forced to interpret, explain, or advocate for themselves.

Well-designed tools:

- Reduce misunderstanding and conflict
- Support transparency and accountability
- Protect dignity and relationship
- Shift responsibility from individuals to systems

Limits of Policy-Only Approaches

Many organizations rely heavily on formal policies to guide behaviour. While policies are necessary, they are often written in legal or technical language that is difficult to interpret in everyday practice. This gap can leave supervisors unsure how to respond and employees unsure of their rights or options.

Common challenges include:

- Policies that exist but are not understood
- Inconsistent application across teams or sites
- Overreliance on individual judgement
- Fear of doing the wrong thing leading to inaction

Plain-language tools and practical templates help bridge the gap between policy intent and lived experience.

A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach to Employer Tools

Through the Indigenous Eye, effective tools:

- Are accessible and easy to understand
- Reflect respect for identity, time, and relationship
- Make space for context and conversation
- Reduce the need for repeated disclosure

Through the Western Eye, effective tools:

- Provide clarity and consistency
- Support compliance and documentation
- Reduce risk and uncertainty
- Enable fair decision making

Two-Eyed Seeing ensures that tools are neither overly rigid nor overly vague. They provide structure while allowing relational responsiveness.

Core Tool Categories

The following categories represent common tools that support ethical, consistent practice. Templates should always be adapted in collaboration with Indigenous partners and with local context in mind.

Plain-Language Job Postings and Role Descriptions

Job postings are often the first point of contact between Indigenous Peoples and an organization. Jargon-heavy language, excessive requirements, or vague expectations can deter qualified candidates.

Plain-language job tools:

- Clearly explain role responsibilities and expectations
- Distinguish required skills from assets
- Use inclusive, respectful language
- Name supports, training, and mentorship available

Community members emphasized the need for accessible information and preparation tools, noting:

> ***“Offer the Indigenous Awareness ticket and more info.”***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Transparent communication about certifications and support reduces uncertainty and supports informed decision-making.

These tools support attraction pathways by enhancing transparency and reducing bias.

Onboarding Guides and Orientation Materials

Onboarding tools help new employees understand not only what is expected of them but also what support the organization provides.

Effective onboarding guides:

- Clearly outlines workplace norms and supports
- Identify points of contact for HR, mentorship, and Indigenous Relations
- Explain policies related to safety, leave, and flexibility in accessible language
- Set expectation for respectful behaviour and accountability

Strong onboarding tools reduce uncertainty and support early retention.

Cultural Safety and Respect Checklists

Cultural safety checklists are not meant to police behaviour but to prompt reflection and consistency, particularly for supervisors and teams unfamiliar with Indigenous contexts.

Well-designed checklists:

- Encourage proactive consideration of impact
- Support respectful engagement and communication
- Reinforce shared responsibility for safety
- Are used as learning tools, not enforcement mechanisms

Communication Guides and Conversation Prompts

Many supervisors and colleagues want to be respectful but are unsure how to initiate or navigate conversations about culture, flexibility, or support.

Communication guides may include:

- Suggested language for discussing accommodations and rights
- Prompts for check-ins and feedback
- Guidance on responding to harm or conflict
- Reminders to listen and avoid assumptions

These tools help reduce avoidance and build confidence.

Protocols for Engagement and Response

Clear protocols help organizations respond consistently to situations, including:

- Requests for cultural or ceremonial leave
- Reports of racism or harm
- Requests from communities for organizational engagement, participation, or representation
- After-hours incidents or emergencies

These protocols are intended to guide organizational responses and should not place responsibility for engagement or representation on individual Indigenous employees.

Protocols should clarify:

- Who is responsible
- What steps to follow
- How to prioritize safety and dignity
- When to seek additional support

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous employees often experience fatigue from repeatedly explaining policies, justifying requests, or correcting misunderstandings. When tools are unclear or unavailable, the burden of interpretation falls on those least protected.

There is also a less-spoken reality that tools can be misused when applied rigidly or without context. Over-standardization can erase nuance, while under-clarification can enable harm.

Tools must therefore be accompanied by training, reflection, and relationship, not used as substitutes for responsibility.

Embedding Tools into Practice

For tools to be effective, organizations must:

- Train leaders and supervisors on their use
- Integrate tools into onboarding and daily operations
- Review and update tools regularly
- Invite feedback from Indigenous employees and partners

Tools should evolve as relationships deepen and understanding grows.

