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Message from the Editorial Board

We knew from the outset that this was an important topic to address. While previous issues of the Canadian Apprenticeship Journal have focused on essential skills, apprenticeship completion, global developments in vocational education, and most recently youth engagement, we recognized it was time to dedicate an issue to the initiatives and programs that support the recruitment, retention and training of Aboriginal learners in apprenticeship programs and the skilled trades.

The fastest growing segment of the Canadian population is the Aboriginal youth population: in fact, some have argued that Canada is experiencing an “Aboriginal baby boom.” Canada’s frequently reported skilled trades shortage is also most dire in resource-rich areas in northern and rural regions where Aboriginal communities tend to be located. These demographic and economic realities are prompting Aboriginal communities, training providers, employment counsellors, industry, labour and governments to work together to advance training and employment initiatives for Aboriginal peoples, particularly given the proximity of Aboriginal communities in northern and rural areas to the many newer and planned resource development projects. Yet it is not a simple task of linking perceived available human resources to labour demands. More is at stake. There must be careful consideration of cultural contexts and realities, appreciation for different approaches to teaching and learning, and commitment to strategies that will have longstanding benefits for all stakeholders.

The initiatives detailed in this issue show us that workers and learners come from different places and have different experiences. These circumstances impact the strengths they bring to their workplaces and training environments. The remoteness of some Aboriginal communities, low literacy levels, socio-economic circumstances, and limited work and training opportunities within Aboriginal communities are all challenges that affect individual learners to varying degrees. This means that one solution will not address everyone’s needs. Innovative approaches that can be modified and tailored to unique local and cultural situations and needs are more likely to result in long-term success.

In this issue, the broad representation of Aboriginal engagement initiatives from across the country reveals some common threads that seem to contribute to the successful training and employment of Aboriginal peoples. Paramount is the culture of support and the support of culture. By this we mean that, in the initiatives shared, you will note that much of the success is attributed to programs that provide Aboriginal learners with the time, tools and training needed to develop their employment and technical skills—they are inherently supportive of the learners and responsive to their individual needs. Support of culture, through cultural awareness activities and opportunities to engage in cultural practices that have been built into programs,

recognizes and respects learners' strong ties to communities and culture, and builds on these links to contribute to positive outcomes.

As you read through this issue, we encourage you to also take some time to reflect on the fact that more than 14 per cent of Aboriginal peoples state that their highest level of educational attainment is some kind of certification in the trades (in comparison to 12 per cent of non-Aboriginal Canadians). To us, this indicates a strong tradition of valuing work that makes meaningful contributions to day-to-day living in these communities. The outcomes of the programs and initiatives described within this ninth edition of the Journal suggest it is a tradition that will continue.

We would like to thank our two sponsors for this issue: the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories, and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. Your financial support goes a long way in allowing these important information-sharing activities to take place.

Framing their Careers: Apprenticeship Carpentry Training in Elsipogtog First Nation Community

By Lori Leach, PhD, Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, New Brunswick

Residents of New Brunswick's First Nations communities wishing to pursue postsecondary education often have to leave their community to do so. Studying away from one's community can be difficult for any individual, regardless of ethnicity, but research indicates that Aboriginal people, in addition to having less access to transportation to urban centres than non-Aboriginal people, also face cultural and socio-linguistic barriers to learning as well as low literacy rates. Elsipogtog First Nation community implemented a creative program to help overcome barriers to success for future Aboriginal tradespeople that simultaneously addresses the projected skilled trades shortage facing the province and housing issues within their community. An on-reserve apprenticeship training program was developed where both the class-based theoretical learning and the on-the-job mentored training was offered in the community and for the community. This program has carpentry apprentices working on-reserve with certified Aboriginal journeypersons from Elsipogtog to build homes in the community. Of the first group of Aboriginal apprentices, 46 per cent obtained trade certification (the provincial completion rate is 77 per cent). In addition, this group built 12 new homes and completed various necessary home renovations. A second program with a new group of apprentices is currently underway.

The Elsipogtog First Nation community

Elsipogtog is the largest of 15 First Nations communities in New Brunswick, with approximately 2,307 residents living on-reserve and a total registered population of 3,051.¹ It is located in the eastern part of the province, approximately 100 kilometres north of the closest city, Moncton. Today it boasts a police department, a fire hall, gas station, a convenience store, a recreation centre, an arena, a youth centre and a training centre that hosts apprenticeship training. But that was not always the case.

If Elsipogtog's residents wished to pursue postsecondary education and training prior to 2002, they had to leave their community to do so.

Aboriginal communities in Canada are typically rural and isolated.² If Elsipogtog's residents wished to pursue postsecondary education and training prior to 2002, they had to leave their community to do so. Studying away from one's community can be difficult for any individual, regardless of ethnicity, but research indicates that Aboriginal people, in addition to

less access to transportation to urban centres than non-Aboriginal people, also face cultural and socio-linguistic barriers to learning as well as low literacy rates.³

It is estimated that between the years 1970 to 2000 approximately 200 residents of Elsipogtog registered in an apprenticeship program. However, of those 200 apprentices, only 4 completed and received their Interprovincial Red Seal endorsement on their trade certificate.⁴ A solution to the postsecondary barriers that faced those living on-reserve needed to be found.

In 2002, the Moncton apprenticeship office took note of the high number of interprovincial exam failures (and repeat failures) of Aboriginal apprentices and trade qualifiers in the region. According to Elsipogtog's chief at the time, the main reason that most apprentices did not continue to pursue their certification was the negative experience of multiple attempts and

¹ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, "Elsipogtog First Nation Connectivity Profile, New Brunswick", 2013, accessed May 27, 2013 <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1357840941933/1360162231573> . New Brunswick has 18,000 Aboriginal people, which represents 2.5 per cent of total population.

² R.H. Wetere, "Addressing the Literacy Issues of Canada's Aboriginal Population: A Discussion Paper", 2009, accessed May 8 2013 http://www.nald.ca/library/research/issues_Aboriginal/issues_Aboriginal.pdf .

³ R.H. Wetere, 2009; Stephen May (editor), *Indigenous Community-Based Education*, 1999, accessed August 21, 2013.

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=WmUSPSLxIPQC&pg=PA137&dq=training+in+thier+aboriginal+commujnity&hl=en&sa=X&ei=imYbUtS0E6jE4AP7koCIBw&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=training%20in%20thier%20aboriginal%20commujnity&f=false> .

⁴ Information from the Chief of the Community at the time (as per W. Wheaton's internal program report, 2009).

multiple failures.⁵ It was also revealed that having to travel to Moncton for both their in-class and practical training component was difficult and resulted in a 50 per cent absenteeism rate. Apparent lack of effort on the part of these apprentices was also identified as a factor. Some of these students had failed the exam as many as five times. As evidenced by the tenacity to try and try again, it was obvious that there was desire on the part of these apprentices to succeed. The challenge was to determine what the real barriers were and how best to address them.

Taking an innovative approach to the situation, an academic upgrading course was offered in 2002 on-reserve for the carpentry apprentices from Elsipogtog who were having challenges completing the program.

Pouring the foundation

The upgrading consisted of five weeks of full-time intensive academic skills development for the apprentices, in their home community, to prepare them for the interprovincial exam. Providing the training in the community eliminated the travel, eliminated the feelings of isolation and exclusion, and encouraged the development of culture-specific support. Five students participated in the upgrading and five students successfully completed the exam. Attendance during the training was 100 per cent and every student was focused on the work and made every effort to learn the material in hopes of attaining their Certificate of Qualification with Red Seal endorsement.

“We truly believe that simply having the training in the community made the difference,” said the 2002 apprenticeship manager, Derek Woods. “The students were more comfortable and the program seemed to take on a life of its own when the community owned it!”⁶

Having the classroom upgrading course conducted in the community was a necessary first step in overcoming barriers these apprentices faced in the traditional apprenticeship training format. Once the upgrading course was completed, and proved successful, the next question became how to learn from this experience to best support future apprentices within the community.

⁵ Information provided in a 2009 unpublished report on the program provided by Elsipogtog.

⁶ Telephone interview, May 29, 2013.

Drafting a blueprint: Overcoming the barriers

It was recognized that helping to overcome barriers to success for future Aboriginal tradespeople in New Brunswick would also assist in addressing the projected skilled trades shortage⁷ facing the province.⁸ Meeting New Brunswick's forecasted skilled trades shortage requires planning to provide the necessary training to the future journeypersons. Although the Elsipogtog upgrading course results lent evidence to support the benefits of learning in one's home community, the actual apprenticeship training program involves much more than one upgrading course. It demands four years of training that includes an annual six-week block training session at college in addition to full-time employment in one's chosen trade, under the mentorship of a certified journeyperson. Both these elements of the training program again required completion off-reserve.

Could there be a way to attain both the class-based theoretical learning and the on-the-job mentored training *within* the community and *for* the community? That is, would it be possible to develop a complete apprenticeship training program that would see apprentices working on-reserve with certified Aboriginal journeypersons from Elsipogtog, while meeting an expanding community's needs? In fact, it was possible. A partnership between Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, the New Brunswick Community College, and the community of Elsipogtog was designed that addressed the training issues. Moreover, this new program addressed the poor housing conditions of many families in the community.

Economic realities of Elsipogtog: Housing, population, unemployment, education

Housing: In Canada, one in eight Aboriginal houses contains two families, and one in five houses has serious overcrowding issues. Furthermore, one in three Aboriginal houses needs

⁷ Canada will need an estimated 319,000 new construction workers between 2012 and 2020 to keep up with current construction demands and the number of expected retirements from the baby boomers. See: Construction Sector Council, "Labour Market Information, Construction Looking Forward, 2012-2020 Key Highlights", 2012, accessed May 23, 2013 <http://dcnonl.com/article/id49856/--canadian-construction-industry-will-need-319000-new-workers-by-2020> .

⁸ As seen in Alberta, results of a 2004 upgrading initiative designed for the Mikisew Cree First Nation communities in Fort McMurray shared this notion. In this pilot, a local company, "2000 Plus", identified the need to get more of its young Aboriginal employees involved in the skilled trades. Called the "Shapotowak Programme," its goal was to provide a solid foundation in literacy, numeracy and workplace skills to Aboriginal maintenance employees in order to try to meet the labour demands of the area. See: <http://books.google.ca/books?id=TtCmC6SjH-cC&pg=PA291&dq=Aboriginal+in+skilled+trades&hl=en&sa=X&ei=NpqTUE30GPXJ4AOssoHoDg&ved=0CDsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Aboriginal%20in%20skilled%20trades&f=false>

major repairs.⁹ Housing is a serious issue nationally and in Elsipogtog. According to Aboriginal Affairs Connectivity Profile in 2013¹⁰, Elsipogtog has 727 residential units. Table 1 shows 275 houses require major repair and 215 require minor repair.

Table 1: Elsipogtog First Nation Housing Census Data¹¹

Number of dwellings constructed before 1986	265
Number of dwellings constructed between 1986 – 2006	430
Dwellings requiring regular maintenance only	205
Dwellings requiring minor renovations	215
Dwellings requiring major renovations	275

Population: The unprecedented growth rate of Canada’s Aboriginal population is five times higher than that of Canada’s non-Aboriginal population.¹² As a result, 50 per cent of the Aboriginal population is under 25 years of age. From an economic standpoint, this population growth provides a unique opportunity for Aboriginal people to become skilled tradespeople to meet the future needs of an aging (and retiring) Canadian workforce. It is anticipated that more than 500,000 First Nations youth will be of age to help grow Canada’s economy into one of the largest in the world over the next 15 years.¹³ In February 2012, CBC reported on the growing Aboriginal population in New Brunswick. About 60 per cent of people living in Elsipogtog are under the age of 30 with an estimated 70 babies born on the reserve annually.¹⁴

Unemployment: According to Statistics Canada, Aboriginal people continue to be three times more likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people living in New Brunswick have 20.8 per cent unemployment. Of the total employable workforce in Elsipogtog (n=470), over half (55 per cent) work on the reserve, very few work from home and nobody left the reserve to work outside Canada.¹⁵

⁹ Wetere, 2009, citing Census 2006.

¹⁰ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, “Elsipogtog First Nation Connectivity Profile”, 2013.

¹¹ Statistics Canada, “Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick”, 2007. (Code630131) (table). Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal Population Profile”, 2006 Census. Catalogue no. 92-594-XWE. Released January 15, 2008, accessed May 15, 2013 <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

¹² Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal Population Profile”, 2006 Census.

¹³ R.H. Wetere, 2009.

¹⁴ CBC, “Aboriginal and Immigrant Populations growing in N.B.”, February 10, 2012, accessed May 23, 2013 http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2012/02/10/nb-census-Aboriginal_People-immigrants.html.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, “Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick”, 2007. (Code630131) (table). Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal Population Profile”, 2006 Census. Catalogue no. 92-594-XWE.

Education Level: Statistics Canada also reports that while less than 50 per cent of Aboriginal adults had postsecondary qualifications in 2011, nearly two-thirds of the non-Aboriginal population had postsecondary qualifications.¹⁶ More than twice as many (28.9 per cent) Aboriginal people have less than a high school education than non-Aboriginal people (12.1 per cent). Research using 2006 Census data indicates that approximately 60 per cent of Aboriginal

A full-time apprenticeship training program, including the theoretical and practical components, would be housed on-reserve.

people living on reserves are not completing high school.¹⁷ Basic literacy skills are critical to change. Attaining these skills is fundamental in empowering First Nations people to break the cycle of low literacy and its impact on community health, housing, wages and criminality.¹⁸

Building the bearing walls: A unique program takes shape

Developing the skills of the local Aboriginal workers through on-reserve apprenticeship training was seen as a needed measure to increase rates of retention and completion of apprenticeship programs by Aboriginal apprentices. A full-time apprenticeship training program, including the theoretical *and* practical components, would be housed on-reserve.

Thirteen residents interested in becoming carpenter apprentices were selected to work on-the-job with certified Aboriginal carpenters from the community to build much needed housing for the community. A unique aspect of this program is that the apprentices are employed by the community. A current apprentice in the program shared that the program benefits the community by getting “better housing on reserve and show[ing] young people that we can do it.”¹⁹

Organizing the funding and details of such work experience is no easy chore. Lynn Francis, director of economic development for Elsipogtog, who has been involved since the program’s

¹⁶ Statistics Canada, “The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada”, National Household Survey, 2011, accessed September 3, 2013 http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011003_3-eng.cfm.

¹⁷ Michael Mendelson, “Improving Education on Reserves: A First Nations Education Authority Act”, *Maytree Policy in Focus*, Issue 5, September 2008, accessed September 3, 2013 http://maytree.com/PDF_Files/MaytreePolicyInFocusIssue5.pdf.

¹⁸ R.H. Wetere, “Addressing the Literacy Issues of Canada’s Aboriginal Population: A Discussion Paper”, 2009, accessed May 8, 2013 http://www.nald.ca/library/research/issues_Aboriginal/issues_Aboriginal.pdf.

¹⁹ Interview with Joey Paul in Elsipogtog on May 13, 2013.

conception, recalled the early stages of development and the work still required for the continuation of the program:

It is so important to follow through with the details. It is important to stay in close contact with your partners... and that is exactly what we did. Before we introduced the carpentry trade in Elsipogtog, we had countless meetings with the community to determine which trades to pursue. We also met with the provincial apprenticeship program representatives to understand the process and the ratios. We looked at funding amounts required. We had to ensure that we had the facilities in place for the classroom training portion of the process.²⁰

Measure twice, cut once: Customizing the training delivery

“Aboriginal people believe that education is an integral means of helping... and it can happen only when their fully actualized selves are accepted and recognized as the foundation for the future,” said Dr. Marline Brant Castellano, a former research director for the Royal Commissions on Aboriginal Peoples.²¹ “A successful model is one that incorporates Aboriginal culture, knowledge, and values at the core of the learning system.”

The Elsipogtog First Nations’ apprenticeship training program is well on its way to becoming such a program. When asked how the program meets these goals, Francis shared how the very essence of the program fits the Aboriginal culture and how the program is helping to create change:

This apprenticeship training program is an awakening in our community; or you could call it a spark. I have piloted many programs to see what our clients connect with and I find apprenticeship fits very well. It complements the energy we have as a culture, the need to build, the need to take pride in our work. When the community sees something start and actually come to the point of celebrating success, they look at it and say, this is actually working; this encourages them to pursue a career in the trades.²²

²⁰ Email correspondence May 16, 2013.

²¹ M. Brant Castellano, et al., *Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise*, 2000, accessed May 14, 2013 http://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8-d2UgEIVnoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Aboriginal+in+new+brunswick+education&ots=6igzpROwAG&sig=i302_uzyNgNW_zUi7k4_FYJxKIM#v=onepage&q=Aboriginal%20in%20new%20brunswick%20education&f=false .

²² Email correspondence, May 16, 2013.

How the training is delivered is unique not only in location, but also in duration. Unlike block training offered at the college setting for six weeks, the on-reserve training is flexible to offer an additional one to two weeks of learning. This flexibility helps to ensure the training material is clearly understood and that the learners are prepared for the exam.

Critical to the success of the program is the quality of the training instructor.

“You have to have the right person for the job,” said Peter Lafford, successful journeyman carpenter from the 2002 pilot upgrading year. He continued, “...the best part of the program was having the material taught so clearly. If there was a question in class, the class stopped and as a group we all worked on finding the answer.”²³

The instructor could not simply deliver curriculum at the community training centre with success and with good attendance unless a relationship of trust was developed. This was accomplished slowly, with the instructor integrating into the community as much as possible, attending community functions, listening to the needs of the apprentices and community, and making necessary program alterations.

From 2002 until 2013 the program can boast having the same instructor, Wade Wheaton.

“I have a motto on how I instruct and I think it especially fits the learners of this special program: ‘People don’t care what you know until they know you care,’” shared Wheaton when asked about his part in the success of the program.²⁴ He believes if this approach is taken at all times, the program will gain the respect necessary for its success.

Class size is another consideration. Regular block training requires 12 students in order to run the training. Due to the small population within First Nations communities, it is not realistic to expect the same numbers. Although the Elsipogtog program aimed for and attained the full number of students at the onset, by the end of the program only one-third remained. In Elsipogtog, block class sizes average six participants. This size works well because of the small pool of potential participants, and the work and cost required in organizing the practical on-the-job, community-based work requirements.

²³ Interview at Elsipogtog, May 13, 2013.

²⁴ Email correspondence, May 22, 2013.

It should be noted that although some modifications were made to how the program is delivered, there were no modifications made to what is taught and what is expected of the apprentices.

Carpenters' pride: Results of their labour

The first attempt at this on-reserve apprenticeship training was successful. Thirteen participants worked the number of hours required on-the-job prior to attending the in-class training. As seen in Table 2 below, of that first class in school year 2003/2004, 12 wrote the Block 1 exam. Seventy-five per cent (n=9) were successful on the first attempt. The participants who were not successful on the first attempt chose not to continue with the program even though re-writing and upgrading could have been made available. By the time it came to the Block 2 exam one year later, the number of participants had decreased to seven apprentices. Block 2 exam results showed an 86 per cent success rate on first attempt writing for these seven apprentices. With additional support, the one apprentice who was not successful on the first attempt passed his re-write exam. Block 3 had a 100 per cent pass rate on the first attempt, and by the end of Block 4, six apprentices completed the Interprovincial Red Seal exam and attained journeyperson status.

Reasons for dropping out of the program included the following: one participant was in a serious car accident, some had personal issues, and others chose other career paths. Although the final completion rate was only 46 per cent (6 of 13) compared to 77 per cent for the provincial completion rate²⁵, the program was still considered a great success. Three houses were built on the reserve,²⁶ others received renovations, and six members of the community attained a valuable career.

²⁵ From 2003-2013, a total of 7,516 apprentices wrote the provincial certification examination. Seventy seven per cent of these apprentices successfully completed with an average pass mark of 74.7 per cent.

²⁶ Information provided by the housing office at Elsipogtog.

Table 2: Elsipogtog Block Exam Results²⁷

ELSIPOGTOG RESULTS				
School Year	Course	# Attended	# Wrote	Pass Rate
2012/2013	Carpenter Block 4	4	Program in progress	
2011/2012	Carpenter Block 3	5	4	100%
2010/2011	Carpenter Block 2	5	3	100%
2009/2010	Carpenter Block 2	6	5	60%
2008/2009	Carpenter Block 1	9	9	89%
2008/2009	Upgrade	13	9	33%
2006/2007	Carpenter Block 4	6	6	100%
2005/2006	Carpenter Block 3	7	7	100%
2004/2005	Carpenter Block 2	7	7	86%
2003/2004	Carpenter Block 1	13	12	75%

In 2007, planning began for a second round of this community-based training. As noted in Table 2 above, the year 2008-9 was used to prepare a possible 13 community members for the program. An “essential skills upgrading” year was provided in 2008-9 to best prepare participants for the apprenticeship program’s mandatory Essential Skills Assessment (ESA) required upon registration. All nine participants that wrote the ESA were successful on the first attempt and continued on to register as apprentices.

For this second group of apprentices, Block 2 presented more challenges with only a 60 per cent pass rate on the first attempt. With the class size down to five participants, and in the spirit of community togetherness, this class chose to re-do the entire second block training together to support an increase in learning and to offer a well-prepared review for those who chose to re-write. Three apprentices re-wrote and all three were successful on the second attempt. This additional year was regarded as beneficial to everyone, as they all attained one more year of on-the-job mentored training. In 2013, four apprentices remain in the program and are expected to write Block 4 and attain their Interprovincial Red Seal endorsement on their trade certificate.

²⁷ Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Branch, Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Province of New Brunswick. ACIS Database information.

Table 3 below provides an overview of the yearly participant attrition rate of the first and second cycle of the Elsipogtog carpentry apprenticeship program. The table excludes the 2008/2009 upgrading year. Note that because Block 2 was offered twice in the second cycle, as mentioned above, the Block 2 two attrition calculation is based on the number of participants who initially entered the Block 2 year (n=6).

Table 3: Yearly Participation Attrition Rate of Program²⁸

ELSIPOGTOG RESULTS		
Second Cycle		
School Year		Attrition Rate
2012/2013	Carpenter Block 3 to 4	20 %
2011/2012	Carpenter Block 2 to 3	16.7 %
2009/2011*	Carpenter Block 1 to 2	33.3 %
First Cycle		
2006/2007	Carpenter Block 3 to 4	14.3 %
2005/2006	Carpenter Block 2 to 3	0 %
2004/2005	Carpenter Block 1 to 2	46.2 %

There is no doubt that the apprenticeship program breeds passion about the work.

“[I had been doing] mostly labour work prior to registering and decided to enter the program because my first cousin was a graduate of the program and is doing well working on the reserve,” said Paul.²⁹ “[Once certified I will] work for contracts for a few years and I am thinking about instructing, but want more experience first. Maybe I’ll start my own company down the line.”³⁰

This example speaks to the “spark” description of the program by Francis, as previously noted. The program energizes others.

²⁸ Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Branch, Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Province of New Brunswick. ACIS Database information.

²⁹ Interview at Elsipogtog, May 13, 2013.

³⁰ Interview at Elsipogtog, May 13, 2013.

Future renovations

The program is not perfect. Increased funding to the Elsipogtog housing office to further support apprenticeship wages is required.

“They do not have adequate wages to pay the apprentices,” said Francis.³¹ In an economic time when many apprentices in New Brunswick are migrating westward to the call of five times the local wage, it becomes a critical component.

One past participant of the program, who now works in Alberta and flies home every three weeks, offered a suggestion for improvement. He works primarily with concrete on big jobs as a certified carpenter and would like to see industrial building training included in the current residential curriculum for the trade.

“Hire me as the instructor!” he said when asked how industrial building training would be included in the curriculum. This is a man who is passionate about his trade and promotes the skilled trades in his community.

“When [community members] come knocking at my door asking about getting work out West, I tell them to get into the [Elsipogtog] apprenticeship program, so they can get the knowledge they need,” said the certified carpenter.³²

Gender deserves consideration. Since its inception, two females entered the program. One completed Block 3 and is now also working in Alberta, and one became a certified carpenter and is working in her community. With only four per cent of the 4,000 apprentices in New Brunswick being female³³ and with the barriers facing women entering non-traditional trades, it is impressive that female representation is captured in Elsipogtog’s program. Specific emphasis to entice more women to the program may be beneficial.

The essential element of success of this program is that it has been designed in such a way that the community feels committed to and involved in the program. Elsipogtog’s population

³¹ Email correspondence with Lynn Francis, May 17, 2013.

³² Interview in Elsipogtog, May 13, 2013.

³³ Information provided by the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Branch of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Province of New Brunswick.

continues to grow and by the end of 2013 it is expected that this unique program will have contributed 24 new homes to the community: 3 in each year of the program.

The Elsipogtog apprenticeship training program design has enhanced the apprenticeship training system in one Aboriginal community in New Brunswick. It may, therefore, provide a model for creating pathways that support access to training for Aboriginal people elsewhere. Further, such a program has proven successful in creating highly skilled Aboriginal tradespeople, thereby contributing toward inclusivity in the workforce in the skilled trades. As the construction industry continues to expand, the opportunities for First Nations people to be gainfully employed in the trades continue to increase.

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Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers: Challenges and Opportunities

Prepared by The Conference Board of Canada

A recent report from The Conference Board of Canada analyzes the challenges and opportunities employers encounter when engaging Aboriginal workers in Canada. Through a review of literature and data, telephone interviews with key industry, education and Aboriginal stakeholders, and a survey of employers, the report explores the extent to which Métis, Inuit and First Nations can help meet Canada's current and future labour market and skills needs. The report provides recommendations on the steps that employers, Aboriginal organizations and policy-makers can take to help improve the labour market participation of Aboriginal workers.

Report overview

A recent report by The Conference Board of Canada focuses on the contribution that Aboriginal peoples can make to Canada's ongoing competitiveness and performance. *Understanding the Value, Challenges and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers* was funded by the Métis National Council and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and explores the extent to which Métis, Inuit and First Nations can help meet Canada's current and future labour market and skills needs.

