

(Carl Richards - Narrator) Access to investment capital is one of the most fundamental requirements for any small business startup.

Evidence suggests that Indigenous small businesses are faced with a higher number of financial barriers than their non-Indigenous counterparts. While there has been an increase in success in the Indigenous economy, Indigenous entrepreneurs are still faced with a historic array of obstacles that hinder the growth and development of their business venture. Indigenous entrepreneurs describe having more negative experiences when launching startups than other entrepreneurs, especially when it comes to accessing capital. Indigenous-led financial institutions have stepped up to provide aid to FNMI enterprises through low-interest loans, grants, advocacy, and advisory programs. Some of these financial institutions include Aboriginal Community Futures Development Corporation, Aboriginal Development Lenders, and Aboriginal Capital Corporation. Despite the increase in capital access, few Indigenous entrepreneurs seemed to be aware of the vast array of financial programs and initiatives that are available to them. As one entrepreneur puts it, it is important to utilize all the support that is available. (Kat Pasquach) As an entrepreneur, especially when you're starting out, the amount of financial resources that will be available to you are--there are so many financial resources that are available to you. There is no reason not to apply for these things. If you think that you don't have the time to apply for about two thousand, three thousand-, and five-thousand-dollar grant, you need to make the time to do it. Because essentially, it's free money and it is free marketing for your business. And those people that you connect with for those grants are going to support you the entire time that you own your business. Being able to take advantage of financial resources is a big thing. Nobody is going to get started without influxes of cashflow into the business. And it is incredibly important to recognize what, what boxes you can check off to make this thing happen. (Carl Richards - Narrator) Institutional barriers such as access to loans from centralized banks continue to hinder the success of many FNMI-led businesses. In fact, over 50% of Indigenous entrepreneurs struggled to keep their businesses afloat due to inadequate access to debt financing. The fact remains that FNMI businesses are unable to use reserved land as collateral for loans.

collateral for loans. Their on-reserve populations are dwindling, and they face institutionalized discrimination on numerous fronts. The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association reports that it would require \$83.3 billion dollars in capital for FNMI economies to have access to funding at the same level as mainstream Canadian businesses. The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business supports this claim, stating that Aboriginal entrepreneurs rely on personal savings to finance their business investments rather than common sources of funding, be it business loans or aid through government programs. Fortunately, some Indigenous entrepreneurs have been able to access these funding sources to help keep their businesses and operation and have had positive experiences.

(Sarah Hopkins-Herr) I did receive some assistance through a COVID loan through Tecumseh Development

Corporation. Half of it was forgivable, the other half I'm still working on paying back. It was this in-surge of funding that was able to cover those costs, which was great. But then after the funding has gone, it's trying to make sure that I have enough to pay my staff person, to pay the rent the next month, and it can be stressors. And there are times where I'm sitting on a lower amount of cash and I'd like to be. I do experience often cashflow issues. And so the good thing is there are organizations like Aboriginal Capital Corporations or Business Development Bank of Canada, or your own bank. There's a lot of places you can go to look into, I would say more of a short-term type of loan to cover that cashflow issue. (Carl

Richards - Narrator) As more Indigenous businesses are started, they will continue to build professional networks with one another to help navigate the financial demands of running a small business through the sharing of knowledge, they will better understand where to find sources of financing, business advice, and mentorship. The goal for Indigenous entrepreneurs is to have the same access to resources and face the same challenges as everybody else.