



# AABO: Bridging the Gap Between Aboriginals and Apprenticeship

With membership from Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) Holders, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Aboriginal employment and development organizations across Ontario, the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario (AABO) is working hard to increase the number of Aboriginal people working in skilled trades. "AABO is a sub committee of the provincial AHRDAs organized to work with AHRDAs and employers to improve opportunities for Aboriginal people to get into apprenticeship programs," explains John Wabb of the Canadian Union of Skilled Workers; just one of the many organizations benefiting from AABO's initiatives.

Formed following the Aboriginal Institute Consortium (AIC) Apprenticeship Forum in January 2003, AABO, formerly known as the Ontario Aboriginal Apprenticeship Working Group, hopes to answer the call put forward by the AIC. With an ever aging workforce Ontario is facing a shortage of skilled workers to fill trades positions. At the same time the Aboriginal population is a booming untapped resource. AABO's aim is to bridge the gap and increase the number of Aboriginal people participating in apprenticeships thus fulfilling the need for skilled workers.

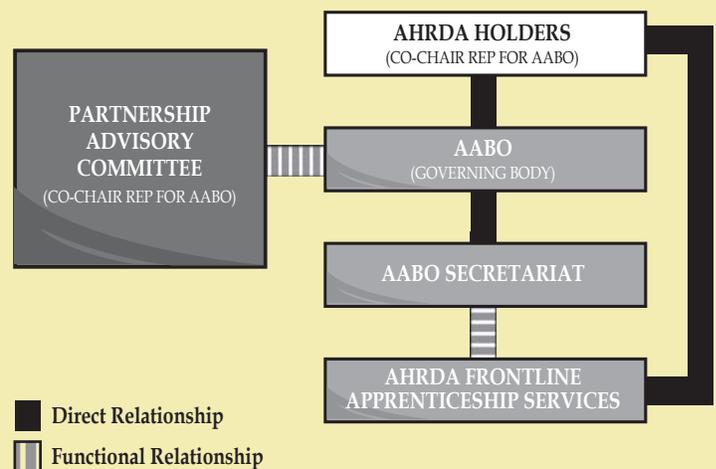
Currently the organization is trying to recruit employers and is developing a Partnership Advisory Committee of stakeholders who share the objectives of the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Strategy to advise AABO in their initiatives. AABO's goals for 2008 are to continue to build the Partnership Advisory Committee, develop relationships with AHRDAs through supporting local initiatives and appoint an executive director to interact with employers and AHRDAs.

"AABO fills the gaps where other programs have lacked," explains Wabb, adding that mainstream programs don't always take into account the needs of the Aboriginal community. According to Wabb everyone that's participat-

ing in AABO is bringing forth great ideas and support as well as experience and contacts essential to the initiative. "We connect skilled workers to employers," says Wabb.

## Sneak Peek

Welcome to this sampling of the AABO newsletter. This quarterly publication is intended as a tool to help employment counsellors stay informed on apprenticeship issues. Each issue will include information on major projects occurring in Ontario that require or will require skilled tradespeople. Training institutions and programs will also be discussed as well as changes to apprenticeship regulations. Each issue will also spotlight a skilled trade and a valuable resource. We hope you enjoy this sneak peak of the AABO newsletter. Future issues will be eight pages rather than four and will be issued quarterly.





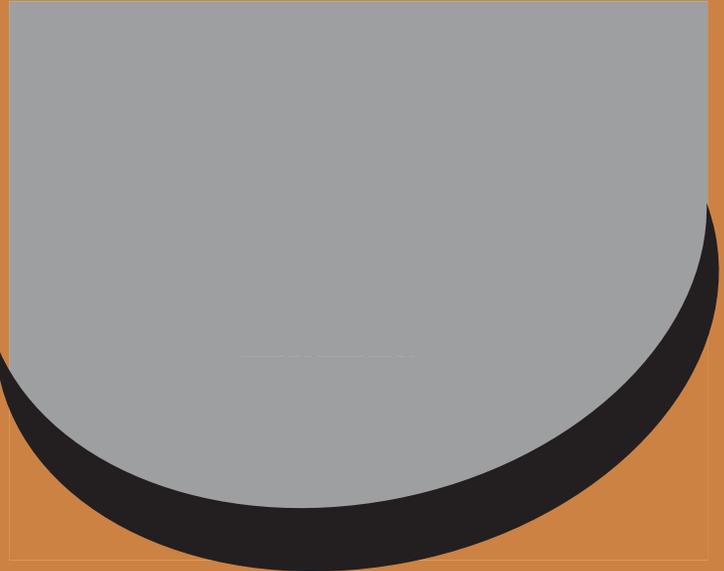
# Apprenticeship Feature

## What is Carpentry?

**W**ith the insurgence of home makeover and carpentry shows on television stations and the increasing number of carpentry programs being offered in post secondary institutions, carpentry is on the front stage with many taking notice. But what do carpenters do? In general terms a carpenter constructs, erects, installs, maintains and repairs structures. While early generations of carpenters may have worked primarily with wood materials, today's carpenters work with a wide range of materials including wood, steel, wood substitutes and other materials.