Background

Canada's economic development and ongoing prosperity depend on having a strong and skilled workforce.¹ In the coming years, however, Canada is unlikely to have enough workers with the right skills to meet its labour needs.² Falling fertility rates and longer lifespans are aging Canada's workforce at an accelerating rate.³ The result is not enough younger workers to replace those who are retiring. Further, many businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and hire qualified workers. This is particularly true in areas with small populations but high demand for skills, such as in Western and Northern Canada where primary industries including oil and gas, and mineral extraction are flourishing.⁴

Canada's Aboriginal population is the fastest-growing population cohort in Canada, and could play a significant role in helping the country meet its labour market needs.

Demographic projections indicate that future population and labour force growth in Canada will come from international net migration as opposed to natural increases.⁵ However, there are important domestic sources of under-represented populations that can contribute to Canada's current and future labour challenges, including Aboriginal peoples, women, disengaged youth and people with disabilities.⁶ Canada's Aboriginal population is the fastest-growing population cohort in Canada, and could play a significant role in helping the country meet its labour market needs. However, the labour market participation of Canada's Aboriginal population lags behind that of the non-Aboriginal population.

¹ Heidi Martin, *Building Labour Force Capacity in Canada's North* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, November 2011), 1.

² Glen Hodgson and Anne Park Shannon, *Mission Possible: Stellar Canadian Performance in the Global Economy* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, January 2007), 67.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Cheryl Knight, "Petroleum Labour Market Issues and Supply Solutions" (paper presented at the Western Compensation Outlook and HR Conference, Calgary, Alberta, November 9, 2010); Martin, *Building Labour Force Capacity*, 2–3.

⁵ Statistics Canada, *Canada Year Book 2011* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2011), 352, accessed August 1, 2013 www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2011000/pdf/front-preliminaires-eng.pdf.

⁶ Glen Hodgson, "Aboriginal Workers Can Support, But Not Sustain, Canadian Workforce," *InsideEdge* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, September 2010), accessed August 1, 2013 www.conferenceboard.ca/insideedge/2010/september-10/sept27-inside-outlook.aspx.

Labour market participation challenges for Aboriginal workers

A number of factors impact the degree to which Aboriginal workers in Canada participate in the labour market. Some of these factors limit Aboriginal workers' ability to take advantage of meaningful employment opportunities, while others create barriers for employers to find and recruit Aboriginal workers. Factors include where the Aboriginal population in Canada is located, educational levels, and language and cultural issues.

The Aboriginal population of Canada is more concentrated in the North, the Western provinces, and rural and remote locations than the non-Aboriginal population.⁷ Access to employment opportunities for Aboriginal workers living in remote, rural, or non-urban areas is generally limited to industries and organizations with local operations close to Aboriginal communities.

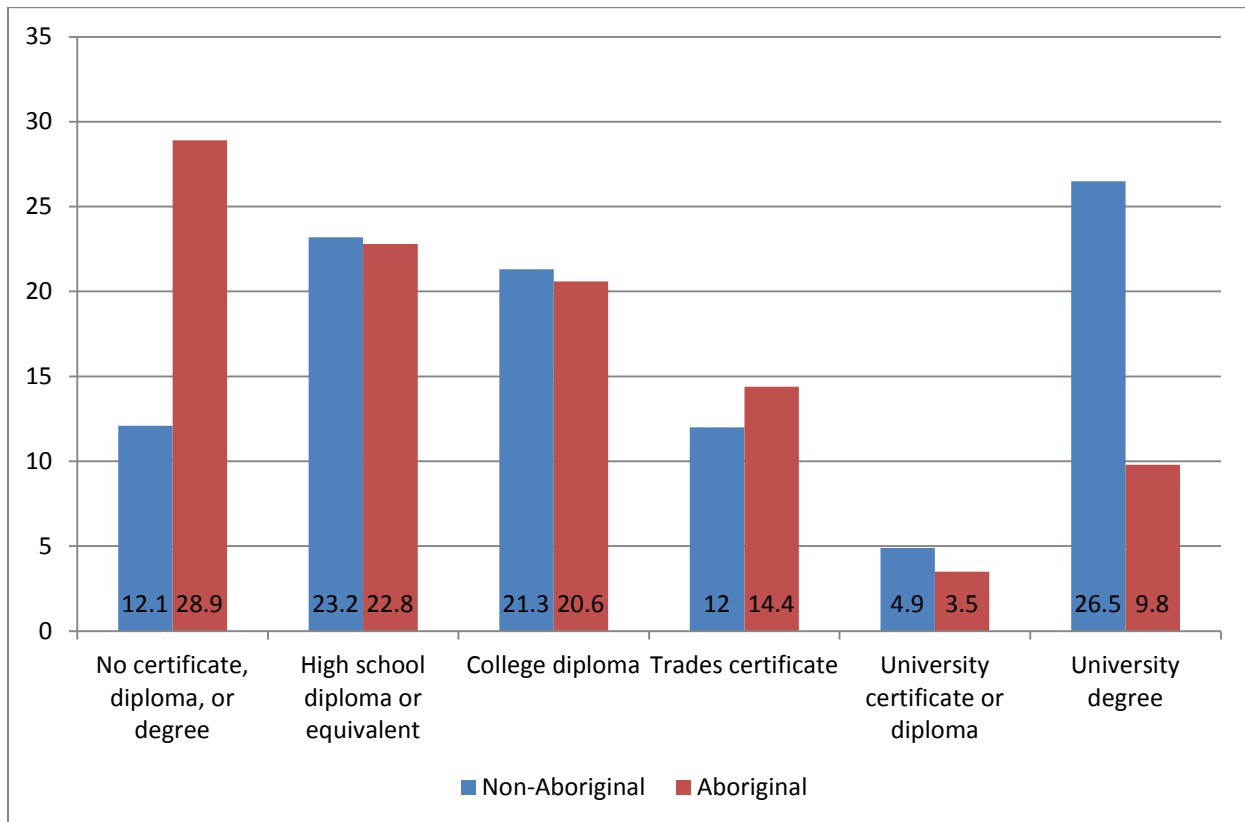
The Aboriginal population in Canada has lower levels of overall educational attainment than non-Aboriginal people. The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) found that 12 per cent of Canada's non-Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had not completed high school or obtained another diploma or certificate, compared with 29 per cent of the Aboriginal population (see Figure 1). Aboriginal rates of some types of postsecondary educational attainment also lag behind those of non-Aboriginal people in Canada. A notable exception is trades certificates—the Aboriginal population has attained slightly higher completion levels in this area than the non-Aboriginal population. The NHS found that 64.7 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population had completed a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree, compared with 48.4 per cent of the Aboriginal population.⁸ The lower overall educational attainment of Canada's Aboriginal population can be attributed to a number of factors: generally lower socio-economic and health outcomes, more limited access to schools and culturally appropriate curricula, and the continuing impacts of residential schools.⁹

⁷ Andrew Sharpe et al., *The Effect of Increasing Aboriginal Educational Attainment on the Labour Force, Output and the Fiscal Balance* (Ottawa: Centre for the Study of Living Standards, 2009), 8.

⁸ Statistics Canada, *The Educational Attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, National Household Survey 2011* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2013), 4-5.

⁹ Ashley Sisco et al., *Lessons Learned: Achieving Positive Educational Outcomes in Northern Communities* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2012), 15.

Figure 1: Canadian Population by Highest Level of Educational Attainment – (Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Populations, aged 25 to 64) (per cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, *The Educational Attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada*, 2013.

Lack of appropriate literacy and language skills is often a key barrier preventing Aboriginal workers from achieving their workforce potential. Aboriginal workers often face challenges to overcome the literacy barrier and develop their skills to “job standard” levels without assistance (i.e. workplace standards of at least International Adult Literacy Survey [IALS] Level 3).¹⁰ Literacy skills include three key elements: proficiency in using documents, reading text, and solving problems; doing these things in the languages in which business is conducted in Canada; and demonstrating such skills against the backdrop of Canadian workplace culture. Racism is also a challenge facing Aboriginal workers in Canada. Negative stereotypes about

¹⁰ OECD and Statistics Canada, *Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey* (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000). In the IALS, adult literacy is measured on a scale from one to five. Level 1 is the lowest level and Level 4/5 is the most advanced level. Level 3 is the minimum level of literacy an individual needs to function well in Canadian society.

Aboriginal people, as well as a lack of knowledge about Aboriginal people among the non-Aboriginal population can create misunderstandings and conflict in the workplace.

Increasing the participation of the Aboriginal population in the Canadian labour force will take time. It will require an array of policies, programs and practices that encourage and promote education, skills development, communications and respect, cultural awareness, and labour force attachment. It will also be important for the Aboriginal population to continue developing the right mix of skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to succeed in different occupations, industries and sectors across the country.

Further, it requires employers to be more aware of their skills needs, and to articulate these needs to educators, communities, and employment and training stakeholders. The Conference Board's 2011 report *Building Labour Force Capacity in Canada's North* notes that "businesses must commit to learning the culture, goals, history, and experiences of their Aboriginal and Northern workforce."¹¹ The report also points out that "Northerners [and Aboriginal people] must also learn the business culture of their employers and understand the organization's goals."¹²

Challenges, benefits and opportunities of engaging Aboriginal workers

The purpose of The Conference Board of Canada's recent report, *Understanding the Value*, was to gain insights into the challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal labour market development policies and programs to move forward. The research analysis was based on a review of literature and data; 13 telephone interviews with key industry, education and Aboriginal stakeholders; and an original survey of 173 employers. See box below: "Canadian Businesses Responding to the Survey" for survey methodology information.

¹¹ Martin, *Building Labour Force Capacity*, ii.

¹² Ibid.

Canadian Businesses Responding to the Survey

The Conference Board's online survey asked employers to identify the challenges and opportunities of hiring Aboriginal workers. Invitations to complete the online survey were emailed to employers across Canada between January and March 2012. Organizations that were contacted were those deemed likely to have had contact with Aboriginal organizations or workers. Survey invitations were also emailed to individuals from businesses that met all three of the following criteria: located in either the territories or in the "Northern" and "rural" parts of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia; employed at the management level or above; and working in human resources. These individuals were targeted due to the likelihood that they had experience with Aboriginal workers. Businesses invited to participate in the survey were also encouraged to forward the survey invitation on to other businesses. One hundred and seventy-three organizations from across Canada responded to the survey.

The report identifies the key challenges and impediments that businesses face when recruiting, hiring and retaining Aboriginal workers. In addition, the report looks at what more can be done by businesses, governments, education providers and Aboriginal communities to better support and sustain the meaningful integration of Aboriginal people into the workforce and to optimize the contribution they can make to the Canadian, regional and local economy.

Some Canadian businesses are actively engaged with the Aboriginal population and see Aboriginal workers as a valuable labour source. However, many businesses are not yet aware that hiring Aboriginal workers could potentially solve their human resources needs. Others would like to tap into this labour pool, but are unsure of where to find and how to attract Aboriginal workers.

Many of the businesses surveyed had experience employing more than one Aboriginal group within the past two years (N = 125): First Nations – 41.3 per cent of businesses; Métis – 28.6 per cent of businesses; Inuit – 19.7 per cent of businesses; Unsure – 9.7 per cent; None – 0.7 per cent.

Businesses were asked about their most pressing human resource challenges. The top challenges indicated were:

1. A shortage of qualified/skilled workers;
2. Difficulty retaining qualified/skilled workers;
3. The need to replace retiring workers, managers or leaders;
4. The need to attract under-represented workers (e.g. Aboriginal peoples, women, immigrants);
5. Transferring knowledge from retiring workers; and
6. The education system not meeting the needs of their industry.

Aboriginal Skills, Employment and Training Strategy (ASETS) agreement holders design and deliver employment programs to meet the needs of their local Aboriginal population and the local labour market. ASETS agreement holders receive and distribute federal funding for employment services to help Aboriginal people find and maintain employment. When asked about government programs, half of the businesses surveyed were aware of ASETS agreement holders. Some businesses were also aware of other government programs. However, almost one-third of businesses surveyed were not aware of any government programs to assist with the employment or training of Aboriginal workers.

Challenges with attracting and hiring Aboriginal workers

The functions of attracting and hiring workers are commonly grouped together under the term “recruitment.” Businesses were asked about their specific challenges with attracting and with hiring Aboriginal workers. “Attracting” was defined for businesses as finding Aboriginal workers or helping them find you. “Hiring” was defined as employing or onboarding Aboriginal workers into the organization.

Just over half (51.6 per cent) of survey respondents said they experienced challenges in attracting Aboriginal workers. The top challenges in attracting Aboriginal workers were said to be:

- Skill levels of potential workers are too low (skill examples: literacy, technical, leadership);
- A lack of work experience;

- Worker reluctance to move to job site/away from community;
- Language or cultural issues; and
- An inability to communicate or reach out to potential workers in Aboriginal communities.

Just under half (46.4 per cent) of survey respondents said they experienced challenges in hiring Aboriginal workers. The top challenges in hiring Aboriginal workers were said to be:

- A lack of qualifications, formal documentation or certification;
- Skill levels of new hires are too low (skill examples: literacy, technical, leadership);
- A lack of work experience;
- Differences in expectations between workers and employer; and
- Worker reluctant to move to job site/away from community.

The key challenges in attracting and hiring Aboriginal workers point to a lack of qualifications, skills, education and work experience; difficulties for employers in reaching out to potential Aboriginal workers; worker lack of awareness of employment opportunities; and worker reluctance to relocate. These issues reflect some of the reasons for lower Aboriginal engagement in the labour force, chiefly, lower education attainment levels and the location of Aboriginal populations.

Challenges with work performance and retention of Aboriginal workers

Once past the recruitment stage, some employers said they experienced challenges with Aboriginal workers' job performance. Some were also challenged in keeping Aboriginal workers with the organization. About two-fifths (41.9 per cent) of survey respondents said they experienced challenges with the work performance of Aboriginal workers. The top challenges with the work performance of Aboriginal workers were said to be:

- Absenteeism;
- Productivity or performance issues;
- Inadequate skill levels for the workplace (examples: literacy, technical, leadership);
- Quality of work issues; and
- Substance abuse.

Just under half (45.4 per cent) of survey respondents said they experienced challenges with retaining Aboriginal workers. The top challenges with retaining Aboriginal workers were said to be:

- Limited career advancement opportunities;
- Hiring of Métis, Inuit or First Nations workers by other companies;
- Worker reluctance to move to job site/away from community;
- Lack of ongoing training or development opportunities; and
- Inadequate compensation (examples: salaries/wages, benefits and/or pensions).

The key challenges with work performance and in retaining Aboriginal workers point to education and skills issues; absenteeism; limited career advancement opportunities; substance abuse and criminal records; and language and cultural issues. These factors reflect some of the reasons for lower Aboriginal engagement in the labour force, including lower education attainment levels as well as language and cultural issues.

Benefits of engaging Aboriginal workers

While some employers face challenges recruiting and employing Aboriginal workers, the successful engagement of Aboriginal workers results in benefits for workers, employers and local communities. Aboriginal workers act as ambassadors for the employer organization in their home communities. As such, they may encourage others to seek employment there.

Other benefits seen include:

- Aboriginal workers acting as role models in their communities;
- Organizations realizing better relationships and integration with the local community;
- Economic benefits to the community, including higher income levels and reduced local unemployment;
- Organizations increasing their understanding of Aboriginal cultural issues;
- Aboriginal workers improving their understanding of business pressures; and
- Improved employee equity and inclusion.

Those businesses that successfully employ Aboriginal workers experience a variety of benefits that go beyond simply finding qualified staff, such as reductions in skill gaps, absenteeism and staff turnover; improved quality of work and productivity; improved workplace health and safety; and increased profitability or competitiveness.

Successful engagement of Aboriginal workers

Our research sought examples of employers' solutions and success stories in engaging with Aboriginal workers. Partners, such as educational institutions, play a key role in connecting employers with Aboriginal communities and potential workers. They help to address the challenges of outreach, building trust and cultural understanding, and bridging communications gaps. Canadian employers successfully partner with educational institutions, community organizations, band or treaty organizations, and Aboriginal labour market development organizations to recruit Aboriginal workers.

Employers also use a variety of other tools and strategies to recruit Aboriginal workers including advertising, local employment centres, mentoring opportunities, and internships or job placement programs. Offering opportunities such as mentoring, internships and job placements helps in attracting workers and ensuring a smooth transition to the organization. Forward-thinking employers offer such opportunities to position themselves as an employer of choice to prospective workers, and also to ease the school-to-work transition for Aboriginal workers.

Many businesses that actively recruit Aboriginal workers also have strategies in place to address work performance issues and to encourage the retention of these workers. Success stories speak of:

- Cultural programs, cultural support staff and Aboriginal-friendly workplace programs and/or policies: Culturally appropriate practices help in retaining workers. Examples include culturally sensitive recruitment and screening practices, cultural awareness training for staff (including non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal staff), spiritual ceremonies and cultural celebrations at job sites, and bereavement policies cognizant of Aboriginal culture. Programs such as these help to build awareness of the cultural differences within organizations. They also help to improve the understanding of expectations on all

sides (that is, the non-Aboriginal worker, the Aboriginal worker, and the employer) of what is needed on the job.

- Providing time for Aboriginal workers to participate in seasonal or traditional activities: Allowing time helps to address absenteeism and recognizes the cultural importance of these activities to the workers and their communities.
- Mentorship and internship programs: Mentoring and internships are often used to help address education and skills issues by embedding learning opportunities on the job.
- Language training: Whether an in-house program or external training provider is used, building language skills in English or French helps to close communications gaps on the job.
- Competitive compensation and benefits: Offering pay and benefits that are commensurate with other jobs in the sector or region are a means of retaining skilled Aboriginal workers.
- Career bridging programs: Providing career path planning guidance and bridging programs helps Aboriginal workers transition into new positions and see future opportunities for themselves within the organization.

Strategies for action

Despite successful employer-led initiatives to engage Aboriginal workers, both survey and interview evidence suggest employers in Canada face significant challenges with the attraction, hiring, work performance and retention of Aboriginal workers. Many of these challenges are due to the educational attainment of Canada's Aboriginal population, which lags behind that of the non-Aboriginal population. In addition, some Aboriginal workers lack basic skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy and how to apply for a job) and work experience. Negative stereotypes and racism can hinder the success of Aboriginal workers in their efforts to find and keep engaging jobs. Misunderstandings between employers and Aboriginal employees about workplace expectations can also impede the labour market success of Aboriginal workers.

From the survey data, interviews and a literature review, a number of potential strategies or recommendations to improve the recruitment, hiring and retention of Aboriginal workers emerge.

These strategies can help businesses to better engage with Aboriginal workers and help Aboriginal workers to better succeed in the labour market. They include:

1. Improve educational outcomes

Consistently poor educational outcomes and a lack of work experience are significant impediments to Aboriginal peoples' success in the workforce. Therefore, efforts to increase both secondary and postsecondary educational attainment among the Aboriginal population are called for. Concerted action by a number of stakeholders will be required to achieve this goal. The result will be improved access for Aboriginal people to quality secondary school education to facilitate their ability to obtain work or to enter postsecondary programs. Also critically important are opportunities for Aboriginal workers to develop basic skills including literacy and numeracy skills. Mentoring, internships and job-shadowing opportunities are ways that businesses can help Aboriginal workers to build skills and knowledge. Business can also partner with ASETS agreement holders or other organizations on training initiatives for Aboriginal workers.

Mentoring, internships and job-shadowing opportunities are ways that businesses can help Aboriginal workers to build skills and knowledge.

2. Increase information and best practice sharing

Increased opportunities for employers, training providers and other organizations to share knowledge and information would enhance their ability to assist Aboriginal workers. For instance, Aboriginal employment organizations (e.g. ASETS agreement holders) have limited opportunities to share best practices and learn from one another. Building their knowledge base would help these organizations to strengthen their ability to provide services and to exchange ideas for successful models and practices. Further research and analysis of future Aboriginal labour market development issues would also help in planning future services. Exchanging best practice information on how to market services and programs to potential employer clients would help raise awareness of available programs and services for employers.

3. Simplify points of contact between employers and Aboriginal organizations

There is a labyrinth of networks and contacts that employers must currently connect through in order to access potential Aboriginal workers. Some employers have difficulty engaging Aboriginal workers because of this complex web of Aboriginal organization networks that exist in Canada. Better coordination of information and services among Aboriginal organizations could make it easier for employers to engage Aboriginal workers. Improved coordination would result in simplified processes and fewer points of contact to allow employers to reach out and find potential Aboriginal workers more easily.

4. Raise awareness of Aboriginal cultures

Cultural awareness programs can help to overcome racism and misunderstandings in the workplace. They can help create more inclusive work environments by improving communications between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers. Also, positive stories about Aboriginal people generated by the media, governments and industry can help to create better cultural understandings outside the workplace and can help combat negative stereotypes.

Canada's Aboriginal population can play an important role in helping businesses meet their current and future human resources requirements. The findings of this research act as a starting point for creating a greater understanding of how to address the labour market integration challenges facing Aboriginal workers in Canada.

To obtain a copy of the full report, *Understanding the Value, Challenges and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit and First Nations Workers*, download it for free from The Conference Board of Canada's website at www.conferenceboard.ca.

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The Case for Raising Aboriginal Literacy Levels

By T. Scott Murray, DataAngel Policy Research Incorporated

This article provides an overview of the economic analysis completed by DataAngel Policy Research Inc. to better understand the literacy skill levels of the Aboriginal population in Canada and how it impacts the country's ability to compete at an international level. Examining the relationships between literacy skill and demographic characteristics observed in Statistics Canada's 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey to the 2006 Census of Population, the study derives estimates of the skill distribution for small areas and relatively small populations. The article provides estimates of the potential costs and benefits of raising Aboriginal literacy levels through public investments in upgrading initiatives and highlights the need to engage employers in the process.

Aboriginal literacy levels and the labour market

This article is based on DataAngel's analysis of the relative literacy skill levels of Canada's Aboriginal adults and how they influence Aboriginal workers' ability to compete in Canada's labour markets.¹ The analysis applied the relationships between literacy skill and demographic characteristics observed in Statistics Canada's 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)² to the 2006 Census of Population to derive estimates of the skill distribution for small areas and relatively small populations. The estimates have been shown to be reliable

¹ T. Scott Murray and Richard Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada: A Segmentation Analysis*, (Calgary: Bow Valley College), 2011, accessed May 16, 2013 http://www.towes.com/media/30403/aboriginal-oles_jun%2022-2011.pdf.

² In the IALSS, skills are defined along a continuum of proficiency, and for each skill area, proficiency is denoted on a scale ranging from 0 to 500 points. Level 1 represents the lowest level of proficiency and Level 5 the highest. For more information on the skill levels and areas, see Statistic Canada, "International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey" *The Daily*, November 2005, accessed August 22, 2013 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/051109/dq051109a-eng.htm>.

enough to set priorities and to allocate resources to the areas and subpopulations that will yield the highest rates of return on investment. Undertaken on behalf of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and published by Bow Valley College in Calgary, the analysis documents that:

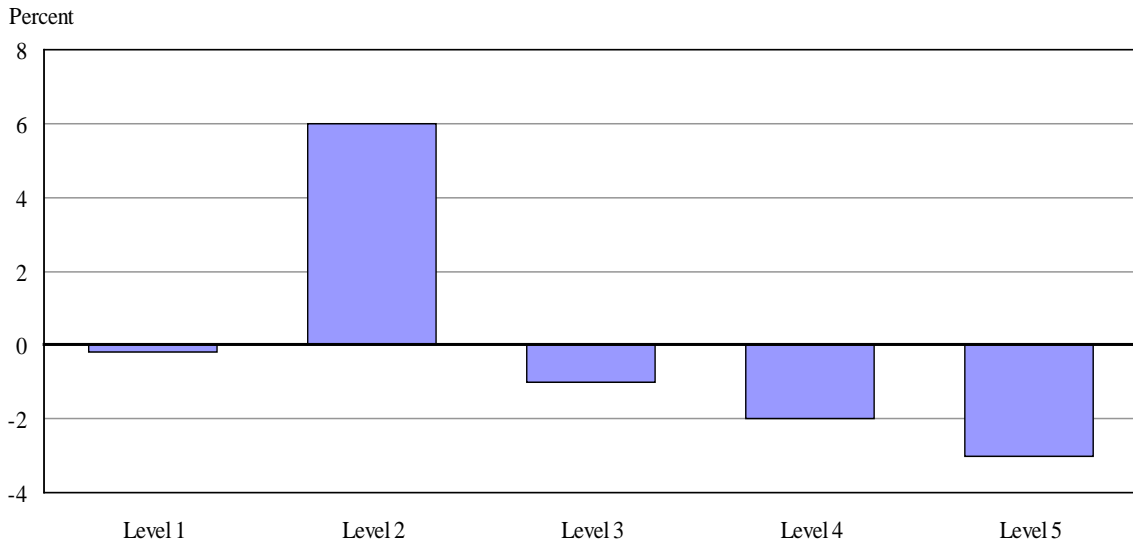
The Canadian economy appears to be relatively inefficient, in the sense that it does not make full use of all the literacy skills that adults possess. The economy uses only 63 per cent of the aggregate supply available in the Aboriginal population largely because skilled Aboriginal peoples are unable to find work. Finding ways to increase the aggregate demand for labour and for literacy skill would yield significant increases in Aboriginal earnings and output.

Paradoxically, the jobs held by employed Aboriginal workers demand 104 per cent of the literacy skill that they possess. This four per cent literacy skill shortage represents an untapped economic potential and argues for policies to increase the level of literacy skill of Aboriginal workers, particularly in jobs that currently demand Level 2 literacy skill.

Figure 1 compares the levels of literacy skill demanded by jobs that are held by Aboriginal workers to the levels demanded by jobs held by non-Aboriginal workers. The figure shows that Aboriginal workers are more likely to work in jobs that demand Level 1 and 2 skills and that, by extension, pay less. This difference explains much of the wage gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers.

