



Marking Careers in the Energy Sector



Pre-apprenticeship courses are paving the way for careers in the trades with partnerships between Aboriginal groups and Ontario colleges bringing even more opportunities to local communities. The Metis Nation of Ontario, in partnership with Georgian College, is facilitating one such opportunity in the lucrative energy trades. “The options are endless really. Not only in the energy industry but in the engineering fields themselves, there’s so many pathways and avenues to pursue,” says Shawna Snache, project coordinator for the Metis Nations of Ontario (MNO).

The Employment in Energy Project, now in its second year, offers 16 weeks of in-class training at Georgian College’s Barrie campus followed by a 16-week wage subsidized work placement in the energy sector. With input from the energy sector and MNO, the college’s Technology Foundations course has been tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal students with culturally appropriate academic supports. Students gain understanding in areas such as essential mathematics for technology, DC circuit fundamentals, and new this year, general engineering. Upon completion of the program students have improved awareness of employment opportunities and increased knowledge of pathways to careers in the energy sector.

The addition of the general engineering course is one upgrade that Shawna believes is a significant improvement over last year. With a part-time teacher pulled from the

industry, students are getting a clear look at what the energy sector has to offer. “He’s a consulting engineer so he’s going to give them sort of a bigger picture, he’s going to paint a bigger picture of the types of fields, the pathways you can follow in this industry whether you choose to pursue an engineering field or a technologist field,” explains Shawna.

This year sees 15 students, ranging in age from 18-50, from communities in the Simcoe County area including Midland and Barrie while others come from as far as Manitoulin Island and Wikwemikong. “It’s anticipated that we will run the project again hopefully for at least three more years is what we’re aiming for,” says Shawna.

With a greater focus on green energy, more than ever Aboriginal peoples need to gain the skills that will increase their employability in this emerging sector. “I think it’s about seeing a need and getting creative enough to be able to fill that need,” she says.

On top of providing career training to clients, the project is an excellent opportunity for MNO to build on their partnership with Georgian College. “It’s about creating industry partners, creating long-term relationships, and creating employment opportunities,” elaborates Shawna. As well as partnering with the college, the Employment in Energy project allowed MNO the opportunity to reach out to industry partners. An advisory committee made up of key employers in the energy sector helped shape the project and ensure students receive a comprehensive overview of the trades. Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, BrucePower, Ontario Power Authority, the Electricity Sector Council and the Canadian Union of Skilled Workers all helped develop and guide the project. Local partners like Walkers Electric, Valard Construction and Acute Electrical will be providing practical entry-level experience through work placement training, which could potentially turn into full-time positions for participants.

Classes commenced July 18, 2011 at Georgian college and will conclude November 4, 2011, leaving just a few days before students slip into their work placements on November 7th.

Apprenticeship Feature Mighty Machines

If you've ever dreamed of controlling machines that dig trenches, build foundations or put pipe in sewers, then a career as an heavy equipment operator may be in your future. The power is truly at your fingers as you pull levers and work foot pedals to create, lift or demolish. Working in varied environments, heavy equipment operators are often found at roadwork sites, in quarries, working for logging and mining companies and breaking ground at new construction sites. Wherever ground needs to be moved, a heavy equipment operator is sure to be near.

The heavy equipment operator designation is a new trade available voluntarily for apprenticeship. Specifically, apprentices learn how to operate bulldozers, tracked excavators, and tractor-loader-backhoes. Similar trades, including grader, side boom and scraper operators, are not recognized by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as true trades. Industry leaders and stakeholders are lobbying to have related trades require apprenticeship rather than just training.



The Life of an Heavy Equipment Operator

Work Environment

Heavy equipment operators are found in all construction sectors including new home building, heavy industrial, institutional, commercial, and civil engineering. They are found working on road upgrades, at airports, and mines and quarries. They work most often out in the elements, exposed to the sun, wind, cold and rain.

Where Will it Take You?

Heavy equipment operators work for:

- General contracting, building high ways, dams and airports, or installing sewer or other utilities
- Residential building
- Municipal development
- Asphalt paving companies
- Pipeline companies
- Logging companies
- Mining companies
- Landscaping companies
- Demolition companies

Are You the Right Fit?

Because they use expensive pieces of equipment, which have the potential to harm other workers, heavy equipment operators must have good judgement to maintain the safety of themselves, the machines and those working around them.

