INDIGENOUS MENTORSHIP IN FORESTRY

Understanding the role of mentorship in retention and career advancement for the Indigenous forestry workforce.

Labour Market Information Report

Indigenous mentorship programs build confidence, skills & relationships that have positive impacts on career choices and success.

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1. INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT & PURPOSE

In 2018, the BC First Nations Forestry Council (the "Forestry Council") launched the BC First Nations Forestry Workforce Strategy (the "Workforce Strategy"). This was developed with First Nations, industry, and the Indigenous Skills, Employment and Training Program (ISETP) delivery organizations as a long-term initiative to increase the participation and success of Indigenous peoples in the BC forest sector through training, careers, and employment opportunities.

The overall goal of the Workforce Strategy is:

> "To achieve sustainable and meaningful career, employment, and business outcomes for First Nations peoples in the BC forest sector through collaborative partnerships among First Nations, forest companies, the Indigenous Skills, Employment, and Training Program (ISETP), and the Forestry Council, while reflecting community cultural values, the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Calls to Action*."

The Workforce Strategy is built around seven strategic areas and provides a pathway forward for developing an available and skilled Indigenous forestry workforce. One of the strategic areas in the Strategy is "Retention and Advancement" to develop and implement a First Nations Forestry Mentorship (and Retention) Program with industry organizations and industry workforce participants.

In this context, early in 2021, the Forestry Council initiated a project to conduct labour market secondary and primary research to understand the role of mentorship in recruitment, retention, and career advancement for the Indigenous forestry workforce and to develop a framework for a First Nations Forestry Mentorship program.

The Forestry Council has now completed extensive secondary research and primary data collection through the engagement of Indigenous students and youth, First Nations, ISETPs, education and training organizations, and BC forest sector industry employers to understand and address barriers to advancement within the forest sector and increasing the participation of Indigenous youth in the sector. This work also seeks to inform an understanding of the role of mentorship in recruitment, retention and career advancement for the Indigenous forestry workforce.

Based on this research, the purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of findings, including the following:

1. An analysis of employment barriers and possible solutions identified in the primary data collection to recruitment, retention and career advancement of Indigenous employees.
2. An analysis of current and future workforce mentorships challenges and possible mentorship solutions to address the needs and pressures of regional workforce shortages a summary of outreach activity for each informant group, including comments, observations, and anonymized participant data.
3. A description of employment trends, labour market conditions and opportunities, social, environmental, and economic trends as they relate to indigenous participation in the forestry sector.
4. An analysis of attraction, retention, and advancement issues/barriers.
5. An analysis of emerging skill needs and key skills gaps reported by employers and other relevant stakeholders.

This report provides a summary and thematic analysis of the data to define key themes, key findings, implications of the findings, and recommendations for the next steps on a Retention and Advancement Framework.

2. PRIMARY RESEARCH OVERVIEW

As indicated, in addition to previous secondary research of existing and relevant literature and data, and with feedback and guidance from the Project Steering Committee, primary data collection from participants was obtained through research surveys and tools for the primary data collection, including:

- Online surveys are available through the virtual conference platform and social media promotions.
- Live poll questions during the engagement sessions at the conference.
- A voice option to hear the question and answers read out to the research participant.

All research participants provided free, prior and informed consent. Participation in the research project was voluntary, and participants could decline to answer any question if preferred.

During the conference engagement sessions, the Forestry Council provided an overview of the seven key themes from the Literature Review Report and polled the participants on the level of importance for each theme. The engagement sessions were split into 2 groups:

Indigenous Workforce	Forest Sector Opportunities
• BC First Nations • Indigenous students and job seekers in BC • Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program (ISETP) representatives	• Forest sector employer representatives and mentors (current and former) • Education and training institution representatives

Primary data collection occurred through the following channels:

- BC First Nations Forestry Conference on June 16, 2021.
- #ForestryConnect Career Fair on September 23, 2021.
- The media campaign launched on September 29, 2021 and closed on October 27, 2021.

3. FOREST SECTOR AND LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT

BC Forest Sector

An overview of the BC forest sector and the labour market for forest sector-related employment and Indigenous participation was outlined in the previous secondary research and literature review report published in March 2021, *Indigenous Mentorship in Forestry: Understanding the role of mentorship in retention and career advancement for the Indigenous forestry workforce*. This is included as part of this LMI report as a separate PDF document.

BC Forest Sector Labour Market Information

After a two-year interruption due to COVID-19 and uncertainty about labour markets, the summer of 2021 the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training prepare the new *BC Labour Market Outlook: 2021-2031*. An analysis of the 2019 Outlook was included in the previous literature review report.

One important point about this new BCLMO data is that it is unlikely that it factors in the recently announced Government of BC plans to defer a further 2.6 million hectares of forests in BC. According to the BC Council of Forest Industries, its analysis indicates that these deferrals will "result in the closure of 14 to 20 sawmills in BC, along with two pulp mills and an undetermined number of value-added manufacturing facilities." BC COFI states this will result in 18,000 jobs being lost and $400 million in lost revenues to the Province.

[1] BC Council of Forest Industries. "Harvest Deferral Process Will Have Devasting Impacts, Shutting 14 to 20 Sawmills and Threatening 18,000 BC Jobs." *New Release*. November 2, 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.cofi.org/wp-content/uploads/REPORT_COFI-2019-FOREST-INDUSTRY-ECONOMIC-IMPACT-STUDY-FOR-WEB.pdf.

The table on the next page provides data from the 2021 Labour Market Outlook for the three forestry-related sectors. First, it estimates employment in 2021, with wood product manufacturing being almost half of the total sector (47%) and forestry, logging and support activities is just over one-third (35%) and paper manufacturing representing 18% of employment.

While the sector as a whole is forecasted to lose over 8,000 jobs or 15% of today's employment over the next ten years, most of this will be in forestry, logging and support activities (down -25% or over -4,700 jobs) and in wood products manufacturing (down -16% or over -2,900 jobs). Paper manufacturing is expected to lose much less employment (-4% or over -400 jobs).

Despite this significant job loss, because of retirements and other attrition in the sector over the next decade, this BCLMO[1] forecast projects the net (expansion + replacement) need for almost 4,400 additional workers over an annual average of 440 in BC. This represents 8% of current employment in the sector.

Due to their relative employment loss, wood products (48%) and paper products (21%) are expected to represent a slightly higher portion of the sector whereas forestry, logging and support activities will drop to 31% (from its current 35% share).

Overall, during the next decade, over 13,000 jobs will need to be refilled due to attrition, but after the employment loss of almost -9,000 is against this, it results in almost 4,400 net new job openings.

BC Labour Market Outlook, 2021-2031

Forest Industry Sector	2021 Employment % of total)	New Job Openings 2021-2031		Total Job Openings 2021-2031 % 2021 Employment	Change Employment 2021-2031 % of 2021 Employment	Projected 2031 Employment % of total
		Expansion % of 2021 Employment	Replacement % of 2021 Employment			
Forestry, logging and support activities (NAICS 113)	18,906 35%	-5,184 -27%	4,564 24%	-621 -3%	-4,709 -25%	14,197 31%
Wood product manufacturing (NAICS 311 & 312)	25,064 47%	-3,227 -13%	6,001 24%	2,775 11%	-2,935 -16%	22,123 48%
Paper manufacturing (NAICS 322)	9,844 18%	-497 -5%	2,708 28%	2,211 22%	-433 -4%	9,411 21%
Total forestry	53,814 100.0	-8,908 17%	13,273 25%	4,365 8%	-8,077 -15%	45,731 100.0

Source: Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. *BC Labour Market Outlook, 2021 Edition, 2021-2031 Forecast: Employment and Job Openings by Industry (Forestry-Related) Sector*. Retrieved at https://www.workbc.ca/Labour-Market-Industry/Labour-Market-Outlook.aspx.

The table on the next page shows job openings during 2021-2031 by occupation in the sector. The Table identifies the "top" occupations (i.e. occupations with the most openings). Openings are driven more by occupations prevalent in wood products and paper manufacturing and occupations that exist in all parts of forestry (e.g. managers, supervisors, technologists and technicians).

All sectors include supervisory and management employment opportunities, and the forestry support sector activities represent opportunities for individuals with forestry technical and professional education and training, namely forestry technicians and technologists and forestry professionals – all relatively highly-skilled occupations. Paper manufacturing involves higher-skilled operator positions and power engineer and power systems technical jobs. Therefore, forestry mentoring programs should consider the supervisory and management positions and include such pathways in mentorship programs.

This list of occupations totals over 4,900 job openings, more than 100% of total job openings for the BC forest sector over the next ten years. Some of the smaller occupations not in this table have negative job opening growth which nets the sector job openings of just under 4,400.

BC Labour Market Outlook, 2021-2031

Top Occupations	Job Openings (2021-2031)
Supervisors, Forest Products Processing	869
Labourers in Wood, Pulp and Paper Manufacturing	806
Sawmill Machine Operators	638
Supervisors, Logging and Forestry	466
Forestry Technologists & Technicians	377
Construction Millwrights & Industrial Mechanics	325
Other Wood Processing Machine Operators	314
Pulp Mill Machine Operators	293
Forestry Professionals	266
Manufacturing Managers	226
Lumber Graders & Other Wood Processing Inspectors	208
Logging Machinery Operators	125
Total – Top Occupations in the BC Forest Sector	**4,913**

Source: Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. *BC Labour Market Outlook, 2021 Edition, 2021-2031 Forecast: Job Openings by Top Forest Sector Occupations in BC Forest Sector.* Op. cit.