The economic potential of the economy is also constrained by the fact that an average of 53 per cent of Aboriginal workers have literacy skill levels below those needed to do their jobs well.

Figure 1: Difference in Skill Demand Level between Aboriginal Groups and the Total Population, Employed Adults Aged 16 and Over for Location



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

The economic potential of the economy is also constrained by the fact that an average of 53 per cent of Aboriginal workers have literacy skill levels below those needed to do their jobs well. Finding ways to increase the skills of Aboriginal workers might, under some circumstances, yield significant increases in Aboriginal earnings, aggregate output and overall welfare.

Eliminating occupational literacy skill shortages in Canada's Aboriginal populations would be expensive—an estimated \$984 million would be needed to bring skill levels up to those demanded by their occupations. This cost was derived in several steps. First, literacy scores were imputed onto the 2006 Census individual file using the relationships between skill and a broad range of demographic characteristics observed in the 2003 IALSS data file. Second, Aboriginal workers' actual skill level on the IALSS scale was compared to the proficiency level associated with their occupation in HRSDC's Essential Skills profile. For workers with skills below the profile level, this provides an estimate of the number of points needed to get to the bottom threshold of the required level. Next, data from the IALSS and International Survey of Reading Skills (ISRS) assessments

were used to classify Aboriginal workers into groups based on shared patterns of learning needs. For the fourth step, experts developed estimates of cost per point for each group of Aboriginal learners. Estimates of the total instructional cost were then derived by multiplying the number of points needed to reach the target level by the appropriate unit cost/point.

The investment to eliminate the occupational literacy skill shortages would, however, generate an estimated \$2.256 billion per year in additional earnings, an implied return on investment of over 229 per cent per year were the economy able to put all of the newly created skill to use. Unadjusted, Canadian employers pay \$214 in additional earnings per year for each additional literacy point. After adjustment for a broad range of other factors that are known to influence wage rates, such as age, gender, education, immigrant status and language, the marginal value of an additional point of literacy to earnings is \$155. The earnings increase estimate was derived by multiplying the number of additional points gained by the adjusted marginal value of an additional point of literacy to earnings, i.e. \$155. Dividing the expected earnings increase by the estimated cost provides an estimate of the simple rate of return in the first year.

Raising all Aboriginal adults to Level 3 would cost \$1.463 billion, but would generate an additional \$2.467 billion in additional earnings, a return that implies 169 per cent annual rate of return. These estimates were generated using the same methods, but using the number of points needed to get to prose literacy Level 3 for Aboriginal adults at Levels 1 and 2.

The projected earnings growth would flow from improved productivity associated with less worker error and material wastage, the adoption of more efficient work organization and production methods, and lower rates of worker illness and accident.

More recent analysis suggests that significant reductions in public expenditures on Aboriginal adults living off-reserve in Canada's provinces could also be realized. Estimated savings include \$100 million on Social Assistance Payments, and small amounts on Employment Insurance, Worker Compensation, doctor visits, hospital stays

and dental visits.³ These estimates were derived by imputing literacy skill estimates onto the Survey of Income and Labour Dynamics (SLID) and the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), and then applying the relationships between skill, benefit receipt and benefit amounts to obtain first order approximations of program savings.

The simple magnitude of these potential returns justify public investment in raising Aboriginal literacy despite the fact that most workers have incomes that are sufficiently high to self-finance the required literacy upgrading.

Public investment in literacy

... apprentices need Level 3 literacy skills in order to be able to cope with their technical training and to apply their technical skills to globally competitive levels upon completion of their program.

The real case for public literacy investment rests, however, on the dire economic consequences associated with trying to compete in fiercely competitive global markets with large numbers of low skilled workers. Significant changes are transforming the global economy in ways that are reducing the competitiveness of Canada's producers.

Canada has a surplus of highly educated and literate workers relative to the demands of the economy. Where Canada faces critical skill shortages are in the trades. Because of where economic growth is expected to be concentrated, the demand for technically-skilled workers is projected to outstrip supply. Canada's apprenticeship systems will play a central role in providing these workers, but must ensure that learners have the literacy and numeracy skills needed to support efficient learning. Research shows that apprentices need Level 3 literacy skills in order to be able to cope with their technical training and to apply their technical skills to globally competitive levels upon completion of their program. An estimated 60 per cent of apprentices lack this level, a fact that explains a high proportion of apprentices who fail to

³ T. Scott Murray and Richard Shillington, *Investing in Upskilling: Gains for Individuals, Employers and Government*, (Ottawa: Canadian Literacy and Learning Network), 2012, accessed May 15, 2013 <http://www.literacy.ca/research-and-resources/clln-literacy-and-earnings-project/investing-upskilling/>.

complete their programs.⁴ Research also shows that relatively modest but focused literacy skill upgrading of apprentices can increase persistence to completion rates. A study completed in partnership by the Construction Sector Council, SkillPlan and the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum found that 100 per cent of Year 1 carpenter apprentices who completed essential skills upgrading passed their Level 1 exams in comparison to 89.1 per cent of apprentices who did not participate in upgrading activities.⁵ The impact of such early literacy skill upgrading programs can be expected to have a pronounced impact on Aboriginal learners as their literacy levels are below average.

For the first time since the end of the Second World War, the country is entering a period of labour shortage in which employers will have difficulty replacing workers leaving the labour force through retirement. In periods of labour shortage, employers compete for workers and those who are able to pay high wages will have an easier time attracting the workers they need. Employers at the lower end of the value chain will have to hire whatever workers they can. Many of these workers will have much lower levels of literacy skill than employers have been traditionally able to attract. The presence of these workers in the workplace will reduce productivity growth, increase levels of workplace illness and accident, and reduce the ability of Canadian firms to compete in international markets—unless employers invest in upgrading their employees' literacy and essential skills.

At the same time, changes in the global economy are expected to place Canadian exporters under enormous pressure. Increasingly Canada's exporters will be faced by foreign competitors who have access to capital at the same prices, who are able to buy the same advanced production technology, who can tap global research and development, and who have access to workers who are as skilled as their Canadian peers but who generally earn much less. This will allow foreign competitors to match Canadian firms on quality and to beat Canadian firms on

⁴ Derived through a special analysis of data from Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey, 2000 cohort.

⁵ Construction Sector Council, SkillPlan and the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, "The Business Case for Essential Skills in Construction", (Ottawa: Construction Sector Council), January 2010, accessed September 5, 2013 http://www.buildforce.ca/en/system/files/products/The_Business_Case_for_Essential_Skills_in_Construction_0.pdf. As another example, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) studied carpenter apprentices who received essential skills upgrading. Findings indicate that the groups of apprentices who received upgrading had significantly higher course pass rates and provincial exam results. For NAIT study details see: Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker, "Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System," (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks), June 2006, 23.

price. Canadian firms can respond to these competitive pressures in several ways. They can outsource production to foreign producers, a strategy that would, over time, reduce employment and income levels in Canada and, eventually, the population's standard of living.

They can reduce wages and benefit rates to those paid by their foreign competitors, a strategy that will maintain employment levels, but reduce incomes and, over time, Canadians' standard of living.

A third and more promising way is for individuals, employers and governments to invest in raising the skills of the workforce. Canada already invests significant amounts in postsecondary education, with fully 85 out of every 100 high school leavers going on to some form of postsecondary study.⁶ As a result, the fundamental issue is one of quality not quantity. It would seem that Canadian workers will have the technical skills and knowledge needed to compete. What they do not have is the literacy and other essentials skills to apply their technical skills and knowledge to globally competitive levels.⁷

Higher levels of literacy will help improve worker employability and productivity. The Canadian labour market is among one of the most efficient at recognizing and rewarding higher levels of literacy skill with more work and higher wages. This implies that workers with relatively low literacy skills will be less successful in getting and keeping employment that offers high wages and stability.

Higher levels of literacy will help to support higher levels of adult learning and will increase the rate at which firms can adopt more knowledge and information-intensive technologies of production and work organization.

Higher literacy levels can also be expected to reduce the incidence and costs of workplace injury and accident. The resultant productivity growth will help maintain the competitiveness of Canada's firms in what is becoming a fiercely competitive global economy.

⁶ Special tabulation using Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey, 2000 cohort.

⁷ Labour costs represent an average of 70-80 per cent of production costs and higher skill levels allow capital and technology to be used more productively.

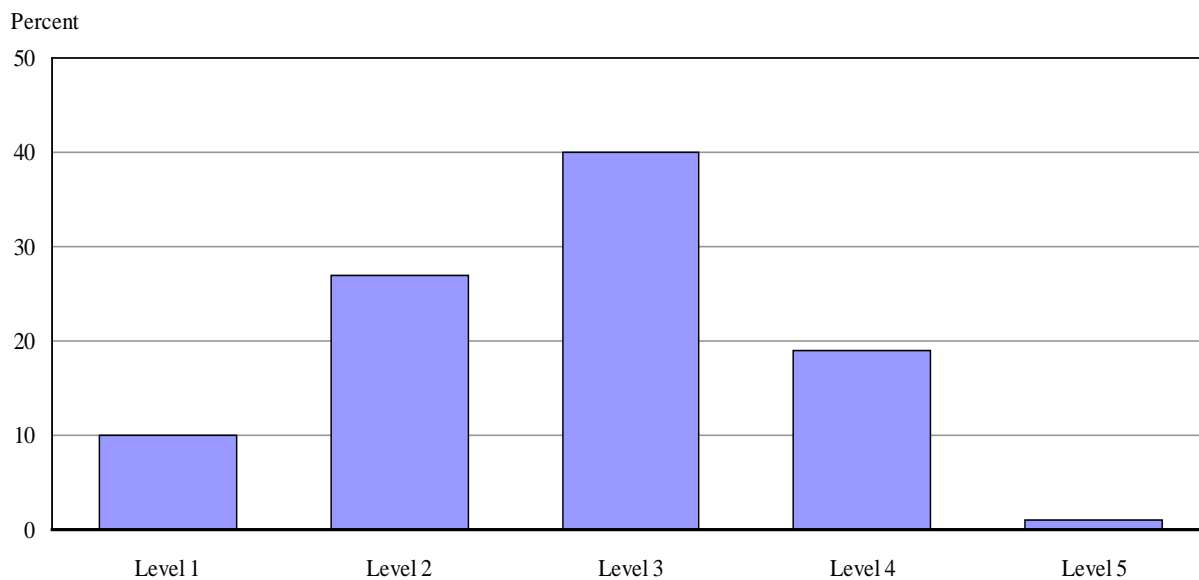
Improved literacy levels are also expected to precipitate other benefits, including higher levels of population health, improvements in social and democratic participation, and reductions in current levels of social inequality in these outcomes.

What is troubling, however, is that a large percentage of the adult population has literacy skills below Level 3.

As shown in Figure 2, Canadian adults are relatively skilled with the average adult having Level 3 literacy. The transition from Level 2 to Level 3 is an important one as it marks the point at which processing shifts from the recall processes in

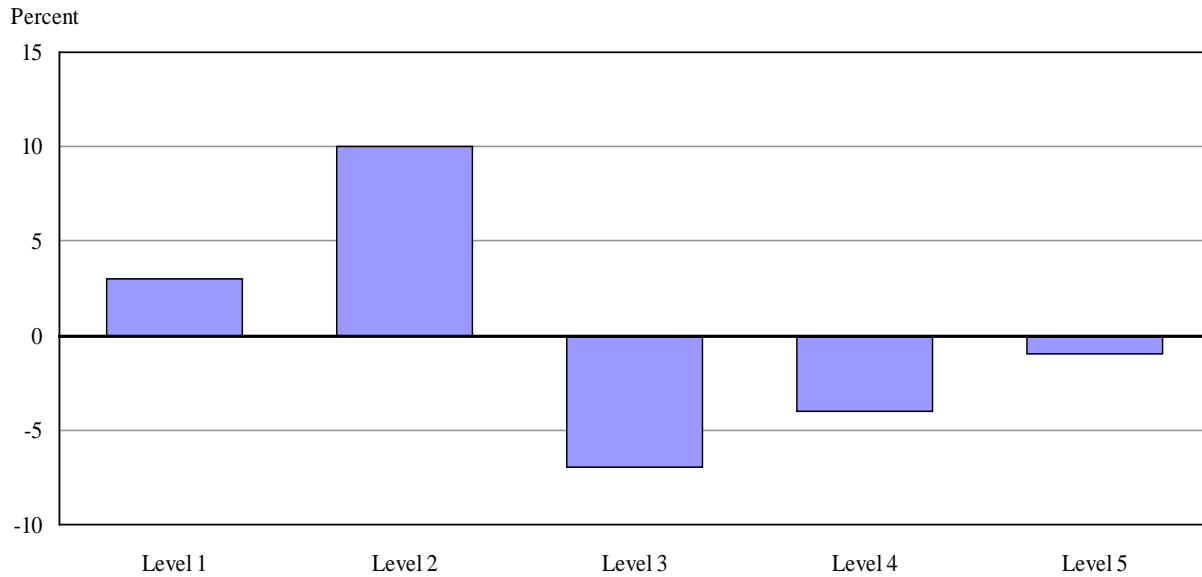
the back of the brain to reasoning in the pre-frontal cortex. Moreover, the Canadian economy is rapidly shedding jobs that demand Levels 1 and 2, and replacing them with jobs that demand Levels 3, 4 and 5. What is troubling, however, is that a large percentage of the adult population has literacy skills below Level 3. Figures 3A through 3C compare the distribution of literacy skill in the three main Aboriginal sub-populations. They show that Aboriginal adults are more likely to be at Levels 1 and 2, and less likely to be at Levels 3, 4 or 5, than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Figure 2: Distribution of Prose Literacy Proficiency by Proficiency Level, Adults Aged 16 and Over, Canada, 2006



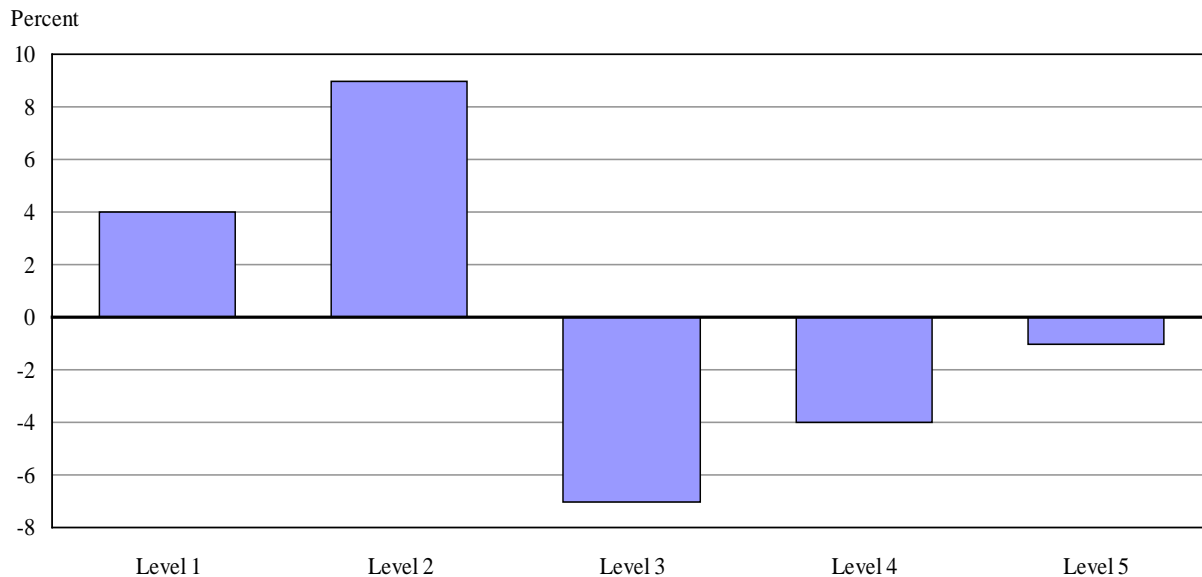
Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

Figure 3A: Comparative Profile of Literacy Level, Other Aboriginal - Off-Reserve, Canada, 2006



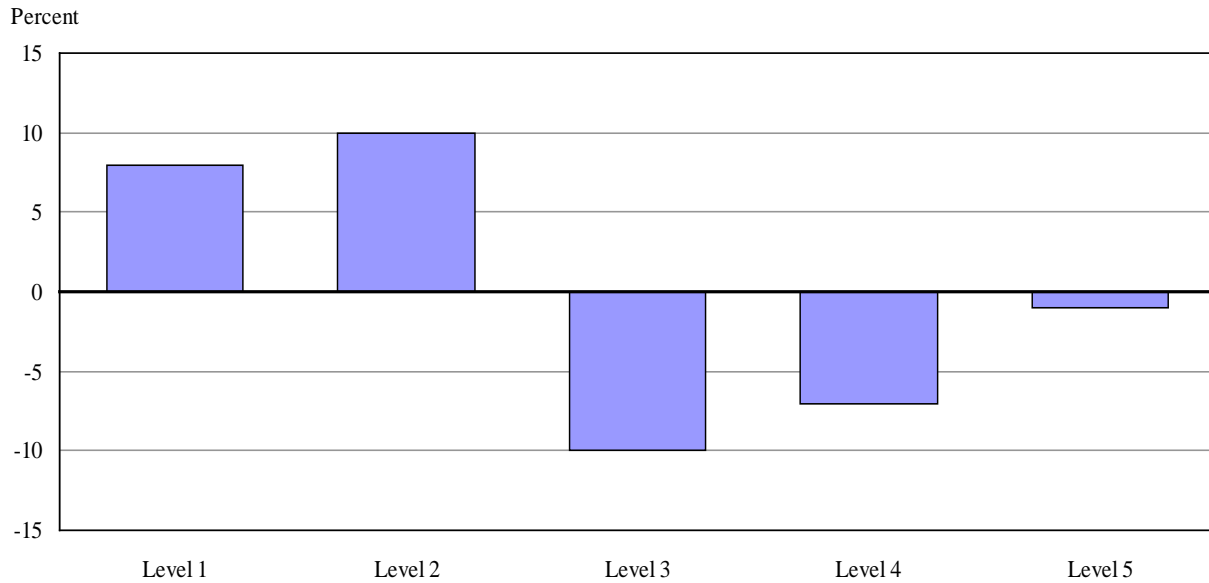
Source: 2006 Census of Population and IALSS, 2003

Figure 3B: Comparative Profile of Literacy Level, Band Member - Off-Reserve, Canada, 2006



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

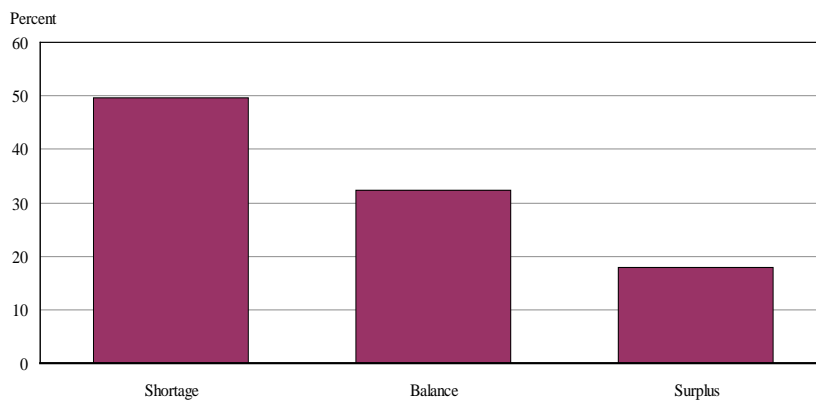
Figure 3C: Comparative Profile of Literacy Level, Band Member - On-Reserve, Canada, 2006



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

As shown in Figure 4 below, currently an estimated 50 per cent of all Canadian workers have literacy skills below the level demanded by their occupation.⁸ These workers may be able to do their jobs, but will have difficulty mastering new production processes and procedures, and dealing with unfamiliar tasks.

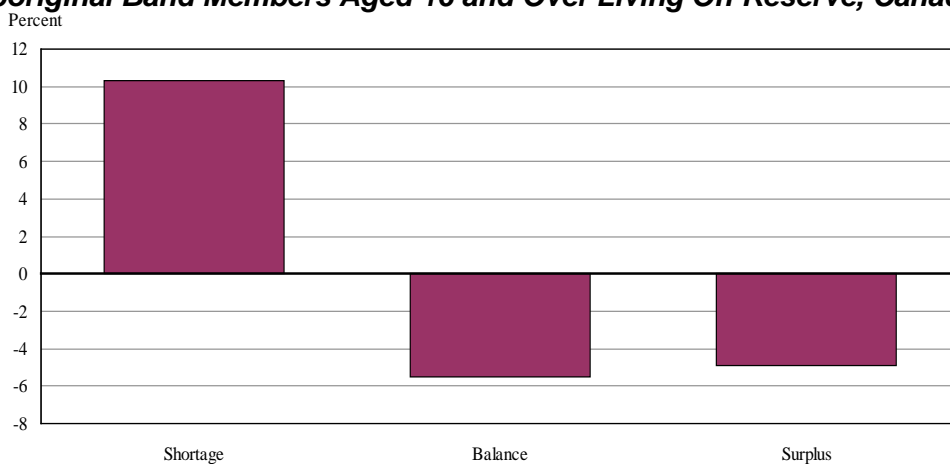
Figure 4: Employed Population by Shortage/Surplus Adults Aged 16 and Over, Canada, 2006



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

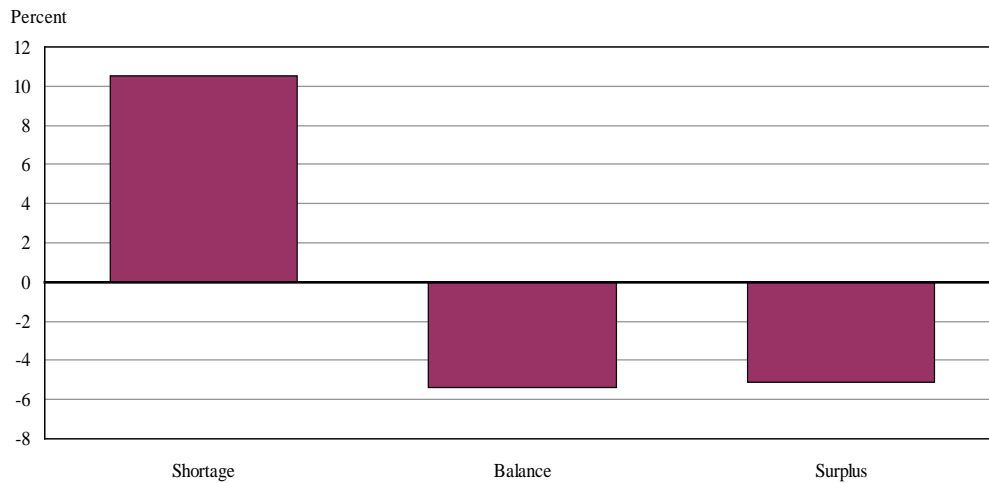
Figures 5A through 5C show that all three key Aboriginal sub-populations are significantly more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to have literacy skills below the level demanded by their occupations. This skill difference translates into lower wage rates, fewer opportunities for promotion, higher chances of layoff, higher rates of workplace illness and accident, and lower productivity.