Education/Training

You must be at least 16 years of age and have a minimum Grade 12 education. A mechanical background is helpful as is any volunteering involving mechanical equipment.

How Much Can You Earn?

Heavy equipment operators can expect to make between \$21 and \$32 an hour depending on experience, contract, collective agreements, economic conditions and area of expertise. Apprentices will make a percentage of the journey person's rate, usually 50-60 per cent in their first year.

Types of Equipment

Heavy equipment operators use a variety of machines but only three are available for voluntary apprenticeship.

Tracked excavators – Dig, excavate material in large volumes and load material. It is often used in construction, mining and forestry sectors.

Bulldozer – clears and levels land.

Tractor-loader-backhoe - The front loader bucket is used to grade, level, excavate and move material. The back bucket digs trenches, performs excavation jobs, levels and grades surfaces.

Job Prospects

Employment for this occupation is maintaining current numbers and focusing on new workers and workers from outside Ontario. Employers are expected to be actively seeking workers through 2011 and 2012.

Country Kid, with Big City Dreams

As a kid, Jordan Wright saw for himself the power of machines. Working alongside his father on a local farm, riding plows and tractors was second nature. Now this 19-year-old Ohsweken, Ontario native is turning his childhood memories into valuable experience for a career as an heavy equipment operator. “It’s just a different atmosphere, all the controls are pretty much the same but just a different type of work from agriculture to heavy equipment,” explains Wright.

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Trading rolling fields for construction sites, Wright enrolled in the pre-apprenticeship heavy equipment course offered through the Operating Engineers Training Institute of Ontario (OETIO) in Morrisburg, Ontario. Completing six weeks of in-class training, the OETIO program gave Wright the fundamentals in heavy equipment machines like the mini excavator, compactor and skid steer. “We went through just the basic controls of it and the safety of each piece of equipment and what you should and shouldn’t do at a certain time,” says Wright. With his background, the mechanics came naturally and Wright scored in the top of his class with a 92 per cent final grade. “They told me that I’d go pretty far in this trade if I follow through with it,” says Wright.

With the help of employment counselor, Brandi Jonathon at Grand River Employment and Training, Wright’s farm experience and high marks have landed him an opportunity to gain work placement experience through AECON, one of the leading construction and infrastructure development companies in Canada. “They’re pretty much the biggest company infrastructure wise across Canada. They’ve worked on a couple of big jobs worth a few million dollars so they’re pretty big,” he says.

With Morrisburg being five hours away, it was Wright’s first taste of life away from home. “I’ve always gone places alone but I’d always known someone once I got there so this is a whole different atmosphere with people I don’t know and meeting new people,” he says. But after one taste Wright is ready for the whole pie and looking forward to taking his skills across Canada. “It’s a whole different atmosphere being in one spot one day and another spot the other day, that’s pretty cool,” he says. AECON has sites in Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Edmonton and Breslau where he is currently gaining valuable work experience.

Once his eight-week probation is up Wright will know whether or not he has a permanent position with AECON. In the meantime he’s soaking up tips of the trade from journey persons willing to take him under their wing. “I’m always coming across new stories, new people, and what they have to offer, all the little tricks they can tell me. So every day I pretty much get to know someone new or get to know someone a little better,” he says.



A Powerful Drive for a Powerful Ride

“**Y**ou have to make some sort of sacrifice to get where you want to go in life.” That’s the philosophy Josh Martin lives by as he works his way to a career as an heavy equipment operator.

As an ex maintenance mechanic for the Six Nations parks and recreation department in Ohsweken, Ontario, Martin already had a fair bit of experience before embarking on his training at the pre-apprenticeship course offered through the Operating Engineers Training Institute of Ontario (OETIO) in Morrisburg, Ontario. Through six weeks of training participants are exposed to various machines including the tractor-loader-backhoe, skid steer, excavators and graders as well as associated safety practices.

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“In theory they take you through everything,” he says. The OETIO allots three weeks of in-class training followed by three weeks of machine training where participants spend half days on each machine.

“It’s like a kid in a candy store, you grow up as a kid playing with toys like jiggers,” says Martin who proudly states he had the whole Tonka set. As he goes off to work he teases his five-year-old brother that he gets to play with full sized Tonkas.

But it’s more than just fun and games for Martin who is intent on proving he’s got what it takes to make it in the trade. Following his six-week program, Martin began job site training working as a laborer for AECON where his drive to succeed makes him the man for any job. “I go wherever they need me. I would like to get more seat time but also want them to know I can work hard,” he says.

