

## **Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program**

Jurisdiction: Alberta

Contact: Olie Schell

Level: Post-Secondary

Theme: Transition/Linkages

### Description of Practice:

Increasing the number of Aboriginal people in the province's workforce is a high priority for the Alberta government. In the last few years, the government has worked to increase the successful participation in, and completion of, apprenticeship programs by Aboriginal people. Senior high school students, parents, Aboriginal groups, career counselors and other stakeholders have all participated in and benefited from projects such as the Aboriginal Communication Strategy and the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project. These projects also help to link employers with potential Aboriginal apprentices and provide support to help build successful working and learning relationships.

### Background:

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology are currently involved in the following activities and initiatives:

#### *Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project (AAP)*

Alberta Advanced Education provides support to the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project (AAP), a joint venture initiative between industry, Aboriginal representatives and the Federal Government designed to increase Aboriginal people's participation in Alberta apprenticeship programs. The project began in 2001 with locations in Edmonton, High Level and Fort McMurray, and expanded in 2004 to locations in Calgary and Lethbridge. The project has registered 275 Aboriginal apprentices in over 24 different trades. To date, six apprentices have successfully completed their apprenticeship programs and have achieved an Alberta Journeyman Certificate. Twenty-eight apprentices are currently in the final period of their apprenticeship programs.

#### *Aboriginal Communication Strategy*

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology has been distributing promotional materials to increase awareness among youth of career opportunities in the trades. These include a colouring and activity book for children in kindergarten to grade 4, playing cards for grades 2 to 4, a comic book for grades 7 to 9, a guide for junior and senior high students, and a guide for school counsellors and educators. Many of the materials can be downloaded from [www.tradesecrets.org](http://www.tradesecrets.org).

Under this strategy, the department has also funded two Aboriginal Youth Ambassadors to deliver presentations to junior and senior high students, parents, Aboriginal groups, career counsellors and other stakeholders across the province.

A brochure for employers about the benefits of hiring Aboriginal apprentices is being developed. Articles highlighting successful Aboriginal apprentices are being developed.

### *Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)*

The Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) provides opportunities for high school youth to begin their apprenticeship program in grade 10. The youth are paid by the employer during their on-the-job training while they earn high school credits. Once the youth have graduated from high school, they are eligible to enter the first-year of their apprenticeship technical training program. Many learners often obtain full-time employment with the training employer. There are currently 15 self-identified Aboriginal RAP apprentices in high school. An additional 42 Aboriginal apprentices who started in the RAP have continued on to a regular apprenticeship program after high school.

### *Youth Apprenticeship Project (YAP)*

The Youth Apprenticeship Project (YAP) is a pilot project in northern Alberta that helps learners from grades 7 to 12 explore career options through applied learning activities. The YAP is beginning its second year of implementation as a pilot project in four northern Alberta schools. The YAP assists learners to see the need and value of staying in school and earning a high school credential and in making connections between core academic subjects and the world of work.

During the first year of implementation of the pilot, a total of 240 learners from five participating schools were involved in the project. The participating schools included: Dr. Swift Middle School (Lac La Biche), Prairie River School (High Prairie), Grouard School (Grouard), Bigstone Community School and Mistassiniy School (Wabasca-Desmarais). The YAP is a pilot project that is projected to run for six years subject to funding approval and viability after an external evaluation scheduled for the fall of 2007.

### *Scholarships*

The Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Scholarships provides approximately 165 annual scholarships of \$1,000 each to recognize the excellence of Alberta apprentices in a trade and trainees in a designated occupation, and to encourage recipients to complete their apprenticeship or occupational training programs. In 2006, there were eight scholarships awarded to self-identified Aboriginal apprentices.

### Development:

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, in collaboration with other stakeholders, has developed an Essential Skills program to address the needs of Aboriginal people who would like to participate in apprenticeship programs, but lack the necessary workplace skills. In the Apprenticeship Preparation for Aboriginal People project, Aboriginal learners will learn the workplace essential skills, knowledge and strategies to enter and succeed in an apprenticeship program through an applied learning curriculum that will focus on literacy, numeracy, science and work maintenance skills. The first pilot of the project is expected to be delivered in 2007.

### Evidence:

With the help of the initiatives such as the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project, as of February 2006, there were a total of 1,126 Aboriginal apprentices in the province - an increase of 888 apprentices in less than four years.

### Adaptability:

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's approach to increasing Aboriginal participation in the trades is based on collaboration with First Nations and Métis

communities, industry and educational stakeholders with an emphasis on opportunities and communication for learners beginning in the K-12 years. The various components of Alberta's approach would be adaptable to other jurisdictions.

Further information:

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