Figure 5A: Relative Rates of Literacy Surplus, Shortage and Balance, Employed Aboriginal Band Members Aged 16 and Over Living On-Reserve, Canada, 2006



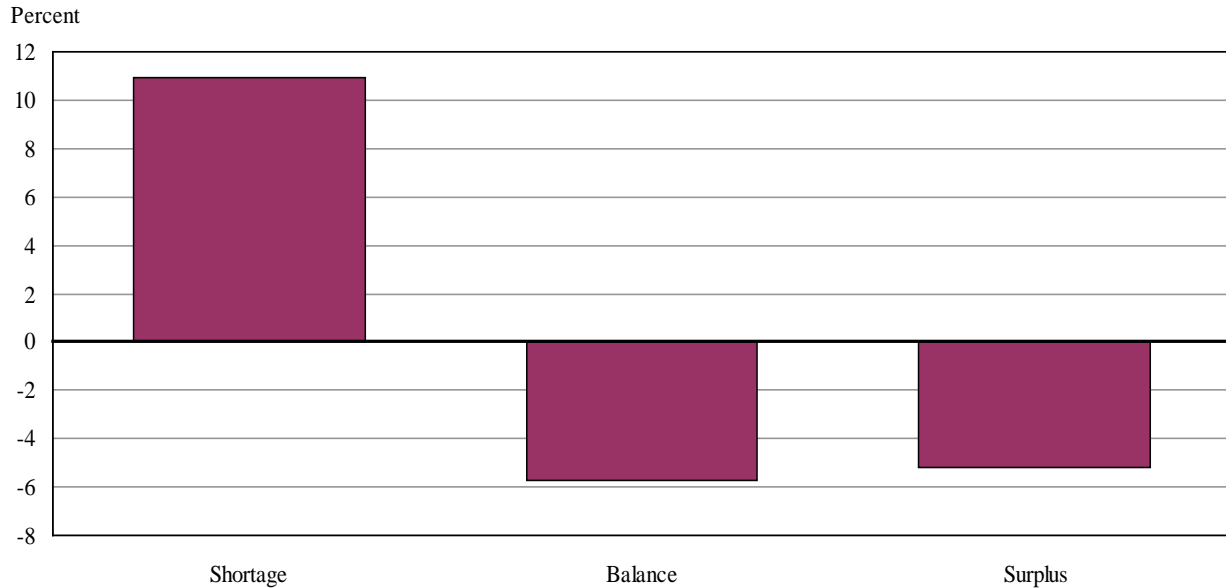
Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

Figure 5B: Relative Rates of Literacy Surplus, Shortage and Balance, Employed Other Aboriginal Adults Aged 16 and Over Living Off-Reserve, Canada, 2006



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

Figure 5C: Relative Rates of Literacy Surplus, Shortage and Balance, Employed Aboriginal Band Members Aged 16 and Over Living On-Reserve, Canada, 2006



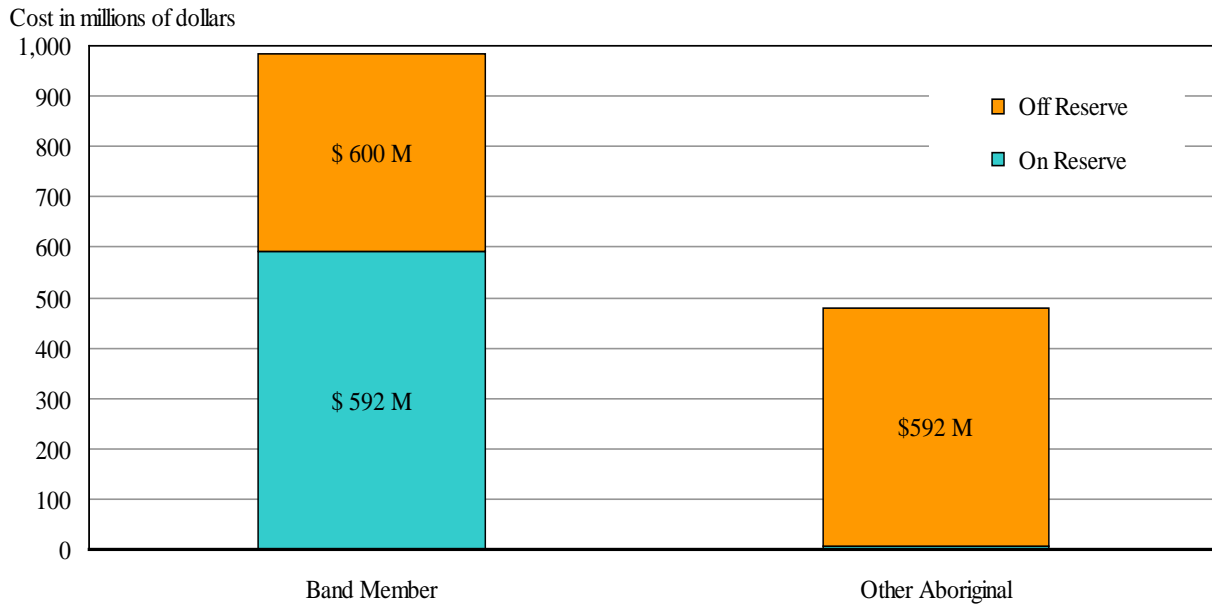
Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada, 2011*

Individuals and their employers might choose to invest to raise employees' literacy skills, but almost certainly not rapidly enough to avoid extensive short-term economic pain. Realizing Canada's full economic potential will depend critically on rapid and massive public investment in adult literacy.

The case for investing in Canada's Aboriginal populations follows the same logic, reinforced by the fact that Aboriginal workers will represent an increasingly important share of new labour supply.⁹ Figures 6 and 7 plot the estimated costs of providing sufficient remedial instruction to raise literacy skill levels enough to eliminate literacy skill shortages in Aboriginal populations.

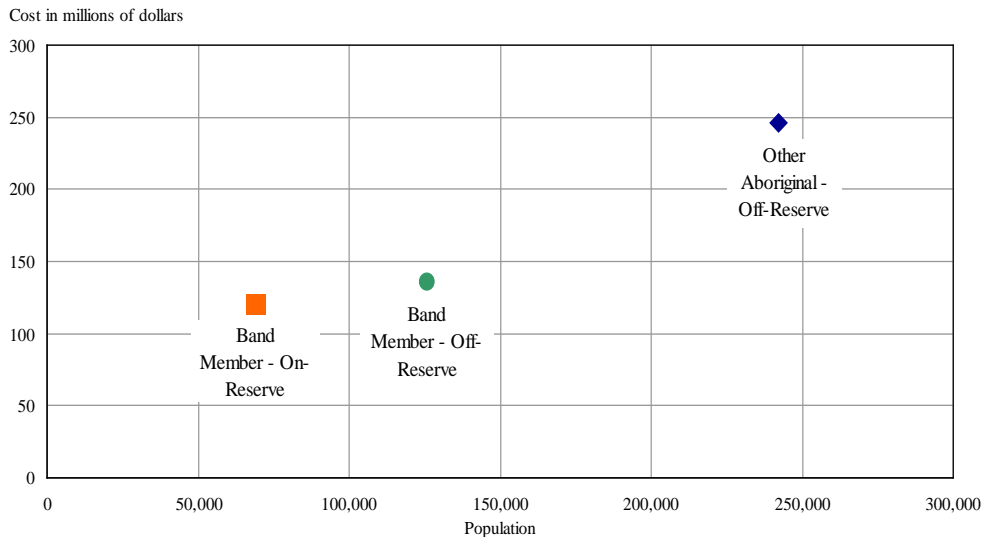
⁹ Higher levels of fertility in Aboriginal populations mean that Aboriginal populations are younger on average and represent an increasing share of net new labour supply. See Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit", Catalogue No. 99-011-X, *National Household Survey, 2011*, accessed September 4, 2013 <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>.

Figure 6: Estimated Cost of Providing Aboriginal Adults with Competitive Literacy Skills, Canada, 2006



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

Figure 7: Estimated Cost of Eliminating Literacy Skill Shortages in the Employed Aboriginal Population, Canada, 2006



Source: Murray and Shillington, *Understanding Aboriginal Literacy Markets in Canada*, 2011

The figures reveal several important facts, including the total cost of eliminating literacy skill shortage in Canada's Aboriginal populations, which is estimated to be \$1.456 billion. The total cost of eliminating literacy skill shortages varies significantly by Aboriginal sub-population. The largest investment would be required for other Aboriginals living off reserve, largely Canada's Inuit and Métis populations.

One should also not lose sight of the fact that literacy contributes to the well-being of individuals and communities in ways that generate enormous indirect economic benefit. Thus, a failure to invest in raising Aboriginal literacy levels will amplify current levels of economic and social disadvantage.

Raising average literacy skill levels is best accomplished by improving the quality of primary and secondary education that is available to Aboriginal youth. The Canadian Education Association notes that while mainstream Canada's Public Schools Act holds government accountable, gives parents guaranteed rights and legislates minimum teaching days, board governance and teacher certification for non-Aboriginal schools, the federal Indian Act broaches none of these topics. Moreover, on-reserve schools receive between \$2,000 and \$3,000 less per student than their provincial counterparts. There are also instances in which some schools in remote communities cope with up to \$9,000 less per student. As a result, Aboriginal schools are burdened by higher pupil-teacher ratios and larger class sizes, are limited in their ability to keep up with curricular and technological advances, and are challenged by lower pay and less benefits for teachers.¹⁰ The result is that Aboriginal youth leaving the secondary system are far more likely to be at Level 1 and 2 than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Investment in youth alone will not, however, be sufficient. Higher levels of investment and participation in adult literacy programs are urgently needed to ensure Canada's ability to compete. The pressing literacy needs of First Nations living on-reserve argues for intervention in all First Nations communities. Such intervention would require increasing the capacity of Aboriginal institutions and Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)

¹⁰ James Wilson, "The Indian Act – Three Simple Pages Say it All!", *Our Blog*, Canadian Education Association, December 2011, accessed August 28, 2013 <http://www.cea-ace.ca/blog/james-wilson/2011/12/4/indian-act-three-simples-pages-say-it-all>.

agreement holders. Friendship Centres could play an important role for off-reserve urban Aboriginal populations.

Additional investments might come from a variety of sources including individuals, employers and various levels of government. The federal government has a clear constitutional responsibility for making the required investments.

Canada's governments do not have the fiscal capacity to fix the skill problem themselves. Achieving higher levels of literacy investment and participation will depend on engaging Canada's employers. The fact that most adults with what are judged to be inadequate levels of literacy skill are working creates incentives for their employers to invest and suggests that instructional programs need to be tailored for the workplace.

Ironically much of Canada's future economic growth is expected to come from resource extraction in areas where Aboriginal populations already live.¹¹ Common sense and economic self-interest suggest a need for governments, employers and educators to act now. Canada's apprenticeship system provides a well-established mechanism linking education with employment in an efficient and effective way. Governments, employers and unions need to invest to ensure that the flow of apprentices is adequate to meet projected demands, and that all apprentices have the literacy and essential skills needed to support efficient learning and to apply their technical skills upon completion of their program.

Encouraging higher levels of Aboriginal participation in the apprenticeship system has to be a priority. The federal government has a clear constitutional responsibility to improve the quality of education for all Aboriginals. Additional investment is needed to guarantee that Aboriginal youth graduate from high school with the skills that they need to get full value out of postsecondary education and to go on to compete in Canada's labour markets. Additional investment is also required to provide Aboriginal adults who left the education system with low

¹¹ For a discussion on the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the development of Canada's natural resources, see Ken Coates and Brian Lee Crowley, "New Beginnings: How Canada's Natural Resource Wealth Could Re-shape Relations with Aboriginal People." *Aboriginal Canada and the Future of the Natural Resource Economy Series*. (Ottawa: MacDonald-Laurier Institute), May 2013, accessed September 3, 2013 http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/2013.01.05-MLI-New_Beginnings_Coates_vWEB.pdf

levels of literacy skills with the skills that they need to get and keep jobs. Such investments will provide meaningful employment, reduce dependence on government income support, and greatly reduce the current level of income inequality faced by Canada's Aboriginal populations. Doing so would also serve Canada's collective economic success.

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WRAP Program: Bridging Supply and Demand on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory

Prepared by Grand River Employment and Training

Grand River Employment and Training (GREAT)'s Work Ready Aboriginal People (WRAP) program focuses on preparing Six Nations members for rewarding careers in the construction sector by working with local industry partners. In addition to introducing young Aboriginal people to the skilled trades, the program offers skills upgrading, a cultural awareness week and ongoing support to registered apprentices.

Linking supply and demand

The Work Ready Aboriginal People (WRAP) program is a partnership between Grand River Employment and Training (GREAT) and the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council of Ontario. GREAT is an Aboriginal Skills Employment and Training Agreement Strategy (ASETAS) holder with Service Canada that works with Six Nations members to meet their employment and training needs. GREAT celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2012 and continues to look at new and innovative ways to deliver programs and services to meet the needs of the Six Nations community and its industry partners. The Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council represents well over 15 construction trades in the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) construction sector.

In 2011, with the assistance of Alex Lolua who represents the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), GREAT made a presentation to the Building Trades Council to partner on the WRAP program. Affiliates agreed to partner to provide the safety and trades training for the participants, and the WRAP program was born. This was a very exciting time in

GREAT's history because it was the first program of its kind to focus specifically on the ICI construction trades industry, targeting Aboriginal youth aged 18-30.

Given the expanding need for skilled people in the Canadian construction industry and that Aboriginal youth are the youngest and fastest growing segment of the country's population¹, the WRAP program helps bridge supply and demand. Youth participants have an opportunity to explore the construction trades, gain hands-on skills, earn safety certificates and make an informed career decision. The program is promoted to the youth in the community as a start to a career and not just a job. Participants are encouraged to be open-minded to learn about all of the trades and not to make a decision until the program is completed. The construction industry benefits through an increase in skilled tradespersons to help meet labour demand.

Program specifics

The WRAP program consists of 12 weeks of trades training that includes in-class theory, hands-on practical assignments and certification in various areas of safe work practices. Due to industry need, an eight-week Grade 12 math and Grade 12 physics component was implemented. Many employers and unions are finding that new trade entrants lack some of the knowledge needed for the trades, particularly in the area of math. GREAT is looking to add to this year's upgrading with more activities and hands-on assignments to introduce concepts in a visual manner, which will supplement the workbook instruction. Moreover, this year's program will also include an additional two weeks of upgrading. Many Aboriginal people are hands-on learners and it is felt that implementing different learning tools and more support time will better assist the students in achieving success.

This year's program will have a few new features including a one-week competitive intake that will require the participants to attend one week of training without receiving a training allowance. This period is being viewed as their personal investment. The program will take up to 25 potential participants and will screen the intake down to 15 participants by the end of the week. The participants will be evaluated throughout the first week of the program through different

¹ Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit." National Household Survey, 2011. Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011001. See: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.pdf>.

assessments and exercises to ensure they have the aptitude for the trades as well as the commitment needed to be successful in the program.

Cultural awareness week

Another new feature for the WRAP program is the official implementation of a cultural awareness week. This week focusses on assisting the participants with understanding the importance of self-identity, history and culture of Haudenosaunee People. It is becoming evident in many ways that Aboriginal youth lack a sense of who they are and where they come from, and hence where they are going. If they are fortunate enough to come from a family with strong traditional ties to the culture, then they are somewhat less likely to have issues with self-identity.

During the cultural awareness week, guest speakers from the community as well as people who have the historical and cultural knowledge are brought in to speak to the youth. Knowledge of one's past is crucial for finding and following a positive path forward, and this is very much rooted in Haudenosaunee values and teachings. Activities during the week concentrate on mentorship, which includes getting to know people in the community who have worked in the trades, and learning from them and their experiences. Other speakers are brought in to talk about cultural teachings and to remind everyone that we all have a purpose. Youth are taught that they do not have to leave their culture behind to pursue a career, but instead should be taking it with them. In order for the WRAP program to be successful, the program must be culturally relevant and sensitive to the participants it serves.

Expanding WRAP program's role

The WRAP program has taken on a greater role not only in promoting the trades and apprenticeship, but also through mentoring and supporting clients as they navigate their way through the apprenticeship process. Due to the length of most apprenticeships, it is important to ensure that potential participants have the commitment needed to succeed. As of April 1, 2013, GREAT hired a full-time cultural mentor/job coach to assist with implementing the cultural awareness training as well as to assist with further developing the mentorship aspect of the program.

GREAT recognizes the need to now focus more on supporting the apprentices throughout their apprenticeship until completion to journey person status.

While much of the focus over the past few years has been on getting people into apprenticeship programs, GREAT recognizes the need to now focus more on supporting the apprentices throughout their apprenticeship until completion to journey person status. With industry partners, GREAT has been able to expand its employer networks while fostering an

environment that assures employers they are receiving good quality candidates who are prepared to enter the construction industry. GREAT's union partners have also assisted the organization by explaining the process for applications, describing the qualities of a successful candidate, clarifying the minimum level of education needed, and sharing the issues they experience when recruiting new apprentices. This has helped the WRAP program meet industry and community needs.

Employer networks

GREAT has been growing the existing employer network over the last couple of years through the implementation of an employment division within the existing organizational structure. Through the WRAP program, attention is now being geared towards the unionized construction industry as an area that needs more development. As the program moves forward, more effort will be put towards establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with employers looking to increase their Aboriginal workforce. Upon successful completion of the WRAP program, participants have the knowledge to apply to the trade of their choice and have a better understanding of the application process for the unionized trades. Support is ongoing even after program completion because it is recognized that it is at this point that participants need the most assistance as they are now out there looking for employment opportunities.

Collaborative partnerships

In 2011, GREAT received funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to implement the WRAP program as a pilot project in the Six Nations community. Since then, the WRAP program has been funded through GREAT's program funding as well as through other

dollars from a local partnership developed with Imperial Oil called the Science Education Employment Development (SEED) program. The union training facilities provide the training, materials and industry-recognized safety certifications as their in-kind contribution towards the program, while GREAT also provides significant in-kind contributions. GREAT's in-kind contributions include the salary for the program coordinator, who implements and monitors the program and the progress of the participants, and the salary for the cultural mentor/job coach. This program is significant not only because it is the first of its kind in Ontario that is specifically directed at Aboriginal youth, but also because of the collaboration of so many partners sharing resources and working towards a common goal.²

Participants' outcomes

The first WRAP program started September 16, 2011 and ran until January 20, 2012. GREAT had 15 participants in total, with all of them completing the upgrading and 14 completing the trades training portion of the program. Of the 14 who completed both components of the program, 4 are registered apprentices and 1 still needs to complete his General Educational Development (GED), which he is working on at this time.

The second intake, which ran from September 2012 until the end of March 2013, had 15 participants. Of the 15 participants, 12 completed the trades training and 7 completed the upgrading, earning credits in both math and physics. Three completed math upgrading only and two did not complete the upgrading component. One was working and one left during upgrading for personal issues, but has since returned to pursue pre-apprenticeship plumbing training. Of the 12 who completed the trades training, 7 are currently working. Others have applications in to Ironworkers Local 736, Millwrights Local 1007, IBEW Local 105, and the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Trades – Local 95. One has completed the entrance exam for the pre-apprenticeship heavy equipment operator

² The complete list of partners includes the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council of Ontario; IBEW Local 105, Hamilton; Sheet Metal Workers and Roofers Local 537; Ironworkers Local 736; International Union of Operating Engineers Local 793 and Operating Engineers Training Institute of Ontario; Painters and Allied Trades District Council 46; Laborers' International Union of North America Local 837; United Association 67; Carpenters Union Local 18; Millwrights Regional Council of Ontario Local Union 1007; International Brotherhood of Boilermakers Local 128; Ontario Masonry Training Centre; International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Trades – Local 95; Ogwehoweh Skills and Trades Training Centre; and Science Education and Employment Development (Imperial Oil).

program in Morrisburg, Ontario and is now completing the job placement. One has passed the entrance exam and is on the pre-select list for the IBEW. Another was hired full-time as a welder and within two months was promoted to Quality Assurance. Two more have written and passed the entrance exam to enter into sheet metal training. Four of the participants have not been referred at this time as they are currently taking a welding certification course.

The program allows stakeholders to see the value of upgrading for employment in the trades.

The program is very beneficial for participants as they gain insight into trades they were unaware of prior to taking the program. It allows participants a first-hand opportunity to learn about several construction trades and supports participants by identifying the academic requirements needed to enter the different trade areas, providing them with an opportunity to achieve above minimum requirements.

Program achievements

The WRAP program has experienced a number of other successes, which have benefited the various stakeholders involved. While exposure to the various trades has assisted participants in making informed decisions regarding their future career paths, the emphasis on safety has also been important because it is a critical pillar of the unionized construction industry. As such, the program offers industry-recognized safety certifications.

Many Aboriginal youth would not normally meet the requirements to register as an apprentice in a traditional apprenticeship due to deficiencies in math and science. The WRAP program participants, however, benefit from the upgrading because it not only prepares them to write the trades entrance exams, but it also enhances their skills to ensure they are successful in trade school. The program allows stakeholders to see the value of upgrading for employment in the trades. As further support to potential apprentices, the program coordinator is knowledgeable about the criteria for applying to each trade union as well as whom to contact to set up trade entrance testing, if required. In addition, the development and implementation of the cultural teachings and mentorship component to make the program culturally relevant as well as the position of the cultural mentor/job coach are distinguishing features of the program.

Program contributions

Another positive aspect demonstrating the program's success and benefit to participants is the purchase of a mini-bus to accommodate program participants. This purchase was supported with the help of the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the SEED Program, the Ogwehoweh Skills and Trades Training Centre, and GREAT.

Through the program, mutually beneficial relationships are being established, developed and maintained amongst the various stakeholders involved. Greater networking opportunities are being created through partnerships, therefore widening the employer network. At the same time, the Building Trades unions are increasingly aware of Aboriginal demographics and are willing to work with ASETAS holders towards indenturing apprentices and seeing them achieve journeyman status.

GREAT re-worked the program based on feedback from all partners and participants, and as an indication of on-going support for the program, Building Trades offered to accept a third intake of participants in September 2013.

Grand River Employment and Training (GREAT) is located in Ohsweken, which is the largest First Nations community in Canada. GREAT's mandate is to assist unemployed and under-employed members with all their training and employment needs.

Orientation to Trades Program: Engaging Aboriginal Young Adults in the Trades Sector in New Brunswick

By Anita Boyle, Senior Aboriginal Project Manager, North Shore Micmac District Council

The North Shore Micmac District Council (NSMDC) in Eel Ground, New Brunswick is leading a project designed to increase the number of Aboriginal young adults entering the trades sector. Aboriginal young adults can play a role in filling the gap of skilled trades workers in Canada in the upcoming years. In an effort to address barriers often faced by Aboriginal students, the Orientation to Trades program allows students to explore the theoretical and shop-based practices of five trades while also focussing on academic and workplace skills, and Aboriginal cultural enrichment.

About the program

The North Shore Micmac District Council (NSMDC) in Eel Ground, New Brunswick is out to prove that Aboriginal young adults can play a role in filling the anticipated gap of skilled trades workers in Canada. The program designed by NSMDC and New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) Miramichi allows Aboriginal young adults to explore various trades while focussing on academic and workplace skills, and enriching learners' culture and heritage. NSMDC's Orientation to Trades program project is funded in part through the Government of Canada's Skills and Partnership Fund with assistance from the Aboriginal Workforce Development Initiative (AWDI) in New Brunswick. Two instructors from NBCC Miramichi are dedicated to the program and facilitate all classroom and shop instruction. Guest speakers are invited to address the participants on specialized topics that fall outside the expertise of the skilled trades instructors.

The program focusses on an introductory level of theoretical and shop-based practices in five trades including electrical, carpentry, industrial mechanics, welding and automotive service. Over a 32-week term, similar to a regular college pre-employment trades program, students receive instruction in math, literacy, computers, employment strategies, workplace safety, financial literacy, essential skills for successful learning, and other workplace essential skills,

NSMDC elected for a more innovative approach to address the specific needs of Aboriginal young adults who often face multiple barriers to success.

such as knowledge of employer expectations and good time management. In an effort to breakdown institutional and personal barriers, NSMDC encourages the young adult learners to explore and increase understanding of themselves and their cultural identity through a focussed module on Aboriginal culture (Mi'kmaq).

Designing NSMDC's program

Orientation to Trades programs have been offered to the general population for several years. In fact, NBCC had previously delivered similar programs targeting other groups. In the early design phase of the project, and building on the NBCC model, NSMDC elected for a more innovative approach to address the specific needs of Aboriginal young adults who often face multiple barriers to success. Upon completion of the program, students may begin apprenticeships with accredited hours, or return to school to study a specific trade and apply the credits earned while taking the Orientation to Trades program.

In September 2010, NSMDC, through its project manager Anita Boyle, conceptualized and designed the project and applied for special funding through the federal government. Once funding was approved, NSMDC quickly formed an advisory group made up of key stakeholders such as the NB Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, the NB Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification branch, First Nations employment counsellors, NBCC, and the AWDI. This group supported collaboration with stakeholders to address potential problems, and provided advice and guidance to NSMDC with regards to the overall implementation of the program.

When NSMDC was in the program plan design phase, careful attention was paid to some of the key issues that could be addressed in the program that would allow for the successful transition of Aboriginal young adults into the workforce, and specifically into the trades. In NSMDC's experience, it was observed that many youth were failing to see the trades as a viable career path. Those inclined to pursue postsecondary training often chose to go to university only to find out later that they were not suited for university or that they were ill-equipped to handle the transition and stress of leaving home for extended periods of time. These youth often got "lost in the shuffle" and quietly disappeared. Many of those who quit school or university often suffered a loss of self-esteem and diminished opportunities for employment in addition to loss of future targeted postsecondary funding.

Addressing barriers

Aboriginal young adults often present with one or more barriers that make successful completion of training and postsecondary study a challenge. Low self-esteem, addiction issues, incompleteness of secondary education, poor family support and lack of transportation all contribute to low educational attainment of Aboriginal students. In an effort to break down as many of these barriers to success as possible, NSMDC recognizes the importance of enriching the mainstream Orientation to Trades program with a cultural element.

For a three-hour block each week, students put down their welders and hammers to learn more about their culture, and how to use its powerful teachings to cope with life's challenges and to strengthen personal success. A respected Mi'kmaq cultural educator works with students to bridge gaps in cultural knowledge. Students are better able to align who they are with modern expectations of the world of work.

NSMDC wants to ensure that their students view their local college, which is situated off-reserve, as an accepting and safe learning environment. Adult learners in particular not only bring their skills forward, but also their biases and attitudes based on their learned and lived experiences, which can affect how they feel about institutions of higher learning, and how they interact with their fellow students and instructors. The weekly cultural class allows students to talk about their needs, issues and Mi'kmaq culture while studying in a mainstream institution. Students enjoy learning more about their culture and begin to see the college as a supportive

learning environment as it embraces their Mi'kmaq identity, impacting positively on the retention rate of the students.

In addition, NSMDC's program design addresses other barriers students encounter by providing a training stipend that covers childcare and travel, as required. Students also receive safety equipment such as steel boots, hard hats, coveralls, safety glasses and gloves. In an effort to facilitate the transition to employment, students earn additional certifications such as WorkSafeNB, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and First Aid as part of the program. To support those interested in pursuing work in the Alberta oil sands, Construction Safety Training System (CSTS-09) and Oil Sands Safety Association – Regional Orientation training are also offered.

Careful screening of prospective students allows NSMDC to select clients who have the best opportunity to complete the training and move into employment in a trade of their choosing. NBCC and NSMDC collaborate on selecting clients for the program. Students are screened for suitability, motivation and educational qualification. Completion of Grade 12 or General Educational Development (GED) is a minimum requirement.

The cultural education component, training stipend, supply of safety equipment, safety certifications and screening procedure are all valuable program features that support learners in overcoming barriers to education, training and employment.

Factors for success

The importance of establishing partnerships with industry and other primary stakeholders cannot be overstated for a program such as this to be successful. NSMDC works diligently to establish and sustain partnerships with employers in its region to identify hosts for the students for the 10-week work placements.

To engage employers, NSMDC developed a brochure to leave with prospective employers after an initial visit by the project manager. The brochure informs employers about the skill levels of students, describes the training that emphasises employer expectations, and highlights the

certifications that the students have earned, such as WorkSafe NB, WHMIS and First Aid. A simple note on the brochure stating that NSMDC's students report to the workplace with steel-toed boots, safety glasses, hardhats and coveralls sends a strong message to employers that the students are ready and prepared to go to work for them.

