

# Imagine this ...

Many Indigenous communities have achieved a great deal of success in spite of a colonial system designed to work against them. Among other strengths, this success can be attributed to peoples' resilience, intelligence, perseverance, and courage – these are the types of strengths Bridging the Gap is aiming to support with a goal of fast-tracking positive results. Many studies exist that describe communities' current socio-economic conditions, but where are the long term strategies and investments required to build socio-economic capacity? Imagine the potential to fast-track socio-economic prosperity if communities were focused on:

- Creating a local economy where community members can earn a living while also giving back to the community;
- Aligning commercial partnerships and agreements with the community's economic aspirations;
- Celebrating culture as a way to build confidence and self-esteem;
- Raising awareness and reducing shame around the root causes of unemployment and underemployment (e.g. poverty, addiction, abuse, etc.)
- Building the personal effectiveness and leadership capacity of individuals so they can lead communities and nations into the future;
- Facilitating peer mentorship networks to provide ongoing encouragement and support;
- Acknowledging the community's socio-economic capacity in order to meet people where they are at;



## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Bridging the Gap is a National Conversation designed to explore the role that personal development and leadership programming could play in helping to close the socio-economic gap that currently exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

We are in the process of meeting with Indigenous peoples and other stakeholders across Canada to discuss needs and explore options for fast-tracking socio-economic equality. A position paper will be prepared highlighting what we heard, including needs and recommendations targeted to industry, government and other funders. We welcome you to join us on this learning journey by participating in a workshop or completing our short online survey.

**ECONOMIC PROSPERITY  
IS ON THE HORIZON**  
IS YOUR COMMUNITY READY?

Please visit us at [www.urbanmatters.ca/bridging-the-gap](http://www.urbanmatters.ca/bridging-the-gap) for more details.

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BRIDGING  
THE GAP

kanuu  
indigenous innovation



Canada's economy is thriving and Indigenous peoples are uniquely positioned to participate in meaningful ways. As industry seeks out stronger partnerships and governments modernize their procurement practices there will be even more employment, training and business opportunities. But in order to take advantage of these opportunities people need the skills, motivation and social supports to get the job done!

## Is your community realizing its full potential?

Even though most joint ventures and commercial agreements promise all sorts of economic and employment benefits, research shows that lots of time these benefits are not fully realized. Why? Because some communities do not have the socio-economic capacity to fully live-into these agreements.

Sometimes communities have a difficult time recruiting and preparing citizens to participate in employment and business opportunities on a sustained basis. Often this is because of barriers that limit individuals' ability to take the next step towards their own economic goals. Often the economic barriers we see in communities relate to very human challenges such as:

- Lack of confidence or experience;
- Fear of failure or fear of the unknown;
- Lack of encouragement and support from friends or family;
- Difficulty integrating into culturally insensitive workplaces;
- Mental and/or physical health challenges;
- Living in a cycle of poverty that is hard to climb out of;
- Overcoming history such as criminal convictions, poor work history, etc.

These are some of the realities that make it difficult for some individuals to take advantage of training, education, or new business opportunities. Multiplied, these are the factors that make it difficult for Indigenous communities to build thriving economies.

“Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.”

— RECOMMENDATION FROM TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION REPORT 2015

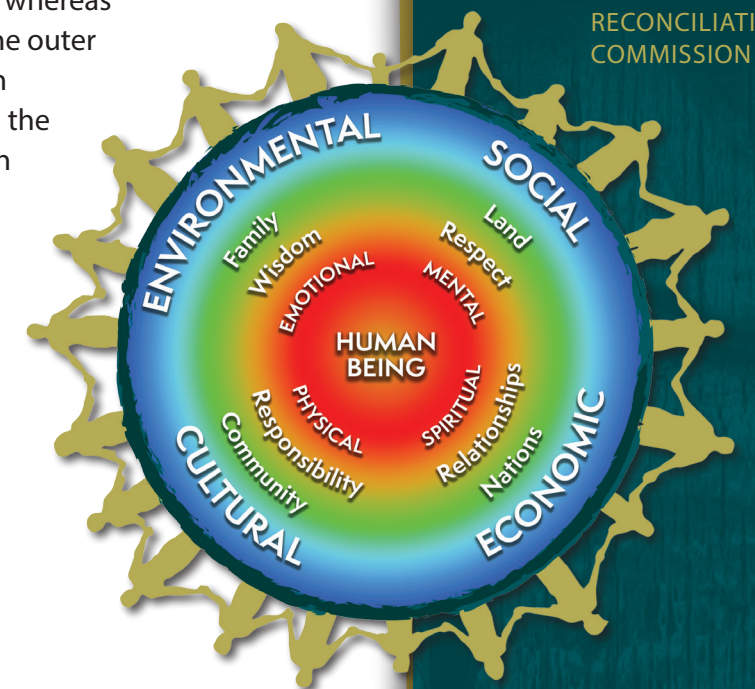
## HEALTHY PEOPLE = HEALTHY ECONOMIES

At Urban Matters we believe that healthy people are essential to a healthy economy. Unfortunately, the conversation about how to support people in reaching their full potential doesn't often come up during business negotiations. Most commercial agreements and joint ventures focus on skilled labor training and employment because this is what is immediately relevant and important for industry — but is this what is immediately relevant and important for communities? Some of the questions that leaders could be asking include:

- What kinds of work are people interested in?
- What services and skills does our community need to thrive as a local economy?
- How can we help people identify and develop their talents and help them get on a path that's right for them?
- What kinds of social issues need to be addressed to create an economically stable environment?
- What kinds of supports are in place to help people succeed along their economic journey?

The First Nations Health Authority created a wonderful graphic that illustrates the holistic nature of health and wellness from an Indigenous perspective. We like this graphic because it shows very real human needs at the center and moves out towards broader areas of community influence. In our experience, many of the economic barriers relate to the human being at the center of the circle whereas economic agreements and plans sit around the outer edge. Too often we see a disconnect between where resources are being applied and where the real economic potential exists — which is with confident, healthy and motivated people.

Bridging the Gap is exploring the relationship between the wellness of individual people and the economic strength of communities. Our theory is that unless a person's emotional, mental, spiritual and physical needs are met, it is difficult for them to contribute to the community and economy around them. We think a new socially-oriented approach to economic development is required.



“We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.”

— CALL TO ACTION FROM HONOURING THE TRUTH, RECONCILING FOR THE FUTURE - TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION 2015