Job Openings by Top Forest Sector Occupations in BC Forest Sector
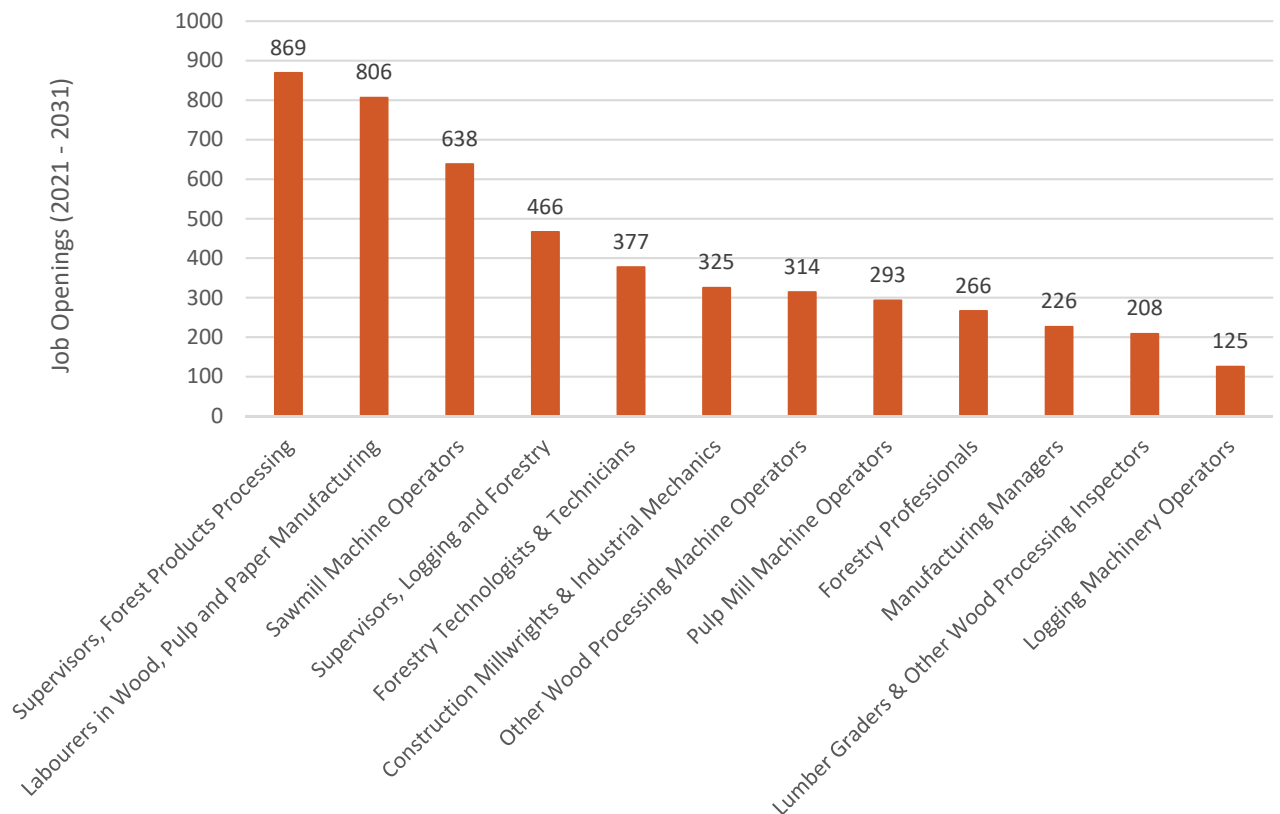
4. KEY THEMES FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was high-level and two-dimensional, organized first by geography (BC, Canada, International), and second, organized by common topics (program type, target audience, Indigenous focus, etc.). In each case, a brief description of the program was provided. A total of 53 documents and websites from BC, Canada and International jurisdictions were reviewed and summarized, including 36 Canadian sources and 17 international sources.

Several key themes emerged from a review of the above literature, particularly those pieces cited. These themes have direct implications for Indigenous youth and student mentorship programs and models and the related concepts of attraction, recruitment, retention and career advancement. There is a growing body of knowledge about and interest in this topic in the last decade in Canada and elsewhere. However, there is still a lot of room for inquiry, research and testing mentorship program elements and models; this is still a relatively new area of research and practice.

Key Themes

This report identifies the following relevant themes, each of which is covered in more detail below:

1. Attraction of Indigenous workers is challenging.
2. Retention and advancement of Indigenous workers require special attention, including embracing cultural differences.
3. Mentorship programs enhance successful career paths for Indigenous workers.
4. Community-based Indigenous youth-focused mentorship programs have a positive impact.
5. Community-based youth mentorship programs for non-Indigenous participants have a stronger focus on employment and personal development.
6. Post-secondary Indigenous mentorship programs focus on building strong academic attachment and preparing for employment.
7. Mentoring programs (not specifically Indigenous) benefit from impact studies and effectiveness Assessments.
8. Education has a direct influence on Indigenous employment.

Most of these themes are not entirely surprising and are consistent with the Forestry Council's previous research, however, it was important not to follow any preconceived assumptions but rather to confirm these through empirical secondary research. These are each summarized below and the literature sources are listed in the appended bibliography.

Attraction of Indigenous workers is challenging

The literature points to some challenges with the attraction of Indigenous talent. One of the most effective attraction strategies is to foster and support the role of existing Indigenous workers in the organization as a way to encourage Indigenous applicants. If Indigenous applicants see themselves represented in a potential employer, they may feel more inclined to pursue opportunities there. Organizations that are perceived to be inclusive and diverse are viewed as more welcoming.

Retention and Advancement of Indigenous workers require special attention, including embracing cultural differences

Retention and advancement issues were addressed in a small number of documents and websites. Like attraction, organizations that offer a diverse and inclusive work culture that recognizes and embraces cultural differences and builds on them – may have higher retention levels. The focus of one research piece from the Government of Canada was on how to improve the public service work experience for Indigenous employees. The report[2] states the following:

[2] Government of Canada (2017). Many Voices One Mind: A Pathway to Reconciliation. Retrieved from: https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/knowledge-circle/many-voices.html.

[3] Morris, Marika. (2017). Indigenous recruitment and retention: Ideas and best practices from a literature review of academic and organizational sources. 10.13140/RG.2.2.1 5553.45927. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319968081_indigenous_recruitment_and_retention_Ideas_and_best_practices_from_a_literature_review_of_academic_and_organizational_sources. December 2021.

[4] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf

[5] MacLaine, C., Lalonde, M., and Fiser, A. (2019). Working Together: Indigenous Recruitment and Retention in Remote Canada. *The Conference Board of Canada.* https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=10121

[6] Rimmer, N.D., Manty, J., Cimineri, C., Koch, C., Robinson, P. (February 2017). Recruitment and retention of indigenous students in a baccalaureate nursing program. *Capella University.* https://sigma.nursingrepository.org/bitstream/handle/10755/621358/Rimmer_Nadine_DNCapstonePaper.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y

"While there is still much work to be done to ensure all Indigenous public servants feel supported and included, this report is an important step on our path to supporting the incredible potential Indigenous public servants bring to our workplace. Now is the right time to address barriers that limit diversity and inclusion, which have no place in the Public Service."

A comprehensive discussion paper[3] from Carleton University (Ottawa) presents a number of best practices on preparing the workplace for increasing the participation of Indigenous people in all occupational sectors. Recruitment strategies, partnerships, the role of existing Indigenous employees as assets, and workplace transformation are discussed.

The report makes several recommendations including:

- Commit to embarking on the next generation of Indigenous recruitment and retention strategies.
- Provide training in response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report's Calls to Action[4] (e.g. #57, #62, #63, #64, #92).
- Establish best practices in human resources policy and practice.
- Build and support the existing Indigenous workforce.
- Cultural accommodation and flexibility.
- Build on existing partnerships to transform the workplace.

A Conference Board of Canada study[5] on recruitment and retention of Indigenous workers in remote communities identifies persistent challenges that employers and Indigenous employees continue to face and highlights best practices to help employers develop effective recruitment and retention strategies suitable for Canada's Northern and remote regions.

A study[6] by Capella University suggests that to enhance the retention of an Indigenous student, a culturally sensitive classroom that reflects the values and learning styles of the Indigenous student and culturally relevant curricula need to be considered when devising strategies for retention.

Mentorship programs enhance successful career paths for Indigenous workers

Indigenous and non-indigenous mentorship programs build confidence, skills and relationships that have a demonstrated positive impact on career choices and success. Programs that focus on youth (age 15-29) mentorship tend to feature a mix of elements that primarily support participants' personal development. This focus sets the stage for participants to confidently pursue a chosen academic and/or career path with the benefit of knowing that they have the support of a mentor along the way.

Community-based Indigenous youth-focused mentorship programs have a positive impact

A significant number of documents and websites reviewed focused on mentorship programs for Indigenous Youth. It is clear that such programs have positive impacts on the participants, helping them prepare for higher education and employment. While the programs have a mix of target audiences (e.g. female, urban, Indigenous only, diverse participants, etc.), the programs' outcomes focus on human development as well as skills development in addition to rebuilding or bolstering cultural practice. Outcomes are viewed as long-term.

[7] Tesfemariam, F (n.d.) *Mentoring for success: Post-secondary education and career readiness.* https://careerwise.ceric.ca/2019/09/19/mentoring-for-success-post-secondary-education-and-career-readiness/#.YAikcOhKjJ5

[8] Rawna, J.S., Sieukaran, D.D., Nguyen, H.T., and Pitawanakwat, R. (2015). Development and evaluation of a peer mentorship program for aboriginal university students. *Canadian Journal of Education* 38(2). www.cje-rce.ca

[9] Preston, J. (April 2019). A funder's guide to identifying high quality mentoring programs: From indicators to red flags. *The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring.* https://www.evidencebasedmentoring.org/the-leading-indicators-and-red-flags-of-quality-mentoring-programs-a-funders-guide/

[10] Mentor (December 2019). *E-Mentoring: Supplement to the elements of effective practice for mentoring.* https://www.mentoring.org/resource/e-mentoring-supplement-to-the-elements-of-effective-practice-for-mentoring/

[11] No author (n.d.) Examples of the best company mentorship programs. *Mentorloop.* https://mentorloop.com/blog/examples-best-company-mentoring-programs/

Community-based youth mentorship programs for non-Indigenous participants have a stronger focus on employment and personal development

This type of mentorship program is not specific to Indigenous participants, although there is a growing body of knowledge that identifies the importance of community-based programming for strengthening Indigenous youth and student success and development. These programs tend to focus on strengthening personal development and preparing for higher learning and employment.

