
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Jan. 23, 2020

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training
Industry Training Authority

Indigenous communities, ITA build skilled trades workforces

GITAUS – More than 475 people in Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia are gaining skills to succeed in high-opportunity trades careers, with six new two-year training programs.

“For years, Indigenous leaders have been calling for skills training opportunities closer to home to support their community’s needs and self-determination,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “Our government is responding to this Call to Action by working in partnership with Indigenous communities, the Industry Training Authority and employers. These new programs will create pathways for Indigenous workers to take advantage of the tens of thousands of in-demand jobs forecasted in the trades over the next decade.”

Supported by the Industry Training Authority (ITA), the programs will address community priorities and opportunities with courses ranging from exploratory and introductory trades to construction and electrical training.

“ITA’s committed to building strong partnerships with industry, training providers and Indigenous communities to create innovative programs that enable Indigenous people to gain exposure to the skilled trades and find meaningful careers,” said Shelley Gray, CEO, ITA. “These new programs will ensure more individuals have opportunities to access training and become apprentices while giving them the tools to be successful.”

Programs include Kitselas First Nation’s Kitselas Community-Led Apprenticeship Development. Over two years, an estimated 48 people will receive introductory trades training that will pave the way to apprenticeships.

“Investments from industries, such as LNG, mean it’s busy right now in northwest B.C., with tremendous opportunities to secure long-lasting careers in the skilled trades,” said Judy Gerow, Chief Councillor, Kitselas First Nation. “Making sure our members, and members of neighbouring Nations, have access to those opportunities is critical. The community-led program is one way we can do that. A successful career in the trades translates into economic security for families in our communities.”

ITA is providing \$7.5 million to support the six Indigenous training programs, with funding from the Canada-BC Workforce Development Agreement (WDA).

B.C.’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act passed unanimously in November 2019, establishing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the framework for reconciliation in B.C.

Skills training that improves employment opportunities responds to UNDRIP Article 21.1, asserting the rights of Indigenous peoples to improve their economic and social conditions, including through education and employment. It also responds to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 7, to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Quick Facts:

- The 2018 Labour Market Outlook projected nearly 71,000 trades job openings in the province through 2028.
- Trades careers, in which skilled workers are in demand, include millwrights, heavy-duty mechanics, carpenters and electricians.
- Signed in 2018, the WDA between the federal and provincial governments provides \$685 million over six years and the flexibility to design and deliver locally driven, responsive and inclusive labour market programs for British Columbians.

Learn More:

Industry Training Authority: <https://www.itabc.ca/>

Kitselas First Nation Employment and Training: <http://kitselas.com/departments/employment-training/>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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Hands-on trades training supports Indigenous communities

\$7.5 million will support an estimated 478 people in Indigenous communities throughout B.C. in gaining access to skills training in the trades. Two-year programs began Sept. 1, 2019, and will run until Aug. 31, 2021.

Supporting its commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation, the Industry Training Authority (ITA) worked with Indigenous communities to develop a procurement process for this funding that would eliminate barriers and increase participation.

Administered by the ITA, the funding comes from the Canada-BC Workforce Development Agreement, signed in 2018. Programs receiving funds are:

- All Roads: First Nations Trades Training – the Construction Foundation of BC is receiving more than \$2 million over two years to provide individualized services, including employment/apprenticeship opportunities, to 110 participants in Nuxalk Nation, Lytton First Nation, Blueberry River First Nation, Ahousaht First Nation, Penticton Indian Band, Tl'etinqox and Witset First Nation.
- Alternate Pathway to Electrical – ACCESS is receiving more than \$900,000 over two years to provide essential skills and electrical foundation training to 32 participants in Burnaby and Port Coquitlam.
- Careers in Construction Trades – Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in Kamloops is receiving almost \$1.5 million over two years to provide essential skills and introductory programs, such as construction craft worker, heavy equipment operator and a trades sampler program to 100 participants in Kamloops, Lillooet and Chase.
- Indigenous People in Trades Training – Camosun College is receiving almost \$1.4 million over two years to provide exploratory trades skills foundation courses to 160 participants at its Interurban campus and at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo.
- Kitselas Community-Led Apprenticeship Development – Kitselas First Nation is receiving more than \$1.2 million over two years to provide introductory training and industry certifications to 48 participants in Gitau.
- Transition and Heavy Mechanic Foundation Program – TRU's Williams Lake campus is receiving almost \$478,000 to provide a heavy mechanics foundation program, including wraparound supports and industry certifications to 28 participants in Williams Lake.

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