While working on one machine would give him more

specific training, Martin is gaining valuable insight into the life of a trades person working various jobs including flag man, working in a shop, and putting in Bell lines with a crew in Orangeville. As a floater in one of Canada’s largest construction and infrastructure companies, he’s worked with various crews across Ontario and benefitting from tips from other tradespeople. “They’re great guys,” he says, “they all help me, tell me what I’m doing wrong and how to fix it.”

Martin will return to Morrisburg for machine specific training in October, at which time he says he’ll likely focus on the excavator. However, given his choice he’d work on a 350 CAT, the largest excavator. “Go big or go home,” he smiles.

Martin plans to stick with AECON for his full apprenticeship but hopes to someday make it up north into the mining industry. “It’s a lot of money to be made, people have been telling me they need operators,” he says. His valuable experience will pave the way for him in an industry already predicting a 40 per cent retirement rate requiring workers to fill the gap. “There’s just better money in the trades,” says Martin.

Share Your Story

Are you or someone you know living the exciting life of an apprentice? Does your organization support Aboriginal apprenticeship? Is there something you’d like to see featured?

Contact us with your stories and tips on exciting programs in the world of apprenticeship. We are always on the lookout for interesting stories and initiatives to share.

CAF Equips Employment Counsellors with Essential Skills Tools



The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) is back promoting essential skills with a second round of education sessions, this time focused on employment counselors. “They are the people with a direct connection to Aboriginal clients and that’s who we were trying to impact,” explains Emily Arrowsmith, project manager for CAF. “People who are interested in trades and want to be in apprenticeship and maybe need some career awareness and some upgrading in order to be successful in apprenticeship are the people we wanted to get at and we thought that counselors would be the best way to reach those people,” she adds.

CAF’s widely successful online workshops for employers were the first step in promoting the importance of essential skills training among apprentices. Essential skills are a popular topic among the industry with numeracy, deductive skills, and communication all labeled as vital for effectiveness in apprenticeship by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

“A lot of our research has shown that if you provide people with essential skills help they’re much more likely to be successful when they become an apprentice. They’re also much more likely to have success with their technical training and more likely to want to stay in their apprenticeship and complete the program,” says Arrowsmith.

With the use of a new tool based around apprenticeship and essential skills from the office of literacy and essential skills, CAF delivered training workshops across Ontario, aided by administrators Human Resource Systems Group Limited. Each day of the two-day workshops focused on

presentations about apprenticeship as a viable career option, introduction to the tool by essential skills experts, and brainstorming sessions on how to incorporate the tool into current employment and training programming.

“The really good thing about the materials is they made a very strong link between trades and skills,” says Arrowsmith. The tool focused on specific links to trades by sharing a day in the life of a specific tradesperson and the various skills he/she would use.

Working with Brian Pelletier of AABO, CAF was supplied with key contacts interested in promoting the training. “At the beginning of the project we did say we were going to work with ASETS holders as part of the project and we did send a formal letter to each of the ASETS holders inviting them, but most of the connections we got through Brian,” explains Arrowsmith.

CAF’s program began in February and wrapped up in June 2011. While they are currently out of funding they are hoping to develop partnerships with Aboriginal communities to continue to promote essential skill training. With over 400 participants in 29 workshops and numerous requests for similar training in other communities, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

“It’s a really good model and all the participants asked, ‘Can you please come back and do this more, can you do this at high schools, can you keep this model going because this is exactly the kind of practical hands on information that we need to work successfully with our clients.’ So we are hoping we can come up with cost sharing or partnership models, which will allow us to continue to do these workshops,” she says.

Learn More

For more information about essential skills as they relate to apprenticeship, visit:

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum’s essential skills initiative.

www.caf-fca.org/en/activities/essential_skills.asp

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada’s office of Literacy and Essential Skills

www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/index.shtml

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Partners in Apprenticeship

The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario is composed of representatives of the Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) and Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) Agreement Holders. The PAC represents government, industry, and employers. The Aboriginal Construction Employment Referral Services (ACERS) are an AABO initiative and work directly with AHRDA's, Employers, and Apprentices to become a sponsoring agent and indenture Aboriginal clients who enter into apprenticeships.



North America Construction



Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Affaires autochtones et Développement du Nord Canada



Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canac

