



## HAAMB Builds a Stronger Workforce



When the call for proposals came out in May 2010 under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and University's Projects in Emerging Sectors for Aboriginal People, the Huron Area Aboriginal Management Board knew just what to submit. "Over the years we've had a lot of interest from clients who wanted to look into trades but didn't know how to get into them," explains Pam Keeshig, executive director for Huron Area Aboriginal Management Board (HAAMB). With grant assistance, HAAMB is offering 15 apprentices the chance to experience various trades through a pre-apprenticeship training program.

"Funding we get through the AHRDA isn't always enough so the grants we are receiving save us money on our existing budget already committed to other interventions. If I had 15 applicants who wanted to pursue apprenticeship our budget wouldn't have afforded it," she says.

With over 35 applicants for the program the demand for trades opportunities is evident throughout Bruce County, a community roughly two hours from major urban centres. In partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), Georgian College, and Bruce Power, HAAMB is hoping to build a stronger skill force by introducing hopeful apprentices to the world of trades. "They'll be job ready once they're done. The program provides them

with the opportunity to see what it's like to work in a unionized environment and to work in a skilled trades environment," says Keeshig.

HAAMB isn't alone in pushing the trades to build a stronger community. The program received support from the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC), a committee formed by equal representation from the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of Plumbers and Pipefitters Industry of the United States and Canada (UA Local 67) and the Mechanical Contractors Association of Hamilton. The JATC stepped forward offering partnership, provided curriculum, as well as training in their facility in Brantford, Ontario.

The program began in September 2010 and continues until March 2011. Participants received four weeks of mechanical math skills at Georgian College before being relocated to the UA Local 67's training facility in Brantford for 70 days of training by union hall members. Training encompasses major skill sets including: basic safety, propane, fall arrest, tow motor, broderon, rigging and hoisting, and WHIMIS. More rigorous training is provided in welding and steam fitting, both for 25 days. Finally, participants will complete a four-week placement at the Power Workers Union at Bruce Power located within Bruce County.

"Once they've acquired skill sets for these apprenticeships there are different opportunities they can seek out," says Keeshig. The trades provide the opportunity for mobility. While there are ample jobs for tradespeople in Bruce county, Keeshig says, trades provide those who want to leave home the opportunity to work anywhere. "We do have a large nuclear facility here that's within driving distance for work and a lot of work comes through the union for that plant. If our population is skilled they will be eligible for meaningful work in the area," she says.

HAAMB is continuously working to create opportunities for clients within Bruce County. They've developed meaningful partnerships with Georgian College and positive relationships with other training organizations like the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. "There's a shortage and [the Aboriginal] population is the fastest growing," she says.



# Apprenticeship Feature Shaping the World

The ability to visualize shapes in simple materials isn't something everyone possesses. But for sheet metal workers who must interpret blue prints to create everything from heating and ventilation systems to roofing, siding and shelving units, it's second nature.

A steady hand is required for precision cutting in this versatile trade. Sheet metal workers are continually upgrading their skills as new technology emerges incorporating laser and plasma cutting equipment.

Sheet metal workers form the world around us with the fruits of their labours evident in vents carrying heat from room-to-room, the siding on our houses, and work surfaces and equipment in restaurants and hospitals.

Sheet metal workers require highly specialized and up-to-date skills, which are used in-shop, and on-site to design, fabricate, assemble, install and repair sheet metal and plastic. Using light metal working tools such as shears, brakes, punches and drill presses, they cut, bend, punch, drill, shape and straighten sheet metal to create intricate products.

## The Life of a Sheet Metal Worker

### Work Environment

Sheet metal workers are found both indoors and out depending on the task. Some work is completed within a shop while installation and repairs are often done on site. In this trade, workers generally operate on a standard 40-hour workweek, though peak periods will provide opportunities for overtime. As many ventilation systems are several feet in the air, sheet metal workers must be prepared to work at considerable heights and lift heavy materials and equipment.

### Job Prospects

Sheet metal work is a stable industry with an ongoing need for certified trades people. They are employed in a variety of industries including: manufacturing, construction, metal fabrication and railway.

### Are You the Right Fit?

Do you have the steady hand and precision needed to join sheet metal parts using sophisticated tools? Can you visualize the shape and dimensions of an object using blueprints? If you're 16 years of age with a Grade 12 education, you could join the ranks of men and women who grind and buff seams and join metal parts using welding and soldering equipment in a number of industries.

### How Much Can You Earn?

Sheet metal workers can expect to make between \$21 and \$32 an hour depending on experience, contract, collective agreements, and economic conditions and area of expertise. Apprentices will make a percentage of the journeyperson's rate, usually 50-60 per cent in their first year and go up in wages at each level of apprenticeship.