Confidence building, career exploration and relationship building are mentioned frequently, while cultural practice is not addressed.

Post-secondary Indigenous mentorship programs focus on building strong academic attachment and preparing for employment

The websites and documents in this category tend to focus on preparing mentors for their work with mentees. This includes helping new Indigenous post-secondary students with the transition to the post-secondary environment, building positive relationships, and exposure to a mix of academic disciplines and career options. One of the documents focused on pure research[7] – looking at recruitment and retention of Indigenous students in a particular academic program.

Another study[8] pointed to a perceived need for more study on mentorship programs that facilitate positive educational and mental health outcomes within the Indigenous population.

Mentoring programs (not specifically Indigenous) benefit from impact studies and effectiveness assessments

Mentoring programs benefit from proper planning, execution, funding, and regular assessment. One article[9] examined the economic benefits of mentorship programs from an investment perspective. Preston offers a clear description of what separates good mentoring programs from bad ones based on several key factors that can easily be measured. The implication is that successful programs have 'evidence-based' measurable benefits.

Another discussed the sort of changes required to manage e-mentorship[10] in the wake of COVID-19. This article provides suggested COVID changes to mentoring programs to address potential issues – presumably to ensure the continued success of the program (Mentor, no date).

A separate article[11] described four highly successful corporate mentoring programs at Deloitte, KPMG, Intel, and Zynga such as focus and commitment, applicability to the job, specific knowledge transfer and domain skills and reversing mentoring (mentors learning from mentees).

These eight key themes and other findings on success factors were tested with questions in this project's primary research and are discussed the Analysis, Findings and Summary/ Implications section of this report.

12 Cahill, I. G. (2018). Indigenous access to skilled jobs in the Canadian forest industry: The role of education. *International Indigenous Policy Journal 9*(2). https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/iipj/article/view/7547/6191

13 Carr, T., Kenefic, L. S., and Ran co, D. J.(2017). Wabanaki Youth in Science (WaYS): A tribal mentoring and educational program integrating traditional ecological knowledge and western science. *Journal of Forestry 115*(5) pp. 480-483. https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2017/nrs_2017_carr_001.pdf

14 Government of Canada (n.d.) *First Nations Forestry Programs: Success Stories.* https://cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/pubwarehouse/pdfs/29377.pdf

Education has a direct influence on Indigenous employment

One study[12] explored the relationship between education and employment level in the forest industry A website[13] described its range of training programs and the importance of involving a mix of Traditional Ecological Knowledge Holders with academic institutions and industry for a balanced approach to training.

Another document[14] highlighted two dozen forestry-focused Indigenous success stories.

The eight key themes identified through the above literature scan have implications that helped guide and inform the development of the specific primary research questions. The themes also helped the Forestry Council Project Team to better understand the challenges and motivators for Indigenous youth to enter and succeed in forestry-related education, employment and advancement, as well as the best approaches for attracting Indigenous youth to mentorship programs. The primary research questions delved into identifying characteristics of mentorship models that address these challenges and motivators, and the types of support required for both mentor and mentee training in mentorship programs.

5. ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA RESPONSES

In addition to the analysis of employment barriers and solutions, workforce mentorship challenge sand solutions, emerging skill needs and gaps and attraction, retention and career advancement barriers and strategies in the literature review, these topics are explored and analyzed in this primary data.

Primary data collection was obtained from engaging Indigenous youth and representatives of First Nations, ISETPs, education and training organizations and BC forest sector industry employers during the BC First nations Forestry Conference in June 2021, the #ForestryConnect Career Fair in September 2021 and through a media campaign from late September through late October 2021.

The data analyzed came from:
- Polls results of forest industry representatives and Indigenous students during conference engagement sessions
- The main survey during the conference and career fair
- A "pick a mentor model" mini-survey after viewing video interviews

Forest Sector Employer and Student/Job Seeker Poll (n=85

Based on the issues that emerged from the literature review, 85 industry representatives and Indigenous students were asked to respond to seven questions (involving 10 variables) in terms of the extent to which certain key themes were very important to not important at all regarding statements related to workforce and mentorship factors.

The responses from fifty-seven industry representatives and 28 Indigenous student participants to these themes are as follows.

Key Theme	Percentage who answered "Important" or "very important"	
	Indigenous Students/ Job Seekers (n=28)	Forest Sector Employer (n=57)
1. "How important is it for Indigenous applicants to see themselves represented in a potential employer's workforce to feel more inclined to pursue opportunities there?"	93%	89%
2. "How important is cross-cultural awareness building and training among forest industry employers and employees to you?"	100%	100%
3. "How important is it that industry and employers participate in a formal First Nations forestry mentorship program?"	96%	85%
4. "How important are community support and participation in mentorship programs for the participant's success in the program and ultimately a career in forestry?"	92%	89%
5. "How important is it to you for Indigenous cultures, cultural supports and Elder roles to be embedded or reflected in post-secondary mentorship programs?"	99%	83%
6. "How important are mental health supports to be included in post-secondary mentorship programs?"	90%	90%
7. "How important are each of the following elements to include in post-secondary mentorship programs?"	-	-
a) "Traditional ecological knowledge holders are part of the mentorship program."	96%	93%
b) "Part of the program be delivered by academic Institutions"	86%	73%
c) "Industry experts are part of the mentorship program"	93%	90%

The feedback from the above engagement session questions shows that both the Indigenous students/job seekers and the forest sector employers responded with similar levels of the sum of "importance" and "high importance" responses for all theme areas.

Some examples of differences within the important vs. very important rating include the following:

- While 100% of both students/job seekers and employers in Question 2 said the factor was either important or very important, the students/job seekers "very important" rating was 9 percentage points higher (79% vs. 70%) than for employers.
- While mental health supports in Question 6 were equally important for students/job seekers and employers in the aggregate of important/very important ratings (90%), students/job seekers were 9 percentage points higher in the "very important" rating (67% vs. 58%).
- While both type of participants were relatively positive about 7b and 7c, the students/job seekers participants rated delivery of part of a mentorship program by academic institutions and industry experts as part of a mentorship program as "very important" at 14 percentage points (24% vs 38%) and 13 percentage points (41% vs. 54%) lower than employers.

While there are some anomalies in the relative degree of "important" and "very important" ratings between Indigenous students/job seekers and forest sector employers, this validates the findings of the literature review and is an indication that these are important principles to continue reflecting upon in the upcoming work in developing the Indigenous mentorship framework.

Indigenous Mentorship in Forestry – Pick a Mentorship Model (n=73)

The concept of mentorship may have a wide range of meanings professionally, culturally, and socially. Part 2 of the data collection sought to inform the question, 'What type of mentorship is most valuable to you?' It featured video interviews with First Nation mentor's experience in the following topic areas:

- First Nations Culture
- Inclusion and Diversity in the BC Forest Sector Workforce
- Personal Development

Prior to watching the video, the Forestry Council provided an overview of the research project and a description of the three mentor models below.

After participants watched the presentation and video interviews, they were asked "Which of the three mentor models do you think best addresses First Nations Culture, Inclusion and Diversity in the BC Forest Sector Workforce, and Personal Development?"

Of the 73 who responded to the above question, almost two-thirds (66% or 48) prefer the two-way learning mentor model, while 21% or 15 prefer a student-centric model and 14% or 10 prefer a laddering one.

Laddering Mentor Model
Expertise is shared from an expert to entry-level:
Mentor → Senior Student → Junior Student

Two-way Learning Mentor Model
Expertise is shared between all members of the program to achieve goals for both the individual and the participating organizations
Mentor ←→ Student
Mentor ←→ Mentor
Student ←→ Student
Group forums

Student Centric Mentor Model
Mentor(s) → Student

Analysis of Main Survey Responses (n=122)

During the two Forestry Council events, 122 individuals participated in the survey with 70% identifying themselves as Indigenous:

> First Nations Status – 46%
> First Nations Non-Status – 14%
> Metis Registered – 6%
> Inuit – 2+%

Of the 122 participants, they were responding in the following roles:

- Forest sector employers – 33%
- Indigenous students or individuals interested in a career in forestry – 24%
- Indigenous persons interested in mentorship programs – 13%
- Indigenous Skills Employment and Training Program representatives – 8%
- Education or training providers – 8%
- Current/past mentor in the industry – 3%

This analysis will first provide a summary of the responses to key questions by participants in each of the above categories.

Indigenous Skills Employment and Training Program (ISETP) Representatives (n=9)

Nine survey participants identified as ISETP representatives. Most questions were responded to by seven from this group.

When asked about the most common barriers to employment among their clients, the most frequently identified ones were:

- Difficulty in completing application forms/paperwork (57%)
- Lack of a Driver's License (57%)
- Inadequate or no cover letter (42%)
- Lack of childcare (42%)
- Lack of work clothes (42%)
- Lack of transportation (42%)

When asked about why most clients withdraw from programs after starting, financial issues were identified by two participants and health, addiction and transportation issues were each identified by one participant. Forty-three percent of participants reported that 75-100% of their clients retain their job once they have found work; another 43% indicated 51-74%.

Lack of supports on the job, lack of mentorships and lack of a living wage were identified as reasons for their clients not retaining their jobs.

Seventy-one percent of ISETP participants indicated 50 to 100 of their clients need assistance with life skills (e.g., anger management, addiction, legal issues, fines).

ISETP participants reported that 100% of their clients were "somewhat satisfied" (86%) or "very satisfied" (14%) with their job search.