Depending on a carpenters area of expertise he or she could be building foundations, installing floor beams, laying sub flooring and erecting walls or they could be adding the final touches by installing trim items including doors, stairs, moulding and hardware. Of course in order to fit all these pieces a carpenter must also know how to properly measure, cut and join these materials.

Carpenters can work for construction companies, carpentry contractors, special trade contractors or maintenance departments while many others are also self-employed. You'll often find carpenters working on new homes or renovations or in heavy industrial plants as well as institutional and commercial construction.



## Tricks of the Trade

## A Carpenters Life

### Work Environment

Working conditions for a carpenter can vary from one job to the next and even from one day to the next. Some carpenters can work indoors framing and installing trim while others can spend most of their time outside working in the mud building forms for concrete. You may work in cramped areas or you could even be building scaffolding and working at considerable heights.

Even the number of hours you work can depend on your specific job, the time of season and work demand. Some carpenters work a steady 40-hour week while others can be working much more or less depending on the job. If you are facing a peak period

in your sector you could be required to work overtime and then when the period slows down you may face a layoff.

Carpenters face physically demanding days which often will require you to work on a team or with a partner. Other times you will be working independently and it's important that you have the skills to work both independently and cooperatively.

### Skills and Requirements

What does it take to be a carpenter?

- The versatility to work in cramped areas, on your feet for long hours or at considerable heights.
- Strong math skills to ensure you are precise and accurate in your work.

- Creativity in your designs and a keen eye for detail.
- The desire to work with your hands.
- Good physical condition and stamina to work long hours and carry materials.
- Interpretive skills to read blueprints.
- Problem solving skills.

### Tools of the Trade

In a job where accuracy and precision are key carpenters are constantly armed with rulers and framing squares to aid their work. Carpenters also use different hand tools and portable power tools, such as chisels, saws, hammers, nail guns and drills. Typically nails, staples and glue are the basics for joining materials.

# A Career in Carpentry: More than just wood and nails!

Standing 300 feet in the air at the highest point of DeFasco isn't the place you'd expect to see a carpenter but according to Chris Powless, a third year carpentry apprentice, the skies are the limit. "A carpenter will never be out of work," he says, "There is always a need for a carpenter in the world where some fields are boom or bust."

As a unionized carpenter belonging to the 1,200 member Local 18 in Hamilton, Ontario, Chris has experienced the highs and lows of carpentry while building scaffolding at Defasco, Stelco and ESSO, or installing hard wood flooring or trim work in local businesses or industrial offices. "Everyday you could be doing something different, it's so diverse. You could work 30 years and you're still learning," he says, adding that he could be outside in the mud building forms for concrete at the beginning of a project and then back inside finishing the building at the end of the project.

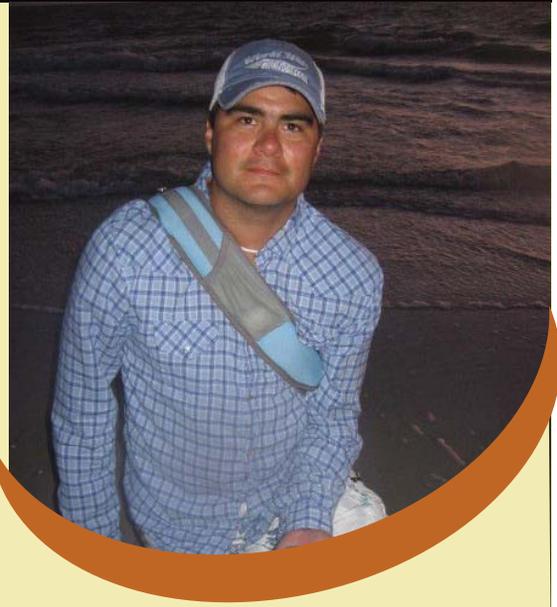
After college Chris found few jobs in his chosen field of fish and wildlife and finally returned to the job he spent summers working on since he was 16. Signing up at the Hamilton Local he joined the ranks and now belongs to the same union as his father, grandfather and uncle. Since then he's delved into the industrial world seeing views that the general population is unable to see including the massive machinery and pipes of the ESSO refinery in Nanticoke and a DeFasco tower view of the Hamilton Harbour and

Skyway Bridge with the world at his feet.