To date, 4 out of the 14 students from the first cohort have found employer sponsors and are beginning their apprenticeships.

Additional key strengths of the program include the close collaboration of the project manager with the local First Nations communities and their employment counsellors, the support of the instruction and administration team at NBCC, and the engagement of government and industry stakeholders. Indeed, building on the success of

the first year of the program and on NBCC's established expertise and reputation in placing and supervising students for the practicum component of the program, NSMDC contracted NBCC to oversee and supervise student placements for the second cohort. NSMDC also works with the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification branch to facilitate students' transitions into apprenticeships. To date, 4 out of the 14 students from the first cohort have found employer sponsors and are beginning their apprenticeships.

For many of the students, the work placement is the first time that they have ventured out into the non-Aboriginal community to work. Though many have apprehensions about what it is like to work outside of their community, they feel well-prepared by their training program to meet employers' expectations. Similarly, employers report that they are pleased with the students who work for them. In some cases, employers retain their students and offer them either full or part-time employment.

Next steps for the program participants and programs

The three-year Orientation to Trades program project will conclude on March 31, 2014. The first cohort of 14 students completed their training in July 2012 with positive results. As noted above, four of the students have started apprenticeships. Five students went on to take a pre-employment trade course at NBCC. Of the five, two entered electrical, two entered welding and

one entered carpentry. Several other students eager to earn a living went out to work in various industries where they continue to build their skills. A few students went to Alberta for work, one of whom works as a high level security guard at one of the worksites in northern Alberta, earning a good wage to support his young family.

In June 2013, the second cohort of 14 students completed the program. Seven are set to enter pre-employment trades training in the fall of 2013 while the others are planning to go directly to work or are pursuing additional postsecondary study.

The project is now in the early stages of the evaluation phase. While it is still premature to fully understand how this specific initiative and approach will impact the students over time, it is anticipated that more students will enter the trades and it is hoped that they will do so within the reporting phase of this project. The more realistic outcome, however, is that there will be delayed entry to skilled trades careers as more students overcome personal barriers.

Still pleased with the outcomes of the students to date, NSMDC has seen the program's initial impact on influencing the direct movement of some Aboriginal learners into the skilled trades sector. While more work needs to be done to keep up the momentum and to encourage engagement and investment from industry, results so far are promising for the individuals, the community and the future skilled trades workforce.

Anita Boyle is from the Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation in New Brunswick. She is currently a Senior Aboriginal Project Manager at the North Shore Micmac District Council in New Brunswick and has extensive experience in economic development, training and community development.

Journeyman Ratio Pilot: An Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative in Newfoundland and Labrador

By Keith Jacque and Shaun MacLean of the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership with
research by Jan Burry of Lower Churchill Project

As Labrador's economy expands through natural resource development projects, so does the need for skilled tradespersons. Labrador's three Aboriginal groups and Nalcor Energy formed the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership (LATP) to capitalize on the opportunities and to support the participation of Aboriginal people. At the LATP's urging, a pilot ratio amendment was approved to increase the journeyman to apprentice ratio in the carpentry and heavy equipment operator trades in targeted communities in an effort to boost the number of Aboriginal journeymen.

Developing Labrador's economic and human resource potential

Labrador is experiencing unsurpassed economic growth that is forecasted to continue and accelerate. Planned/possible major projects for the region include Nalcor Energy's Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project, Vale's underground mining at the Voisey's Bay nickel mine, Aurora Energy Resources' uranium mining near Postville, Alderon's Kami iron ore project, and Iron Ore Company of Canada's Project Genesis. At the same time, the aging labour force, particularly in the western part of Labrador, will result in significant job openings over the next decade as workers retire and need to be replaced. The resultant, burgeoning need for skilled labour is an unprecedented opportunity for Aboriginal workers to participate in the labour force, thereby contributing to the reversal of the unsustainable socioeconomic condition that exists within many of Labrador's Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal people in Labrador face on-going challenges related to major changes in traditional lifestyles that resulted from residential schooling settlement, missionary influences and the money economy. Research indicates that generally Aboriginal people have lower educational attainment¹, an ever increasing loss of language, cultural traditions and customs², and increased rates of substance abuse, suicide and domestic violence.³ Families and communities are attempting to cope with these circumstances while trying to preserve and promote culture, language and traditions in a changing, modern economy.

Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership

To help address some of these challenges, Labrador's three Aboriginal groups—Innu Nation, Nunatsiavut Government (NG) and NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) (formerly Labrador Métis Nation)—and Nalcor Energy partnered to form the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership (LATP). In May 2009, the Nalcor Energy-Lower Churchill Project, on behalf of the Innu Nation, NG and NCC, applied for funding through the federal government's Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) program.⁴ When ASEP funding was approved, the LATP was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization to implement and lead training programs for members of the Aboriginal communities.

The three Aboriginal groups are the "owners" of the LATP and Nalcor Energy is the "industrial partner" (as required to be eligible for funding). These partners of the LATP, which make up its Board, determine the direction of the organization while the LATP Executive Director manages the day-to-day operations.

The training programs were agreed upon by the Board, as advised by Nalcor Energy with respect to the areas of anticipated employment on the Lower Churchill Project. By working with

¹ Statistics Canada, "The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada", Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011003. May 2013. See: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011003_3-eng.cfm.

² Mary Jane Norris, "Aboriginal languages in Canada: Emerging trends and perspectives on second language acquisition", Canada Social Trends, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 11-008. 2009. See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2007001/9628-eng.htm>.

³ Samuel Perreault, "Violent victimization of Aboriginal people in the Canadian provinces, 2009", Juristat Article, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 85-002-X. March 2011. See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11415-eng.htm>.

⁴ The ASEP promoted increased participation of Aboriginal people in major economic development. Funding for the ASEP program ended March 2012.

training providers, who were selected based on a standard Request for Proposals process, the four partners developed the training programs. The LAMP provided support services to clients via LAMP career counselling staff, who were representative of each of the three Aboriginal groups. The mandate of the LAMP was to provide (within the confines of the funding agreement) whatever support clients required to remove any barriers that impeded their ability to get from where they were to where they needed to be.

The lack of journeypersons affects the ability of apprentices to complete apprenticeship training and attain certification.

The four partners, along with the provincial and federal governments, provided a total of \$30 million in cash and in-kind contributions. The funding covered all aspects of the initiative to increase the number of Aboriginal people engaged in training programs. In addition to covering wage subsidies,

tools, equipment, tuition, travel, accommodation and childcare costs, the funding supported training that was hosted within communities as well as the services of an interpreter who provided support in technical training by explaining specific tools' names and uses, and techniques specific to the carpentry trade. While the emphasis was on training clients for the skilled trades such as carpentry and electrical work, training for the full scope of the Lower Churchill Project's labour needs was provided. These included such areas as engineering, helicopter operation, administration and security, in addition to the training of other skilled trades workers such as cooks. The LAMP worked closely with the province's Department of Education and the Apprenticeship Division to ensure that clients received training that would carry them through the Lower Churchill Project and beyond. The goal was long-term capacity-building for the communities. In total, more than 300 individuals received training between 2009 and 2012.

Ratio pilot

During the on-the-job training portion of an apprenticeship program, the apprentice works under the guidance of a certified journeyperson who teaches the apprentice how to safely and efficiently complete the tasks of the trade. Nationally, there is a gap between the number of apprentices and certified journeypersons. Within Aboriginal communities, the mismatch is even starker. The lack of journeypersons affects the ability of apprentices to complete apprenticeship

training and attain certification. The inability to secure employment and the lack of role models negatively impacts retention and completion rates of apprentices in the Aboriginal communities.

The LATP recognized this deficiency as a huge barrier to the capacity-building strategies of Aboriginal communities. In response, the LATP advocated for and presented the Provincial Apprenticeship Certification Board (PACB) with options to increase the current journey person to apprentice ratio in an effort to facilitate growth in the number of certified Aboriginal journey persons. Working closely with the PACB and partnering with the Innu Development Limited Partnership (IDLP), a pilot ratio amendment was approved for the Innu carpentry apprentices in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. While the standard ratio in Newfoundland and Labrador is two apprentices to one journey person in the carpentry trade, the ratio was changed to five apprentices to one journey person in the two communities. Readers should note that the ratio was altered only for the participants in this pilot project. A further request to amend the ratio for the heavy equipment operator trade was approved, boosting the ratio from two apprentices for every one journey person to four apprentices per journey person. Again, this change was made only for the duration of the pilot project in these communities.

A requirement of this ratio pilot was that apprentices had to be registered with the LATP. Vigilant monitoring and site visits with regular reporting to the PACB were other conditions of the pilot program. There was also an understanding that the journey person on-site acted in a mentor capacity rather than as a production-oriented tradesperson. It was critical to get employers on-board with this arrangement to ensure that the apprentices were adequately supervised and mentored. Indeed, this aspect proved to be one of the main challenges the LATP had to overcome in order to implement the revised ratio. Employers preferred that all journey persons on the work site were engaged in activities that were directly advancing the project and did not necessarily understand the contributions the journey persons were making by being solely responsible for mentoring the apprentices. The LATP executive communicated the participation requirements and benefits of the pilot to the employers. These discussions helped convince employers of the contributions the ratio pilot would make to the local area and the value of these types of investments in Aboriginal apprentices.

Outcomes of the LATP's training initiatives

All outcomes were tracked by the LATP staff using the ARMS tracking system⁵, per the ASEP funding agreement requirements. The LATP's ratio pilot program for carpentry apprentices finished in May 2011. For the wage subsidy period of February to May 2011, the carpenter apprentices worked a total of 2,610 insurable hours that were logged and signed off by a certified journeyperson. At the end of the program, the nine trained carpenter apprentices from the pilot continued employment with the IDLP. Additionally, 15 apprentices from Sheshatshiu began their apprenticeship training in carpentry and continue to pursue training to achieve journeyperson status. In Natuashish, the ratio pilot project allowed for 9 carpenter apprentices and 12 heavy equipment operator apprentices to pursue journeyperson certification.⁶ Although unrelated to the journeyperson ratio pilot, the LATP was also able to provide training to 35 electrician apprentices over the funding period.

One of these electrician apprentices shared his positive experiences about participation in the LATP.

"If it was not for LATP, I may not have been able to succeed in becoming an apprentice electrician," said one participant. "I am capable and willing to complete almost any task that I may endeavor to pursue. I am working with a journeyperson electrician, and gaining valuable work experience as well as logging hours as a first year apprentice. I attribute my successes to the funding of this program. With the lack of funds within the Aboriginal communities, and the potential for opportunities for training and employment, one can only imagine the possibilities of success stories such as mine."

With additional funding secured for the LATP, it is hoped that similar success stories will be shared in the near future. Moving forward, the LATP will continue to work with the IDLP and the

⁵ ARMS is a web-based case management system designed to track and manage clients, case files, results, funding, costs, etc. to meet the tracking and reporting requirements of federal and provincial funders.

⁶ It is a challenge to collect further details on participants' outcomes at this time, partly due to lack of access to phone or internet for some participants. In addition, the LATP has just begun to resume operations after a 15 month gap in services due to lack of funding. Readers should also note that since the carpentry and heavy equipment operator apprentices began their apprenticeships under this pilot, they have not had time to complete their training programs since the first funding agreement for the LATP ended March 31, 2012.

PACB to support and explore options for increasing the journeyperson capacity in all communities across the province.

Keith Jacque has been the Executive Director of the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership (LATP) since its formation. As an Aboriginal and an educator, Keith understands the need to advance Labrador's Aboriginal peoples and views the LATP as a key part of this process.

Shaun MacLean began working with the Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership (LATP) in June 2013, but has since left for new opportunities. While at the LATP, his experience in policy development, Aboriginal relations and research greatly contributed to the LATP's work.

Jan Burry is the Newfoundland and Labrador Coordinator of Diversity and Aboriginal Affairs on the Lower Churchill Project. Appointed to the NL Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board in 2002, she served two terms. She has delivered diversity and gender awareness training provincially and nationally.

Building Careers for Aboriginal Peoples in the Skilled Trades in Saskatchewan

Prepared by the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

In addition to delivering skilled trades-focused programs to First Nations and Aboriginal learners through its Construction and Industrial Career Centres, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) provides opportunities for registered apprentices to acquire on-the-job training through its Joint Training Committee (JTC). Taking on the role of an employer, the JTC has experienced considerable success, supporting a growing number of apprentices to completion and certification in the province.

Benefiting through partnerships

The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) is a certified First Nations-governed training institution with a mandate to provide training and other labour force development services for the First Nations people of Saskatchewan.

SIIT has been managing Construction and Industrial Career Centres on behalf of its partners¹ since 1999. Each of the seven Career Centres is guided by a steering committee. The Career Centre steering committees consist of partner representatives and other key stakeholders in the region who are interested in First Nations and Aboriginal labour force development initiatives.

The Career Centres serve to:

- Coordinate available labour with industry demand;

¹ The founding partners include Saskatchewan Construction Association, PCL Construction Management Inc., Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of the Economy – Labour Market Services (formerly Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training), Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, and Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

- Develop mutually beneficial linkages to industry;
- Support employee-employer relationships;
- Assist in overcoming barriers to employment;
- Provide links and access to training and skill development; and
- Promote interest in construction careers.

The Career Centres seek to develop skills and provide an opportunity for First Nations, Aboriginal participants and others to establish careers in construction and other industrial sectors. A significant component of achieving these objectives is job coaching, which was implemented upon recommendation by the construction industry and other partners. Job coaches are individuals who are quite often journeypersons themselves, and this feature gives them credibility with both their clients and the employers. They have “been there and done that”, which allows them to develop positive connections with clients and employers. The job coaches are responsible for:

- Assisting participants to develop their employability skills;
- Providing career guidance and advice;
- Supporting participants to overcome employment and training barriers; and
- Liaising between workers and employers.

Programs for success

Clients who have job experience will use a Career Centre to find employment, renew or gain safety tickets, or attend certified apprenticeship training, which is delivered by SIIT. Level I Carpentry is typically a seven week program in Saskatchewan. At SIIT, however, it is extended by two weeks to give students additional essential skills training at the beginning of their apprenticeship, which leads to increased completions amongst other improved results. The practice of front-loading essential skills upgrading in apprenticeship training was quantified in *The Business Case for Essential Skills in Construction* that was spearheaded by the Construction Sector Council, SkillPlan and the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum.²

² See: <http://www.buildforce.ca/en/products/business-case-essential-skills-construction>

Clients with little or no work experience can apply to take what is called a Quick Skill, or Pre-Apprenticeship training program. Some of the programs delivered through the Career Centres that are directly linked to employment include Construction Worker Preparation, Residential Renovation and Construction, Women in Trades, Concrete Forming, Steel Stud and Drywall, and Residential Framing. These programs are delivered in cities where the Career Centres are located (Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, Yorkton and North Battleford) as well as in First Nations communities.

Once employed for a period of approximately six months, clients are encouraged to become registered apprentices.

These programs help clients gain confidence and the technical skills needed to become gainfully employed. Once employed for a period of approximately six months, clients are encouraged to become registered apprentices.

Joint Training Committee

In 1998, SIIT worked with the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) to establish the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies – Joint Training Committee (SIIT-JTC). The SIIT-JTC acts like an employer, indenturing First Nations and Aboriginal people in the construction trades and allowing apprentices mobility within industry as they maintain their status as registered apprentices in Saskatchewan. The motivator to form its own JTC was for greater flexibility and to allow more mobility for clients and students because they would not have to re-indenture should they switch employers. It was also employed as a way to keep more apprentices in good standing with the SATCC. The SIIT-JTC collaborates with SIIT's Career Centres to establish relationships with industry³ in order to find suitable employment to fulfill training requirements at each level. By indenturing apprentices, the SIIT-JTC supports apprentices in attaining journeyman status in their respective trades. Responsible for indenturing, training and tracking Aboriginal apprentices living in

³ Some industry partners include Graham Construction Ltd., Quorex Construction Ltd., Westridge Construction Ltd., Dominion Construction Ltd., RNF Ventures Ltd., Thorpe Brothers Ltd., River Bank Development Corporation, Meadow Lake OSB, Empire Welding & Machining Ltd., Kitsaki Management Limited Partnership, Construction Associations (Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert), and Homebuilder Associations (Regina, Saskatoon).

Saskatchewan, the SIIT-JTC works closely with the SATCC to promote the value of apprenticeship while achieving the objectives of the Career Centres, the SIIT and the SATCC.

In 2012/13, the SIIT-JTC populated a newly built provincial database to assist in monitoring, recording trade-time and tracking apprentices for each level of technical training. SIIT's database enhances the institute's ability to work closely with the SATCC to coordinate the training requirements for apprentices. In February 2013, the SIIT-JTC hired a program officer to perform administrative duties and to keep the apprentices' information and training data current.

As the SIIT-JTC continues to move forward, the institute has expanded the office with the addition of two field consultants. The role of the SIIT-JTC field consultants will be to travel throughout the province to work closely with apprentices, deliver training to rural communities, and seek new apprentices working in the construction industry.

Participant demographics and outcomes

The Career Centres have been gathering information on their clients since the first Career Centre opened in Regina in 1998. The seven Centres have registered over 20,000 clients and have found close to 15,000 jobs for clients. Signifying the Centres' important role in training and skills development, nearly 11,800 participants have completed the Construction Safety Training System and an additional 4,800 are either engaged in or have completed skills training.

The Centres' client demographic is 74 per cent First Nations, 14 per cent Métis and Non-Status, and 12 per cent non-Aboriginal. Eighty-four per cent of the clients are male with 16 per cent being female. Just over half (52 per cent) of the clients are under 30 years of age. A small percentage (6.5 per cent) of participants has attained postsecondary education as the highest level of education; the majority, at 80 per cent, has attained Grade 10, 11, 12 or 12 General Educational Development (GED) as the highest level of education.

Since 1998, the SIIT-JTC has indentured 681 participants, 73 of whom were indentured this past fiscal year 2012/13. Over the course of the initiative, 78 participants have been hired and registered with a business or contractor. The SIIT- JTC continues to build careers in the skilled

trades for Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. In this past fiscal year 2012/13, the SIIT-JTC celebrated seven new journeypersons. Since 1998, a total of 53 journeypersons have been generated from the Career Centres in conjunction with the SIIT-JTC.

To put some of these numbers into the provincial context, there were 9,742 total registered apprentices in Saskatchewan as of June 30, 2012. Of those, 1,288 were of Aboriginal ancestry. Between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012, the province issued 1,682 journeyperson certificates. In fiscal year 2011/12, the number of Aboriginal peoples who became certified journeypersons was 112.⁴

Moving forward, the SIIT-JTC and Career Centres will continue to collect information on participants, ensuring accurate data informs new developments and supports the future success of initiatives to grow Saskatchewan's skilled workforce in the construction industry.

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies provides academic and career education and training to First Nations adults in Saskatchewan. Programming includes adult basic education, business administration and information technology, health and community studies, and certified technical, vocational and trades training.

⁴ Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, "Statistics: 2011-12 Results at a Glance." <http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/publications-resources/statistics/> Please note that the provincial statistics are available for 2011/12 while SIIT's statistics are for 2012/13.

Cambrian College's Trades Trailer Brings Training to Remote Communities

Prepared by Cambrian College

Cambrian College's innovative mobile training trailer offers complete hands-on and virtual learning in the skilled trades for up to 16 trainees at once. Deployed in remote Aboriginal communities, major cities, or on job sites, the trailer is equipped with satellite communication, tools and machinery. With Aboriginal, industry and community partnerships, the trailer moves through different regions, heightening awareness about skilled trades training and developing the workforce by delivering custom, culturally relevant programs.

Increasing accessibility to trades training

Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario, brings hands-on trades training to learners in remote communities and job sites around the province. Cambrian unveiled its mobile training system, the first of its kind in Ontario, in 2009. Its design and construction were made possible by a \$2-million dollar gift from Vale. To support workforce development in the trades and to make training more accessible, Cambrian deploys a 53-foot mobile training facility that is equipped to deliver hands-on instruction in a variety of trades including welding, electrical, millwright, heavy equipment, truck and coach, machining, gas fitting and more.

Depending on the intended use of the trailer, either one or two supply trailers, which house materials, training aids, and additional tools and equipment, accompany the main trailer. The trailer can operate in extreme weather conditions, sets up in minutes, and provides over 1,800 square feet of classroom and shop space when all three components are used. Cambrian's trades trailer can accommodate up to 16 trainees at once as they learn to use all of the tools and equipment of their respective trade.



Cambrian College's mobile trades trailer.



The trailer has the versatility to provide hands-on learning in a number of skilled trades.

The trailer supports formal apprenticeship training and has the capacity to accommodate various levels of technical training; however, it is primarily used for teaching level one technical training. Approximately 200 students over the past three years have completed training in the trades trailer (either apprenticeship training or corporate training). The trailer is outfitted with all

of the features of a high-tech classroom such as touch screen controls, a projector, wireless internet and a drop-down screen. Students and instructors also benefit from virtual learning opportunities using the trailer's wireless satellite communication capabilities.

Part-time staff are hired to provide the training wherever the trailer is put into operation. There is also a full-time technician who does the set-up and dismantling of the trailer. The number of staff deployed at special events and career fairs depends on the type of event. The cost to use the trailer has several variables. Factors such as the distance to the training or event site, the cost to deliver the training, and the human resources needed to conduct the program or participate in the event all play a role. The duration of the training and whether or not only the main unit or all three units are used also impact cost. Each contract is negotiated individually to tailor it to the needs of the partner.¹

Success in an Aboriginal community

In winter 2013, the trades training trailer delivered essential pre-trades training to students from Webequie First Nation, located 500 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay. The trailer was scheduled to travel up the ice road to that remote community in January, but due to unstable road conditions, it was deployed near Constance Lake First Nation, west of Hearst instead. Sixteen young people, including one young woman, enrolled in the [Mining Essentials](#) program to prepare for diverse career opportunities in Ontario's Ring of Fire region. The mineral-rich area is located in the James Bay lowlands. It has been earmarked for intense mining development and Webequie First Nation is the closest settlement.

The 12-week program was delivered by Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Education & Training Institute in partnership with Webequie First Nation, Cliffs Natural Resources and Cambrian College. The students graduated on May 2, each earning a certificate that is required by the mining industry to be considered for an entry-level position.² The program curriculum also prepared students to pursue further postsecondary education.

¹ Communities and corporations can request the trailer by contacting Louise Turcotte at 705-566-8101, ext. 7810, or by email at louise.turcotte@cambriancollege.ca.

² See <http://www.aboriginalmining.ca/en/miningessentials/MiningEssentials.asp> for more information.

Reducing barriers to trades training

It enables students to live in their home communities, learn with their friends and peers, and for those with families, be at home with their family every day.

By bringing the trailer to Aboriginal and remote communities, it can help eliminate the need for travel and the associated expenses that come with living away from home such as accommodation and transportation costs. It enables students to live in their home communities, learn with their friends and peers, and for those with families, be at home with their

family every day. They also have access to cultural support from their home communities, which is particularly important to Aboriginal learners.

“Students living in remote communities want to develop their skills while staying close to home, so they can take advantage of opportunities in mining, construction, forestry and other industries without leaving their families far behind,” said Louise Turcotte, Associate Dean of the Schools of Skills Training, and Community and Corporate Learning at Cambrian College, who oversees administration of the trailer. “Our trades trailer facility opens many doors to those students and it offers solutions to businesses with corporate training needs. It’s truly a workforce developer; it can fill niches and allows us to run approved training programs with small class sizes in remote areas to reach learners where they live.”

Introducing youth to the skilled trades

Currently, the trailer is well-booked for trades training at various sites, but when it is not deployed for that, Cambrian has organized trades trailer tours, visiting elementary and secondary schools in Ontario to expose younger students to opportunities in the skilled trades and technology.

The trailer has visited most of the English high schools in the Sudbury area and in 2011, was deployed at secondary schools in London, Barrie, Kitchener-Waterloo and Owen Sound. On these occasions, Cambrian faculty members expose students to a variety of hands-on activities to whet their appetites for careers in the trades. Members of the College’s liaison team also

give presentations to let high school students, teachers and guidance counsellors know about the programs and services available at Cambrian.

The trailer has also been deployed at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition in Waterloo, Ontario, so that students and teachers in attendance could get a first-hand look at the trailer's capabilities and learn about the trades programs that Cambrian offers. As a result of these initiatives, an increased number of students from southern Ontario have applied to Cambrian. Media reports about the trailer and its movements have also increased public awareness about the need to develop the workforce in the skilled trades.

Cambrian receives numerous requests to attend trade shows, pow-wows and Aboriginal career fairs across northern Ontario, so the trailer is often brought to these events to showcase training programs and the capabilities of the trailer for trades training.

By raising awareness of the skilled trades and providing trades training in remote and Aboriginal communities, Cambrian's trailer is helping to overcome a number of barriers. More youth are encouraged to consider careers in the skilled trades and remote learners are now able to access community-based, hands-on training, which increases retention rates, benefiting individuals, communities and industry.

Cambrian College is the largest college in northern Ontario, offering more than 80 full-time programs with flexible and online learning options and hundreds of part-time courses. The College offers co-op diploma apprenticeship programs through its Skills Technology Institute (SkyTech).

EADDI: An Online Apprenticeship Initiative in Manitoba

By Rosemary Vogt, Project Manager, E-Apprenticeship, Red River College, Winnipeg, Manitoba

An innovative initiative at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is providing the technical training portion of apprenticeship training for selected programs in an online blended or hybrid format. Known as the E-Apprenticeship Alternative Delivery Development Initiative (EADDI), the objective is to increase training capacity for apprentices by providing community-based training. A particular benefit of the model is that it can be delivered in remote areas, allowing apprentices to remain in their communities while completing the requirements of their level training. Data collected in spring and summer of 2013 indicate that apprentices identify the convenience of remaining at home in their community as opposed to completing their level training at one of Manitoba's technical colleges as the program's greatest strength.