When asked if a mentor would help their client achieve certain results, the participants reported that mentorships would be "helpful" or "very helpful" in achieving the following results:

- Retaining a job – 100%
- Having a positive job search experience – 100%
- Successful completion of/benefiting from their program or service – 100%

Six of seven ISETPS participants indicated mentoring would be very helpful for retaining a job; and five of seven that it was very helpful for the other two types of results.

When asked about what type of mentor support would help their clients successfully complete/benefit from their program or service, they rated employer support most frequently (57% or 4), with peer support and community support (each 14% or 1) being lower. When asked what support would help their clients with their job search, employer and community support were both cited most frequently (each 43% or 3). Participants also most frequently cited employer support (57% or 4) – but also peer support (29% or 2) – in response to what support is important for job retention of their clients.

> *In summary:*
>
> - *ISETP clients need help with paperwork, Driver's License and financial issues*
> - *Mentorships would be helpful or very helpful for ISETP clients to have a positive job search, retain their job and successful completion of their program/service*
> - *ISETP representatives see employer supports and employer mentors as key for their clients getting and retaining a job*

Indigenous Students or Individuals Interested in a Career in Forestry (n=29)

Twenty-nine of the survey participants were Indigenous students and/or job seekers interested in a career in forestry. Generally, 23 to 27 of the participants responded to most questions.

When asked about barriers they face to employment, the most frequently cited barriers are:

Reason(s) Given	# of Replies	% of Replies Given
Lack of work experience	15	56%
No driver's license	10	37%
Inadequate or no resume	8	30%
Lack of education	7	26%
Lack of work clothes	5	19%
Lack of childcare	4	15%

In terms of barriers to post-secondary education, the participants' most frequently cited barriers are:

Reason(s) Given	# of Replies	% of Replies Given
Funding for tuition	11	41%
No driver's license	8	30%
Can't afford to relocate	4	15%
Need upgrading	3	11%
Lack of childcare	3	11%
Physical, Emotional or Mental Health Disability	3	11%

Forty-one percent of the participants were currently enrolled in post-secondary programs; one-third were in high school (grade 10-12) and 26% were not in school (i.e., just finished, unemployed, looking at options, etc.).

Some participants reported experienced having a mentor in various ways: 18 or 67% "in life"; 13 or 50% in education/training; 12 or 48% during employment; 7 or 28% in a program; and 6 or 24% in an Indigenous community program.

A large majority of the participants (24 or 92%) responded yes when asked whether there were times they would have liked to look to a mentor for guidance.

Were there times you would have liked to look to a mentor for guidance?
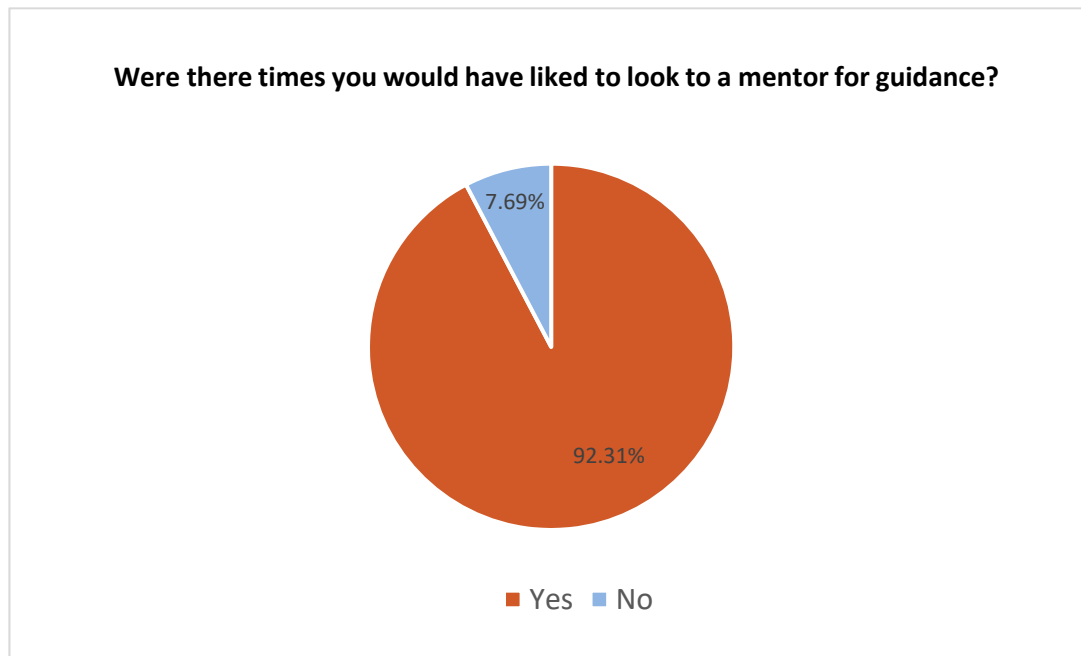
Of 26 who responded, 19 or 73% responded yes when asked if mentorship "had benefitted them".
Their comments in this regard included the following:

- Four participants spoke about "guidance", for example, "I felt like the specific guidance in the field added to the work experience."
- My mentorship is benefitting me in many ways. I am helping bring awareness to social issues surrounding aboriginal peoples and it is also helping me in the process of graduation.
- Helped me complete elementary school.
- By helping me with my schoolwork.
- The support provided confidence and security; just a second opinion was nice, and the guidance was helpful and alleviated stress and anxiety.
- Showed me possibilities; answered questions.
- Instructed me how they be benefitted; showed me the ropes.
- I think mentors in general are beneficial. I have parenting mentors, and language mentors. I go to my mentors for advice whenever needed. they are there for me.
- By learning proper ways of mentoring and becoming a mentor myself.
- I wasn't starting out alone; I had someone to direct my questions to and she helped me become a lot more confident.
- Emotionally and spiritually benefited me; helped me stay on track with better days.
- Having someone specific to direct questions to was very helpful.
- In guidance as what to do next in my education plan, and life during the time I was studying criminology.
- She was nice and I had someone to hang out with.
- Having someone to ask questions and to vent to when I was feeling overwhelmed. They helped me feel safe and like I belonged; also provided encouragement.

When asked if they felt if mentorship was "a valuable experience", 88% or 23 of 26 answered yes. Their reasons for this included the following:

- I'm currently still under a mentor. This experience is teaching me different communication skills that I would not normally use like leadership and organization of events. It is also teaching me ways to raise awareness around social issues.
- It made me feel value and appreciated.
- Gave me insight to other fields.
- It gave me good grades.
- I was shown how to participate in my community and programs.
- Passed on knowledge.
- It helped with the correct process, and I knew what not to do.
- Learned more from working then at home.
- When you don't really know what you are doing, it is nice to have someone to go to for sound advice and direction.

Do you feel it was a valuable experience?
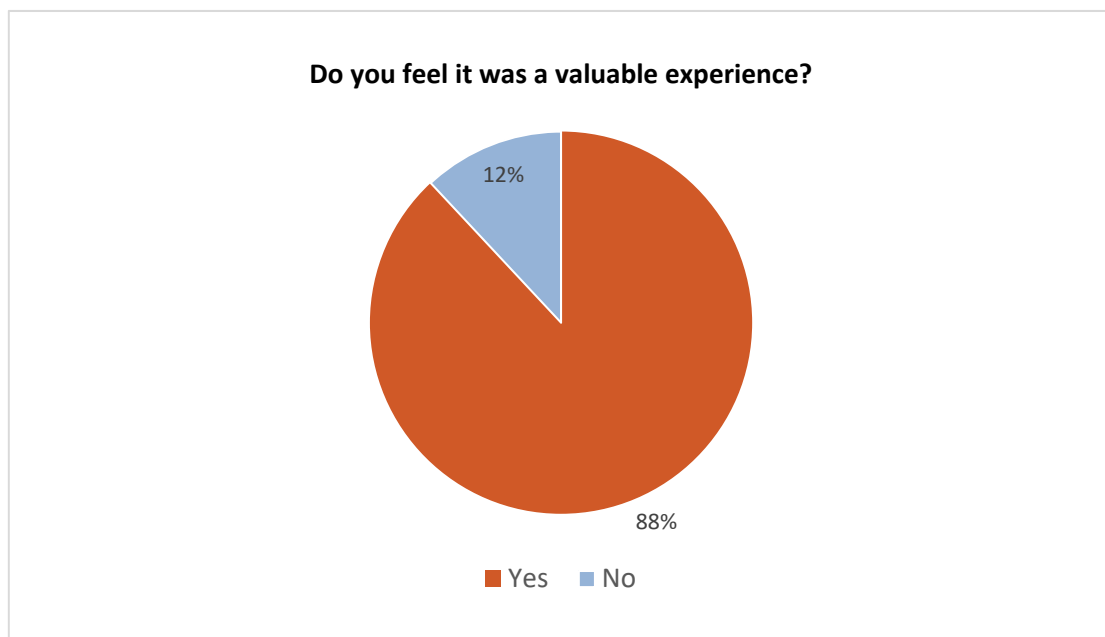
- I finally admitted I can use help.
- My mentor gave me guidance and helped me learn about plants hands on.
- Learning more knowledge in different subjects. Gaining wisdom.
- You aren't starting out alone, you have an experienced guide to give you advice about the ins and outs.
- I needed guidance as to be a good leader in the position I had as a youth worker and liaison for HIV/AIDS employment. I wanted to be able to approach the community to the needs in the scope of what my duties were to provide in terms of my employment contract.
- Learned a lot in my job and in life.
- They provided encouragement.
- Having support and teachings help with confidence building and skills training.

When asked about the age of the mentor, 73% responded that age did not matter and 23% preferred a mentor who was older than themselves. Eighty-one percent (21) said they would be open to being mentored by a peer. As with age differences, most (80%) of the participants indicated they had not preference or differences in comfort level with a person of a certain gender. Further, when asked about who they would be most comfortable with as a mentor, participants equally preferred a family member, a community member, an employer, or a peer.

Of 23 who responded, 11 or 48% indicated their school provides them with a mentor if requested; and 88% (22 of 25) consider their instructor to be a mentor.

When asked if they feel intimidated if mentored by a person in a very senior position, none felt "extremely intimidated" and 24% did "not feel intimidated at all", 40% felt "somewhat intimidated" or "intimidated"; over one-third were "not sure." The reasons given for feeling intimidated were as follows:

- Mainly just stress. Stress to perform at my best and give effort.
- Since they are more experienced than me.
- Just because they are older, and I don't want to disappoint them.
- It's hard to connect if you don't know them personally.
- If they were my boss or someone I worked under, I wouldn't want my own actions to negatively affect my perceived work ethic.
- It can be intimidating to ask questions to someone who has a vast knowledge of a subject. Personally, I don't want to feel dumb even though I know they would likely be more than happy to answer any questions I have for them.
- Because our brains like to associate high-up positions with authority, and it can be intimidating speaking with someone who has decades of experience in some cases even though you know they would love to answer any questions.
- The power dynamics.
- While not direct intimidation, in response to this "intimidation" question, a respondent answered, if there are too many years since they entered the workforce, they are often disconnected from what it is like to be a student or new worker and may downplay issues you have.

Students/job seeker participants were asked several specific questions:

- They were fairly evenly split on a preference for speaking to a small group (43%) vs. one-on-one interactions (39%); 17% had no preference (both).
- Most participants preferred "learning by doing (hands-on)" as their learning style; 17% preferred "talking and listening."
- When stuck on a problem or question, 39% indicated they generally seek out help from a manager or teacher; 35% generally keep trying to solve it on their own, and 17% seek help from a peer.
- When asked about confidence level, while zero participants said they were "not confident at all" or "extremely confident", 87% responded that they were "somewhat confident" or "confident".
- When asked to what degree they feel it is a struggle to fit in, 13% said "not difficult at all", almost half (48%) said "somewhat difficult", 9% said "difficult" and 30% were not sure.
- 87% felt they are engaged in their studies.

When asked whether they feel they have a good support system in place to help them deal with a challenge, participants reported mostly having support in their education (74%), in life (74%), within their family (70%) and at work (62%). However, 45% of participants felt they had support in their community.

When asked about the most important types of support for participants, they rated the following:

1. In education or training – 87%
2. In life – 78%
3. In a program – 57%
4. During employment – 52%
5. In community – 39%

The last question of student/job seeker participants was for them to describe their ideal mentor. Their comments were insightful and thoughtful:

- Kind, helpful, respectful,
- Speaks clearly and explains well.
- Someone who helps and supports what I would do.
- Understanding, knowledgeable.
- Someone who can help me succeed and understand.
- Knowledgeable, experienced, understanding, patient, non-judgmental and confident.
- The ideal mentor I would consider must possess healthy values, morals, principles in a respectful manner that is approachable.
- A mentor is someone who helps guide you in the right direction.
- Someone who is excited to share their knowledge and gives me random factoids unprompted.
- Helper. Advisor. Teacher.
- Someone who is attuned to nature, has a well-rounded medicine wheel (has knowledge of indigenous stories, history, etc.), is approachable, non-judgmental/critical. someone who can share their knowledge knowing the person they are sharing with as to not stop growth.
- Someone who is extremely knowledgeable but also excited to share everything they know.
- someone who helps lead another to success with personal experience and knowledge.
- Patient, supportive & knowledgeable.
- Easygoing, kind, encouraging, makes me feel safe and supported, female or non-binary.
- Someone only about 5-10 years older than me, who is in the end of their education or newly graduated so that they understand today's climate with work and school.
- A mentor who is understanding of your capabilities and has a network of people available to help mentor their mentee if they are unable to answer questions or provide guidance in a particular area.
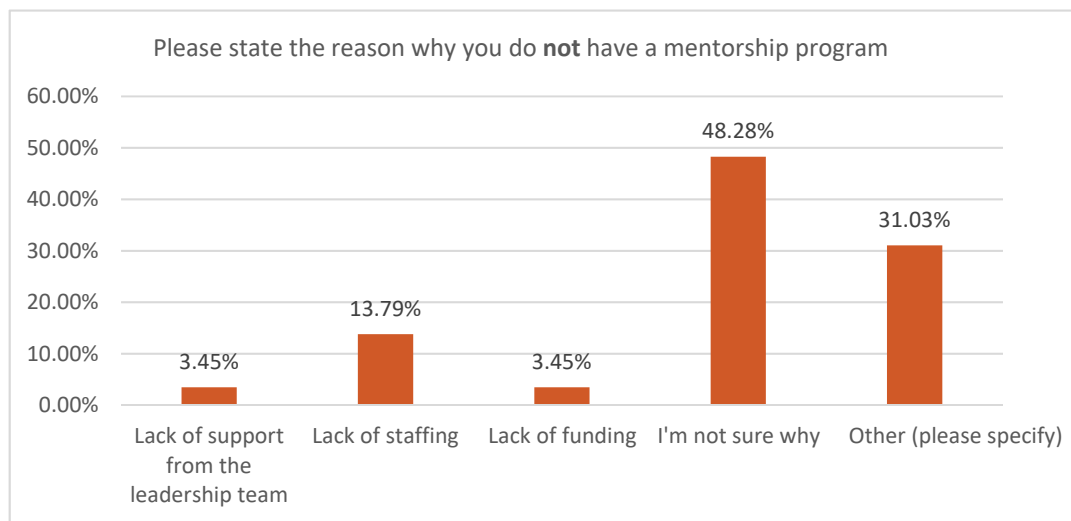
In summary:

- *Almost three-quarters of these participants were either in post-secondary or high school and some have had experience with mentorships during employment and in education/ training and community programs.*
- *Participants are quite positive about/supportive of mentorships:*
  - *92% said there were times they would have liked to seek a mentor for guidance*
  - *73% indicated mentorships have benefitted them*
  - *88% reported that mentorship was a valuable experience for them*
- *Participants did not have strong preferences in the age or gender of mentors*
- *Participants expressed varying degrees of how they solve problems, level of confidence and difficulty in fitting in. The majority prefer "learning by doing."*
- *Most of these participants feel they get good support from their education, in life, from their family and at work, but less than half felt this about community support.*

Forest Sector Employers (n=40)

One-third of all survey participants or 40 were representatives of forest sector employers, the single largest participant category.

This is invaluable input because of the size, however, since 9 of the participants represent an organization with a formal mentorship program, including 7 with an Indigenous-specific mentorship program, the number of responses for many questions was a much smaller base of input. For those that have a formal program, they can accommodate a range of 2 to 50 mentorships annually, averaging 18 per year. Eight of 89% of those with such a program find it a success to date.

Please state the reason why you do not have a mentorship program

Category	Percentage
Lack of support from the leadership team	3.45%
Lack of staffing	13.79%
Lack of funding	3.45%
I'm not sure why	48.28%
Other (please specify)	31.03%

Of those participants who do not have a mentorship program, the reasons are that 48.28% are not sure, 13.79% indicate it is because of a lack of staffing, and 3.45% state it is because of lack of support from the leadership team or lack of funding. 31% of respondents provided the following comments:

- We want to and are building the foundation for a program
- The business model is focused on coaching and mentoring youth as they enter the workforce; 2021 saw our business develop some revenue and our training offering focuses on youth development
- The crew acts in a mentor capacity
- It has not been initiated by the company
- We are a 2-person business and very new; we are interested in growing our business and adding more staff in the future, at that time we would hope to build a mentorship program.
- I am part of a family-owned/run consulting business that is just my husband and I; several of the clients we work for have mentorship programs that we work with
- We can ask questions from anyone, but there just isn't a formal program
- Mentorship is not formalized but encouraged; many of our staff are mentored through positions at the company

Of a total of seven respondents, when asked how many temporary work experience mentorships resulted in a permanent hire, three participants 51 to 74% did and two indicated 26 to 50% did; two were not sure.

100% of participants indicated mentors receive training or additional instructions before mentoring. Hours of training received by them prior to mentoring ranged from 2 hours to 100 hours, averaging 24.5 hours per participant who responded. On hours per week, this ranged from 1 hour to 30 hours or an average of 6.25 hours.

Of the seven participants who responded, 71% indicated they have a choice on whether to mentor someone (vs. it being assigned).

Most (83%) received no stipend to be a mentor.

100% of the seven employers who responded indicated that mentorship increased the mentor's productivity; and 85% found that the mentorship always or most times led to a stronger positive relationship between the mentee and the organization.

Five of the participants identified additional costs of having a mentorship: employee mentor time (3); mentor training time and costs (1) and reduced productivity of the mentor (1). On the other hand, the benefits of mentorships identified by the employers were: a diverse and inclusive workforce (3), increased retention of employees (2), increased job satisfaction (1) and increased productivity (1).
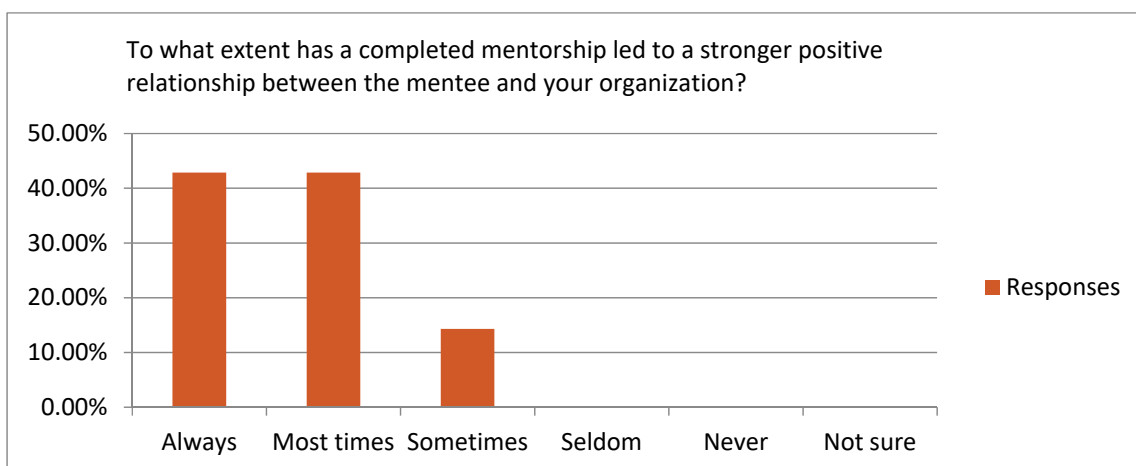
Mentorships were identified in the following work areas – resource management & timberlands (3), manufacturing & wood products (1), and trades (1) and business management (1).

