

UPDATED: Program aims to connect Pabineau community with jobs

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Community partners of the Working Warriors program in Pabineau First Nation Felicia Grant (left) and Stephanie Peter-Paul.
Photo: Submitted

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A project for indigenous people in Canada could see more people from Pabineau First Nation connected with jobs in New Brunswick.

The Working Warriors program is connecting First Nation, Inuit and Métis people with jobs nationally by collecting data – an aboriginal skills inventory – in those communities across the country, said Jamie Saulnier, president of Working Warriors, based in Winnipeg.

“For the last eight years or so we’ve been building a strategy between industry and indigenous people,” he said.

A pilot project was tested in communities in Ontario and Winnipeg. Working Warriors was officially launched the spring of 2015 to create a “national skills inventory of indigenous people” and a list of businesses looking to hire.

The strategy is to compile working information about indigenous people and their skills, including resumes, in a database so communities can use the information to connect their residents with work.

“This is going to allow you to market your people ... to industry in the province of New Brunswick,” said Saulnier.

In New Brunswick, the program has teamed up with Joint Economic Development Initiative Inc. (JEDI), which was looking was looking to create a framework for a similar project and fit in with what Working Warriors is doing so the groups formed a partnership, Saulnier said.

Saulnier said having someone from JEDI go into the community to create a partnership with them has made it much easier to get data since it can be done over time.

He expects to have the Working Warriors program completed in all indigenous communities in New Brunswick by the end of 2016.

Pabineau First Nation is one of the communities participating in the program. The program was introduced to the community during the summer of 2015 and will wrap up in the next few weeks, said Mike Hennessey, research analyst with JEDI, who is also a Pabineau band member.

In the summer of 2015 there was a campaign in Pabineau to inform residents about the project. Those who participated could meet with people in their community or enter their information on the Working Warriors website.

“What the Working Warriors website allows us to do is see graphs and breakdowns of age demographics, gender, educational attainment, even occupations that were reported and so with all of that information we’re going to internally, as a service to the community, build a community workforce profile that we’ll give to the band staff and leadership of Pabineau,” Hennessey said.

When employment opportunities arise, the information will be sent out to those who are qualified in Pabineau and other indigenous communities so they’re able to apply or attend the job recruitment fairs.

Hennessey said the data also has the capability of helping governments to shape policy and provide insight on what kind of training will be needed for the workforce for upcoming projects in the province.

“For example, they might want to have a certain amount of welders or a certain amount of labourers,” he said. “If we see there’s a gap between where the labour force is right now and where that project is going to be hiring in two or three years, then we can build a training plan so that individuals that are interested in

getting involved in that opportunity are trained and built in that capacity so they can gain employment and build their career in New Brunswick.”

The bulk of the project at Pabineau First Nation finished up in August but Hennessey said he plans to wrap-up the loose ends by the end of March.

“Now we have a pretty good picture of what the workforce looks like in the community of Pabineau,” he said.

About 60 people from the community of about 200 chose to participate.

“We felt that that was a very strong response rate because of the factors of a lot of people – about half the people (eligible) – live off the reserve,” he said.

He said those who are participating in the Working Warriors program from Pabineau don’t necessarily still live there but might be away finishing their education or away for other reasons.

“That’s the overall purpose, is to connect individuals with opportunities,” he said.

Hennessey said larger communities typically have a lower percentage of response rate because it’s harder to reach everyone in the community.

When the final results are compiled, Hennessey said it will be up to the community if they want to share the results.

Hennessey said JEDI doesn’t want the project to end with the first round of data collection, but would like to see it carry on continually so the database will be up to date allowing Pabineau residents a better chance at employment.

JEDI considers the program a success and is in the progress of completing the process with Working Warriors in eight other indigenous communities throughout the province. Working Warriors is also working with various partners nationwide to see the project through.

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