Section 4.4 – Procurement & Indigenous Business Inclusion

Indigenous-owned vendors, supplier development, and value-based procurement

Purpose of this Section

This section expands Indigenous workforce development beyond employment to include economic participation through the procurement of Indigenous goods and services and the inclusion of Indigenous businesses. It recognizes that sustainable Indigenous participation in the energy sector is strengthened when communities and entrepreneurs benefit economically, not only through jobs but also through contracts, partnerships, and long-term business relationships.

Procurement is a powerful lever. When designed intentionally, it can support Indigenous self-determination, build community capacity, and strengthen regional economies. When poorly designed, it can reproduce inequity, exclude Indigenous businesses, or create extractive relationships. This section helps organizations align procurement practices with Indigenous worldviews, rights, and relational accountability.

How this Section will be used

This section is designed to help organizations:

- Expand Indigenous inclusion beyond employment
- Design procurement systems aligned with Indigenous values
- Support Indigenous entrepreneurship and economic sovereignty through procurement and partnership
- Strengthen long-term, reciprocal partnerships

Organizations are encouraged to view procurement as a means of relationship-building and shared prosperity, guided by accountability and respect.

Indigenous Worldview: Economy, Relationship, and Responsibility

From an Indigenous worldview, economic activity is inseparable from relationships, land, and responsibility *(Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009)*. Trade and exchange have long been practiced as relational acts that strengthen interdependence, reciprocity, and collective well-being. Economic success is not measured solely by profit but by whether the activity supports community continuity, balance, and future generations.

Indigenous business inclusion, therefore:

- Respects community priorities and sovereignty
- Strengthens local and regional economies
- Builds long-term capacity rather than one-time transactions
- Values relationship and trust alongside cost and efficiency

When procurement ignores these principles, it risks undermining the very communities it seeks to engage.

Limits of Conventional Procurement Systems

Conventional procurement systems are often designed to minimize risk, maximize efficiency, and standardize processes. While these goals are understandable, they can inadvertently exclude Indigenous businesses, especially smaller or community-owned enterprises.

Common barriers include:

- Complex qualification requirements
- Short timelines that disadvantage small teams
- Insurance, bonding, or capital thresholds misaligned with community contexts
- Lack of transparency in decision-making
- Preference for existing suppliers, familiarity, and scale

When procurement systems prioritize familiarity and scale over relationships and impact, Indigenous businesses are often treated as perpetual newcomers.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach to Procurement

A Two-Eyed Seeing approach enables organizations to uphold essential procurement standards while reorienting systems toward inclusion and equity, creating ethical space for Indigenous and Western governance approaches to interact respectfully *(Ermine, 2007)*.

Through the Indigenous Eye, ethical procurement:

- Prioritizes relationship and trust
- Recognizes community benefit as value
- Respects Indigenous governance and decision-making
- Supports long-term capacity building

Through the Western Eye, effective procurement:

- Ensures fairness, transparency, and accountability
- Manages risk and compliance
- Delivers value for money
- Meets operational and regulatory requirements

Together, these perspectives support procurement systems that are both responsible and transformative.

Pathways for Indigenous Business Inclusion

The following pathways outline how organizations can embed Indigenous business inclusion into procurement systems. These approaches should be adapted through dialogue with Indigenous partners.

Indigenous-Owned Vendor Identification and Outreach

Organizations can proactively identify Indigenous-owned businesses through registries, community referrals, or partnerships with Indigenous organizations.

Effective outreach includes:

- Clear communication about opportunities
- Early engagement before tenders are issued
- Respectful relationship-building
- Transparency about expectations and timelines

Supplier Development and Capacity Building

Supplier development recognizes that inclusion is strengthened when organizations invest intentionally and equitably in Indigenous business growth.

This may include:

- Mentorship and technical support
- Joint venture or phased contracts
- Adjusted contract scopes or timelines
- Access to feedback and learning opportunities

Supplier development should be collaborative rather than paternalistic.

Value-Based and Social Procurement Models

Value-based procurement broadens evaluation criteria beyond the lowest cost to include social, cultural, and community benefits.

This approach:

- Recognizes Indigenous business participation as value
- Aligns procurement with reconciliation and sustainability commitments
- Encourages long-term partnerships

Clear criteria, transparency, and accountability are essential for ensuring fairness.