### Where Will it Take You?

Sheet metal workers are valuable employees in a number of trades including but not limited to:

- Plumbing, Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning Construction (HVAC) firms
- Primary steel producers
- Metal producers
- Stamping press and coated metal products companies
- Aircraft and parts manufacturers
- Building construction firms

They may also specialize in ornamental work, weatherproofing or systems balancing.

### Education/Training

To become a sheet metal worker you should have your secondary school diploma with credits in math, English and science before entering an apprenticeship of 9000 hours.

# Fate Opens Door to Apprenticeship

An accident and chance led to 32-year-old Lee Hill of Six Nations, embarking on a career as a sheet metal worker. Hill started out his trades career in ironwork, working alongside his dad but eventually felt the tug to strike out on his own. “I figured I had to get out and see the rest of Canada,” he says.

Hill decided to pursue employment in Alberta and settled in Edmonton working various jobs unrelated to construction. Finally, he found a position working as a laborer in a sheet metal shop, cleaning and loading trucks. However, tragedy struck when Hill suffered an accident while out mountain biking. “I got hit by a truck. I was laid up for three months with a broken collar bone so with all that spare time I figured I might as well sign up for an apprenticeship,” he explains. With the help of his employer and support from Grand River Employment and Training, Hill turned an unfortunate event into an opportunity and began training as a sheet metal worker apprentice.

Like most trades, Hill says he likes the hands-on aspect of the work. In the shop he receives orders on drawings which he must then recreate in metal. “I do a flat pattern of whatever I have to make and then cut it out and weld it or rivet it, there’s bending involved or rolling if it is a circular object,” he says. Unexpectedly though, he’s discovered an interest in the science behind Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning, commonly called HVAC. “I’m kind of interested in the way that air moves and things like that and with ironworking experience and welding experience, I didn’t do too bad in the shop either,” he says.

Sheet metal work is a versatile trade that can take you into many different industries. They are found in shops, on construction sites and in custom stainless shops building everything from air conditioning ducts to restaurant and hospital equipment. Through the shop in Edmonton, Hill worked mostly on sheet metal products for heating and air conditioning systems, including on site installation. “That was the main thing that I was in but I had about two or three years in a sheet metal shop and I worked in a custom stainless shop for about three months and then the rest of it was mainly installation of heating and air conditioning,” explains Hill.

For those looking for a trade with a bit of a daring side, sheet metal work can take you to surprising places. Hill found himself 120 feet in the air installing oversized duct



work at a sulfur extraction plant in Fort McMurray. “There was a lot of crane work and the size of the air handling units were the size of a house pretty much. Each piece of the duct that we were putting up was probably close to 800 lbs per piece,” explains Hill. With experience in Ironwork, Hill says, “The height thing doesn’t bug me. It’s kind of in my blood.”

Hill is home now on Six Nations where there are plenty of opportunities in the surrounding areas. After eight years as a sheet metal worker, Hill encourages others to follow his lead and look into the trades as a career. “The industry right now is really hurting for people to take on trades. There is a huge gap. There are lots of people in the 20 to 30 year old age range then there’s a good 20 year gap and you’re looking at 50 to 60 year olds,” he says. For the most part he says, “It’s a good trade to be in. There are a lot of places to go. It takes discipline, being there, getting up, and going every day. Even people who have great jobs, have bad days.”



# CAAR Program Offers Training Insights

March 2010 saw the completion of a project, which brought new opportunities into Ontario's northern communities. The Centre for Aboriginal Apprenticeship Research (CAAR) offered First Nation communities the chance to participate in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training in an otherwise remote and employment challenged area.

Produced by the Sioux Lookout Area Aboriginal Management Board (SLAAMB), the project brought fresh skills to the economy of the 30 surrounding communities. Located approximately 400 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay, SLAAMB's service area encompasses 24 First Nations and six Native organizations.

As an opportunity to learn and work within the community, the CAAR program attracted those individuals not comfortable or able to leave their communities. Web-based training and video conferencing coupled with online coaching overcame barriers and were essential in remote areas only accessible by air. In total, the program produced six journeyman carpenters and two journeyman electricians, bringing much needed skills to the communities. As well, the program supported the construction of the Sioux Lookout Health Centre (Meno-Ya-Win) which opened its doors mid October and the new hostel slated for opening in December.

As a pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training module, the initiative provided valuable insight into training techniques for First Nations in remote communities. It identified ways

to maximize training and employment opportunities and developed tools to support the recruitment and retention of First Nations people in the skilled trades.

The initiative was funded by Human Resources Social Development Canada and supported by numerous partners including 15 trades unions, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Job Connect, three tribal councils and the construction project managers of both the health centre and hostel.

Every year the numbers of skilled trades people dwindle. Programs like CAAR ensure Canada's strong trades workforce by identifying solutions to recruit and retain Aboriginal people. SLAAMB continues to seek out opportunities to improve their economy through apprenticeship training.

## Partners

## in Apprenticeship



Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada



Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada