

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS YOUTH

WHY ARE THESE PROGRAMS IMPORTANT?

There are many benefits of on-the-land/water programs for Indigenous youth. While the specific outcomes may vary from program to program and participant to participant, a recent report by Changemark Research + Evaluation found nine key positive outcomes including:



Leadership: On-the-land/water programs support peer-to-peer and multi-generation knowledge exchange while promoting character building among participants, and helping youth develop the tools needed to succeed as community leaders.



Stewardship: On-the-land/water programs give Indigenous youth an opportunity to understand the land and how to take care of it. Indigenous youth who participate in these programs have reported an increased sense of responsibility in caring for the land, highlighting that it was the connection to the land that sparked the shift.



Climate Change: On-the-land/water programs often educate youth on environmentally-friendly practices and provide opportunities to do research designed with Indigenous teachings in mind. This can foster a greater understanding of what the land can provide, how to care for it, and in turn, inspire youth to address climate change.



Food Security: On-the-land/water programs can teach youth skills in locating and harvesting local foods, reducing the need to rely on expensive and limited imported foods. These programs can also connect youth with equipment and training that support them in accessing traditional foods.



Health and Wellness: On-the-land/water programs can impact many parts of the health and wellness of Indigenous youth, including physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. They can also contribute to healing from intergenerational trauma, reducing violence against girls, and creating safe spaces for two-spirit, non-binary, and LGBTQIA+ youth.



Language: Many Indigenous words that describe experiences, beings, and parts of the land are best communicated when on the land. On-the-land/water programs can provide opportunities for Indigenous youth to share the experience of connecting to language with both their peers and program facilitators in a supportive environment.



Culture: Many on-the-land/water programs include opportunities for traditional Indigenous ceremonies and practices (e.g., Potlatch and canoe travel) to be shared between different generations.



Education: On-the-land/water programs help educate youth on important life skills through Indigenous knowledge systems and teachings. These programs can help foster a sense of belonging and confidence in Indigenous youth.



Employment: On-the-land/water programs provide an opportunity for Indigenous youth to learn valuable employment skills and explore potential future careers. These programs also teach youth other transferable skills that may lead to employment in areas that aren't being taught in their local educational systems.