Increasing training capacity

In many trades, the demand for training seats has strained the conventional delivery capacity of training providers with respect to meeting the needs of the Manitoba labour market.¹ In 2008, Red River College investigated ways to expand capacity for apprenticeship training, which resulted in recommendations to develop an alternate model of program delivery comprised of distributed learning using hybrid or blended learning methodology.² In the fall of 2009, Red River College partnered with Apprenticeship Manitoba to design, develop and implement online training for

¹Apprenticeship Futures Commission, "Meeting Tomorrow's Needs", March 2008. See: http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/apprent/forms/pdf/apprent_future_comm_rept.pdf

² Red River College contracted Leading Solutions Consulting to conduct an environmental scan of trades education in Canada with a specific focus on discovering alternate models of program delivery for apprenticeship trades. The consultancy project transpired in response to the Manitoba Futures Commission's call for an apprenticeship system that is flexible and responsive to the current and emerging needs of the Manitoba labour market. Leading Solutions Consulting made numerous recommendations to expand capacity for apprenticeship training in a white paper: *Consultancy Project on Distributed Apprenticeship and Trades Curricula*. One of the recommendations resulted in what is now known as EADDI. See: <http://www.leadingolutions.ca/>

selected apprenticeship trades. The intention was to provide an alternative to traditional block release training by increasing access to training for a wider demographic including the rural and northern population in Manitoba. Known as the E-Apprenticeship Alternative Delivery Development Initiative (EADDI), this model provides community-based training and reduces the amount of time apprentices need to leave their community to complete their level training at one of Manitoba's technical colleges. EADDI was intended to increase access to apprenticeship training and Aboriginal peoples are one of the populations served by the EADDI project on the basis of the location of their communities in northern and rural areas of the province.

Delivery objectives

The program delivery model for EADDI was generated based on a distributed cohort model in which apprentices work through online modules individually and meet in a virtual classroom twice a week to discuss their learning. As in traditional face-to-face delivery, the EADDI delivery model requires apprentices to engage in individual and group learning activities. Where appropriate, apprentices engage in small workplace projects to enhance their learning. E-apprentices meet face-to-face on two occasions: for an orientation at the beginning of their level training to learn the skills necessary to be online learners and at the end of their program for a Capstone³ to refine and demonstrate their practical skills. In some trades, apprentices also write qualifying examinations for their level of training during the Capstone period.

Entrance requirements for apprentices in the EADDI model of program delivery are similar to face-to-face programs based on Apprenticeship Manitoba's requirements for each trade. Applicants are required to complete an assessment called [SmarterMeasure](#) that quantifies and identifies a student's level of readiness to take an online or technology-rich course. SmarterMeasure is a good screening tool because it tests certain skills, and demonstrates what it is like to sit in front of a screen, concentrate and get organized for computer-based instruction. Some of the fundamental skills required for online learning success are self-motivation, time management and technical literacy. At [e-Apprentice](#), learners can try sample lessons, view a "Live" class and find responses to frequently asked questions.

³ A period of time (typically 1 week in duration) when apprentices demonstrate the hands-on, practical components of their level training in a face-to-face learning environment.

Benefits and key features of EADDI

There are numerous benefits and key features of the EADDI model of program delivery. EADDI eliminates the need for apprentices to go on Employment Insurance while completing level training and reduces employers' loss of staff. It enables communities to retain their people since apprentices frequently fill multiple roles in their community, such as coaches for local sports teams and volunteer firefighters in addition to being spouses and parents. The EADDI model also offers the potential for reduced cost delivery. Discussions are currently underway regarding modularizing the online content to serve as a resource for face-to-face instruction, for remediation and for supporting the provincial bridging program for foreign-trained trades professionals. EADDI is sponsored by Apprenticeship Manitoba and is a partnership between Red River College, University College of the North, and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

EADDI eliminates the need for apprentices to go on Employment Insurance while completing level training and reduces employers' loss of staff.

EADDI is supported through a \$2.1 million investment by Manitoba Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, and an in-kind contribution from Red River College for technology platforms, human resources, software and other intellectual property worth approximately \$800,000.⁴ Red River College developed technical training for electrical common core Levels 1 and 2, construction electrical Level 3, automotive service technician Levels 1 through 4, plumbing Levels 1 through 4, heavy duty equipment technician Level 1, and water and wastewater Levels 1 and 2. University College of the North developed industrial mechanic (millwright) Level 1, and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology developed carpentry Levels 1 and 2. Program delivery for each trade is implemented by apprenticeship departments in the respective colleges.

⁴ Government of Manitoba, "Apprenticeship Manitoba to Offer Online Training", News Release, April 28, 2011. See: <http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?item=11357>.

Fundamental conditions for EADDI

There are five fundamental conditions for EADDI to be successful:

1. The training delivery model needs to fit realistically within commitments of apprentices' employment, family and community.
2. The apprentice remains in the community working full-time with the exception of attending a face-to-face orientation session at the beginning of program delivery and attending the Capstone upon program completion.
3. The level training must be delivered to the same standards as the traditional block release on-campus model.
4. The level must be deliverable within a reasonable time span, preferably in non-peak seasons.
5. The model must be workable for the employer as an alternative to traditional 8 to 10-week block release training.

Development and delivery

During the initial stages of content development for EADDI, it was anticipated that an alternative level of electrical would span approximately six months from October to May with a two-week break over the winter holidays. It was expected that apprentices would spend approximately 22 weeks online in addition to 10 days on campus for a total of 300⁵ hours of instruction. A 10-hour weekly cycle was projected on a four-hour employer release during a workday *plus* six hours to be scheduled in two-hour blocks by the apprentice according to the needs of the curriculum.

Although EADDI was anticipated to provide distributed learning for apprentices in their own homes, in November 2012, Levels 1 and 2 of the electrical program rolled out to two cohorts of apprentices employed with Manitoba Hydro in Gillam, Manitoba.⁶ Both cohorts met at the Radisson Converter Station twice a week to participate in a virtual class environment using Blackboard Collaborate⁷ in addition to completing online independent study. There were

⁵ Number of hours varies based on trade requirements.

⁶ Gillam is situated 1,062 kilometers north of Winnipeg between Thompson and Churchill.

⁷ Blackboard Collaborate is an online collaboration platform providing web conferencing, mobile collaboration, instant messaging and voice authoring.

seven apprentices in each level. One apprentice in Level 2 participated from an offsite location in western Manitoba. In June 2013, both levels of apprentices successfully completed their level training. The Level 1 cohort completed the Capstone requirement onsite in Gillam, while the Level 2 cohort completed the Capstone at Red River College in Winnipeg.

Feedback from participants

Extensive qualitative data on participant experiences with EADDI has been collected through face-to-face interviews with apprentices. The results of the data will be used to review the current courses and will inform continuous improvement of subsequent component development and delivery. The data showed that apprentices bring varying degrees of previous experience with technology to online learning and it is undeniably a steep learning curve for some individuals. Some apprentices were frustrated by technological glitches, the duration of the level training and the loss of employment overtime hours during training delivery. The apprentices almost unanimously agreed, however, that the ability to remain in their community as opposed to leaving their families, community and employment for 8 to 10 weeks to take their level training at one of Manitoba's technical colleges is EADDI's greatest strength. The primary recommendation for subsequent EADDI program delivery was to reduce the length of the delivery model.

Future directions

EADDI continues to be guided by the fundamental conditions as outlined above. So far the data inform us that EADDI is helping apprentices in one remote northern Manitoba community complete their level training via a distributed learning model. This is significant since leaving family and community for 8 to 10 weeks is a hardship for many apprentices in rural and isolated geographical regions. Estrangement from family and community frequently results in anxiety over detachment, finances, lodging in the city as well as familial and community responsibilities. All of these concerns can impede an apprentice's successful completion of level training and career advancement. It is anticipated that certain features of EADDI will be revised to meet the various needs of apprentices and employers. A fuller and more detailed report on the research findings related to the first phase roll out of EADDI is forthcoming.

In addition to working on the EADDI project, **Rosemary Vogt** developed the curriculum for Standing Tree to Standing Home, a northern Manitoba community capacity-building initiative by Frontiers Foundation. She has taught in the K-12 system as well as higher education.

Giving Aboriginal Youth a Head Start at Winnipeg Technical College

Prepared by Winnipeg Technical College

In Manitoba, Southeast Collegiate (SEC) and Winnipeg Technical College (WTC) have partnered to offer Aboriginal high school students an opportunity to explore skilled trades careers. The Aboriginal Trades Training Internship Program allows Aboriginal students from SEC to participate in a wide scope of trades programs at the WTC, encouraging them to continue to postsecondary education.

Hands-on exposure to trades

Most people wait until after high school to pursue a career in skilled trades or technology fields. They typically pay for schooling, complete program requirements and graduate from a postsecondary institution to gain career-oriented knowledge and experience. Thanks to a partnership between Southeast Collegiate (SEC) and Winnipeg Technical College (WTC), however, Aboriginal high school students can start developing employability skills in the skilled trades before they have left high school.

The Aboriginal Trades Training Internship Program, launched in 2011, gives Grade 11 and Grade 12 SEC students from seven remote Aboriginal communities¹ in Manitoba the opportunity to explore and sample programs at WTC, encouraging them to continue to postsecondary education in the trades and technologies.

Over 34 weeks, 16 students, split into two cohorts, cycle through two separate clusters of hands-on, project-based instruction. Students in the industrial cluster learn skills and

¹ The seven communities include St. Theresa Point, South Indian Lake, O-pipon-na-piwin Cree Nation, Wasagamack, Little Grand Rapids, Garden Hill and Blood Vein.

complete projects in the areas of industrial welding, motorsport technician, electricity/electronics, carpentry and industrial mechanics. Meanwhile, students in the human services cluster complete projects in culinary arts and design, hotel and hospitality services, hairstyling, microcomputer systems, production art and pharmacy technician.

This program is the result of a partnership between people and organizations eager to enhance students' opportunities to explore career options in the trades and technologies. Designed by Chantal Simard, Manager, Continuous Learning and Corporate Programs at WTC and WTC staff, it receives support and expertise from Clayton Sandy from Manitoba Children and Youth Opportunities. Working together to support opportunities for Aboriginal youth, SEC fits the program into a busy timetable and WTC manages the program.

Praise for program

Some students, like John Colomb, even choose to come back for a second year of the program.

"[In] my first year at WTC, there was an electrical trade course offered. It was a lot of fun learning the course, and had lots of hands-on [activities]. We made a GoKart last year and it worked just fine. We drove it around SEC parking lot and showed our project to SEC students," Colomb said. "The second year is better than the first year because I found out there was carpentry being offered as one of the trades and this is exactly what I wanted to get into once I graduate in June 2013. In the future, I want to become a carpenter and build houses at South Indian Lake and a home for my family."

Program participants learn safety, theory and practical skills, and build confidence through exposure to the skilled trades. Stakeholders report that students are not only enjoying, but also benefiting from the program through the practical knowledge and skills they obtain.

"The Aboriginal Internship Program partnership with Winnipeg Technical College and Southeast Collegiate, now in its second year, has been nothing but positive. The student involvement and opportunities have been approached with encouragement and willingness to learn new and exciting trades and vocations," said Sheryl McCorrister, Principal/Director, SEC.

“Essentially this is exactly the outcome that this program was designed to fulfill: encourage students to continue with higher education as they are capable of realizing their dreams.”

WTC also sees the benefits of the program, noting the impacts of positive exposure to the skilled trades.

“In the first year, SEC selected the participants. Now, the students select us,” said Simard. “WTC is just thrilled with having the Southeast Collegiate students onsite once a week. Not only does the program expose students to the exciting, lucrative and rewarding careers in trades and technology, it also gives them first-hand experience in the world of postsecondary education.”

Students sample the food they have prepared in the culinary arts section, and at the end of the year, leave WTC with the story boards, tool boxes, hand stamps and metal dice they have created.

As a personal touch, WTC staff greet the students when they arrive, meet with both cohorts for coffee breaks, and accompany them to their vehicles at the end of the day.

Overcoming obstacles

Although the program has been successful, a few adjustments were needed. For instance, in the initial year of the project, the administration at SEC had taken an active role in selecting students to participate in the program. In the second year, SEC students who were potentially interested in participating were given an orientation and tour of WTC. Students then elected to participate and chose the cluster in which they wanted to be involved.

In the first year, students signed up for one program, which they attended one afternoon a week for the entire year. In the second year of the program, the approach was modified slightly so that students were exposed to a number of trades and technologies throughout the academic year. The diversity made the program that much more valuable to the students. If a student was not particularly interested in one of the options, he or she knew that in just a few weeks' time, there would be exposure to something new again.

Now the program is entirely project-based. Students sample the food they have prepared in the culinary arts section, and at the end of the year, leave WTC with the story boards, tool boxes, hand stamps and metal dice they have created.

Continuation of the program

The program, which is now considered a great success, saw the graduation of 15 of the original 16 students. Two of the students plan on returning to WTC as postsecondary students: one is looking to complete a diploma in electrical applications and the other is seeking training in carpentry. Another graduate intends to pursue culinary arts.

“When we started this program, we had three goals: to connect WTC with Manitoba’s Aboriginal community, to provide participants with an opportunity to explore exciting careers in trades and technologies, and to give students confidence in a postsecondary setting,” said Simard.

Initially, WTC received no funding for this project. WTC instructors accepted the responsibility of teaching the SEC students in addition to their regular class assignments.

“We were simply investing time and effort in this initiative because we believed it was something we wanted to do,” said Simard. WTC provided instructional support, equipment and supplies. SEC transported the students, purchased personal protective equipment, and hired an Educational Assistant to accompany the students.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, Manitoba Education stepped up to share the cost of the project with WTC. The funds allowed the project to enhance students’ experiences with additional staff and other resources. Although support from the province has not been officially confirmed yet, both WTC and SEC say they are confident Manitoba Education will help with the cost again for the 2013-2014 academic year.

SEC plans to track the students’ success by following up with the educational authorities in the Aboriginal communities who sponsor the students enrolled at SEC.

Sixteen students will once again be recruited from SEC for 2013-2014. Several schools have expressed interest in similar programs. In 2013-14, WTC will be delivering a similar program to students from two schools in the French school division. WTC plans to make it clear that the future is bright for those who chose careers in the trades and technologies in Manitoba.

Winnipeg Technical College (WTC) is a public institution committed to providing training to secondary and postsecondary learners with a strong focus on transitioning to employment. WTC's programs provide training in a wide variety of sectors including information technology, skilled trades, and health and human services.

Five Steps to Doubling the Number of Aboriginal Apprentices in BC

By Gary McDermott, Director Aboriginal Initiatives, British Columbia Industry Training Authority

The Industry Training Authority (ITA) in British Columbia set a goal to double the number of Aboriginal apprentices between 2007 and 2010 from 5 per cent of all registered apprentices to 10 per cent. This article shares the collaborative approach the ITA took to surpass this target, providing insight on the research, partnerships and outreach activities that helped lead this important initiative to success.

Introduction

Over the past five years, the number of Aboriginal people taking trades training at public postsecondary institutions in British Columbia has more than doubled. Despite composing less than 5 per cent of the BC population, Aboriginal people now make up over 10 per cent of all trades students. This is good news, since a large youth population and high densities in key economic growth areas around the province make the Aboriginal community an important target group for the skilled trades.

What did the Industry Training Authority (ITA)¹ do to support this growth, and are there lessons to share with other sectors and jurisdictions?

¹ ITA is the provincial Crown agency responsible for overseeing BC's industry training and apprenticeship system, providing a skilled workforce for industry and career development opportunities for British Columbians.

In 2007, the ITA set an ambitious goal to double the number of Aboriginal apprentices in the province by 2010, from 5 per cent of all registered apprentices to 10 per cent. It surpassed this goal by supporting the existing infrastructure and stakeholders, including First Nations, Aboriginal employment and training agencies, training providers, and industry itself. The ITA conducted and shared research, formulated and delivered key strategic initiatives, and launched innovative communications activities, while continually processing input and feedback from all stakeholders.

This article outlines the five main steps utilized to develop and maintain this working relationship with stakeholders. These steps have also played an important role in building the effective working relationships among stakeholders that are critical to the successful development of a sustainable apprenticeship system that supports Aboriginal apprentices, workers, and service delivery agencies.²

The five steps are:

1. Understand the environment and build awareness
2. Do your research
3. Establish an advisory body and develop a plan
4. Develop targeted programs
5. Communicate and market effectively

The image below presents these five steps for engaging stakeholders in supporting Aboriginal participation in apprenticeships. The steps are arranged in a circle to illustrate the ongoing activities within these steps, as the environment is dynamic and all five steps must be constantly refreshed.

² Part of the article was adapted from the 2012 ITA research report, *Barriers and Successful Approaches to Preparing and Employing Aboriginal Trades People*.

Figure 1: Five Steps to Engaging Stakeholders



Step 1: Understand the Environment and Build Awareness

As part of the first step, the ITA dedicated resources to the goal of doubling the number of BC's Aboriginal apprentices and hired a director to lead Aboriginal Initiatives.³ During the first six months of the initiative, the director focussed on developing relationships with the BC Aboriginal community in order to identify the key stakeholders, understand the training and employment needs, and gauge awareness of the apprenticeable trades.

The BC Aboriginal population includes more than 200 First Nations communities, a large Métis population and, in Vancouver, the third largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada. This engagement process was an invaluable opportunity to learn about the Aboriginal community's knowledge of the ITA and their awareness of apprenticeship itself. The process resulted in the identification of a group of champions who were interested, passionate and knowledgeable people who felt strongly about the importance of Aboriginal participation in the apprenticeable trades.

³ See www.itabc.ca/aboriginal-people-trades/overview for the ITA Aboriginal Initiatives webpage.

Step 2: Do Your Research

Following the outreach activities, a comprehensive research report was mandated in 2008 to learn more about Aboriginal people's involvement in the skilled trades and about the issues affecting their participation in the BC apprenticeship system.⁴ The *Aboriginal People in the Trades* report by Izen Consulting provided necessary insight into several key topics. It supported a more thorough understanding of available resources and best practices, investigated how Aboriginal apprentices and employers viewed various issues, and assessed how apprenticeship itself fit within the Aboriginal community. More specifically, the research explored:

- Aboriginal communities' current knowledge of apprenticeship;
- Comprehensive demographics of Aboriginal communities in BC;
- An inventory of successful training programs that support Aboriginal people;
- A list of resources available to Aboriginal people;
- An examination of current apprentices; and
- A survey of employers.

There were five major findings as a result of our 2008 research. The ITA was committed to taking these findings into consideration in order to support Aboriginal people in the skilled trades and to achieve its goal of increasing Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship programs. These findings are discussed below.

Youth population

The Aboriginal population in BC and Canada is growing much faster than the general population due in large part to the high number of youth who, in turn, are having their own children at younger ages than non-Aboriginal Canadians. As a result, the proportion of Aboriginal people currently in and soon to be a part of the labour market is sizeable and growing.

⁴ Izen Consulting. *Aboriginal People in the Trades*. Industry Training Authority, 2008.

Information and awareness gaps

Given that there are over 100 active apprenticeable trades in BC with more than 200 supporting organizations, the full scope of information about the trades, industries, employers and training options can be overwhelming to the Aboriginal community and to other organizations. These factors result in a limited awareness of apprenticeships and careers in the skilled trades among Aboriginal people, and among First Nations and Aboriginal service agencies. The Aboriginal community lacks information on skilled trades, apprenticeship opportunities, career paths and entrance requirements.

The Aboriginal community lacks information on skilled trades, apprenticeship opportunities, career paths and entrance requirements.

Academic requirements

The skilled trades, and even the general labour market, have academic pre-requisites for participation. For a variety of reasons, these expectations can create barriers to entry, especially for Aboriginal people.

Another key element was the need to develop in the Aboriginal population the essential skills⁵ required to succeed in the skilled trades, during both the in-class or technical training and the on-the-job training components of an apprenticeship. Essential skills play an important role in the examination processes, in safety issues and in the long-term understanding of the skilled trades. Research suggests that apprentices who lack essential skills are more likely to fail exams, repeat training, or drop out of an apprenticeship program altogether.⁶

⁵ There are nine essential skills as defined by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. They include reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communications, working with others, thinking skills, computer use and continuous learning. The degree to which each of these skills is required, as well as the way they are applied, varies according to the workplace environment.

⁶ Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, *The Link between Essential Skills and Success in Apprenticeship Training*, June 2007.

Employment opportunities

Employment opportunities are essential not only for the training of apprentices, but also for their long-term career outlook. The skilled trades generally pay well⁷, and a wide range of industries and occupations offer strong projections for employment opportunities in both the near and distant future. Consequently, industry is looking to the Aboriginal community to play a key role in helping to fill current and projected shortages of skilled labour. Yet the dilemma remains: many Aboriginal people, for a wide range of reasons, are unable to enter the skilled trades or to continue working in the skilled trades.

Some factors that impede the participation of Aboriginal people in the skilled trades include low awareness of opportunities, unfamiliarity with the apprenticeship process, limited knowledge of industry culture, lack of previous work-related experience, absence of required and preferred certificates and education, lack of connections to employers and industry, and workplace racism.

Many First Nations communities and Aboriginal agencies are unsure of how to enter into effective partnerships with industry, or do not fully understand the apprenticeship system. At the other end of the spectrum, many industries are uncertain about how to contact First Nations and Aboriginal agencies, are unaware of the benefits and services they offer, or are unclear on how to develop positive working relationships with them.

Success factors and best practices

The 2008 research report revealed that many skilled trades and apprenticeship-related programs and services are being delivered by a wide regional network of service providers. The services and programs are made readily available to Aboriginal people and many of them have been in place for some time. A number of these initiatives are achieving resounding success.

⁷ While wage averages vary according to the trade area, statistics on apprenticeship completers in BC indicate that on average they earn \$29/hour, which compares very well with individuals who do not pursue any postsecondary education or training and often work for minimum wage. For more on the outcomes of apprentices, please see the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum's February 2011 report *Assessing Apprenticeship Outcomes: Building a Case for Pursuing and Completing an Apprenticeship*, which is available on the following webpage: http://caf-fca.org/index.php?page=labour-market-entry-and-outcomes-for-apprentices&hl=en_CA.

To foster the growth and development of these services to meet the needs of all potential clients, it would be beneficial to exchange and share success factors, and to extend the development of partnerships. Certainly an important component of this effort will be the promotion of success stories. Some of the most common elements of successful Aboriginal programs include:

- Team building
- Partnerships
- Direction from and involvement of the Aboriginal community
- Local delivery
- Well-researched plans
- The right model for the community
- Evaluation and modification

In 2012, the ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives pinpointed two priority topic areas for additional research in order to fully and successfully involve Aboriginal people in the skilled trades. The two areas identified for further research were:

1. Prepare Aboriginal apprentices: preparing Aboriginal apprentices includes, but is not limited to, essential skills assessment and upgrading, class-based technical training and foundation training.
2. Employ Aboriginal tradespeople: employing Aboriginal apprentices refers to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people in trades positions.

As a result, an additional research report was commissioned by the ITA in 2012 to explore the barriers that exist in both of these priority areas, and to examine the approaches that innovative organizations used to overcome them. The goal of this report was to offer approaches developed by various training providers and employers as examples from which other organizations could learn.

Successful approaches to preparing Aboriginal apprentices

The most commonly identified approaches for preparing Aboriginal apprentices were characterised by the following four categories:

1. **Holistic training and client support:** this approach involved going beyond the conventional limits of training programs to address barriers rooted in the community, the family and the personal lives of apprentices and pre-apprentices.
2. **Working with communities:** this approach involved developing a formal relationship with Aboriginal communities that supports the involvement of Aboriginal people in the trades.
3. **Working in communities:** this approach involved hosting training programs and related activities in Aboriginal communities through the use of mobile training facilities and/or by using community facilities.
4. **Partnerships:** this approach involved developing a strong chain of relationships with organizations at all stages of the training and development process including relationships between employment service providers, educational institutions, Aboriginal communities, governments and employers.

Successful approaches to employing Aboriginal apprentices

The follow-up report also described each successful approach to employing Aboriginal apprentices and articulated the defining practices that characterized each one. The most commonly identified successful approaches fell into the following four categories:

1. **Partnerships:** this approach included developing formalized relationships with Aboriginal communities and/or employment service providers to facilitate recruitment, training and retention of Aboriginal tradespeople.
2. **Promotion:** this approach included promoting skilled trades' employers, career paths and job opportunities directly to Aboriginal communities and organizations.
3. **Aboriginal awareness training:** this approach included integrating training to increase awareness of Aboriginal culture and history in the workplace, and making a concerted effort to break down stereotypes to create a more positive and understanding work environment.

4. On-the-job training: this approach included taking a formal or structured approach to on-the-job training that emphasizes not only technical training, but also integration into work culture.

The ultimate goal of the business plan was to increase the number of Aboriginal people participating in the apprenticeship system.

Overcoming barriers to prepare Aboriginal apprentices and pre-apprentices will likely be reliant on funding and program design decisions, while overcoming barriers to employ Aboriginal tradespersons may be largely reliant on the awareness and willing support of employers. Therefore, it is hoped that the 2012 report will encourage funders and decision-makers to support unconventional approaches to prepare Aboriginal people for apprenticeships, and inspire employers to build simple yet important cross-cultural bridging mechanisms in the workplace.

Step 3: Establish an Advisory Body and Develop a Plan

Following an engagement phase in 2007 and the completion of the first research project in 2008, the third step was to set up an advisory body to make recommendations on developing a business plan that would address the five major findings identified in the *Aboriginal People in the Trades* report. The ultimate goal of the business plan was to increase the number of Aboriginal people participating in the apprenticeship system.

