



**NextStep
to Success**

aWe

**ALBERTA WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS**

NextStep to Success PROGRAM FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The NextStep to Success program offers guidance and expertise on starting and building a business.

The program includes an eight-week business planning series focused on determining readiness for entrepreneurship, marketing research, operations planning, and financial planning.

Our small group sessions include real-life examples, success stories, and practical training in a supportive learning environment. With our partners, AWE is continuing to develop programs that will increase entrepreneurial opportunities for women business owners in Alberta.

Since the inception of
NextStep to Success, the
program has reached more than
470 entrepreneurs



A New Craft, A NEW CALLING

Laura Asham is the Founder behind Asham Creations, an award-winning company that sells puppets for educational purposes. Laura participated in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series in Siksika Nation.

Laura Asham has been beadworking since she was seven years old. After learning the art from her mother and sister, Laura found a love for the craft. In 2008, she began designing various beadwork projects as a part-time business while she finished her social work education.

In 2010, Laura's daughter was entering a princess pageant at her school and needed a talent to compete. "I suggested that she use a puppet to showcase Blackfoot words. Me being the person I am had to go above and beyond. It took me two days and 11 hours to create one puppet."

Her newfound hobby quickly shifted into a business opportunity. She started selling puppet sets to schools across a variety of First Nation communities in Alberta.

"It has been so good to see that the puppets are not only bringing joy to people, but they are teaching children how to speak Blackfoot. Many schools on the Siksika Nation are now teaching full immersion programs."

Laura participated in AWE's program, NextStep to Success, this past year. She said it was great to have the assistance she needed to create her business plan.

"As I plan to expand my business and build-out a commercial space, I knew that I needed to get my business plan together. The NextStep program was very helpful to me."

Laura is in the process of finishing her business plan and securing funding to open her first commercial space.

"Right now, I have been so focused on my local market and keeping up with that. I hope that in 10 years time we have covered Canada and moved into international markets."

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Finding Your Path AND FUELING YOUR SUCCESS

Crystal Janvier is the CEO and Owner of Sun Dance Enterprises Ltd., a facility integrity and quality assurance consulting business operating primarily in the oil and gas sector. Crystal participated in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series in Edmonton.

Crystal Janvier did not always have aspirations of being an entrepreneur, but her determination to achieve her goals is nothing new. Starting university when her son was just 10 days old, Crystal was focused on her education, completing a Bachelor of Arts Honors degree, and following it up with her Masters of Science in Public Health.

Her interest in owning her own business came later, after a career in consulting and working with Indigenous youth to help them get into trades careers.

In the early days of her career, Crystal admits that she did face some of the stereotypes that come along with being a young woman in business. “They called me the kid, because I was the youngest field director at that time. I had to prove myself.”

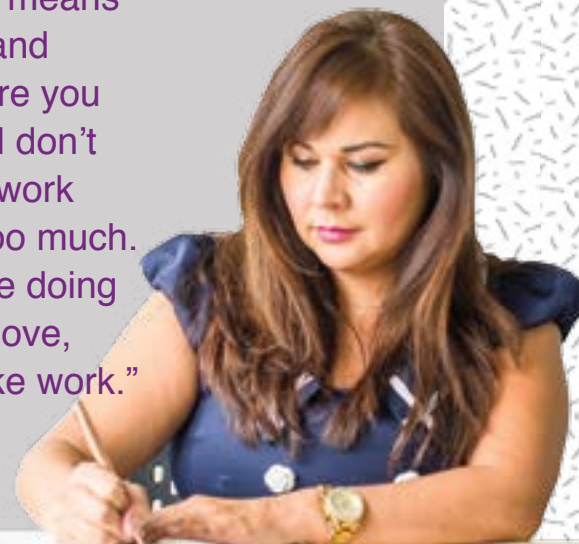
Crystal began her own oil and gas consulting business in 2009, and then launched Sun Dance Enterprises Ltd. with her husband in 2013.

Prior to joining the NextStep to Success program, Crystal had started writing a business plan but was looking for additional knowledge and resources to finish it. Crystal says she would definitely recommend the series to others.

“Before you invest time and especially before you invest finances towards something you’re not 100% certain about, it will help you determine how feasible it’s going to be. It gives you an ability to analyze your risk.”

In the future, Crystal is planning to expand her business and hire additional contractors. For now, Crystal is happy doing what she loves.

“Success to me means feeling fulfilled and happy with where you are in your life. I don’t really separate work and home life too much. To me, if you are doing something you love, it doesn’t feel like work.”



A RECIPE FOR Success

Esther Jacobs is the Co-owner and Operator of Jacobs Weaselhead Corporation. The company has several different streams of business, including catering, equipment rentals, and training. Esther participated in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series in Tsuut’ina Nation.

Esther Jacobs is no amateur when it comes to her craft. She has been working in catering for over 30 years, a skill she learned hands-on at a young age.

“We learned a lot of our hands-on skills from our own mothers, aunts, cousins. You learn a lot of the basics you need to know from community connections.”

She also grew up in an entrepreneurial family, with her father being a business owner for over 25 years. Her whole family worked in that business, and she credits her dad for teaching her many of the business skills she has today.

