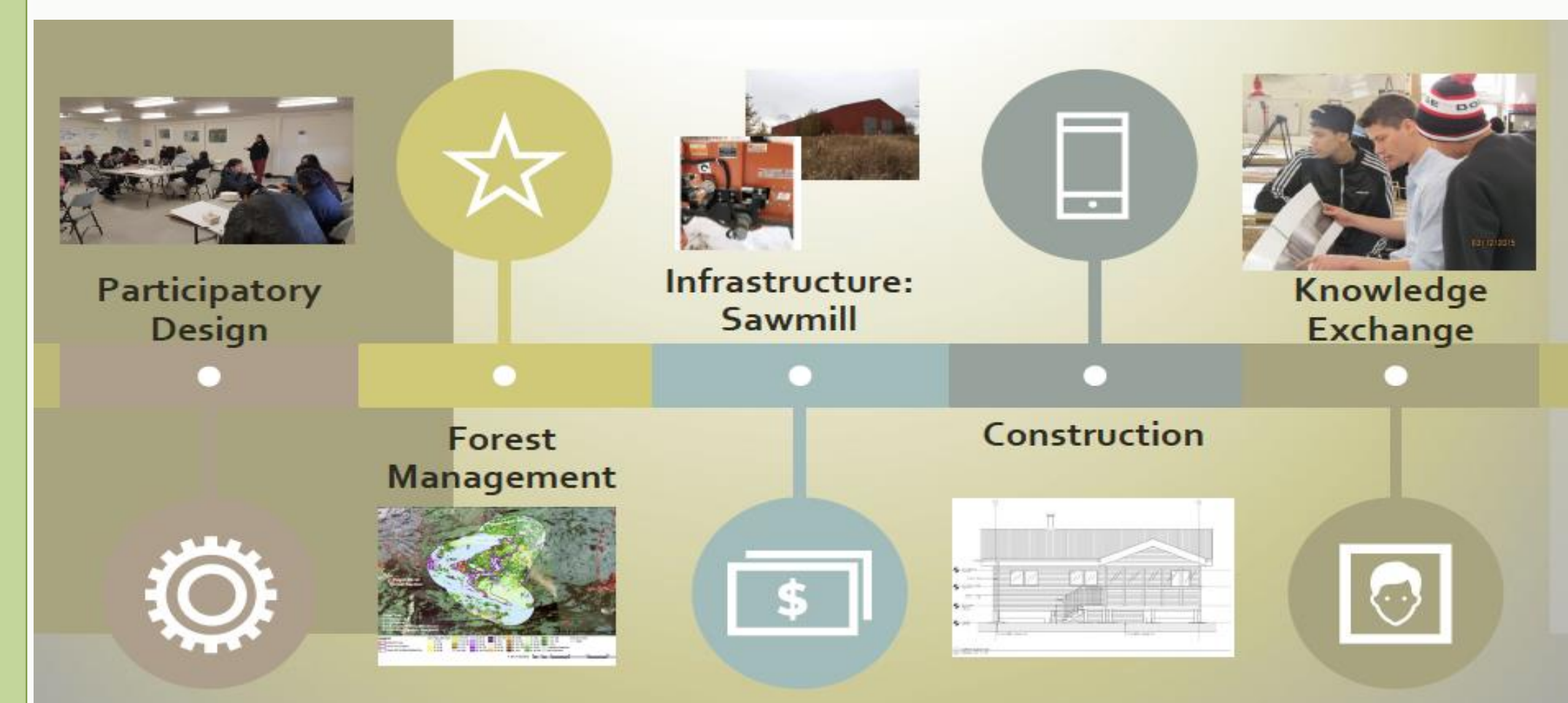


Introduction

Community-led capacity building of youth provides a way to improve community development to meet Sustainable Development Goals. An applied education program in two remote First Nation communities is building houses aiming to solve both the housing crisis and high rates of youth unemployment.

Severe housing shortages occur in First Nation houses that are often overcrowding and poor quality (INAC, 2017; Optis et. al., 2001). Lack of skilled trades people to build and manage houses is part of the problem (INAC 1990). To resolve these housing concerns, there is a need for First Nation-driven long-term capacity development and governance, in addition to ongoing support for construction and repair (INAC, 2017).

Wasagamack First Nation and Garden Hill First Nation are currently building capacity of youth, to resolve housing challenges through the Boreal Home Building (BHB) project. This program started with students helping architects design the house then learn forestry, forest management and sawmilling too supply the wood to build the house. The students then learn carpentry as they build two houses in their community. This learning pathway is shown in the figure below



Objectives

- ❖ To assess the **economic, environmental** and **social** impact of a community-led education program on the community development in two First Nation communities;
- ❖ To analyse **at the individual level** whether the Boreal Homebuilders program is resulting in **social, economic and environmental changes** in students' lives;
- ❖ To assess **the costs versus the benefits** of the Boreal Homebuilder community-led capacity building.

Significance

- ❖ Help shape this program to provide a model for other First Nation and other communities to build youth capacity and housing.
- ❖ Develop a strategy for capacity building programs in housing and other SDGs.



Figure 1: Aerial view of Island Lakes, Manitoba



Figure 3: BHB Trainees using the leveler to level the church project site in Wasagamack



Figure 5: BHB trainees making a stick build house based on blue prints designed during housing design conference in Wasagamack.



Figure 7: Babajide Oni (researcher) addressing the BHB trainees in Wasagamack during first contact engagement



Figure 2: Housing conditions in Island Lake (broken windows and no or broken doors)



Figure 4: BHB trainees making the stage for a community gathering in Wasagamack.



Figure 6: Darryl Wastesicoot (BHB lead project instructor) teaching BHB trainees learning how to read blue prints of the stick build house in Garden Hill



Figure 8: Babajide Oni (Researcher) working with BHB trainees at stick building project site in Garden Hill

Methods

Although I will be applying mixed methods in the future, to date I have only applied a survey form with 10 student respondents. This is a multi-year longitudinal survey that will follow 30-35 students over the program and after the program to see what an impact this program has on their work lives.

Reflections and Preliminary Results

In the course of this study, I am keeping a reflective journal where I write down my daily reflection entries from the programming and relationship building with the trainees and community members at large. This journal will help me to self-reflect and learn from the past experience. A reflective journal can help you to identify important learning events that had happened in your life.

Below is a highlight from my reflective journal so far in the study:

"In my role as a researcher I am also learning to build capacity and housing as a mentor in the BHB program in both communities. I flew in to these remote communities to mentor students in numeracy, computer use, problem solving; instilling real life job place trainings and motivation. Also, I attended different feasts and gatherings. I regularly participate in different community sports like volleyball and floor hockey. This helped to create community bonding and improved my relationship with the community leadership and members. Later, I was named "Mukawa" meaning Bear in Oji-Cree."

Preliminary Findings of Survey asking students about overall impact of BHB program on them (N = 10)

- "This program has taught me to face my fears."
- "It has taught me to build my mind to possibilities & given me a more optimistic outlook."
- "Changed my mindset for the better."
- "Improved my social life and I opened up myself to new things."
- "Working with my project partners helped me to be successful."
- "This program has helped to build my relationship with others."
- "Socially getting to know people and greet people more."
- "The program taught me about safety in my environment."
- "Impacted my life to be more social."
- "Made new friends."

Also, as part of the overall 18 month certificate program students have received 8 micro-credit courses in the community namely-

1. Wilderness First Aid (Red Cross)
2. Forestry 1
3. Forestry 2
4. Small Motors
5. Job Readiness
6. Chainsaw Operation
7. Construction Safety (COR)
8. Lumber Grading



Conclusion

To date the Boreal Homebuilder Project seems to be a promising model worthy of study. This 18 month post secondary education program for youth in Wasagamack First Nation and Garden Hill First Nation communities in Island lake, Manitoba is providing employment with payment through the Mino Bimaadiziwin partnership and technical skills but also better social outcomes.

These BHB students are not only designing the homes but chopping the logs and sawmilling them before building houses with them. In this applied program they learn about forestry and carpentry while building houses with local wood they cut. The youths are benefiting from education integrated with work and also the community is benefiting from building sustainable houses. This project is ambitious and I hope to play a small positive role.

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