

Anishinabek Employment Training Services celebrates new partnership and grand opening

[anishinabeknews.ca/2019/08/27/anishinabek-employment-training-services-celebrates-new-partnership-and-grand-opening/](https://www.anishinabeknews.ca/2019/08/27/anishinabek-employment-training-services-celebrates-new-partnership-and-grand-opening/)

By Rick Garrick

THUNDER BAY— Anishinabek Employment and Training Services (AETS) celebrated the announcement of about \$16.9 million in federal funding over 10 years for education, training and other relevant services on Aug. 13 in Thunder Bay.

Employment, Workforce Development and Labour Minister Patty Hajdu announced the funding, which is part of the First Nations Labour Market Strategy under the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program, during the celebration at the Waverley Resource Library, where the AETS office is located on the lower level. AETS serves nine First Nations, including six Northern Superior Region communities.

"It's finally getting some stability around annual funding," says Red Rock Indian Band Chief Matt Dupuis. "At least now we know we are going to have something in place going in year after year instead of wondering if this is our last year. It's great to see that the federal government is seeing the value in this program."

Chief Dupuis says the AETS office location in the Waverly Resource Library is "great."

"The upgrades downstairs — it just looks amazing," Chief Dupuis says. "It's great to see that we could add added value to a pre-established location like the Thunder Bay Public Library. The synergies are great, working in conjunction just made sense."

Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Councillor Sharon Ostberg, who is also board president for AETS, says the 10 years of funding will enable AETS to do long-term planning.

"You are going to see a lot more of the programs that we originally ran plus the enhanced ones that are coming on," Ostberg says. "I can estimate there are about 400 youth who have benefitted through these programs in the past, and we're hoping to double that."

Ostberg encouraged youth to follow their dreams and to ask for help when required.

"We're here to help you," Ostberg says. "Pursue your education, and if you can't do that on your own we can help you with that."

Fort William Councillor Tannis Kastern says the funding announcement was "phenomenal."

"The message needs to get out there that anything is possible," Kastern says. "After pursuing a university degree, I've had many doors open for me. Considering I came from dropping out of high school at 15 with two high school credits and going back at 37 and actually graduating, I endorse going back to school for our people. Don't give up and don't let anyone tell you no."

Minister Hajdu says the federal government is committed to renewed relationships with Indigenous peoples, based on reconciliation and recognition of rights, respect and co-operation.

"This partnership puts the power in the hands of First Nations to implement skills training programs and services," Minister Hajdu says. "We are proud to collaborate with First Nations organizations such as Anishinabek Employment and Training Services to create equal opportunities for First Nations people."

Hajdu says the federal government has committed to a \$2 billion investment over five years, and \$408.2 million per year ongoing, in Budget 2018 to create the new ISET Program.

"We know that Indigenous-led programs work, we know that when you adequately fund things and you give Indigenous communities autonomy to determine for themselves how to deliver that funding, how to plan for their labour market needs, how to support individuals to actually travel on that journey to their true full potential, that's when we start to see success in programs like this," Minister Hajdu says. "I'm really excited that in Budget 2018 we committed a significant increase— \$2 billion over the next five years, for about \$400 million every year thereafter for a 10-year funding agreement for these programs so there is the continuity, there is the stability and there is the equity in the funding that will allow Indigenous communities to move forward."



Employment, Workforce Development and Labour Minister Patty Hajdu announced \$16.9 million in federal funding over 10 years for Anishinabek Employment and Training Services during the grand opening ceremony of its new office on Aug. 13 in Thunder Bay.



Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Councillor Sharon Ostberg, board president for Anishinabek Employment and Training Services, speaks about the importance of the \$16.9 million in federal funding over 10 years that was announced by Employment, Workforce Development and Labour Minister Patty Hajdu for the Thunder Bay-based organization on Aug. 13.