



npower canada

NPower Canada Reconciliation Action Plan
(2025 – 2027)

The Artist



Nahanni Giuricich

About the Artist

Nahanni Giuricich is a Sayisi Dene artist from Calgary, Alberta. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the Alberta University of the Arts in 2023. Her work is deeply rooted in the landscapes of the prairies and the Rocky Mountains, where she creates detailed compositions featuring animals and natural elements that carry spiritual meaning in Indigenous cultures. Her art has been showcased at notable venues such as the Glenbow Museum and the Calgary Stampede, reflecting the recognition she has received within the community. In addition to her art, Nahanni is committed to becoming a teacher, with a passion for inspiring youth to appreciate and engage with art. She also finds inspiration in her role as a mother, which influences and enriches her creative process.

About the Artwork

“For this artwork, I chose to represent Reconciliation through the image of a new day. For me, the rising sun embodies hope and the promise of change. Just as the sun brings light after darkness, reconciliation brings understanding and unity after a history of pain and division. The sun's steady journey across the sky is a reminder that Reconciliation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and commitment from us all. In Dene teachings, the loon is seen as a guide and protector, closely tied to water and the spirit world. Its markings, like stars across the night sky, are said to represent the souls of ancestors watching over us. This connection to our ancestors reminds us of the wisdom that comes from the past and encourages us to reflect on our shared history and seek guidance from those before us. Just as the loon dives deep and resurfaces with clarity, reconciliation asks us to face deep truths and find new understanding. Including the loon in my artwork symbolizes this journey, guided by our ancestors, to remember, heal, and move forward together.”



Land Acknowledgment



NPower Canada is a national organization and acknowledges with respect the land on which we operate and reside, now called Canada, is the traditional territory of diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; and that the work on these lands and by these peoples precedes Canada, and all of its Settler and Newcomer representatives.

Chair & CEO Message



Julia Blackburn
CEO



Stephen Gardiner
Board Chair

NPower Canada has always been committed to fostering respect, dignity, fairness, equity and self-esteem in our mission to support individuals who face systemic barriers to education and employment. As a leading workforce development organization in Canada, we understand our unique position to effect lasting and positive change on the economic prosperity of Indigenous Peoples and help to close the digital skills gap. While we have always encouraged the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in our programs and have been fortunate to develop reciprocal relationships with Indigenous community partners, we recognized that a deeper commitment to reconciliation was needed.

We understand that it is everyone's responsibility to address the intergenerational impacts that remain from Canada's traumatic past with First Nations, Métis and Inuit, the legacy of the residential school system, and the current social inequity that it fosters. We must work together to address the systemic barriers that Indigenous Peoples face and take actionable steps to a more inclusive and equitable society.

In 2024, we committed to developing a Reconciliation Action Plan that will help us to implement what we have learned and push forward our commitment for the future. We recognize that Canada is home to diverse Indigenous Peoples and communities, each with its own distinct characteristics. As a national organization, we will take a regionalized approach to our Reconciliation Action Plan, to support the unique needs of each province and territory. We thank Mokwateh for their support in the development of our Reconciliation Action Plan and will continue to engage with Indigenous Peoples and organizations to inform and provide feedback on our reconciliation efforts.

Our three-year plan represents a blueprint for how we intend to continue to engage and partner with Indigenous Peoples, communities, and governments, to advance Reconciliation across three pillars: Operations, Relationships, and Services. We have set measurable outcomes and will share annual progress reports for transparency and accountability. We understand that true Reconciliation takes time and recognize that our Reconciliation Action Plan is a living document that may need to be adapted and reinterpreted in changing contexts. A NPower Canada National Indigenous Advisory Council will support the implementation of this plan through meaningful collaboration.

NPower Canada is committed to prioritizing meaningful engagement and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, building strong and sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities, and reducing systemic barriers to education, employment, and economic opportunities for all. We believe that Reconciliation offers a better path forward for all Canadians, including ourselves and the way that we relate to our purpose and vision.

- Julia Blackburn, CEO and Stephen Gardiner, Board Chair

Background

Education and Employment Inequalities

NPower Canada recognizes the importance of Reconciliation in addressing historical injustices and advancing equitable opportunities for all Canadians. We understand the legacy of colonialism and its profound impact on Indigenous Peoples and are committed to fostering a culture of Reconciliation within our programs and operations. By developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we aim to actively engage with Indigenous communities and work collaboratively towards building strong and more inclusive pathways to success. This action plan underscores our organizations dedication to actioning Indigenous rights, promoting cultural understanding, and contributing to the broader societal effort of Reconciliation in Canada.

At NPower Canada, we see firsthand the multifaceted barriers hindering access to education and employment opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, which exacerbates existing disparities. With the highest unemployment rate among all demographic groups¹, Indigenous Peoples encounter numerous systemic obstacles in securing stable employment, perpetuating cycles of systemic economic disadvantage. Disparities in education and employment are compounded by inadequate representation of Indigenous leadership and lack of understanding of Indigenous frameworks within many institutions. Indigenous participants have outlined for us the importance of Indigenous role models leading classrooms, and mandatory Indigenous history training for non-Indigenous faculty and staff². NPower Canada is listening to Indigenous alumni, and working to shape programming in response to these recommendations.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2024. *Labour force characteristics by region and detailed Indigenous group*. January 5. Accessed April 15, 2024. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410036501>.

² Canadian Federation of Students. 2021. *Fact Sheet: Indigenous Education*. October. Accessed April 2024. https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Indigenous-Education_Factsheets_2021_EN.pdf.

Background

Recent research also underscores the disproportionate impact of psychosocial barriers on Indigenous youth from low-income communities, which impedes their engagement in STEM programming. Despite initiatives to increase Indigenous representation in STEM fields, the disparity persists, with Indigenous employees comprising only 1% of the STEM workforce, despite comprising 5% of Canada's population³. This underrepresentation reflects broader systemic issues perpetuating inequities in education and employment that our organization aims to help alleviate.

Statistics reveal significant inequalities in educational attainment among Indigenous Peoples, particularly concerning high school completion rates. While non-Indigenous Peoples exhibit higher rates of high school completion and postsecondary participation, Indigenous Peoples, especially those residing on reserves, face significant challenges in accessing and completing postsecondary education. Nearly 60% of Indigenous Peoples living in their home communities do not have a high school degree, while 90% of non-Indigenous Canadians completed high school as of 2021.⁴ Recent government initiatives, such as the Budget 2024 proposal to invest \$242.7 million over three years in supporting First Nations post-secondary students, signal efforts to address these disparities and improve access to education for Indigenous youth, as per Call to Action #7 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.⁵

We understand that addressing the systemic barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada relating to education and employment require comprehensive, long-term strategies. These initiatives will encompass targeted support for NPower Canada program participants who are Indigenous, and include culturally inclusive curricula and Indigenous knowledge systems (such as Two-Eyed Seeing pedagogy), increased access to Indigenous role models and mentors, and broader socio-economic interventions aimed at addressing underlying inequalities. By prioritizing equity and inclusion in education and employment policies, NPower Canada is actively working towards dismantling systemic barriers to its programs and services, and laying the groundwork for a more inclusive, diverse, technological workforce.

³ Spearchief-Morris, Joy. 2023. *Globe & Mail*. November 2. Accessed April 2024. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-indigenous-initiatives-amplify-opportunities-for-jobs-in-technology/>.

⁴ Passafiume, Alessia. 2023. *CP24*. October 22. Accessed April 2024. <https://www.cp24.com/news/high-school-completion-income-levels-increasing-for-first-nations-peoples-statcan-1.6612411#:~:text=Graduation%20rates%20for%20non%2DIndigenous,cen%20of%20those%20off%20reserve.>

⁵ Indigenous Watchdog. 2024. *Indigenous Watchdog*. April 17. Accessed April 2024. <https://www.indigenouswatchdog.org/cta/call-to-action-11/>.

Background

Residential schools in Canada and their legacy

In Canada's not so distant past, the last residential school, located in Saskatchewan officially closed its doors in 1996. By acknowledging and addressing the deep scars left by residential schools, NPower Canada seeks to support the Truth & Reconciliation efforts of Survivors and Indigenous Nations, organizations, and businesses. This involves recognizing the historical injustices perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples by the Canadian government, listening and believing Indigenous truths, and removing barriers to meaningful collaboration. By addressing our history and present reality, a more tailored, inclusive and equitable learning environment within NPower Canada is being formed; one that uses a once harmful tool, the educational system, as a pillar for Reconciliation and empowerment.

- **Cultural Trauma and Loss of Identity:** The residential schooling system forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families and communities, imposing Western values and eradicating native languages and cultural practices. This traumatic experience has led to a loss of cultural identity and pride, impacting how Indigenous Peoples perceive and engage with formal education.
- **Inter-generational Trauma:** The legacy of residential schools continues to affect Indigenous communities through intergenerational trauma, where the negative experiences of past generations are passed down to subsequent ones. This trauma can manifest as distrust towards educational institutions and authority figures, hindering educational attainment and engagement among Indigenous youth.
- **Barriers to Access and Quality Education:** Historical and systemic discrimination has created barriers to accessing quality education for Indigenous Peoples, including inadequate funding for schools on reserves, lack of culturally relevant curriculum, and limited support for Indigenous participants. These challenges contribute to lower educational attainment levels and perpetuate cycles of poverty within Indigenous communities.
- **Mistrust of Education System:** The residential schooling system, which was operated by the government and Christian churches, exploited Indigenous children for assimilation purposes, often subjecting them to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. This betrayal of trust has resulted in deep-seated mistrust of the education system among Indigenous Peoples, impacting their willingness to engage with formal education structures.
- **Empowerment through Indigenous Education:** Despite historical injustices, there is a growing movement towards Indigenous-led education initiatives that prioritize cultural revitalization, language preservation, and community empowerment. By reclaiming control over their educational systems, Indigenous Peoples are fostering positive relationships with education, rooted in their own cultural values and traditions.

Background

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a government-sanctioned body that was created to listen to testimonies of residential school survivors, compile a comprehensive report of the events that took place, and recommend far-reaching policy changes that can foster Reconciliation. In 2015, the Commission released its Final Report which included 94 Calls to Action for the Canadian government and other important stakeholders such as the Church, media, industry, to attempt to address the wrongs from the past and begin to dismantle the systemic racism of today. As an workforce development organization, it is our responsibility to advocate for these Calls to Action through our work and programming.

Call to Action 7: This call focuses on ensuring that all Canadian educators are provided with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to teach Indigenous histories, cultures, and contributions accurately and respectfully. It calls for the incorporation of Indigenous content and perspectives into school curricula at all levels of education.

Call to Action 11-14: These calls emphasize the importance of closing the educational attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. They call for equitable funding for Indigenous education, culturally relevant and responsive educational programs and services, and increased support for post-secondary education and training opportunities for Indigenous participants.

Call to Action 92 for Corporate Canada: We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous Peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following: Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.



Background

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Articles

After two decades of negotiation, UNDRIP was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, however it was only given royal assent in Canada in 2021. The document outlines the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world. UNDRIP significantly impacts Canada by influencing policies and legislation related to Indigenous rights, land claims, resource management, consultation processes, and reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples. It serves as a framework for addressing historical injustices, fostering respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, and promoting the full realization of Indigenous rights within Canada's legal and political framework. At NPower Canada we take the UNDRIP principles seriously and ensure that we are updating our framework to reflect them.

● Article 8

- Indigenous Peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
- States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
 - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration.

● Article 14

- Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
- Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
- States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including 14 those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

● Article 15

- Indigenous Peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

Background



United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Articles

● Article 17

- States shall in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples take specific measures to protect indigenous children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development, taking into account their special vulnerability and the importance of education for their empowerment.

● Article 21

- Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Our Journey

Over the past ten years, NPower Canada has been committed to closing the digital divide and alleviating poverty for underserved groups through its workforce development program.

Recognizing that Indigenous Peoples have unique and specific needs, in 2019, in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, Elders, and service providers in the communities we served, we co-created and implemented the Indigenous Tech Career Pathways (ITCP) program. ITCP was designed to offer First Nations, Inuit, and Métis participants wraparound services including Elder-led counselling, sharing circles, and culturally relevant career and personal development activities.

In 2021, recognizing the need to acknowledge Canada's traumatic past with Indigenous Peoples and give our staff a greater understanding of how to create equitable spaces for Indigenous Peoples, we implemented mandatory staff training designed by Indigenous Awareness Canada.

Our collaboration with Indigenous organizations has been fundamental. As a Settler led organization, we have formed reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities to learn how we can be the best partner possible. We have worked closely with community organizations across the country such as Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, and Miskanawah in Alberta, to offer wraparound services and individualized supports to Indigenous participants. We look forward to continuing to build on these relationships, and form new ones, in the implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan.

