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AETS earns national award, setting the standard for Indigenous-led employment and training in Canada

July 11, 2026

Thunder Bay (July 2, 2026) – Anishinabek Employment and Training Services (AETS) began 2026 with national recognition, having earned a prestigious award that affirms the organization's leadership in Indigenous employment, training, and workforce and skills development.



Anishinabek Employment and Training Services earns a peer-nominated award through the National Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Gathering in Ottawa, Ontario. – Photo supplied

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AETS attended the National Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Gathering in Ottawa – an event that brings together Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Agreement (ISETA) Holders from across the country to connect, learn, and collaborate.

The ISET Gathering also bestows awards upon exceptional organizations for their dedication to Indigenous employment and skills. On behalf of AETS, Executive Director John DeGiacomo accepted the Indigenous Skill and Employment Office Award. This peer-nominated award honours an entire office, branch, or team that has created an inclusive, supportive, and results-driven environment for Indigenous employment and skills development.

Selected by peers from across Canada, AETS was one of two organizations recognized from among 122 ISETA Holders nationwide for its impact at the local, regional, and national levels.

“It’s an honour to be recognized by our peers at a national level. This award reflects the strength of our Indigenous-led governance, the dedication of our staff, and our commitment to creating culturally grounded pathways to employment that respond to the priorities of the communities we serve,” says DeGiacomo.

Through community-based work, AETS has managed to make an impression on a national scale while still prioritizing the interests of local people.

“AETS sets the standard for how employment and training services should work. Their strength is in how they bring people together and turn that collaboration into real outcomes. Their leadership in Indigenous employment and skills development is something the entire sector can learn from,” says Andy Nieweglowski, Director of Training at LiUNA Local 607.

“On behalf of the AETS Board of Directors and Staff, we are pleased AETS has been acknowledged nationally as a result-driven inclusive environment and this announcement is in line with our mission, to provide learning pathways and guided training towards inclusive employment opportunities respectful of culture,” says Jordan Hatton, AETS Board President.

“Congratulations to AETS on the work they are doing to improve skill levels and employment outcomes of First Nation Citizens. We are proud that AETS is creating innovative solutions to help break down barriers from education to training for employment to participate, and succeed, in today’s economy,” says Chanelle Pepin, Director of Employment Services for EmployNext.

This national honour positions AETS within a cohort of high-performing organizations advancing reconciliation and Indigenous inclusion through strong systems, leadership, and workplace culture. As an Indigenous-governed organization, AETS stands out for practices that not only meet but



exceed sector benchmarks, demonstrating what Indigenous leadership can achieve.

In addition, AETS is prioritizing accessibility for its employees and clients. On July 15, 2026, AETS will be unveiling a new elevator lift at its Park Avenue location in Thunder Bay, eliminating accessibility barriers for those who use a mobility device or have other accessibility challenges. More details to come.

For more information, visit aets.org.

About ISET

The ISET Program is Canada's flagship Indigenous labour market initiative. It funds a national network of 122 Indigenous-led organizations to provide employment and skills training to over 50,000 Indigenous people annually. Programs are locally designed and delivered with wraparound supports such as transportation, childcare, and coaching to ensure success. ISET is a proven platform to strengthen workforce diversity, fill labour shortages, and enable inclusive growth.

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