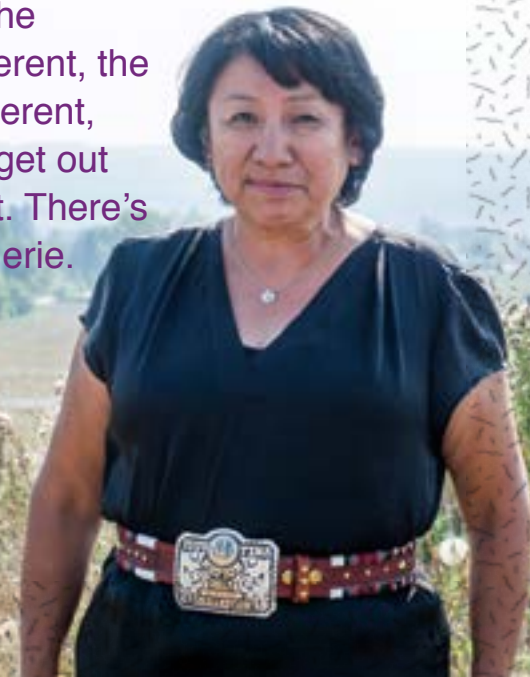
Like most entrepreneurs, she often wears many hats in the company, doing the marketing, promotions, negotiations, and payroll, in addition to cooking.

“There’s not a start and end date when you’re an entrepreneur. It’s all day, every day, it’s always on your mind what to do next. Getting out a quote, or an estimate, or submitting a bid.”

Esther and her husband incorporated their business, Jacobs Weaselhead Corporation, in 2017. With her catering expertise, and his background in the construction industry, their combined skillsets are perfect for the variety of services their business offers.

Partaking in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series was a good complement to other training Esther has done to build her business. The sessions allowed her to look at the big picture for her business. What she found particularly valuable and empowering were the discussions with other women, and the supportive learning environment.

“I find that when you’re with a group of women, it’s different. The learning is different, the teaching is different, and what you get out of it is different. There’s more camaraderie.”



BEING YOUR OWN BOSS Never Goes Out of Style

Sophia Quewezance is an aspiring entrepreneur who is starting a fashion design company. She plans to design and sell t-shirts, swimsuits, and other clothing with Indigenous designs. Sophia participated in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series in Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation.

Sophia Quewezance has always had a love for fashion, a passion that only increased when she began working as a model. It was walking the runway that she realized that she wanted to be designing the clothes, and not only wearing them.

Independent and ambitious from a young age, Sophia knew that entrepreneurship was the right choice for her. "I didn't want to have a boss, I wanted to be the boss."

Participating in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series helped Sophia realize that with some strategic planning, her entrepreneurial dreams were well within her reach.

"The program taught me how to do things the right way and with compassion. Sometimes you run into dead ends but Bev (the program's facilitator) showed me how you can get out of them and go a different way."

Although she plans on running her business solo, Sophia turns to family for encouragement and inspiration. "My auntie is my absolute best friend and she pushes me to do everything and anything." Her dad, a carpenter and entrepreneur himself, is another source of inspiration.

Running a business can be challenging, especially when you have a family, but for Sophia, her two young kids are just another strength. "My kids will totally help me. I want to dress them, and I want to dress my dog. My kids and my family inspire me."

Right now, Sophia is focused on her designs, and executing her business plan. She plans to start operating her business online first, and then expand into selling at kiosks and powwows.

Her advice to other people considering starting a business?

"Don't give up. Have faith in everything that you do."



EXPLORING NEW Entrepreneurial Trails

Jeanette Many Guns is a filmmaker and is the Owner and Operator of Many Guns Ranch and Adventures. Jeanette participated in the NextStep to Success Business Planning Series in Calgary.

For 20 years, Jeanette Many Guns has been offering trail rides and customized tours on horseback throughout Siksika Nation. Speaking passionately about the beauty and the history of her community, Jeanette explains that the many historical sites, close proximity to the Bow River, and breathtaking badlands, make Siksika a popular tour spot.

"I had a lady from Europe that came and she couldn't believe how we didn't see anybody all day. The land that we go through is the same as it was 100 years ago; it hasn't been touched. There's so much history here at Siksika and it's beautiful."

It was her love of teaching about history and culture that inspired Jeanette to start a second business, this time in filmmaking. In 2015 she began creating educational films about Siksika. In addition to a series on the Blackfoot language, Jeanette has also made films sharing Blackfoot legends and stories. Jeanette participated in the NextStep to Success program to help her get more organized and to improve her business plan. Her advice to others starting a business is to put their ideas down on paper.

"Start off with a business plan. And have everything in writing. When you go to the banks, or to any company, they want to see everything in writing."

When asked what she likes most about entrepreneurship, Jeanette says she enjoys the freedom of working for yourself and the ability to set your own timelines. Ultimately though, it comes down to achieving her goal of educating people.

"When visitors come out I get to educate them on the Blackfoot history, our culture, our heritage, and our traditions. That feels good."



ABOUT AWE

AWE is a not-for-profit organization providing unique programs and services to women entrepreneurs through access to markets, mentorship and capital. We believe that our economies and communities are stronger when women are full participants in entrepreneurship.

www.awebusiness.com



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