More recently, we collaborated with Jelly Academy, an Indigenous owned company, to provide scholarships for Indigenous participants to acquire digital marketing training and professional development skills through our Raising Voices program. Graduates of the program had the opportunity to embark on apprenticeships with our employer partners.

While we have taken preliminary steps towards Reconciliation, to address the Calls to Action in Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission, we identified the need for a formal Reconciliation Action Plan to help guide us on our journey.

Building on our progress to date, we have identified three pillars to address reconciliation holistically in all aspects of our organization. Our aim with our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan is to contribute to the broader goal of Reconciliation in Education, in Canada, and to contribute to greater inclusion and diversity within the tech industry.

RAP Overview

Mission

NPower Canada is committed to building mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous Peoples, employers, and partners to increase economic prosperity through sustainable digital careers.

Vision

NPower Canada envisions a tech workforce and digital economy that fosters a safe, accessible, and trustworthy environment for Indigenous Peoples to learn, work, and grow.

Values

The values in which the RAP is derived from are based on epistemological hybridism (two-eyed seeing). Values of both westernized cultures and Indigenous cultures have been woven together to create a framework for the proposed commitments and actions that NPower Canada will undertake.

- **Respect:** Demonstrating respect for Indigenous Peoples, cultures, knowledge, and rights.
- **Honesty:** Conducting all activities with transparency, and integrity, while honoring commitments made to Indigenous partners and stakeholders.
- **Trust:** Working collaboratively with Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals to co-create solutions and opportunities builds trustworthiness and long-term reciprocal relationships.
- **Equity:** Promoting equity and fairness in access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Valuing and integrating Indigenous cultures, languages, traditions, and perspectives into all aspects of the organization's operations.
- **Empowerment:** Empowering Indigenous individuals and communities to actively participate in decision-making processes and to achieve self-determination.
- **Accountability:** Holding oneself and the organization accountable for implementing reconciliation initiatives and for achieving measurable outcomes.
- **Continuous Learning:** Committing to ongoing education, reflection, and dialogue to deepen understanding of Indigenous histories, issues, and aspirations.

RAP Overview

Outcome

Our intended outcome with this RAP is to prioritize meaningful engagement and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in NPower Canada programs by building strong, sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities and governments, supporting Indigenous-led initiatives in technology education and workforce development, and addressing systemic barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples in accessing employment and economic opportunities.

To achieve this, the RAP incorporates Indigenous leadership through a National Indigenous Advisory Council, Indigenous skills training initiatives, recruitment and retention strategies to increase Indigenous representation within the organization, and actively seeking input and feedback from Indigenous Peoples to ensure that the RAP is responsive to their needs and priorities.

By working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and leadership and making meaningful changes to NPower Canada programs and services, NPower Canada is contributing to the broader goal of Reconciliation, while fostering greater inclusion and diversity within the technology industry. Our hope is that our efforts will encourage other organizations to do the same, and that we can grow and change in response to Indigenous leadership on these matters.

RAP Overarching Targets

The work we do at NPower Canada, and specifically in this Reconciliation Action Plan, is to better serve and support Indigenous participants of our programs and Indigenous Peoples broadly. We have set the following targets to hold ourselves accountable and ensure we are making meaningful, positive change.

CATEGORY	TARGET (2027)
ENROLLMENT	Increase Indigenous enrollment by 10% year over year
GRADUATION	80% of Indigenous enrollees graduate from NPower Canada program
POST-PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT	80% of Indigenous graduates are employed after 6 months

RAP Overview



Accountability Measures

We understand that reconciliation without action are just empty promises. Our commitment to accountability ensures continuous monitoring and transparent communication, both within the organization and to the partners, participants, and communities we work with. To hold ourselves accountable, we will commit to:

1. Organize quarterly internal reporting on the status of each team lead's responsibilities
2. Regularly update all staff by publishing internal biannual internal progress reports
3. Publish a public annual progress report
4. Encourage feedback from NPower Canada employees, Indigenous participants, and Indigenous partners to refine and strengthen our Plan
5. Foster a culture of openness and adaptability to encourage proactive problem-solving and innovation

Pillar Overview

Our RAP is grouped in the following three pillars.