In 2008, a call went out to people in the Aboriginal community, industry, training providers and government, seeking individuals to participate in an advisory capacity with the ITA to draft an Aboriginal business plan. From a pool of interested candidates, 16 people from across the province were selected based on their passion for and knowledge of this initiative. The Aboriginal Advisory Council (AAC)⁸ was deliberately comprised to be respectful of Aboriginal diversity and interests, and to represent the wide geographic distribution of communities as effectively as possible. The AAC provided leadership and strategic guidance, and helped

⁸ For details on the Aboriginal Advisory Council, see: www.itabc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/discover/Aboriginal%20Initiatives%20AAC%20Backgrounder.pdf

articulate a vision for a strategic pathway for Aboriginal industry training across BC. Building on discoveries made during the initial engagement and relationship-building activities with stakeholders, the ITA was able to bring together a group of passionate, knowledgeable and committed individuals dedicated to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Over the ensuing six month period of meetings, interviews and literature reviews, the AAC developed an *Aboriginal Trades and Apprenticeship Business Plan*. The business plan considered the research available to date, and the mandate and services of the ITA. It also reflected the requirements of the Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Agreement (LMA), a key funding source. The plan took into account the array of communities, service agencies, training providers and industries that give support to Aboriginal people entering and succeeding in careers in the skilled trades.

Based on the overall goal to increase Aboriginal participation in trades training, the business plan included 2 goals, 5 objectives, 12 strategies and 28 actions to be implemented by the ITA and other stakeholders. The strategies and actions focussed on communication and research activities, and promoted capacity-building both within the Aboriginal community and among other stakeholders to overcome barriers to increasing Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship training. The plan outlined a set of principles to guide the ITA and other stakeholders when considering and implementing the strategies and actions.

The plan also included a short-term vision wherein the ITA provides leadership to best focus the resources for enabling the Aboriginal community and other stakeholders to meet the goals set out in the business plan. In addition, the ITA currently has the capacity to form partnerships to coincide with and expand on the large investments made by the Government of Canada in related projects. The ITA has used LMA dollars to partner with other stakeholders and leverage investments made by the Government of Canada towards training projects. The ITA's Director of Aboriginal Initiatives has used his stakeholder contacts and leveraged the relationships developed over time to bring various partners together around training projects to create programs and make funding commitments for new projects.

Step 4: Targeted Programs

In order to build capacity within the Aboriginal community and among the other stakeholders to support Aboriginal people in the skilled trades and apprenticeship, the ITA accessed funds (beginning in fiscal year 2008/09) from the Canada – British Columbia LMA to pay for targeted training projects.

The LMA provides BC with federal funding of approximately \$66 million per year over the six-year term of the agreement, which started April 1, 2008. These funds are administered by various BC government ministries and agencies, including the ITA, to provide an assortment of labour market programs, including skills and employment-readiness training. Participants in LMA-funded programs are either unemployed non-Employment Insurance recipient clients or employed individuals who are low skilled.⁹ Programs are typically offered by service providers across a range of BC communities, and may focus on specific population groups, such as First Nations, persons with disabilities, or communities in transition, among others.

From 2009/10 to 2013/14, the ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives distributed a total of \$13.9 million in LMA funds to 45 projects that provided support to 1,840 Aboriginal people in the trades. These projects were delivered in partnership with established Aboriginal organizations, training providers and industry partners, all of whom have a mandate and the expertise to support Aboriginal people to enter and succeed in the skilled trades.

The funds were directed towards specific types of initiatives as identified in the research and strategic plans, and which were not generally provided for by other funders. These projects provided a variety of services such as foundation skills, essential skills, technical training, local delivery and work experience in the skilled trades. The ITA did not run these programs directly, but took on the role of encouraging and fostering the management and delivery of these projects by local Aboriginal employment service and training agencies, by individual industry and labour organizations, and by public training providers offering specialized services to Aboriginal people.

⁹ Individuals who are low skilled may lack a high school diploma, certification, or essential skills.

Step 5: Communications and Marketing Activities

After the business plan was completed, the ITA developed and implemented a comprehensive communications and marketing campaign to target the Aboriginal community, employers and industry in BC. A variety of marketing materials were identified for creation over the course of several years to progressively build awareness and involvement. These included brochures, posters and trades' rack cards, as well as articles and advertisements in Aboriginal publications.

The materials were distributed throughout the Aboriginal community via mail-outs, career fairs and community meetings. A particularly effective approach was the inclusion of Aboriginal tradespersons on the posters and in the brochures and materials because these were people Aboriginal community members knew personally, were people with whom they could identify and were people viewed as role models within the larger community.

The ITA has worked with Aboriginal employment and training organizations, First Nations communities, First Nations schools and Aboriginal postsecondary institutions to distribute these marketing materials in order to encourage Aboriginal people to consider apprenticeship as a viable and positive career pathway.

Conclusion: Keeping the momentum

As a result of the positive steps taken by the ITA and its ongoing commitment to this initiative, great strides have been made in engaging Aboriginal people and encouraging them to take a larger role in BC's apprenticeship system. From 2006/07 to 2008/09, the number of Aboriginal people taking apprenticeship training at BC's public postsecondary institutions more than doubled, from 609 to 1,405. Over the same period, the proportion of Aboriginal people taking apprenticeship training at these institutions increased from 5.4 per cent to 9.1 per cent. In the aftermath of the worldwide recession, apprenticeship training suffered a decline in almost every area. However, in 2011/12, there were 1,245 Aboriginal people taking trades training at public postsecondary institutions, which was still more than double the 2006/07 numbers. Even more impressively, Aboriginal trainees made up 9.8 per cent of all students taking trades training, a figure that is already more than twice the proportion of Aboriginal people in the province as a whole (4 per cent). This proportion is significant, and more importantly, it is still growing.

Not all of the progress is easily measurable. This initiative has resulted in increased awareness of the Aboriginal community by the ITA, improved relationships between the partners involved, and enhanced knowledge of the skilled trades and apprenticeship system within Aboriginal organizations around the province. All are positive outcomes of the ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives. Building on the successful work already underway, the goal is to maintain the momentum that has developed as a result of the ITA's long-term commitment to Aboriginal people in BC. Through a concerted effort to conduct further research, revisit and refresh the Aboriginal business plan, and continue seeking funding partnerships in support of Aboriginal training and employment projects, the ITA-stakeholder partnership intends to reach and surpass this goal as well.

Gary McDermott is Director of Aboriginal Initiatives at the Industry Training Authority in BC. He develops strategies and programs to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in industry training, coordinating activities with training providers, industry, Aboriginal organizations, and provincial and federal governments.

The Aboriginal Skills Advancement Pilot Program in Ontario's Ring of Fire

Prepared by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities with files provided by the Government of Ontario

The Aboriginal Skills Advancement Pilot Program (ASAPP) is an innovative, culturally sensitive approach to the development and delivery of skills and employment training. The program is targeted at nine Aboriginal communities of the Matawa First Nations in Ontario's far north region known as the Ring of Fire. The program seeks to grow the skilled trades workforce by building on important partnerships and engaging Aboriginal learners in trades training that is responsive to their needs.

Background

Officially launched in November 2012 in Thunder Bay, Ontario, the aim of the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Pilot Program (ASAPP) is to develop a highly skilled workforce through a skills laddering approach, to structure attainable learning achievements based on assessments and individualized learning/career plans, and to improve access to employment opportunities for 100 Matawa First Nations members. To achieve these positive labour market outcomes, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) works with Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS), which is the Aboriginal Skills Employment and Training Agreement Strategy (ASETAS) holder for the Matawa First Nations Management, Inc., to deliver a comprehensive program that addresses individual needs and the capacities of learners in a culturally appropriate way.

Covering a vast stretch of the James Bay lowlands in Ontario's far north, the Ring of Fire has been identified as having the potential to be one of the most significant mineral deposit finds in

To take full advantage of the labour market opportunities related to natural resource development, First Nations communities in northern Ontario require job readiness and employment service supports.

Ontario in over a century. Located 500 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay, the area contains one of the largest chromite deposits in the world, which is an alloy needed in the production of stainless steel. The area also has the potential for mining nickel, copper, platinum and palladium. Some 300 kilometres from the nearest rail line or highway, the Ring of Fire area currently has limited infrastructure yet offers the prospect of employment in a wide

variety of skilled jobs not only within mining, but also in indirect jobs in feeder industries such as construction, engineering, information technology services and food services. Currently, the mining industry accounts for the creation of over 27,500 direct and 50,000 indirect jobs in Ontario, over 65 per cent of which are in the north.¹

The Ring of Fire is situated near a number of First Nations communities, particularly those that are members of the Matawa Tribal Council, which includes Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong, Ginoomaging, Long Lake #58, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik and Webequie. Economic development resulting from the extraction of primary resources in the Ring of Fire has the potential to provide positive returns for these communities and all Ontarians. To take full advantage of the labour market opportunities related to natural resource development, First Nations communities in northern Ontario require job readiness and employment service supports such as assistance in covering the costs of living, training, counselling and home supports in order to increase community and individual success.

Cultural approach

The learning methods favoured by local community members are based on traditional Aboriginal approaches to learning and teaching, which emphasize the importance of learning through

¹ For more information see: <http://news.ontario.ca/mndmf/en/2012/05/mining-in-ontario---facts-and-figures.html>

hands-on modules with guided supervision. This learning model lends itself well to apprenticeship. By recognizing the similarities in style, the ASAPP is able to draw on this model and deliver a holistic approach to skills and employment training that is culturally responsive, and which also focuses on the importance of work experience and developing life skills.

The program employs a skills laddering approach, which recognizes that learners enter the program at different skill levels. Individual participant assessments inform the development of a Client Action Plan, which allows participants to begin training at an appropriate level to support the development of foundational skills. Upon completion of the ASAPP, participants have an individualized Client Action Plan for career and employment goals, and a range of transferable skills including certified literacy/numeracy skills, health and safety certifications, life skills such as time management, employment skills such as interview skills, and a phased-in exposure to skilled trades training.

The program employs a skills laddering approach, which recognizes that learners enter the program at different skill levels.

A number of cultural supports are in place to strengthen learning, increase retention and ultimately, foster the success of participants. Classroom training includes culturally appropriate resources and tools that recognize the significance of indigenous knowledge, tradition and cultural practices, which help enhance learning. Learners are also able to converse in their own language or dialect during breaks or in the classroom to clarify learning if English is a second language.

Every effort is made to observe cultural practices. Key meetings and gatherings, such as the June 2013 graduation, are opened with prayer by Elders, and traditional drums and singers. Staff are respectful and cognizant of the need for scheduled visits back to northern communities for family occasions and traditional events such as hunting and fishing. These modifications encourage retention and incentivize learners because in order to be released for these events, participants must attend class regularly and meet program requirements. Participants' travel costs are included in the program because it was recognized during the design phase that retention would be positively impacted by maintaining strong community and cultural ties.

Another important cultural support available to participants is sessions between adult learners and the Elder. The Elder is regularly present onsite for counselling and cultural practices, and facilitates workshops on Seven Grandfather Teachings, Four Sacred Helpers and the Medicine Wheel. The allocation of additional office space ensures that the program can offer cultural supports such as smudging and weekly Elder sessions, which help build participants' cultural, spiritual and emotional well-being. While there is a monetary cost of \$75,000 for the provision of these cultural supports, it has paid off in terms of the ASAPP's retention rate and the success of participants, as discussed below.

The ASAPP model is unique because it provides a culturally appropriate approach to learning while facilitating the development of skills advancement pathways. Building foundational skills through a ladder approach that meets the unique needs of each participant supports individuals in attaining the educational requirements that are necessary for participation in apprenticeship training. Participants start with literacy and basic skills training, if required, and progress through to basic certification, which prepares them for advancement to their goals, including apprenticeship, other postsecondary education or employment. The ASAPP promotes cultural competence, cultural congruence in the classroom², and Aboriginal control of program development and implementation.

Partnership

As previously noted, the ASAPP is the result of a partnership between the MTCU and KKETS, the local ASETAS holder. The program builds on KKETS' expertise in delivering skills training that is culturally appropriate and relevant to the needs of Matawa First Nations members. KKETS recognizes the value of the one-on-one approach to developing learning plans that meet both the academic and long-term career aspirations of learners. It also plays a critical role in bringing together the community support of Elders and providing adult learners with the services that allow them to succeed. With the support of MTCU funding, the ASAPP team delivers a holistic program targeted at the specific needs of Aboriginal learners throughout the learning process. Program implementation and training is delivered by KKETS who has partnered with

² Cultural congruence is an educational term referring to an educator making the classroom setting culturally similar to the community from which students come.

Lakehead Adult Learning Centre to provide the high school completion and Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate (General Educational Development (GED)) components of the program.

The core ASAPP team responsible for the delivery and administration of the program goes above and beyond expectations in order to support adult learners. The team supports learners with finding housing and adjusting from remote to urban living, and by providing grief counsellors and holding Sharing Circles in times of need.

Termed the “Wrap-Around Team”, these staff members are at the centre of the success of the program, which as of July 2013 boasts an 85 per cent retention rate. The ASAPP team is exceptional at maintaining high levels of learner engagement, providing career counselling and supporting participants in moving towards their goals following the program.

... around a quarter of the students are consistently choosing to work towards further training in the skilled trades such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

Learners' next steps

On June 28, 2013, the ASAPP celebrated its first graduation of 29 participants. This marked the completion of this innovative and culturally sensitive program for the first and second cohorts of students. Many guests were on hand at the ceremony including five of the nine Matawa chiefs. Chief Sonny Gagnon of Aroland First Nations spoke to attendees. The ceremony was a chance to highlight the success of the students and wish them well on the next stage of their learning and employment paths. The Honourable Michael Gravelle, MPP for Thunder Bay Superior North and Minister of Northern Development and Mines, was present to offer his congratulations on behalf of the provincial government.

Preliminary data shows a high variation in terms of participants' intended education and career pathways. However, around a quarter of the students are consistently choosing to work towards further training in the skilled trades such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning. Early reports on the final two intakes of learners, who began the program July 8, 2013, indicate that this percentage is highly likely to increase.

Other participants are working towards goals related to further postsecondary education, with just under a quarter of participants applying to college or university. Many participants will continue their training in programs that are being made available through the Ring of Fire Aboriginal Training Alliance, which is funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Skills and Partnership Fund, and will move from there into employment. Through this initiative, participants will be able to receive apprenticeship training for a variety of skilled trades including carpentry, electrical, plumbing, welding and heavy duty mechanics.

To date, participants have engaged with employers from the mining sector and various union groups including Noront Resources, Vector Construction, the Carpenters Union Local 1669, and the Construction and Allied Workers Local Union 607. The ASAPP Committee includes members from these groups, which has already resulted in offers of apprenticeship sponsorship for three students.

Program evaluation

In order to assess the results of the pilot program and determine its key elements of success, an evaluation is being conducted. Initial reports indicate the importance of cultural supports to participants and the involvement of Matawa First Nations Elders at ASAPP Committee meetings. In fact, early and ongoing involvement by the communities is a significant factor in this program's success.

The graduation of the last two of five cohorts later this year will complete the pilot, meeting the objective of delivering services to 100 Matawa First Nations members. On-going reporting on the progress and achievements of participants will be a key component of evaluating the success of the program moving forward. Following the program's completion next year, the final program report and evaluation report will be instrumental in identifying best practices, and improving programming for the training and employment of Aboriginal learners. This will offer an opportunity to reflect on the positive impacts of the project, which will help inform the development of future education and training strategies in the north.

The success of this initiative has been due in large part to a strong partnership between MTCU and KKETS (and its partners such as Lakehead Adult Education Centre). However, and most importantly, the encouraging outcomes are the result of the involvement and commitment of each First Nations community participating in this program, the support of their Chiefs and Councils, the presence of their Elders, the determination of the learners, and the hopes of their families.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU) directs and shapes Ontario's postsecondary education, employment and training systems. It establishes provincial objectives related to skills development and training, and designs frameworks for achieving these objectives.

Advancing Apprenticeship Opportunities for Listuguj Mi'gmaq: Identifying Barriers and Sharing Success Stories of Two Apprentices

Prepared by Listuguj Mi'gmaq Development Centre

The Listuguj Mi'gmaq Development Centre (LMDC) provides and/or funds training and employability programs for Listuguj Mi'gmaq with the intent to assist them in realizing their career goals. This article shares some of the approaches the LMDC took to address barriers faced by Mi'gmaq youth in apprenticeship training, and shares the success stories of two individuals who benefited from the LMDC's Apprenticeship Assistance Program.

Listuguj Mi'gmaq Development Centre and Listuguj community

For the past 15 years, the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Development Centre (LMDC) has provided and/or funded training and employability programs for Listuguj Mi'gmaq with the intent to assist them in realizing their career goals. It is a result of these many years of experience that the LMDC has been able to develop various programs that address the barriers Mi'gmaq youth face in apprenticeship training.

The LMDC is one of 22 local First Nations Commissions that is part of the First Nations Human Resource Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ). The 22 local organizations service more than 29 communities in the province.

Listuguj is located in the territory of Gespe'gewa'gi. It is one of the largest Mi'gmaq communities on the East Coast and is one of three Mi'gmaq communities in the province of Quebec (Gesgapegiag and Gespeg are the other two). Listuguj is located on the border of

Quebec and New Brunswick, situated directly across the Restigouche River from Campbellton, New Brunswick.

Showcasing construction careers

In 2009, the LMDC embarked on an innovative approach to develop employability skills and work opportunities by hosting a Construction Trades Exposition.

The LMDC Training Centre was a hub of activity over the course of the two-day event held in May 2009. A total of 258 registered delegates came through the Centre's doors, 66 of whom were high school students.

Students, youth, parents and community members had an opportunity to visit information booths and meet stakeholders in the construction industry who represented training institutes, sector councils, unions and major employers. Delegates took advantage of the opportunity to participate in the hands-on demonstrations set up throughout the facility to get a feel for what it would be like to work in some of the construction trades. The exhibitors appreciated the opportunity to exchange information with the delegates and were kept busy by all who visited their booths or attended their respective presentations.

"The highlight was to be able to connect with parents and youth, and to promote work in the skilled trades. We found that they were very interested and engaged," said one exhibitor.

"I was located across from the 'brick exhibit' and it was cool to see all the youth participate in that trade," said another exhibitor.

The LMDC believes that the information provided to the delegates, and especially the community's youth, gave valuable insight into the construction industry. This event gave community members a greater understanding of the industry and the available resources to access more information.

Labour Market Information initiative

The following year, the LMDC became the pilot site for the Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund's Labour Market Information (LMI) project. This two year initiative enabled the LMDC to research and implement LMI programming, and to conduct a LMI analysis of the community. Highlights from the report indicated the following:

- There is a need for a long-term, stable commitment and investment in LMI;
- The fate of Listuguj's economy and the standard of living of Listuguj members depends on the efficient functioning of the labour market;
- Listuguj's prosperity can be enhanced by allocating labour to the areas of greatest need and providing opportunities to all Listuguj members wanting to work; and
- Economies can only perform well if they keep up with changes and adapt, and this requires accurate and timely information.

In reviewing the updated LMDC labour force database, staff learned that over 50 Listuguj Mi'gmaq have attained vocational diplomas in apprenticeable trades.

Of the many beneficial outcomes of this project, the picture of Listuguj's overall local labour force was established. In reviewing the updated LMDC labour force database, staff learned that over 50 Listuguj Mi'gmaq have attained vocational diplomas in apprenticeable trades. Of these members, only a handful pursued their apprenticeship levels.

Interviews with members revealed that they faced the following barriers that hindered them from successfully entering the labour force:

- Lack of job-finding skills;
- Inability to speak or understand French;
- Lack of the pre-requisites;
- Unfamiliarity with entrance processes;
- Challenges in finding an employer with a qualified journeyman on staff to provide mentorship;
- Border-community realities;
- Limited time frame for employment opportunities due to seasonality of the industry;

- Racism;
- Employers' preference for experienced tradespeople; and
- Lack of start-up monies for apprentices to relocate for employment.

As frontline employment and training staff, the LMDC can substantiate the challenges and realities clients face in completing apprenticeship training. However, the issues for some clients begin even before they consider the apprenticeship route.

Listuguj Mi'gmaq youth are bussed outside the community to another province to attain their high school education. To graduate from high school in New Brunswick, a student must complete Grade 12, which is a pre-requisite for becoming an apprentice in most trades. For those students who do not graduate from the regular high school system, there are various options for them to pursue. They can complete their high school through the adult education program at New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) or write the General Educational Development (GED) tests to obtain a high school equivalency. They can also transfer credits to the Quebec education system to attend adult education or enter a vocational training program. Notably in Quebec, a pre-requisite for certain trades is secondary IV, which is equivalent to New Brunswick's Grade 10. There are always opportunities available to the students; the challenge is ensuring they receive guidance to help determine which route will best meet their needs.

The majority of Listuguj Mi'gmaq students who graduate from the English high school tend to further their schooling by relocating to urban centres such as Miramichi, Moncton or Fredericton in New Brunswick. The main reasons for these decisions include the proximity to their community, and the availability of services and job opportunities in English.

In most cases, it is the first time these college-bound youth have left their community and they are unaware of the supports available to them. In recognition of this, the NBCC has incorporated Aboriginal Student Advisors in their campuses throughout the province. Aboriginal Student Resources Centres are in place to assist and support First Nation students in adjusting to their new environments. The advisors provide mentorship as the students acclimatize to the urban centre and a new learning environment, gain knowledge about new programs and services, and adjust to cultural differences. The LMDC's support counsellor works with the

college advisors to ensure clients receive the necessary assistance to be successful in their training programs.

Students who want to attend trades schools in Quebec face problems regarding the availability of programs in English. Most trades programs in Quebec that are available in English are delivered in the Montreal region, which is nearly 800 kilometres away. While there are a few trades programs offered locally or within the region, the courses are not always in line with youths' career interests.

In Quebec, once a student graduates from a vocational trades program and is ready to gain work experience in the construction industry, he or she is required to find an employer (who is a member of the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ)) who is willing to guarantee the apprentice 150 hours of relevant work experience. They must then choose a union with which to register, provide proof of their graduation certificate, and hold a Construction Safety Card from Quebec (ASP card). After these steps, they can register with the CCQ, pay the \$100 registration fee and receive a Competency Certificate Card to work in the Quebec construction industry.

To address the issue of French language barriers, the LMDC has been working with the local school board and the regional Centre local d'emploi to offer a French as a Second Language course in the community. The objective is to provide instruction to tradespeople on how to converse at a general level, and to build their vocabulary and familiarity with the terminology for their specific trade.

To address the issue of French language barriers, the LMDC has been working with the local school board and the regional Centre local d'emploi to offer a French as a Second Language course in the community.

Graduates from trades training programs are faced with competition when seeking employment as there are generally 15 to 20 in each graduating class. The LMDC has since addressed this issue by providing support and guidance in the areas of networking, job hunting and getting job-ready. This service is incorporated into the client's action plan, well before it is time to graduate.

Although most graduates initially want to return to their community to work, there are typically limited job opportunities in their area of study. Listuguj and the surrounding communities have high unemployment rates. In the Gaspésie region in Quebec, the current unemployment rate is 16 per cent.¹ Across the river in New Brunswick's Restigouche County, the unemployment rate is comparable at 15.7 per cent.² Additionally, the small population results in limited on-the-job apprenticeship training opportunities by certified journeypersons. The need to focus on employment opportunities elsewhere is what helped initiate the new program.

Apprenticeship Assistance Program

The Apprenticeship Assistance Program (AAP) was developed in 2010. The goal of the AAP is to increase Listuguj Mi'gmaq access, participation and success in apprenticeship trades by delivering job readiness counselling, assisting in finding quality work experience placements, and providing follow-up support for the client and sponsor to ensure the success of the placement. The program provides wage subsidies to allow apprentices to accumulate the hours needed to further pursue apprenticeship training in New Brunswick or attain CCQ membership status in Quebec.

Eligible candidates for the AAP have to complete a recognized accredited vocational training program and successfully complete the Block 1 exam (outside of Quebec) or if graduating in Quebec, find a CCQ recognized employer who is willing to provide the 150 hours needed to become a CCQ member.

When the program was introduced, the first employers solicited were the students' stage placement sponsors. These placements were fairly easy to acquire as the employers already knew the candidates and were willing to participate. In other cases, extensive outreach to employers was needed to introduce and explain the program. The desired outcome was to spark interest and secure an interview, which would result in a placement for the client.

¹ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, "EI Economic Region of Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (2000)", September 8, 2013 to October 12, 2013. <http://srv129.services.gc.ca/rbin/eng/gaspe.aspx?rates=1>

² Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, "EI Economic Region of Restigouche--Albert (2000)", September 8, 2013 to October 12, 2013. <http://srv129.services.gc.ca/rbin/eng/restalb.aspx?rates=1>

Success stories

Of the 11 Listuguj Mi'gmaq sponsored by the AAP, 9 are still working either as certified journeypersons with Red Seal endorsements or as apprentices. One person is waiting for work to begin in a couple of weeks, and the other has made a career change and is pursuing other interests.

Each year, there are between three and five Listuguj Mi'gmaq who pursue their training and education in apprenticeship. The LMDC has been able to provide funding to sponsor at least four apprentices per year.

The projected costs of the initiative are usually contributions of minimum wage for a 40 hour work week for 26 weeks. Every effort is made to ensure that the AAP funding exists so that more apprentices can accumulate the hours needed to eventually attain journeyperson certification with the Red Seal endorsement.

The following success stories showcase a Listuguj Mi'gmaq who attained her journeyperson certification with the Red Seal endorsement as a cook and another Listuguj Mi'gmaq who is apprenticing to be an automotive service technician.

Krysten Barnaby – Red Seal Cook

In May 2012, Listuguj community member Krysten Barnaby wrote and passed her interprovincial Red Seal exam as a cook in Moncton, New Brunswick.

This has been a long journey for Krysten, who graduated from a NBCC cook program in 2004 and completed her diploma in business administration in 2007. Krysten chose to complete a formal apprenticeship (which consists of 5,000 hours of work experience over three years, in combination with two six-week blocks of technical training) before writing the interprovincial Red Seal exam.

Krysten said that the most difficult part of this process was working the double shifts and over-time to acquire the hours needed to complete each yearly block. The 26-week AAP helped her achieve a good portion of the required hours.