Regional and Community-Based Procurement

Prioritizing regional and community-based suppliers can strengthen local economies and lower barriers to participation.

Considerations include:

- Breaking contracts into manageable components
- Aligning procurement timelines with community capacity
- Supporting local employment and training

One participant emphasized embedding local benefit directly into contractual language:

> ***"When communities hire companies to do work on the reserve, they should put in the contract that they use locals for labour and other positions."***
>
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

Procurement systems must formalize local hiring commitments rather than rely on informal expectations or goodwill.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Less Spoken Realities

Indigenous businesses often report being invited to participate in procurement processes without a genuine opportunity to succeed. Invitations may be symbolic, or the criteria may effectively exclude Indigenous suppliers from the outset.

There is also a less spoken reality that Indigenous businesses are sometimes expected to deliver social value without adequate compensation or flexibility. When inclusion is framed as charity rather than partnership, inequity persists. This framing shifts responsibility away from systems and onto Indigenous businesses.

True inclusion requires organizations to examine how procurement systems define power, risk, and value.

Embedding Indigenous Business Inclusion into Systems

For procurement inclusion to be sustainable, organizations must:

- Embed Indigenous business inclusion into procurement policies
- Train procurement teams on the Indigenous context and bias
- Track outcomes transparently and ethically
- Review practices with Indigenous partners and advisors

Inclusion should be measured not only by spending but also by relationship quality, capacity built, and community impact.

Recap of Module 4 - Pathways, Practices, and Tools

Module 4 has focused on how Indigenous workforce participation is supported, sustained, and strengthened over time. While Module 3 asked organizations to take responsibility for safety, rights, and internal systems change, Module 4 looked outward to pathways, practices, and tools that enable long-term participation without requiring Indigenous Peoples to compromise their identity, community, or sense of responsibility.

Taken together, the sections in this module reinforce a central teaching: pathways matter only when grounded in relationship, readiness, and reciprocity. Workforce development that moves too quickly, bypasses community leadership, or relies on unaccountable tools risks perpetuating the very harms this Framework aims to address.

Pathways Rooted in Readiness

Section 4.0 introduced the Workforce Pathways & Readiness approach, reframing workforce participation as cyclical rather than linear. Attraction, retention, advancement, and renewal were presented not as steps to be managed but as phases of a relationship that unfold over time.

This section emphasizes that readiness is shared. Organizations, communities, and individuals all share responsibility for determining when and how engagement should occur. Without readiness, pathways become extractive. With readiness, they become sites of trust, learning, and continuity.

Support that extends beyond the Job Description

Section 4.1 identified mentorship, coaching, and after-hours support as foundational, not optional, conditions for Indigenous workforce success. This section affirmed that many challenges Indigenous employees face occur outside formal job descriptions and business hours, particularly in remote, high-pressure, or culturally isolating environments.

By grounding mentorship in the Indigenous worldview and relational responsibility, this section shifted the focus from individual resilience to shared accountability. When intentionally designed and adequately resourced, support becomes a protective factor that strengthens retention, advancement, and well-being.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Community Leadership as the Foundation of Capacity

Section 4.2 repositioned training and workforce development as community-led processes guided by Indigenous governance, consent, and long-term priorities. Rather than treating communities as labour pools, this section affirmed Nations as partners, leaders, and rights holders.

Nation-to-Nation capacity sharing, investment in local infrastructure, and respect for community timelines were identified as essential to sustainable outcomes. This section reinforced that training disconnected from community leadership cannot deliver lasting benefits.

Tools That Translate Commitments into Practice

Section 4.3 addressed the gap between policy and lived experience by introducing plain-language tools, shared protocols, and adaptable templates. These tools were framed not as compliance mechanisms but as supports that reduce ambiguity, prevent harm, and shift responsibility from individuals to systems.

By emphasizing clarity, accessibility, and consistent application, this section demonstrated that everyday tools can either burden or protect Indigenous employees.

Economic Participation as a Relationship

Section 4.4 expanded the conversation beyond employment to include procurement and Indigenous business inclusion. This section affirmed that workforce inclusion is strengthened when Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs participate economically through contracts, partnerships, and long-term business relationships.

By applying Two-Eyed Seeing to procurement, this section demonstrated how conventional systems can be reoriented to prioritize relationships, community benefit, and capacity building alongside efficiency and risk management.

What this Module asks of Organizations

Together, Module 4 asks organizations to move beyond short-term solutions and toward relational continuity.