Pillar I

Internal Operations

Increase Indigenous representation internally and create a culture of accountability and transparency



Pillar II

Build Relationships

Form meaningful relationships based on trust and reciprocity with Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners



Pillar III

Programs & Support

Overcome systemic employment and education barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples

Pillar I – Inner Operations

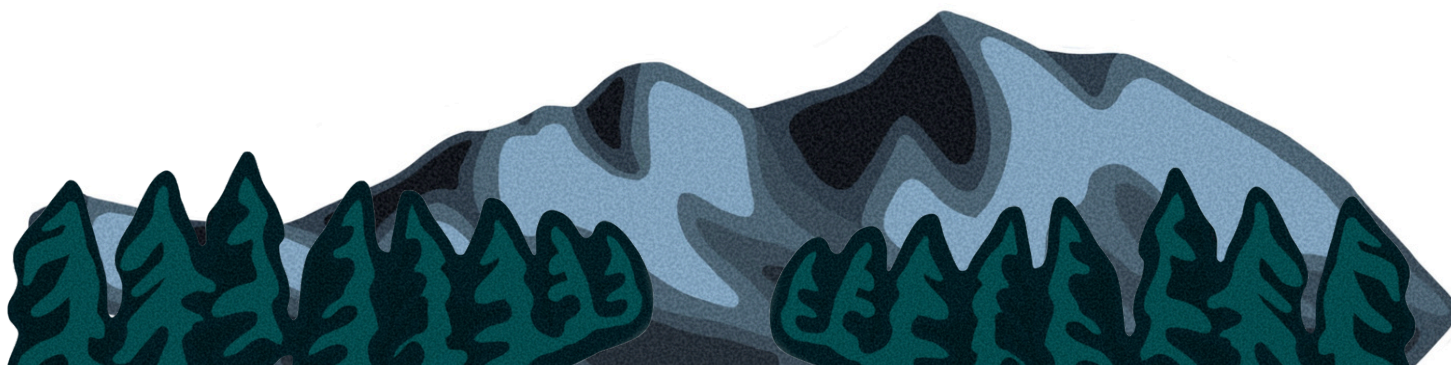
The *Inner Operations Pillar* is dedicated to how the RAP will shape the internal operations of NPower Canada.

Commitment 1: Increase Indigenous representation and leadership in the organization and ensure a supportive workplace environment.

Commitment 2: Achieve 2% Indigenous representation in NPower Canada by 2027.

Commitment 3: Transparency and accountability of RAP both internally and externally.

Commitment 4: Provide relevant training and education for all NPower Canada staff, leadership, and board of directors, so that everyone feels empowered and confident in their work.



Pillar II – Building Relationships

The *Building Relationships Pillar* focuses on building trust, relationships, and partnerships between key players in this sector.

Commitment 5: Outreach and front-line relationship building with potential participants.

Commitment 6: Form long-term, strategic partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations.

Commitment 7: Work with employment partners that prioritize hiring and developing Indigenous talent.



Pillar III – Programs & Support



The *Programs & Support Pillar* is dedicated to how the RAP will affect the services offered by NPower Canada.

Commitment 8: Overcoming barriers to entry into NPower Canada programs.

Commitment 9: Adding Indigenous support systems to current NPower Canada programs.

Commitment 10: Overcoming barriers to employment post program.

References

- Canadian Federation of Students. 2021. Fact Sheet: *Indigenous Education*. October. Accessed April 2024.
https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Indigenous-Education_Factsheets_2021_EN.pdf.
- Indigenous Watchdog. 2024. *Indigenous Watchdog*. April 17. Accessed April 2024.
<https://www.indigenouswatchdog.org/cta/call-to-action-11/>.
- Passafiume, Alessia. 2023. *CP24*. October 22. Accessed April 2024.
<https://www.cp24.com/news/high-school-completion-income-levels-increasing-for-first-nations-peoples-statcan-1.6612411#:~:text=Graduation%20rates%20for%20non%2DIndigenous,cent%20of%20those%20off%20re serve.>
- Spearchief-Morris, Joy. 2023. *Globe & Mail*. November 2. Accessed April 2024.
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-indigenous-initiatives-amplify-opportunities-for-jobs-in-technology/>.
- Statistics Canada. 2024. *Labour force characteristics by region and detailed Indigenous group*. January 5. Accessed April 15, 2024.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410036501>.



NPower Canada creates pathways to economic prosperity for Canada's underserved youth and adults by launching them into meaningful and sustainable digital careers.

npowercanada.ca
LAUNCHING TECH CAREERS. TRANSFORMING LIVES.