Several questions were asked of employer participants not contingent on having a mentorship program, therefore the response rate increased:

- 74% of participants indicated their organization has an inclusive or very inclusive environment.
- 74% said it was important or very important for their organization to implement a mentorship program.
- 89% said it was important or very important (68%) to implement an Indigenous-specific mentorship program in their organization.
- The areas in which such a program would be most useful were identified as resource management & timberlands (42%) and trades and engineering/technical (both 15%).
- The biggest areas of a potential return on investment for their organizations from introducing a formal Indigenous mentorship program were a more diverse and inclusive workforce (42% of participants) and improved relationships between the organization and surrounding communities (29%).

When asked for other comments or suggestions about Indigenous mentorship programs, comments offered included the following:

- To participate in the forestry sector; we need to know what we are doing from the start; environmental stewardship in mind.
- Mentorship is geared toward youth which is drastically lacking in the forest sector at a blue-collar level.
- As a professional forester, I see far more similarities than differences regarding priorities for resource management. Mentorship programs are beneficial to both parties, and by investing time with our local communities I believe we will see greater opportunities for sustainable forest management.
- Very curious on the different ways we could set up mentorship through our organization and the BC FNFC; I feel there are a ton of opportunities in all areas of the organization and operations.

To what extent has a completed mentorship led to a stronger positive relationship between the mentee and your organization?

- We need more First Nations Professional Foresters.
- I think it is important to see that other Indigenous people who have succeeded in the business; not just mentors that are non-Indigenous.
- We are interested in ways to directly recruit Indigenous applicants. We do not have any current applicants in the past 6 months that identify as Indigenous.
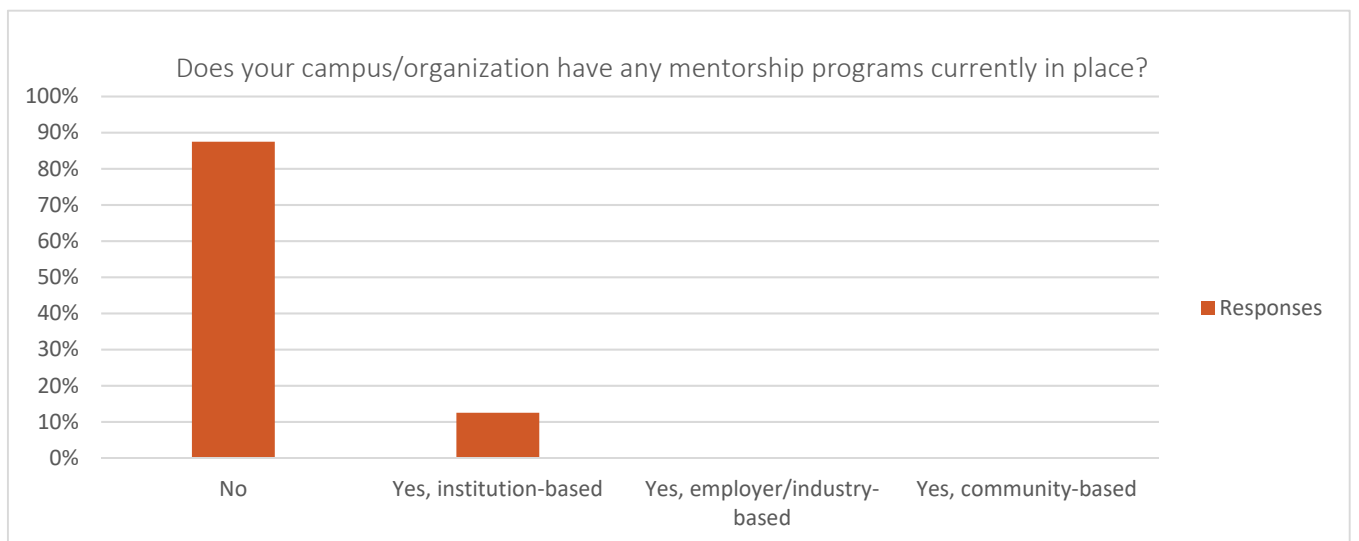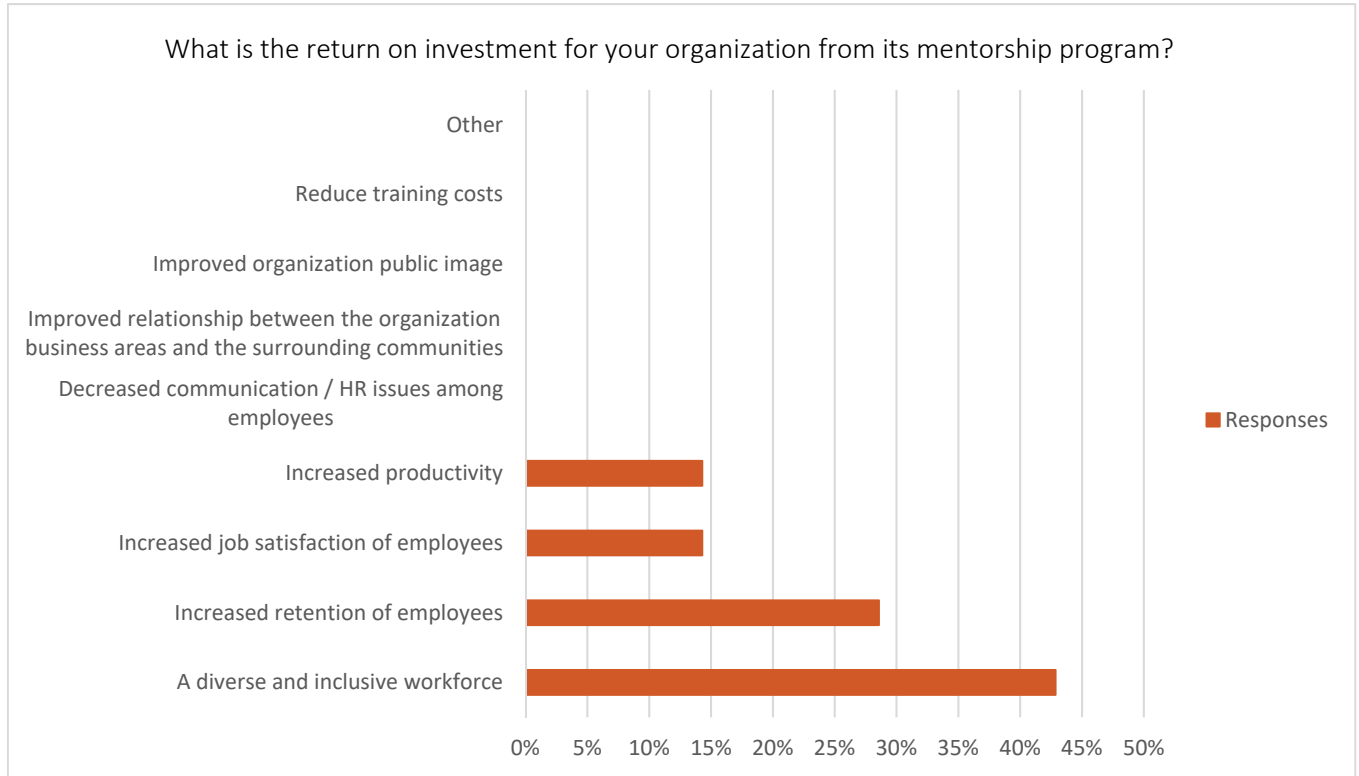
In summary:

- *Almost three-quarters of the employer participants are in an organization without a formal mentorship program, some because they are in small organizations, others have informal approaches, and a few are considering starting one.*
- *All of those with mentorship programs receive some training and most do it voluntarily and receive no additional compensation for being a mentor.*
- *Sector mentors indicated mentorships increased their productivity and led to stronger links between their organization and communities, and benefits include workforce diversity and inclusion, retention and increased job satisfaction. Costs included mentor time and productivity loss.*
- *Almost 90% of employer participants indicated it is important or very important to implement and Indigenous-specific mentorship program in their organization.*

Education or Training Providers (n=9)

Nine survey participants identified themselves as being part of an education or training provider organization. One to eight of them responded to various questions.

Seven of the eight who responded indicated they did not have a mentorship program currently in place, so because of the question logic, there were a small number of responses to many of the other questions:

What is the return on investment for your organization from its mentorship program?

Does your campus/organization have any mentorship programs currently in place?