It asks organizations to consider not only who is hired but also whether:

- Pathways are safe to enter and return to
- Support exists when challenges arise
- Communities are leading decisions that affect them
- Tools and systems protect dignity rather than shift the burden
- Economic participation is reciprocal and sustained

Community Reflections

> ***This was amazing. This is what this world needs.***
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

> ***Kudos to this. Loved it.***
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

> ***I enjoyed this session.***
> *Community Engagement Participant, January 29, 2026*

These reflections affirm community support while reinforcing the responsibility to translate dialogue into sustained structural change.

Appendices

Appendix A – Glossary of Indigenous Concepts

Language as Responsibility

Language is not neutral.

In Indigenous-industry partnerships, words shape power, rights, expectations, and accountability. When language is vague, it can unintentionally minimize sovereignty, flatten cultural distinctions, or reduce Nations to stakeholders within systems that were not designed with them in mind.

This glossary exists to:

- Protect Indigenous governance language
- Clarify corporate and regulatory terminology
- Prevent pan-Indigenous assumptions
- Support shared understanding across sectors
- Ensure Indigenous worldview is not reduced to corporate vocabulary

Precision signals respect.
Clarity supports accountability. Shared language strengthens shared work.

This glossary is intended to support shared understanding and does not supersede Treaty rights, constitutional protections, or Nation-specific governance protocols.

A

Advancement (Seasonality)

The Fall phase of the Seasonality Framework. Refers to growth in responsibility, leadership, skills, compensation, and influence. Advancement does not require assimilation or disconnection from identity, kinship, or community responsibilities.

Assimilation

The expectation, explicit or implicit, that Indigenous Peoples suppress language, world-view, governance, ceremony, or identity to succeed within Western systems.

Attraction (Seasonality Framework)

The Spring phase. The relational process through which Indigenous Peoples encounter employment or partnership opportunities and decide whether engagement feels safe, meaningful, and aligned with personal and community values. Attraction is not recruitment alone; it is the building of trust before opportunity.

B

Belonging

A lived experience of being welcomed, respected, valued, and safe without needing to mask identity or overperform to justify presence.

Board Governance (Western)

Formal oversight structures (Board of Directors, Executive Committees) are responsible for fiduciary and strategic direction within corporations.

C

Capacity (Community Context)

The human, financial, governance, and technical resources available within a Nation or community to engage in partnerships, workforce development, or economic initiatives.

Colonial Patterns

Persistent structures, behaviours, and decision-making approaches rooted in colonial systems that prioritize extraction, control, speed, and unilateral authority over Indigenous sovereignty, relational accountability, and shared governance. Colonial patterns may appear in modern institutions through consultation without influence, short-term engagement, imposed timelines, or policy design that excludes the Indigenous worldview.

Community / Nation / Reserve

These terms are related but not interchangeable.

Nation refers to a sovereign Indigenous government with inherent rights, jurisdiction, governance systems, and authority over its people and lands.

Community may refer to members of a Nation, including those living both on and off reserve. It is relational and social in tone.

Reserve (Canada) refers to land set aside by the federal government under colonial law. A reserve is a legal land designation and does not define the full political, cultural, or territorial scope of a Nation. Best practice:

- Use “Nation” when referring to governance, rights, agreements, or jurisdiction.
- Use “Community” when referring to people or social context.
- Use “Reserve” only when referencing legal land designation.

Cultural Competency

An ongoing practice of humility, learning, and behavioural change. It is not a one-time training, checklist, or certification.

Cultural Safety

A felt experience determined by Indigenous Peoples themselves. A culturally safe workplace or relationship affirms identity, prevents harm, and protects dignity. Cultural safety is defined by those receiving the service or engagement, not by organizational intent.

D

DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion)

A Western corporate framework addressing representation and fairness. DEI initiatives often require adaptation to meaningfully address Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and governance distinctions.

E

Emotional Labour (Indigenous)

The often invisible and unpaid work Indigenous Peoples perform to educate others, translate between worldviews, absorb racism or microaggressions, carry intergenerational grief, and maintain relationships when systems fail. This labour accumulates and contributes to burnout.

Energy Sector

Industries involved in the extraction, production, generation, distribution, and transition of energy resources, including oil and gas, renewables, pipelines, power generation, and related infrastructure.