So what does a carpenter do at a steel mill or oil refinery? Chris describes the Defasco plant as a series of buildings connected by elevated pipes which transport liquids between buildings. When a pipe gets a leak or a valve needs to be changed carpenters are called in to prepare the work area with a scaffolding set-up which can be 40 to 50 feet in the air. Made of reusable steel the scaffolding is put together with included safety features to allow the workers awaiting down below to do their job safely and efficiently. "We go in first and build our scaffold and all the other trades are standing there waiting for us to finish then they rush in and do their job then we rush back and take it all down," explains Chris.

While the majority of Chris's apprenticeship has focused on scaffolding he assures that there are many other areas for carpenters to get into. He himself worked on framing for the Church of Latterday Saints in Hamilton and did trim work in Limeridge Mall. And of course there is always concrete forming work to be done on new buildings.

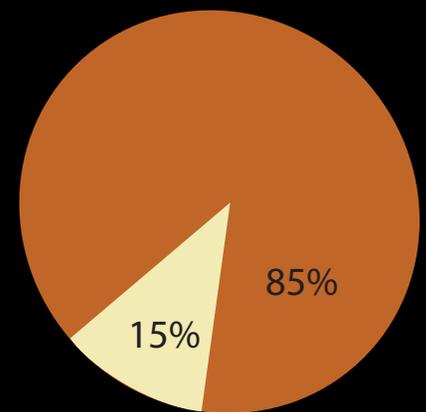
Of the workload Chris says, "It's either feast or famine. When we work we work like crazy. Then there's times of year when you get laid off and you can either work on the side or rely on your savings." While carpentry workers can face layoffs he says that nearly half of the journey



men carpenters he knows maintain their own private businesses on the side ensuring that there's always work. "I know carpenters are seasonal but there's always going to be a job for a carpenter," he says.

## Job Prospects

With the current rate of construction developments and the quickly decreasing numbers of skilled tradespeople all fields of carpentry will see a steady increase in demand for skilled workers.



In the next 10 years the construction industry will have to replace approximately 7200 or 15% of retiring carpenters.

# CSC: Making Trades Accessible

Job searchers and career counsellors are now armed with a new tool when searching for career and apprenticeship information. The Construction Sector Council of Canada, in consultation with Aboriginal Human Resources Agreement (AHRDA) Holders and with information provided by industry, resources has developed [aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca](http://aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca), a trade focused website to promote the trades to the Aboriginal community. "It provides a complete picture of the industry and the skilled trades," says Alan Page, project manager for the Construction Sector Council (CSC).

Originally intended as a site dedicated to promoting the Ironworker Aboriginal Career Awareness campaign the

site was revised after AHRDA's were seeking information for all construction trades. Career counsellors especially will benefit from the in-depth and clear information about the construction industry when promoting the trades to their clients.

While it is intended for Aboriginal people looking to get into the trades the site's quick overview of the various sectors and components of the industry will be useful to anyone interested in construction. It encompasses 38 trades with profiles of various apprentices and tradespeople as well as stories of Aboriginal oriented construction projects. "There are so many talented Aboriginal people currently working in the construction industry and so many interesting stories to tell that the site could have a running section with new profiles every month," explains Alan.

Whether you're looking to get into the trades or a career counsellor looking to promote trades to your clients the [aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca](http://aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca) website provides the main answers to key questions about the trades. This tool can take you from getting started to exploring future career paths in the construction industry. According to Alan there are two main things he finds essential about the site, "One is the chance to see what a trade looks like and the second is to be able to easily explore some associated trades." The job prospects section is also an important tool as it provides information on the future demand for a particular trade in each province.

Visit [aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca](http://aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca) and take the Test Your Construction IQ quiz and see if a career in the trades is right for you.

## Apprenticeship Resources

**Construction Sector Council of Canada**  
[www.csc-ca.org](http://www.csc-ca.org)

**Government of Ontario - Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)

**Careers in Construction**  
[www.careersinconstruction](http://www.careersinconstruction)

**Canadian Apprenticeship Forum's Apprentice Trades**  
[www.apprenticetrades.ca](http://www.apprenticetrades.ca)

**Tradeability**  
[www.tradeability.ca](http://www.tradeability.ca)