- Two participants reported mentoring partnerships with other institutions (trades training for Indigenous people and women)
- One participant indicated they had a (community-based Indigenous-focused mentorship program
- Participants identified academic struggles, personal relationships and career guidance as topics about which students seek support
- Four participants indicated that their campus/organization has an "inclusive" environment and two responded with "somewhat inclusive"
- Four participants rated implementation of a mentorship program in their campus/organization is very important and two others said it was important or somewhat important; even more (5) said was "very important" to implement an Indigenous-specific mentorship
- Cross-cultural learning was most-cited and academic struggles and disability-related issues were less cited in term of areas for a new mentorship program to focus on
- Participants thought the greatest return on investment in an Indigenous mentorship program would be to increase the retention/success of Indigenous students and providing a diverse and inclusive learning/teaching environment

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In summary:

What return on investment do you think there could be for your campus/organization if an Indigenous mentorship program was introduced?
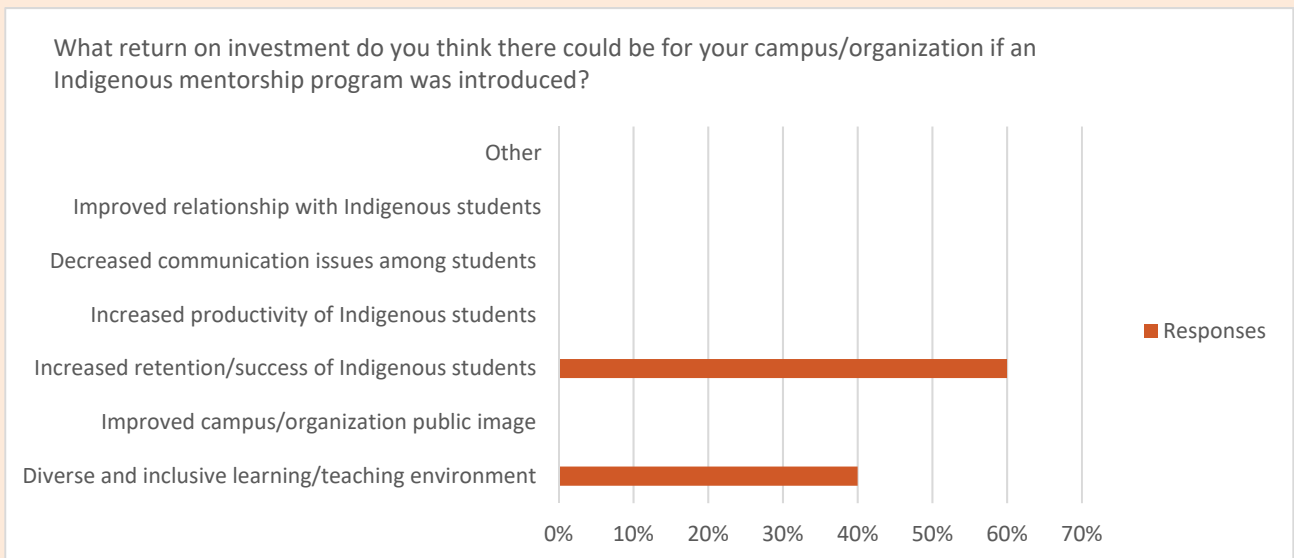
- *Few post-secondary education and training institutions, in BC, have a mentorship program, but more than half of education and training participants indicated it is very important for their organization to implement an Indigenous-specific one.*
- *Participants thought the greatest return on investment of this would be to increase the success of Indigenous students and providing a diverse/inclusive learning environment*

Current/Past Mentor in the Industry (n=4)

Four participants identified themselves as a current or past mentor in the forest sector; and in most cases, three of them responded to survey questions. Other notable information from their responses:

- Two of three participants indicate they have an Indigenous-specific program
- Two participants identified significant challenges in the program, for example, one stated, "Retaining staff is difficult. There are grants for students but getting them to stay on after graduation isn't always easy"
- Participants found program completion and better employee morale as the most significant successes in their programs
- One program has been running 11 years with the other two only 2 years
- In terms of time commitment as a mentor, two participants indicated a few weeks and a few months, respectively
- Three participants identified the following pre-requisites to become a mentor:
  - Patience, skills, a good listener
  - Interest in 2-way learning, interest in helping mentee develop and network, develop their career
  - Strong leadership and technical abilities

How valuable do you feel your mentoring contribution is to your organization?

- To be effective as a mentor, participants identified patience and being personable, and being honest, respectful, patient, open, strong and flexible
- The three participants' programs were all in forestry or natural resource management and were in the Cariboo, Vancouver Island and across Canada
- In terms of partners, participants indicated their programs work with a supplier, First Nations, post-secondary institutions and others in industry
- Two of the three programs represented here were not paid mentorships
- When what motivates them to be a mentor, two participants answered: "Creating futures for people"; and "wanting to help people and the environment and wanting to improve my own understanding through teaching others"
- Two participants responded that they feel their mentoring contribution to the mentee is valuable; and they both though their mentoring contribution to their organization is very valuable
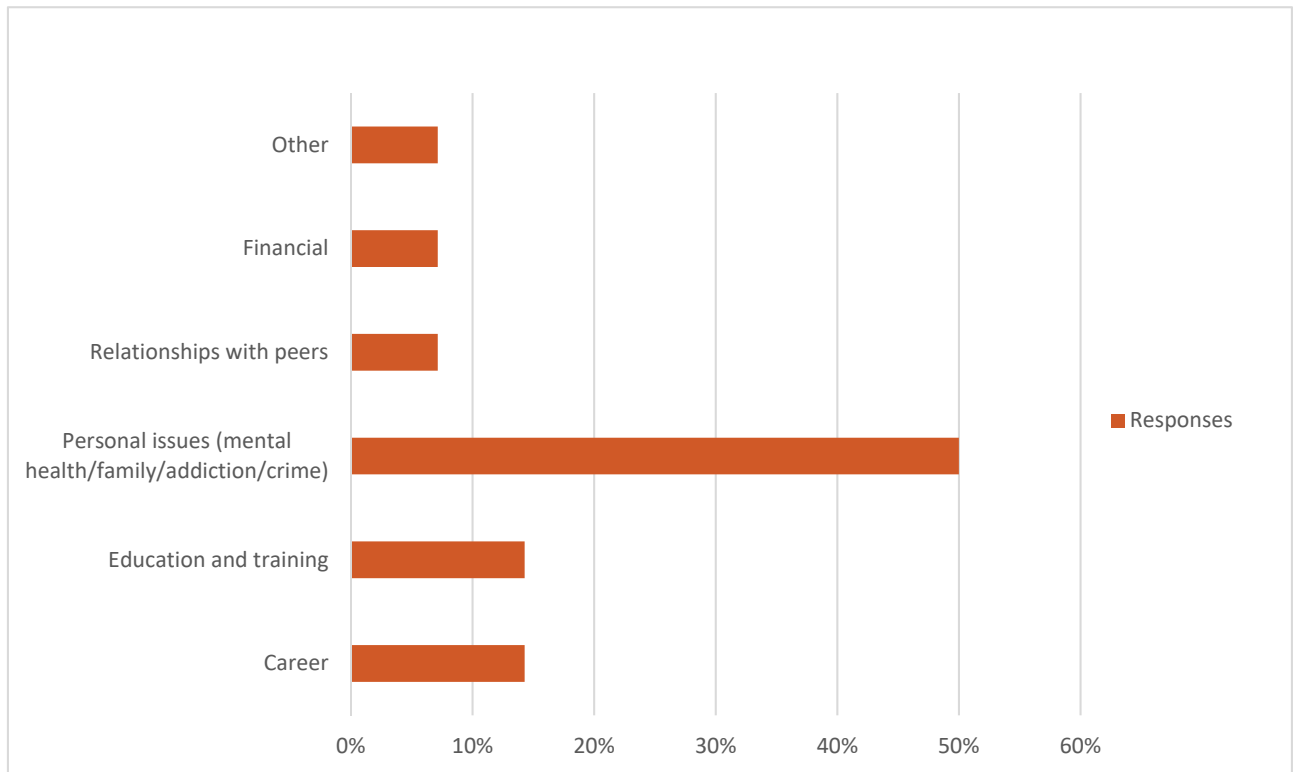
> *In summary:*
>
> - *The two participants with experience as a mentor spoke positively about the experience and its value.*
> - *Participants identified patience, good listening skills, interest in helping mentees, strong leadership abilities and being honest, respectful, open and strong and flexible as important qualities of an effective mentor.*

Indigenous Persons Interested in Mentorship Programs (n=16)

Sixteen survey participants associated themselves with this category. A summary of their responses follows:

- 60% attended post-secondary education or training ranging from undergraduate courses to doctoral level
- 73% (11) were mentored at a job, 62% (8) in personal life and 46% (6) at a school/institution
- Parents were seen as the best mentors by 53%, bosses by 13% and aunts/uncles, teachers, friends by 1% each
- Two-thirds of these participants have been a mentor to someone else, mostly younger than them
- Most participants indicated that a mentor would be helpful to Indigenous youth in a training program, in education, during employment, in life and for cultural knowledge – they indicated it would be very helpful or helpful for 64% to 72% (during employment) for Indigenous youth
- 93% of these participants enjoy sharing their knowledge and wisdom with others and 79% of them would like to share their family's traditions and cultures with Indigenous students entering a forestry career
- Almost all the participants in this category rated mentorship as important or very important for Indigenous for mental wellness (100%), Indigenous culture in the workplace (100%), entering into an education/training program (93%), completing an education/training program (93%) and sustaining employment (71%).
- Participants felt they could provide most support as a mentor on personal issues (mental health/family/addiction/crime), and less so on career and education and training issues.
- When asked what about a mentorship experience, they would be willing to share, a few responses included:
  - "I have had and still have family in the forest sectors. Our forests need care - they are needed for climate renewal & harvesting needs to be more selective"
  - "Navigating the cityscape"
  - "When I was Crew Leader on a Type 2 Wildland Fire crew. It was tough and I had to exercise patience, understanding, and empathy"

- In what areas do you feel you can provide support as a mentor?