Engagement (Industry Term)

In corporate contexts, engagement often refers to consultation or outreach activities. In Indigenous contexts, engagement must include meaningful participation, shared decision-making, respect for governance, and alignment with Indigenous Rights and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

ESG (Environment, Social, Governance)

Corporate reporting framework for measuring environmental impact, social responsibility, and governance practices. ESG metrics often need to be expanded to meaningfully include Indigenous rights and relational accountability.

Equality

The principle of treating everyone the same, regardless of context or history. Equality assumes a level playing field. In Indigenous-industry contexts, equality alone is insufficient because it does not account for structural barriers, historical harm, or sovereignty distinctions. Equity and relational accountability are required to create fair conditions.

Equity

Fairness is achieved by addressing structural and historical disadvantages. Not the same as equality.

Extractive Behaviour

Actions, engagement processes, or partnerships that prioritize information gathering, labour, land access, or reputational benefit without equitable influence, reciprocity, or long-term relational commitment. Extractive behaviour may occur when organizations consult without sharing power, disengage after immediate needs are met, or treat relationships as transactional.

F

Fiduciary Responsibility

Legal obligation of corporate leaders and boards to act in the financial interests of shareholders.

FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent)

An Indigenous right affirmed in UNDRIP requiring:

- Free – Without coercion
- Prior – Before decisions are finalized
- Informed – With full, transparent information
- Consent – The right to say yes or no

FPIC is not consultation. It is an expression of sovereignty.

I

Inclusion

More than representation. Inclusion is the lived experience of influence, safety, belonging, and equitable access to opportunity.

Identity

The lived understanding of who a person is in relation to their Nation, ancestry, language, land, culture, and community. Indigenous identity is relational and collective, not solely individual. It may include responsibilities that extend beyond workplace roles.

Indigenous Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Employee-led groups that create culturally grounded spaces of belonging, peer support, leadership development, and organizational insight for Indigenous employees. ERGs do not replace leadership accountability or systemic change.

Indigenous Rights

Inherent, collective rights held by Indigenous Peoples that predate Canada and are recognized in constitutional law (Section 35), Treaty law, and international law (including UNDRIP).

These rights include, but are not limited to:

- Self-determination
- Governance and jurisdiction
- Land and title
- Cultural continuity
- Language
- Economic participation

Indigenous rights are not corporate accommodations, consultation preferences, or social responsibility initiatives. They are legal and inherent rights grounded in sovereignty.

Indigenous Success Metrics

Qualitative and relational measures grounded in the Indigenous worldview. These assess cultural safety, belonging, reciprocity, community benefit, self-determination, and intergenerational impact.

Industry

Corporate and operational entities engaged in economic activity, particularly within the energy sector.

In a Good Way

A relational expression describing conduct that is respectful, humble, ethical, accountable, and grounded in cultural integrity.

Intergenerational

Spanning past, present, and future generations, reflecting responsibility to ancestors and descendants.

Intergenerational Grief

Grief carried across generations due to historical and ongoing harms such as displacement, residential schools, land loss, cultural suppression, and systemic discrimination. Intergenerational grief shapes lived experience, trust, communication patterns, and nervous system responses, and is often present even when not visibly expressed.

K

Kinship

A relational system defining responsibilities, roles, and connections among family, extended relations, community members, land, and ancestors. Kinship extends beyond Western nuclear family structures and shapes governance, caregiving, accountability, and identity.

KPI (Key Performance Indicator)

A quantitative performance metric used in corporate reporting (e.g., retention rate, promotion rate). KPIs alone cannot measure belonging or cultural safety.

L

Living Document

A document intended to evolve over time through reflection, community feedback, emerging learning, and relational accountability. A living document acknowledges that Indigenous-industry partnership work is ongoing and adaptive.

M

Meaningful (Indigenous Context)

In Indigenous contexts, "meaningful" engagement or inclusion means more than participation or visibility. It requires influence, shared decision-making where appropriate, relational accountability, transparency, and outcomes that reflect the Indigenous worldview and priorities. Meaningful work is felt through trust, respect, and reciprocity, not simply documented through attendance or consultation records.

P

Pan-Indigenous

The incorrect assumption that all Indigenous Peoples share identical cultures, governance systems, protocols, or experiences. Every Nation is distinct.

Procurement

Corporate purchasing systems. In this Framework, procurement includes Indigenous-inclusive practices that support long-term economic sovereignty.