Krysten is currently employed as a line cook with Casino New Brunswick in Moncton.

Interview with Krysten

When did you know you wanted to go to school to become a chef?

I was young when I first developed an interest in cooking/baking. When I was in Grade 7, I had made a goal to someday open a restaurant. The interest began at home watching my parents prepare meals and baked goods. They were supportive in allowing me make whatever I wanted so long as I “cleaned my mess when I was finished.”

How long did it take you to complete your studies?

In total, the process had taken three years: one full year of school, followed by two straight years of working in the industry and two six-week block programs.

How did you go about getting your interprovincial Red Seal endorsement on your certificate of qualification?

First and foremost, I needed to find a location that would hire and train an apprentice. I came across Casino NB and they were happy to take me on. Afterwards, I registered as an apprentice in a Red Seal trade with Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification in New Brunswick by contacting the closest office. This began the process of “collecting” hours towards each block and subsequently [making me eligible to write] the Red Seal exam.

What would you tell the youth in our community about pursuing a career in the cooking industry?

If you enjoy cooking and creating, then this is the field you want to be a part of. It is a continuous learning experience with inspirations that span around the globe. I also have to warn that it can be hard work, long hours of standing in a fast-paced environment and the occasional heavy lifting.

How were the block exams and did the six weeks of block training help prepare you?

When I was ready to write the second block exam, I was warned by peers and my mentor that it was the hardest exam of the four. What I didn't know at the time was a good percentage was on baking (and I like to think that I am more of a baker than a cook).

Each six-week block of training was beneficial in preparing for each exam. The training helped to focus on the areas that the exam questions would be on. Classmates were also a big help by being study pals and quizzing each other throughout the process.

Was each block year of training different?

Yes, the first year was an introduction to the world of cooking. When I attended NBCC Moncton in my first year, practical training was provided when working in the cafeteria kitchen in the mornings and the afternoons were spent in the classroom going over the theory. Block 2 was an in-depth look at specific areas such as baking and starches. Block 3, the final block, gave us a look into menu planning and costing, food cost and inventory control.

Was the exam to obtain your Red Seal endorsement hard?

The Red Seal exam is a collection of 150 multiple choice questions that cover information that was obtained over the three year process. I felt relaxed when writing mine possibly because I had just finished successfully writing the Block 3 exam the previous week. For me, it was a 50/50 chance. There are the more basic questions such as "How do you clean a flattop?", which puts the mind at ease. But then there are the questions that combine your theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge, which make you stop and slowly review your choices before narrowing it down to the "right" answer.

Zachery Pictou – Automotive Service Technician

In June 2011, Listuguj community member Zachery Pictou graduated from an automotive service technician program at NBCC in Moncton.



Through the AAP, the LMDC Support Counsellor was able to assist Zach in finding a work placement with Coast Tire in Moncton. He was able to apply his studies to a work environment, gain experience and accumulate hours towards his Block 2 requirements. After six months of financial subsidy, Zach was able to gain full-time employment. He stayed with that garage for eight months and then found another job with Miller Tirecraft and has been there for the last year and a half. The hours he accumulated from both jobs made him eligible for Block 2 training in the summer of 2013.

Interview with Zachery

When did you know you wanted to go to school to become an automotive service technician?

I was always interested in cars. This was the reason I decided to go to school to become an automotive service technician.

How long did it take you to complete your studies?

It is a one year course. I started in September and finished my Block 1 exam in June of the following year. I went in not knowing much, but came out of the program with a lot of experience. I really wanted to learn hands-on because that is what I am good at.

What would you tell the youth in our community about pursuing a career in the automotive service industry?

Dealing with customers is a bit difficult. We go to school to learn how to make sure a vehicle is safe. Customers are often surprised at the cost. Having to ensure that a vehicle is safe is not always cheap.

What lessons has work life taught you?

I learned that you have to be responsible when you are on your own. Budgeting my money was difficult in the beginning. Also, moving from a small community to a city was very different. I still have a hard time with the noise and people (but you learn to live with it).

What was your biggest fear before starting your job?

I was afraid that I wouldn't find a job as there were 40 automotive service technician students that year as the college ran two training groups.

How was the block exam and did the six weeks of block training help prepare you?

I just wrote my exam last week. The six weeks definitely helped me prepare for that exam.

What would you tell other clients about the LMDC's programs and services?

The LMDC programs and services are excellent. I would recommend them to anyone. They helped me a lot. They were able to give me that extra push I needed.

Conclusion

From the studies produced to determine the barriers the LMDC's clients face to creating solutions to address their needs, the LMDC is proud of the programming and services it offers to aid clients in achieving their potential. As a partner in clients' success stories, the LMDC helps create access to a highly skilled and inclusive workforce in the skilled trades. As indicated in the LMI study, Listuguj's prosperity is linked to providing opportunities to all Listuguj members wanting to work and the LMDC sees the AAP as an important part of this goal.

Located in the territory of Gespe'gewa'gi (Listuguj, QC), the **Listuguj Mi'gmaq Development Centre** provides Listuguj Mi'gmaq clients with programs and services that aim to guide them towards independence by establishing education and career goals, and return-to-work action plans.

All in the Family: Welding Training for Aboriginal People from the Yukon

By Gord Rogers, Communications Consultant with the United Association Piping Industry College of British Columbia (UAPICBC)

This article discusses some of the barriers Aboriginal people face in pursuing skilled trades training and outlines the United Association Piping Industry College of British Columbia (UAPICBC)'s approach to training Aboriginal candidates. It also shares the success stories of three members of an Aboriginal family in the Yukon who pursued certification in welding through the UAPICBC.

Growing Aboriginal participation in the piping industry

Aboriginal people from the Yukon who wish to pursue careers in the piping industry often face financial, cultural and academic barriers. To help Aboriginal people overcome these challenges, the [United Association Piping Industry College of British Columbia](#) (UAPICBC) provides an effective trades training program for Aboriginal people. Funded by the British Columbia Industry Training Authority (ITA) and Carcross/Tagish First Nation, which is just outside of Whitehorse in the Yukon, the program offers a visual and hands-on approach to training that is preferred by many Aboriginal people.

To address financial barriers, the program fully funds the participant once he or she has been assessed and identified as a good candidate. Funding covers costs such as tuition, travel, safety gear, and depending on need, accommodations. In terms of cultural challenges, it has been the UAPICBC's experience that the presence of family is important to an individual's success. When an individual is removed from that supportive setting, the sense of loss of

community can prevent the learner from realizing his or her potential. Recognizing this, the UAPICBC supports the development of trusting relationships that may include study groups that meet before and after class, as well as support groups for domestic issues. Elders also have contact with the students, although this connection is generally in their own community rather than in the context of the UAPICBC's activities.

Finally, to ensure an individual's success in the academic portion of the training program, the UAPICBC conducts assessments of candidates to ascertain academic levels as well as motivation. If it is felt that the school can provide the necessary supports for a candidate to succeed in the program, the school develops an action plan in cooperation with the learner. This approach results in an integrated action plan that maximizes opportunities for the learner to achieve success on his or her journey to a career in the trades.

To implement the training program for Aboriginal people, the UAPICBC had to overcome some challenges. These included coordinating resources between the Yukon and BC, and finding ways for the two jurisdictions to cooperate for the benefit of the students. The Yukon and BC have worked together on many fronts, and in the case of skilled trades training, are demonstrating success with the support they have been able to provide to clients from both jurisdictions.

The UAPICBC is also facilitating construction apprenticeship training opportunities for Aboriginal learners in other trades such as bricklaying, cement finishing, drywalling, painting and decorating, floor laying, pile driving and heavy equipment operation. This training is being provided at all three of the UAPICBC campus locations in BC, which include Delta, Kitimat and Fort St. John. There are currently agreements with the [PTP ASEP Training Society](#), the [Tribal Resources Investment Corporation \(TRICORP\)](#) as well as many of the Aboriginal communities within BC such as Kispiox, Moricetown, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Burns Lake, Haida Gway and New Hazelton. Funding for the training is primarily provided through the Labour Market Sector Solutions and Canada – British Columbia Labour Market Agreement programs, which are supported by the federal and provincial governments.

Welding in the Atlin family

As a mainstay of Carcross/Tagish First Nation in the Yukon, the welding profession has a rich heritage in this Aboriginal community and a considerable presence in one of the community's families in particular. Three members of the Atlin family—the father and uncle, Ron, the son, Derek, and the niece, Jordan—have all obtained various levels of certification in the piping industry through the UAPICBC.



Ron, Derek and Jordan Atlin at the UAPICBC in Delta, BC.

Ron, as a UA Local 170 member, was integral to the introduction of the [Alaska Highway Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition](#) for the [Alaska Pipeline Project](#). One of the proponents, Pearl Callahan, first introduced Ron to Local 170 to initiate a relationship with the coalition so that an Aboriginal skilled workforce could be formed to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in the north.

Ron upgraded to become a pipeline welder through the UAPICBC and then in January 2012 was dispatched to the Louisburg Pipeline Project in Horn River, BC where he received automatic welder training. The automatic welder certification is required by the Pipeline Contractors Association of Canada and their respective pipeline contractors. He is now eligible to be dispatched to any province in Canada as a certified pipeline welder.

Although Ron still complains about Derek and Jordan being around while he is working, he smiles and says that he is proud of their accomplishments, and is very happy that they are at the UAPICBC.

The family's presence at the school is due in large part to the efforts of the UA Local 170 business agents and the special projects coordinator. Business manager Joe Shayler, assistant business agent Alex MacDonald, and special projects coordinator Kelly Sinclair visited Whitehorse with the approval of the ITA to review how the UAPICBC could support Aboriginal people in the Yukon to take advantage of the opportunities afforded their neighbours in BC.

"I never thought I would ever be working as a welder's helper although I used to help Uncle Ron clean up in the shop at home and he would joke that I would make a good welder's helper someday."

Ron's son, Derek, completed a 28-week flexible welding program in which he earned his Welding Level C ticket as well as his Canadian Welding Bureau Certification.¹ The Welding Level C certification is the entry level apprenticeship in the welding profession.² The theory portion of Welding Level C is offered as a distance education course through the UAPICBC and has proven to be

successful at preparing students to pass their ITA written exams. Derek has since completed his Level B and has been working on projects in northern BC and the Yukon.

"I used to joke about my dad being away so much and working as a welder, but now that I know what welding is all about and am pursuing it as a career myself, I have so much more admiration for all the work that my father has done in the past," said Derek. "We can even talk welder-talk together and once in a while include Jordan."

¹ For more information on Canadian Welding Bureau Certification please see:

<http://eng.cwbgroup.org/Certification/Pages/default.aspx>.

² At this level, one is permitted to weld in the construction and metal working industries. Training consists of learning to weld various steel and aluminum parts together using shielded metal arc (SMAW), gas metal arc (GMAW) and flux core arc welding (FCAW) processes in the fabrication, construction, erection and repair components of structures in plate and structural applications. Upon successful completion of this training, and in addition to the required number of apprenticeship hours and a pass mark on the provincial examination, the ITA grants learners a Certificate of Qualification for Welder Level C.

As a woman and an Aboriginal person, Jordan has overcome considerable barriers to pursue a satisfying career in a trade dominated by males. Sponsored by the Piping Industry Apprenticeship Board, she is the first female Aboriginal from the Yukon to be dispatched out of the training centre as a welder's helper to a pipeline project. The Yukon Mine Training Association financially supported Jordan's training because welding certification costs are high; there are typically a number of partners who collectively contribute to an individual's training. She completed her Welding Level B ticket in early summer 2012³ and is now halfway done the requirements for her Level A. At the same time, she is doing her PWP 7 and 10 procedures, which will allow her to weld aluminum and stainless materials. This training will enable her to take advantage of the upcoming opportunities with the liquefied natural gas capital projects in Kitimat and Prince Rupert in BC.

"I never thought I would ever be working as a welder's helper although I used to help Uncle Ron clean up in the shop at home and he would joke that I would make a good welder's helper someday," said Jordan. "As a little girl, we just laugh and say 'thanks uncle', but never expect to be in coveralls and under a helmet welding someday."

Through the various partnerships, the UAPICBC has been able to support many Aboriginal people on their journey to rewarding careers in the skilled trades. The UAPICBC's training program for Aboriginal learners has been delivered to approximately 150 Aboriginal people over the past three years. The school looks forward to continued productive and healthy relationships with the ITA and the various Aboriginal communities to provide training to many more Aboriginal people. Working with industry and labour, the UAPICBC is dedicated to training skilled tradespeople for the future prosperity of BC and the Yukon through an approach that meets the needs of local families, such as the Atlin family.

³ The Level B designation is the equivalent of a Red Seal endorsement for the piping industry. Becoming a welder at Level B permits one to weld ferrous and non-ferrous metals in all positions, on both plate and/or pressure piping using SMAW, gas tungsten arc (GTAW), and FCAW processes. The pre-requisite for this training is successful completion of Welder Level C technical training and applicable apprenticeship hours related to that training. Upon successful completion of this training, and in addition to the required number of apprenticeship hours and a pass mark on the provincial examination, the ITA grants learners a Certificate of Qualification for Welder Level B.

Gordon Banting Rogers is a facilitator/mediator with extensive experience in training, supervision and mediation in the workplace. He has managed multi-million dollar projects in the natural gas industry in Lithuania, Romania and Turkey as well as within Canada. See: www.conresbc.ca.

Creating Opportunities for Aboriginal Youth: An Alberta Employer's Approach

By Mike Deranger, Derantech Welding Ltd.

As a small company based in Fort McMurray, Derantech Welding Ltd. is typical of most of the companies operating in the oil sands region. What sets it apart is that Derantech is wholly owned and operated by Aboriginal peoples. Committed to hiring and training young Aboriginal peoples for the benefit of local communities and the growth of the skilled trades workforce, Derantech provides a positive example for other employers to follow. In this article, owner Mike Deranger shares the company's approach to engaging Aboriginal youth and his perspectives on the importance of providing supportive training opportunities in the skilled trades.

Small business environment in Alberta

Small businesses in Alberta provide more than a third of all private sector employment and over 22 per cent of their employees are under 24 years of age. Large companies with more than 500 employees, on the other hand, report that just six per cent of their workforce is less than 24 years of age.¹ Not surprisingly, it is these small companies that are playing an increasingly important role in training young workers.

Although northeast Alberta is the primary site of operation for many large resource development companies, more than 95 per cent of the businesses in the region have fewer than 50

¹ Government of Alberta, 2012 *Small Business, Big Impact: Alberta Small Business Profile*, October 2012, page 15. See: http://www.albertacanada.com/files/albertacanada/SP_EH-SmallBusProfile.pdf.

employees.² The region's high number of small businesses is attributed to the large companies' reliance on the smaller enterprises to supply key services and products that enable them to carry out the multifaceted operations of their large projects.³ As an example, while Syncrude employs 5,500 people, at peak times, it contracts out work to an additional 1,500 to 7,000 workers.⁴

Companies like Derantech Welding Ltd., a small establishment with 15 full-time employees located in northeastern Alberta, help meet these large corporations' demands for specialized skilled trades work not only by bidding on and fulfilling the contracts, but also by training the skilled tradespersons needed to do the work. In this way, Derantech is not so very different from the numerous other small companies operating in the region who service the larger companies running the major oil sands projects. What distinguishes Derantech from many of the others is that it is wholly owned and operated by Aboriginal peoples, and that its owner, Mike Deranger, has expressed a strong commitment to employing and training Aboriginal youth.

Derantech Welding Ltd.'s commitment to training Aboriginal youth

Based in Fort McMurray, Derantech Welding Ltd. provides welding services to the local oil and gas industry. Some of the company's primary areas of expertise include mobile welding, oilfield welding, custom-build light fabrication and pressure welding. Started in 2003 by Deranger, Derantech Welding has grown from a one-rig operation to a ten-rig operation with 15 full-time employees. The number of employees swells to 50 during shutdowns and turnarounds.

When he first started his company, Deranger set a goal to hire and train as many Aboriginal people in the skilled trades as possible. Throughout the company's growth, the commitment to engaging Aboriginal people in apprenticeship training has remained strong, benefiting local communities and the skilled trades workforce alike.

² This percentage is comparable to the presence of small businesses in all other regions of Alberta according to the Government of Alberta's *2012 Small Business, Big Impact: Alberta Small Business Profile* report from October 2012.

³ Government of Alberta, *2012 Small Business, Big Impact: Alberta Small Business Profile*, October 2012. See: http://www.albertacanada.com/files/albertacanada/SP_EH-SmallBusProfile.pdf.

⁴ Nathan Vanderklippe, "How three small businesses tapped the oil sands", *The Globe and Mail*, 16 April 2012. See: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-managing/leadership/how-three-small-businesses-tapped-the-oil-sands/article4102729/>

Derantech employs and trains First Nations and Métis youth from across the country. Some youth are from local communities in the oil sands region while others have come from as far away as New Brunswick. The success of Derantech's Aboriginal tradespersons demonstrates the important and positive impacts of balancing one's culture with career aspirations. This approach allows Aboriginal youth to support cultural preservation while also realizing their own capabilities to pursue and obtain meaningful employment in the skilled trades.

Since 2007, Derantech has hired and trained 12 Aboriginal apprentices. Three have become journeyman welders. Currently the company trains four apprentices on maintenance in the welding trade. The company plans to increase this number, recognizing that while it has sought to provide its apprentices with the best front-line training, the apprentices have difficulty finding the same level of support when they leave the company. The challenge is that other employers tend to overlook the potential of Aboriginal apprentices and do not give them the same learning curve as other apprentices. Deranger notes that this is a situation similar to what he faced as a young apprentice and then newly certified journeyman.

Building on partnerships

Mutually beneficial partnerships have largely contributed to Derantech's success in advancing the engagement of Aboriginal people in the skilled trades.

Mutually beneficial partnerships have largely contributed to Derantech's success in advancing the engagement of Aboriginal people in the skilled trades. By working with the provincial government, local unions and Keyano College, Derantech has been able to hire promising apprenticeship candidates, provide its apprentices with valuable

on-the-job training experiences, and receive support for developing the technical skills of its apprentices.

The Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative, through the province's Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT), has provided Derantech with all of its apprentices. Staff at AIT screens most of the apprenticeship candidates for Derantech, greatly easing the selection and hiring process. This support has enabled Deranger to find motivated individuals to join the small team

at Derantech, which has strengthened the company's productivity and reinforced its commitment to hiring and training Aboriginal youth.

Signatory with the Construction and General Workers' Union Local 92, Derantech's relationship with Local 92 ensures access to a wide base of Aboriginal employees. Individuals who have proven to be responsible and reliable are considered as potential candidates for undertaking apprenticeship training in the skilled trades. Derantech also works closely with the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union 488, which has supported the company's initiative to engage Aboriginal youth in apprenticeship training over the last five years.

Deranger has strong ties to Keyano College's Aboriginal development activities and its Welding Recertification program. In 1992, Deranger was a student in Keyano's Mechanical and Construction Trades Preparation (MCTP) program. Through the guidance of one individual, he realized that there are non-Aboriginal people who care about the direction of Aboriginal youth and want to help. This support encouraged Deranger to continue on his pathway to certification and to base his company's approach to engaging and hiring Aboriginal youth on Keyano's Aboriginal development work. Recognizing Deranger's success as a small business owner, Keyano College shares his story as a Keyano graduate in its promotional materials, and provides welding training and recertification to Derantech's welders. There are plans for Derantech to play a larger role in hiring successful graduates of Keyano's MCTP program.

Derantech Welding Ltd.: An example for others

Derantech has a proven track record for making a long-term commitment to Aboriginal skills development in the skilled trades. At its heart, it is a simple solution to the complex problem of Aboriginal employment and mobilization. Understanding the value of Canada's young Aboriginal resources and cultural rebirth is paramount to building on successful Aboriginal relations with local businesses, and capitalizing on provincial/territorial and federal support.

Derantech's goals have shifted from short-term work to long-term contracts to advance training initiatives. Journeypersons at Derantech mentor the Aboriginal youth to support the

development of strong skillsets to ensure that those who want to pursue career opportunities with larger companies such as Syncrude, Suncor, Albian and others have the knowledge and competencies to do so. With guidance from the Royal Bank of Canada's Aboriginal Development division, Derantech fully understands the importance of structured growth and financial support to create opportunities for a large and youthful Aboriginal workforce in the skilled trades.

A supportive environment gives learners confidence and a sense of security as they learn and master new skills and techniques, and this is particularly valuable to young people. By providing a solid platform for Aboriginal youth to develop their technical knowledge and skills in the trades, Derantech is helping to diversify and grow the country's skilled trades workforce. Derantech encourages other industry leaders, both big and small, to follow its example by supporting the training of Aboriginal youth in their respective businesses.

A certified welder, **Mike Deranger** founded his mobile welding company, Derantech Welding Ltd., in Fort McMurray, Alberta in 2003. Mike's mother is Blackfoot from Peigan Reserve in southern Alberta, and his father is Dene from Lake Athabasca.

Success Leads to Success: Gaining Perspective in Nunavut

By Philippe Chevalier, VP Training and Inuit Capacity Building Support, YAB Management Inc.

Based on the author's experiences, this piece highlights the value of supporting Inuit learners in their pursuit of skilled trades careers while respecting the operational needs of industrial projects. The author emphasises the goal of keeping a responsible perspective on the public's common interests as taxpayers who are funding an important part of the training investment required for qualifying employment candidates for these career opportunities.

Introduction

As a training and skills development specialist, I have had, for a number of years, the pleasure of working with Inuit in Nunavut by conducting pre-training and employment interviews, and by engaging in discussions with them in communities and in local schools. Through individual and group coaching, I have observed, followed and supported the learning curves of dozens of young men and women who were searching for rewarding, long-term employment. Given these experiences, I would like to share my observations and perspectives regarding the needs of learners in remote communities who choose to pursue lifelong careers in the skilled trades sector.

One apprentice at a time

In 2009, I had the opportunity to plan, coordinate and organize a training program for 10 Inuit men who travelled from their North Baffin community to Newfoundland to be trained intensively for eight consecutive weeks as mine driller helpers for a mining

*How did we accomplish this high rate of success? By choosing to be—all at once—present, committed, transparent, demanding and supportive.*¹³¹

project in Nunavut. We were expected to identify potential funding sources and apply for training funds, which we did successfully. One of three types of training projects eligible for funding through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) was training for a “multi-barrier clientele”. Although this expression clearly identifies the targeted clientele, we felt it was important to translate it into non-bureaucratic terms to allow for the emergence of a positive strategy and action plan. Statistics available at the time showed that the “multi-barrier clientele” was completing any given training program, on average, less than 40 per cent of the time.

With this in mind, we concluded that “multi-barrier clientele” meant “most of them do not finish what they start for different reasons”. Of course, the reasons accounting for this situation are numerous, amongst which we identified the following:

- Previous disappointing experiences with the education system;
- Lack of role models in a training context;
- Lack of ongoing, positive support in the immediate environment of the trainee;
- Perceived cultural gap arising when considering differences between life at home and the formal requirements of a structured training program day after day;
- Unfavourable personal life habits;
- Family issues making it difficult to focus on training programs; and
- Over-crowded housing conditions.

Cultural specificity or economic reality

In the case of the driller helper training program, we implemented a supportive action plan to minimize the barriers for our “multi-barrier clientele”. This strategy raised the average success rate from 40 per cent to 100 per cent. Readers should note that a 100 per cent success rate is a demanding target. Generally, on any training project, we encounter an 80 per cent to 100 per cent rate of success.

How did we accomplish this high rate of success? By choosing to be—all at once—present, committed, transparent, demanding and supportive. This was achieved by performing, in a systematic and formal fashion, a series of coordination and supervision activities as follows:

- Prior evaluation of individual motivation through coaching sessions;
- Workplace essential skills testing and training as required (using the tools and guidelines provided by HRSDC);
- Group coaching for specifying the conditions of a training agreement and clarifying expectations and mutual commitment between the group of trainees and the training organizations involved;
- Information sessions and discussions with the trainees' families prior to the trainees' departure for Newfoundland to ensure their ongoing support;
- Employment of a respected Inuit Elder to accompany the trainees; and
- Meeting with each trainee on a regular basis.

At this point, some of the general public or even training stakeholders may ask: "Why do all of this for this clientele when it is not normally done for any other training clientele?" For the following reasons, all of which are documented:

- It generates a genuinely satisfying experience for the trainees who benefit from their own commitment to success and from our support.
- It has a positive effect on their family life and, by extension, on their community.
- It allows them to be employed for years—which they all were—and for some of them to look forward to reaching the status of team leaders, supervisors or managers.
- It costs much less for Canadian taxpayers than the status quo considering the usual 40 per cent training success rate.
- It improves the average Inuit person's perception of industrial employers in the far north. Instead of associating the potential revenues with an estranged corporate culture and agenda, the Inuit start to see industrial employers as community partners who respect cultural differences, and who care about the Inuit people and their needs.
- It serves the community interests of the Inuit people, the corporate interests of industrial project managers and our common interests as Canadians.

- Finally, it works every time and is the right thing to do for all the previously stated reasons.

We predict that, in time, the number of Inuit role models enjoying successful careers in northern heavy industrial projects will increase, which will reduce the need for personalized external professional support. Young Inuit will be inspired by these role models and motivated to realize their own capacity to achieve long-term, satisfying careers in the skilled trades.

Conclusion

Our experience in skills development practices shows that success nurtures success; it is also a fair observation that failure often leads to failure. As training managers, it is our duty to monitor and support the learning curves of the young adults whose experiences in high school were not easy. This support should be provided until a string of successful experiences leads them to rewarding careers. Subsequent generations will then embark on their own careers, inspired by the role models living and working in their communities.

Vice-President of Training and Inuit Capacity Building Support for YAB Management since 2008, **Philippe Chevalier** previously taught business strategy at HEC Montreal before specializing in training and coaching managers in various corporations including Bell Canada, Rio Tinto Alcan, Canada Post, and Cirque du Soleil.