In summary:

- *Most of these Indigenous participants see mentorship as important or very important for wellness, culture in the workplace and entering and completing education/training.*
- *Indigenous persons interested in being a mentor feel they help Indigenous youth during education/training/employment and for cultural knowledge and a large majority of them surveyed would like to share their knowledge, wisdom and traditions and culture with Indigenous students.*
- *They felt they could provide most support to mentees on personal issues.*

6. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Key Themes

While all the key themes that emerged from the literature review for this project strongly resonated with forest sector representatives and Indigenous students and job seekers, in practice or reality Indigenous mentorship in forestry in BC has significant room for growth and development.

Below are the nine key themes and comments offered on each by the various participant groups. **Note that if a participant group category is not mentioned under a theme, one cannot assume members of that group do not see the theme as important.** For example, ISETPs are not mentioned under the first theme only because survey questions of them did not touch on this topic.

How important is it for Indigenous applicants to see themselves represented in a potential employer's workforce to feel more inclined to pursue opportunities there?"

- Forest sector employers – An employer commented that it is "important to see that other Indigenous people who have succeeded" in the sector.

How important is cross-cultural awareness building and training among forest industry employers and employees to you?"

- Some forest sector employers spoke of the importance of having a diverse and inclusive organization and 74% said it was important/very important to have an Indigenous-specific program in their organization – one of the biggest potentials for return on investment.
- Education and training providers cited cross-cultural learning most frequently as an example of what a new mentorship program should include.
- Indigenous persons interested in mentorship also mentioned this awareness-building as important.

How important is it that industry and employers participate in a formal First Nations forestry mentorship program?"

- ISETP saw industry involvement as important for mentorship and employment success.
- Indigenous students/jobseekers referred to the lack of work experience as a barrier to employment.
- 89% of forest sector employers said this was an important/very important consideration.
- Current/former industry mentors indicated their mentorship contribution was valuable to the mentee and the organization.

How important are community support and participation in mentorship programs for the participant's success in the program and ultimately a career in forestry?

- ISETPs referred to community involvement as a factor for success.
- Indigenous students/jobseekers did not rate this as highly important (39%) relative to other factors and less than half of them (45%) felt they had support of their community.
- 29% of forest sector employers saw a mentorship program paying off through improved relationships with surrounding communities.
- One of the education/training providers is involved in a community-based Indigenous mentorship program.

How important is it to you for Indigenous cultures, cultural supports and Elder roles to be embedded or reflected in post-secondary mentorship programs?"

- Education and training providers considered cultural content and awareness as important for mentorship and their programming generally.
- 100% of Indigenous persons interested in mentorship rated this as important/very important.

How important are mental health supports to be included in post-secondary mentorship programs?"

- ISETPs mentioned this in the context of many of their clients needed life skills development.
- 100% of Indigenous persons interested in mentorship indicated that mentorship is important/ very important for mental wellness; and most felt they could provide most support as a mentor on personal issues including mental health.

Traditional ecological knowledge holders are part of the mentorship program."

- Traditional knowledge and culture was stressed as important by Indigenous persons interested in mentorship.
- "I have had and still have family in the forest sectors. Our forests need care - they are needed for climate renewal & harvesting needs to be more selective."

Part of the program be delivered by academic institutions"

- 48% of Indigenous students/jobseekers indicated their school provides them with a mentor if requested and 88% consider their instructor as a mentor. This reflects much higher post-secondary Indigenous mentorship programs than identified by the post-secondary institutions in the survey. Some of the students/jobseekers reporting this could be in a K-12 school, in an Indigenous-controlled adult or higher education entity or in a workplace-based program.
- Most (5) of the education/training providers felt it was very important fort their organization to implement an Indigenous-specific mentorship program

Industry experts are part of the mentorship program"

- 52% of Indigenous students/jobseekers called for support during employment and many provided clear suggestions on what constitutes an ideal mentor.

Relationship to Project Outputs

In terms of the original terms of reference of this project, five key outputs were sought. Here are some highlights from the primary research that relate to each of these.

1. *An analysis of employment barriers and possible solutions identified in the primary data collection to recruitment, retention and career advancement of Indigenous employees:*
   - ISETPs identified difficulty in completing applications and a lack of a Driver's License as top barriers and a need for life skills training among their clients. They indicated having a positive job search experience and successful completion of their program or service.
   - Indigenous students/jobseekers identified a lack of work experience and no Driver's License as top barriers and many suggested having a mentor would help with job retention and their development.
   - Indigenous persons interested in mentorship identified mental wellness and Indigenous culture in the workforce as being important to address barriers.

2. *An analysis of current and future workforce mentorships challenges and possible mentorship solutions to address the needs and pressures of regional workforce shortages a summary of outreach activity for each informant group, including comments, observations and anonymized participant data:*
   - 88% of Indigenous students/jobseekers felt mentorship was a valuable experience and 73% said mentorship benefited them in life, employment and education/training; they identified some key characteristics of an ideal mentor.
   - This is an opportunity area – most forest sector employers surveyed do not have a formal mentorship program, but most are interested in having one. Further, almost half of those without such a program are "not sure" of the reason why. Also, employers indicated that mentorships in resource management/timberlands and engineering/technical roles would be of most use; and would help the sector strengthen relationships with local communities and create more diverse and inclusive environments; some employers felt their organization is too small to support a mentorship program.
   - This also acts as an opportunity area – only one of the education/training provider participants identified having a mentorship program yet most of them indicated it was very important to introduce an Indigenous-specific program.
   - Three current/former industry mentors identified a challenge of retention after graduation and felt mentorships can contribute to program completion and employee morale.
   - Indigenous persons interested in mentorship spoke much about the importance of helping Indigenous youth through cultural knowledge building.

3. A description of employment trends, labour market conditions and opportunities, social, environmental, and economic trends as they relate to indigenous participation in the forestry sector.
   - Survey participants were not asked about this, but it is addressed in a separate section on new BC Labour Market Outlook data.

4. *An analysis of attraction, retention and advancement issues/barriers; and,*
   - ISETPs identified financial issues as a top reason for leaving a program and identified mentorship as a model helpful/very helpful to mitigate this.
   - Indigenous students/jobseekers generally commented on how mentorships were a positive model for providing them with guidance, knowledge, encouragement and support during employment, and helped them in their career development.
   - Forest sector employers see mentorships as a means for attracting and recruiting Indigenous students and others.
   - Some education/training provider participants felt a mentorship program would help with the retention/success of Indigenous students.
   - Current/former industry mentors identified the challenge of retaining Indigenous students after their graduation. It is not known whether the industry/former mentors were referring to students in the Forestry Council's program.
   - Indigenous persons interested in mentorship identified mental wellness and Indigenous culture in the workplace as important for retention/success.

5. *An analysis of emerging skill needs, and key skills gaps reported by employers and other relevant stakeholders.*
   - ISETPs indicated employer support as being most important for mentorship success.
   - Most Indigenous students/jobseekers indicated that they preferred learning by doing as their learning style and the most important types of support were for education/training and in life.
   - Forest sector employers with mentorship experience unanimously reported an increase in mentor productivity and connections between the mentee and the organization.
   - Cross-cultural learning was most cited by education/training providers as what mentorships could focus on.
   - Indigenous persons interested in mentorship were very interested in participating in the mentorship experience of Indigenous youth, especially about Indigenous knowledge and personal/wellness issues.

7. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

First, this primary research clearly found that all participant groups were positive – to varying degrees – about Indigenous-specific mentorship programs in the BC forest sector. Particularly, support was high among forest sector employers and Indigenous students and job seekers who participated in this primary research.

Second, this primary research identified opportunities:

- For forest sector businesses to follow through on their interest in Indigenous mentorships to introduce such programs in a formal way – perhaps they may need support through Indigenous partnership, industry associations and/or government programming. This might be especially important for smaller businesses without HR departments and economies of scale. The sample size of employer respondents for such topics does not allow analysis across small, medium and large companies.

- For post-secondary education institutions to introduce Indigenous mentorship programs and support Indigenous students to prepare for and enter forest sector employment and career opportunities. Only one Indigenous mentorship program was identified in the survey, but institutional representatives express much interest in and support for such programs.

- For Indigenous persons interested in mentorships to be engaged to support and participate in Indigenous mentorship programs, particularly to support in areas of need such as mental wellness, other personal issues and cultural knowledge and awareness.

- For ISETPs to be used to promote Indigenous forestry mentoring programs in their region within their networks and to young job-seekers and communities, given their positive perception of the value of mentorship found in this research.

Third, the preference for a two-way learning mentor model is positive and is not surprising given its more inclusive and multi-dimensional nature, enabling the building of workplace relationships and sharing of expertise and insight in various directions.

Fourth, this research yields several insights – particularly from students and job seekers themselves but also from sector employers, education/training providers and current/former/ prospective mentors – which have implications for the design and content of a forest sector Indigenous mentorship and retention program and framework. For example:

- Indigenous students/job seekers:
  - Called for mentorship and other support during employment;
  - Identified characteristics of their 'ideal' mentor;
  - Appeared to feel less of a connection with their community in the context of mentorship with others like family, employer, etc.;
  - Saw their instructors as mentors;
  - Prefer 'learning by doing' as a learning style.

- Forest sector employers:
  - See mentorship as increasing productivity of mentors and connections with mentees;
  - See a challenge in retaining Indigenous students after they graduate;
  - Feel mentorships can improve relationships with surrounding Indigenous communities.

- Education/training providers:
  - Feel mentorships can improve student retention;
  - See mentorships as having potential to improve program completion.

- Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program representatives:
  - See financial barriers as key and that mentorships can help with this.

- Indigenous persons interested in mentorships:
  - Take a holistic approach to Indigenous student/job seeker needs and emphasize culture, history, language, family, wellness in mentorships and are interested in contributing.

All the above opportunities and what was heard above from those who participated in this primary research have direct or indirect implications for the conception, design, development and delivery of an Indigenous Forestry Mentorship (and Retention) Program with industry organizations, industry workforce participants and others. These will be considered for the development of a framework for such a program in the next step of this project.

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