Psychological Safety

The ability to speak, ask questions, or raise concerns without fear of humiliation or retaliation.

R

Relational Accountability

Responsibility to uphold commitments, integrity, and respect within relationships through humility, consistency, listening, clarity, and follow-through.

Shared Energy, Shared Futures

Relational Competency

The demonstrated ability to build, maintain, and repair trust-based relationships through humility, consistency, listening, clarity, and follow-through.

Relational Repair

Intentional processes used to restore trust after harm or misalignment, including acknowledgement, apology, corrective action, and structural change.

Relationality

The understanding that all systems, land, governance, economy, community, and identity, are interconnected.

Reflection & Renewal
(Seasonality Framework)

The Winter phase. A period of reflection, ceremony, accountability, recalibration, and healing before the cycle begins again.

Resume Black Hole

A commonly experienced phenomenon where job applications disappear into HR systems without acknowledgement, response, or follow-up. For Indigenous candidates, this reinforces exclusion and historical invisibility.

Retention (Seasonality Framework)

The Summer phase. Refers to sustaining belonging, safety, participation, and growth within the workplace. Retention is not simply the length of employment; it is the ability to stay without sacrificing identity.

S

Seasonality Framework

A cyclical workforce model grounded in Indigenous worldview:

- Spring – Attraction
- Summer – Retention
- Fall – Advancement
- Winter – Reflection & Renewal
- Centre – Reciprocity

Shareholder Primacy

The belief that corporations exist primarily to maximize shareholder value.

Sovereignty

The inherent authority of Indigenous Nations to govern themselves, make decisions over their lands and peoples, uphold their laws, and determine their own futures. Indigenous sovereignty predates colonization and is not granted by the state. It exists regardless of federal or provincial recognition.

Stakeholder (Western Term)

A corporate term referring to individuals or groups with an interest in organizational activity. Indigenous Nations are not merely stakeholders; they are Rights and Title Holders.

Success Metrics (Western/Industry)

Quantitative, trackable measures used in HR and governance systems, such as hiring rates, retention rates, promotion rates, and procurement percentages. These require pairing with Indigenous Success Metrics for balance.

Sustainability Reporting

Corporate reporting framework often aligned with ESG. May not fully capture Indigenous relational, cultural, or sovereignty dimensions without adaptation.

T

Tokenism

Superficial inclusion of Indigenous individuals or representation without meaningful authority, influence, or systemic change.

Trauma-Informed

An approach recognizing the presence of trauma (including intergenerational trauma) and designing systems to avoid re-harm. Trauma-informed does not lower standards; it applies them humanely and predictably.

Two-Eyed Seeing

A guiding principle integrating Indigenous ways of knowing (relational, land-based, intergenerational) and Western systems (policy, measurement, operational tools). Neither worldview is subordinated.

U

UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)

An international human rights instrument affirming Indigenous rights, including self-determination, FPIC, land rights, cultural preservation, and governance authority.

W

Western Eye

The structural, regulatory, and operational lens prioritizes timelines, policy, efficiency, risk mitigation, and quantification. Incomplete without an Indigenous worldview.

Western Workforce Model

A linear employment model emphasizing recruitment → onboarding → performance→ promotion → retention, often without recognition of cyclical or relational realities.

Closing Reflection

True partnership requires shared understanding. This glossary is offered as a foundation for clarity, accountability, and respectful engagement across Indigenous Nations, the energy industry, and government. As a living document, it will evolve as relationships deepen and learning continues.

Appendix B – Attraction & Role Clarity Templates

(Adaptable for Indigenous Recruitment & Inclusive Hiring)

Plain-language Job Posting Template

Position Title: _____ [Clear, jargon-free title]

Location: _____ [City / Region / Site]

Who We Are

We are committed to building respectful, safe, and inclusive workplaces grounded in accountability and relationships. We recognize Indigenous Peoples as Rights and Title Holders and value lived experience alongside formal credentials.

We recognize community-based knowledge, land-based skills, and governance experience as valuable forms of expertise.

About the Role

In the role, you will:

- [Plain description of responsibility 1]
- [Plain description of responsibility 2]
- [Plain description of responsibility 3]

This role involves:

- [Travel / shift work / camp environment / physical requirements – stated clearly]

What We're Looking For

Required:

- [Essential skill or certification]
- [Essential competency]

Assets (not required):

- [Optional skills or experience]
- [Community or lived experience]

We value transferable skills, community leadership, and lived experience.

