

THE FUTURE OF
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BRIEF

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The Future of Work & Learning

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What disruptions are affecting the labour market? Which skills and competencies are required for new and evolving jobs? How can people and institutions adapt to the future of work and learning? Through this monthly brief, keep on top of developments in the workforce and how education and training are changing today to build the skills and competencies needed for the future. Priority will go to stories focused on Western

Canada. If you know of something relevant and want to send for inclusion in the next brief, email lavery@cwf.ca.

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Labour shortages and regulatory hurdles for nurses

Alberta Health Services has modified its care model for COVID-19 patients from a smaller number of patients cared for by individual health care providers to groups of patients cared for by a team of providers. Over 600 nursing students will be deployed to these teams to provide pandemic care via paid practicums after expedited training. Students will be able to complete their studies while working. Earlier in the pandemic, Alberta fast tracked program completion for nursing students who had their programs cut short so they could enter the workforce.

In Manitoba, advocates for internationally trained nurses recommend a recalibration or removal of the competency test or more supports such as high-level language courses, funding support for licensing, and the expansion of and access to bridging programs. "The inability to become registered ... is [a] tremendous waste of human capital," said Seid Oumer Ahmed from the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations.

The B.C. Care Providers Association estimates it can take up to three years and \$20,000 for internationally educated nurses, including Canadians who studied abroad, to become licensed. After the B.C. College of Nurses and Midwives simplified their language proficiency assessments last summer, applications from internationally educated nurses doubled to 800.

Pandemic pressures continue

Post-secondary institutions (PSIs) in Alberta have extended online learning into February for most classes. NAIT, SAIT, and Alberta University of the Arts have taken a hybrid approach to allow those students in hands-on classes to continue learning in person. The University of Manitoba and University of Brandon have taken similar approaches to those of Alberta PSIs. The University of Saskatchewan will be remote until February 7, when the situation will be reassessed. Meanwhile, two Alberta MLAs have asked for PSIs to allow unvaccinated students to return to campus if they have a negative test.

The University of Victoria, SFU and other B.C. PSIs fully reopened January 24. B.C. students are "divided over the return to in-person learning," CHEK News reports. In a letter to government, 10 student associations from across the province asked for online options and additional health measures.

Early childhood educators face increased challenges during this wave. Amanda Worms, owner-operator of Kelowna's Little Owl Academy, told CBC News "Quite frankly, there are educators that are leaving the field because it's all very much too overwhelming and the lack of acknowledgement, consultation and recognition just puts people over the top and it's just not worth it anymore."

Mental health and targeted supports

The ninth University of Toronto-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) survey of Canadians health and substance use shows an **uptick in mental health and substance use concerns since the summer**. While moderate to severe anxiety, loneliness, and depression were generally up, women and younger Canadians reported more increases. CAMH Senior Director, Dr. Samantha Wells says, “While people are incredibly resilient, as this pandemic wears on it’s the people working on the frontlines who are among the most affected [...] Many, especially those in the healthcare sector, face significant stressors and unfortunately they risk reaching the point of burnout.”

The Vancouver Island Construction Association has partnered with the Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions to expand their harm reduction program – the **Tailgate Toolkit Project**. The project was created in response to the **2018 B.C. Coroner’s Report** that found the majority of illicit drug-related deaths among the employed (44 per cent) occur in the construction, trades and transport industry.

A new program funded through the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program gives farmers and their families access to free mental health supports with registered counsellors who have a background in agriculture.

The University of Calgary’s Werklund School of Education is offering free mental health programs for students, young adults, and families “who are struggling with the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.”

Trades training for Indigenous adults

Ten women from Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta received heavy equipment operator certificates after completing IHE Interior Heavy Operator Equipment School’s mobile course. While the course was not targeted specifically to women, the course ended up comprised of all women. The federal government’s Job Bank expects **job prospects for heavy equipment operators to be “fair in Alberta over the next three years.”** Employment growth and retirements will help create new jobs but there are unemployed workers who may take new jobs over recent graduates.

Off-reserve, Indigenous people can now enroll in an Assiniboine Community College farm equipment operator course for free. The 14-week program is sponsored by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and will teach students about the industry, safety, and farm equipment. The program is meant to help people find work and address a current labour shortage in the industry. **The federal government estimates job prospects for farm equipment operators will be fair over the next three years.** High turnover in the sector will help create jobs but seasonality, a lack of retirements, and moderate growth in the sector could limit prospects.

Indigenous K-12 education

Junior high and high school students at the Wihnemne School on Paul Band First Nation west of Edmonton are receiving 10 weeks of training in seven construction trades on reserve.

Chief Sunrise Education Centre on the K'at'l'odeeche First Nation is using **food and cooking to stay connected with families and students during school closure**, CBC reports. Students have unequal access to reliable internet and the school had to get creative to maintain engagement with students. Staff prepare food boxes and recipes for families who then cook together and share photos with the school. Deborah Reid said the program is helping to rebuild trust in schools. "We struggled for years in the north to get people to accept schools and have trust in schools, because of the residential school legacy [...] So this comes along, and all of a sudden schools are a scary place to be in because they could get sick." The program is also providing food to those who may have relied on school food programs for meals.

Yukon First Nations say they've seen little progress in the Education Department since a 2019 auditor general's report highlighted the need to better support Indigenous students and more inclusive education. In the 2019-2020 school year, just under half of Indigenous students enrolled in grade 12 graduated.

Innovations in tech

A study on improving **health care in rural and remote First Nations communities with drone technology** has almost completed its first phase which involved drone flights between Stelat'en First Nations and Fraser Lake carrying supplies and mock laboratory samples.

TradesLink, **an Edmonton startup, has created an app exclusive to the trades** that combines job searching/hiring features with a social platform.

Lethbridge College's Spatial Technologies Applied Research and Training (START) initiative has created a **unique virtual reality experience for the Grande Cache Tourism and Interpretive Centre** in the Municipal District of Greenview. The exhibit allows visitors to virtually follow 90 million-year-old dinosaur tracks which were discovered in the 1980s but are inaccessible to the public because they are located on steep cliff faces.

Broadband internet speed in Canada increased by 27 per cent in 2021, widening the **gap between reliable broadband connections** in northern rural and remote areas and the rest of Canada. Median download speeds in the Northwest Territories were 56 per cent of the 2021 national average. Speeds in the Yukon sit at less than half the national average.

Workforce update

Saskatchewan recorded the highest job growth rate in December among Canadian provinces. The professional, scientific and technical services sectors experienced the most notable increase.

The pandemic has accelerated a population slowdown in Winnipeg. From July 2020 to July 2021, population growth in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Area increased by a mere 0.2 per cent. Career advancement and higher-paid opportunities out of province were primary reasons for lack of growth.

The **vast majority of construction contractors in Northern British Columbia expect more work in 2022** compared to last year, however 71 per cent indicate they are short workers such as truck drivers, carpenters and labourers. Contractors have had to delay project

completion dates, turn down work and put more resources into recruitment as a result of the worker shortage.

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