

Trade it Forward

Career opportunities for Aboriginal apprentices have never been stronger

Written by the Aboriginal Human Resource Council

w: aboriginalhr.ca

Canada is building. From coast, to coast, to coast, cities are buzzing with construction sites, industrial projects and resource development. The skilled labour shortage is growing and employers are looking overseas to bring in expensive workers.

Meanwhile, Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations are growing six times as fast as the rest of the country. That means more than just overcrowding in your school hallways - it means that companies are starting to look to the booming Aboriginal workforce to fill careers in the skilled trades.

Not sure what a skilled trade is? Well, if you look back into the history of your people you will see that this country was built through the hands and tools of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people. Your forefathers used their skills to build Canada's infrastructure, and they shared their craft with early European settlers to help them survive the long cold Canadian winters.

The time is now here for Aboriginal people to reclaim their participation in skilled trades and the Canadian economy. But to do that you need to get your foot in the door, and connect with a master trades person or a journeyperson whom is an Elder of sorts. For every journeyperson there is an apprentice and that apprentice can be you.

Apprenticeship is the first step in learning the skills and getting the experience to specialize in a skilled trade. As an apprentice, your employer helps make sure you are moving along the path with the correct guidance and supervision. You learn while you earn, going to school a few months each year while padding your resume with great experience and references. As you master your trade, eventually you get certified as a journeyperson (otherwise known as getting your 'ticket').

And what a sweet ticket it is. Being a journeyperson; mechanic, carpenter, plumber, boilermaker or electrician opens doors to work, travel and adventure, not to mention some serious coin. Once you've made it, employers will fight over each other to get your skills. As many of Canada's trades people reach retirement age and move into their oceanfront condos you'll be ready to take their place on the gravy train.

So what do skilled trades people do? They build bridges and houses and hospitals. They fix electrical systems, service high-tech equipment and pull diamonds out of the earth. They work in the private sector, government or for themselves, in the cities and towns and country. Trades people get the satisfaction of working with their hands and seeing things get done, and done right. They get respect and they get paid.

The Aboriginal Human Resource Council is proud to bring together employers and educators to create more opportunities for Aboriginal youth in trades and apprenticeship. With successful programs across Canada, we're seeing hundreds of young Aboriginal men and women jumpstart their careers in the skilled trades.

So do your homework...

Check out our website (aboriginalhr.ca) for connections to your local Aboriginal employment centre where you can get help with training and employment opportunities. Also visit this site or consult with your provincial/territorial government for more information about Aboriginal trades programs, initiatives and opportunities.

Post your 'job seeker' profile on Canada's Aboriginal Job Site -*The Inclusion Network* (inclusionnetwork.ca) and start connecting with employers today.

Making the right connections and obtaining the essential skills to enter into a trade takes work, but the possibility of a career in skilled trades might be easier than you think. The demand from employers is there and growing every day. So get your Google warmed up and start looking at what kinds of training and job opportunities are available for you, or near you.