Supports Available

We provide:

- Mentorship and onboarding support
- Cultural safety commitments
- Training pathways (where applicable)
- Points of contact for support (HR / Indigenous Relations)

How to Apply

You may apply by:

- Online submission
- Email
- In-person (where available)
- We recognize that not all experience is captured in traditional resumes. Applicants may submit alternative formats, such as community references or portfolios of work, or request an oral application process where appropriate.

If you require support during the application process, please contact: [Name / email]

Appendix C – Retention & Early Support Templates

Mentorship Role Clarity Agreement (Layered Model)

Mentorship Role Clarity Agreement

(Layered Mentorship Model)

Employee Name:_____

Mentor Name: _____

Start Date: _____ **Review Date:**_____

Purpose of Mentorship

This mentorship relationship is intended to:

- ❑ Support technical skill development
- ❑ Support career pathway navigation
- ❑ Provide cultural or relational guidance
- ❑ Reduce isolation
- ❑ Support leadership development

Expectations

Mentor will:

- Meet regularly (frequency:_____)
- Maintain confidentiality
- Provide guidance without judgement
- Escalate safety concerns appropriately

Employee will:

- Communicate goals and concerns
- Participate in scheduled meetings
- Seek clarification when needed

Boundaries

This mentorship does not replace HR processes or safety reporting structures.

Escalation Pathway

(HR, Governance Lead, Elders Council, Indigenous Relations, or designated community contact)

If concerns arise, the following contact is available:

[Name / Role / Contact] _____

Appendix D – Safety, Leave & Accountability Tools

Cultural Safety Leadership Reflection Prompts Template

Cultural Safety Leadership Reflection Prompts

(For Ongoing Use – Not a Compliance Tool)

Before onboarding a new Indigenous employee, ask:

- Have I clearly explained role expectations in plain language?
- Have I identified a safe point of contact beyond myself?
- Have I acknowledged cultural responsibilities as legitimate?
- Have I set clear expectations regarding respectful behaviour within the team?

Ongoing leadership reflection:

- Do I intervene early when harmful behaviour occurs?
- Do I check in about wellbeing, not just performance?
- Am I placing an education or mentorship burden on Indigenous employees?
- Have I ensured isolation risk is minimized (buddy systems / mentorship pipelines)?
- Do I respond consistently and predictably to concerns?

When conflict or harm occurs:

- Is the harmed person supported first?
- Is accountability clear and documented?
- Is repair considered where appropriate and safe?

These reflection prompts are intended to guide reflection and relational accountability.

Indigenous Leave & Governance Request Protocol Template

Indigenous Leave & Governance Request Protocol

(For Cultural, Ceremonial, or Governance Responsibilities)

This protocol recognizes Indigenous Rights and responsibilities as legitimate and protected. This protocol may also be adapted for use with Indigenous Nations or community organizations where cultural and governance responsibilities are foundational rather than exceptional.

Request Type:

- ❑ Ceremony
- ❑ Bereavement
- ❑ Governance participation
- ❑ Land-based activity
- ❑ Kinship caregiving
- ❑ Other:

Submission Process

Employees may:

- Submit request to supervisor or HR
- Provide general context without excessive personal disclosure
- Request confidentiality

Supervisor Responsibilities

- ❑ Respond promptly
- ❑ Avoid questioning legitimacy
- ❑ Clarify duration and operational needs respectfully
- ❑ Document approval consistently

Escalation Path

If concerns arise, contact:

[HR contact / Indigenous Relations]

This protocol supports dignity, clarity, and consistent application across teams.

Indigenous Procurement Inclusion Clause (Sample)

Indigenous Procurement Inclusion Clause (Sample Language)

The Contractor/Organization acknowledges the importance of Indigenous workforce participation and community economic inclusion.

Where work occurs on or near Indigenous territories, the Contractor/Organization agrees to:

- Make reasonable efforts to recruit local Indigenous labour
- Engage Indigenous-owned businesses where available
- Participate in community outreach where requested
- Report on Indigenous participation efforts transparently

These commitments shall be implemented in good faith and in alignment with local Indigenous governance protocols.

Failure to demonstrate reasonable efforts may be reviewed under contract performance standards.

This clause may also be adapted by Indigenous Nations, community-owned enterprises, and joint ventures to articulate expectations of reciprocal economic participation and community benefit.

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