

Hammer Heads Offers Hope



In Toronto, Ontario, the areas of Jane and Finch, Regent Park and Parkdale carry a certain stigma for the residents within. Known as high risk areas where gun violence and drug dealing is common, youth growing up in these communities are often deemed as troubled and face extra challenges when seeking employment. Thanks to the Hammer Heads program, a twelve-week skill and employment-based training program, high priority men and women between the ages of 18 and 26 are experiencing career opportunities in the construction industry for the first time.

A partnership between the City of Toronto and the Central Ontario Building Trades, Hammer Heads provides skill development, job coaching, and safety training, and exposes participants to multiple construction trades. With hands-on learning at various affiliate training centres located throughout the Greater Toronto Area, Hammer Heads links youth to the 28 unions and major contractors connected to the Central Ontario Building Trades

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“The success is in the cooperation of the unions themselves,” says Osborne Farrell, job developer for Miziwe Biik. As an Aboriginal employment and training provider, Miziwe Biik became involved with the Hammer Heads as a way to encourage their own youth to seek out careers in the trades. “Due to the nature of the programs we offer here it was a no-brainer to get ourselves involved in regards to recommending Aboriginal youth to the Hammer Heads program,” explains Farrell. Miziwe Biik offers their own ongoing carpentry program and with an overwhelming interest Farrell found it imperative to seek out other programming.

With a pre-established commitment to the City of Toronto due to funding requirements, Miziwe Biik found it a minor leap to connect the dots to the Hammer Heads program. In early 2011, Miziwe Biik established a relationship to gain Aboriginal representation within the program. “What they were overlooking is that Aboriginal youth are spread out throughout all those high risk neighbourhoods and we have a lot of at-risk youth and we thought that it would be good if we could do an intake process for the Aboriginal clientele,” says Farrell.

Miziwe Biik has successfully put four Aboriginal youth through the Hammer Heads program, an impressive number considering the overwhelming applications and the program's small participant capacity. “It's quite remarkable if you see the amount of interest from the city alone, not to mention the Aboriginal youth but city-wide how many applicants they get and see that already in the second program we've sent in four people, that's amazing. We're talking about thousands of applications that are coming through the Hammer Heads process and they only have room for 17 people,” says Farrell.

As well as construction trades awareness training, the Hammer Heads program focuses on job coaching to support youth, an ingredient Farrell believes is key to success. “Their lives don't just end at the end of classes, they go back to their families and they go back to those high priority neighbourhoods where there's gun violence and drug dealing and all this other stuff and they need somebody to talk with, they need somebody to identify with them and basically tell them that's not you, just keep coming to school and keep doing your thing and you will succeed,” he says.

Farrell himself identifies with the youth going through the program saying, “I did come from one of those high priority neighbourhoods, and it's very hard and I wish they had programs like that when I was younger, it would have been a lot easier. There's a lot of good people who live in these high priority neighbourhoods but they're overlooked because of the fact of the name that's attached.”

Apprenticeship Feature

Hoist your Career

Are you looking a bit of spice in your work life? Have you been bitten by the travel bug? Can you handle being responsible for those working around you? Crane operators have one of the most exciting and versatile jobs in construction trades.

Crane operators are responsible for operating and directing the work of heavy machines capable of lifting, moving, and positioning large construction objects and often other machinery. They are often found at industrial sites, shipyards, railway yards, surface mines and other similar locations.

Crane operators can be found on many types of work sites from new home building, to heavy industrial work and civil engineering.

As a crane operator you are responsible not only for your own work but ensuring the safety of tradespeople on the site



around you. For this reason crane operators must assume a high role of responsibility on every job site.

The Life of a Crane Operator

Work Environment

Crane operators go where the work is. Travel is a big part of their life with most living away from home for long periods of time. For those seeking to see the world around them, a crane operator career is ideal. Trades people work almost exclusively outdoors and must work closely with other trades people working around them.

Are You the Right Fit?

Are you a team player? Can you take charge and handle instructing not only your immediate coworkers but other trades people on a site? Do you communicate well and have the ability to follow instructions? Cranes can be an essential part of a job site but have the potential to cause harm when those working around them are unskilled in safety practices. Crane operators must have good judgement to maintain the safety of themselves, their crane and those working around them.

Education/Training

To become an apprentice crane operator you must have a minimum Grade 10 education. Following a three to four year apprenticeship program you require certification within Ontario to operate a crane. Crane operators must stay current. As machines become more modernized with sophisticated mechanics and computers, operators must keep up-to-date.

How Much Can You Earn?

Apprentices will make a percentage of the journey person's rate, usually 50-60 per cent in their first year and go up in wages at each level. Crane operators can expect to make \$22-\$34 hourly depending on experience, contract, company, economic conditions and area of expertise.

Types of Cranes

Telescopic Crane – consists of a boom with tubes fitted one inside the other

extended by a hydraulic mechanism which extends or retracts the tubes to increase or decrease the length of the boom.

Boom Truck – available in medium, heavy and wellhead. They are capable of moving heavy loads.

Mobile Crane – A basic crane consisting of a steel truss or telescopic boom mounted to a mobile platform.

Tower Crane – Usually fixed to the ground, a tower crane gives extended height and lifting capacity. These are the types of cranes usually seen in the construction of tall buildings.

Job Prospects

Employment for this occupation is above average with employers expected to actively seek workers well into 2019.

FAMILY MAN TAKES HIS CAREER TO NEW HEIGHTS



“It takes a different kind of guy to want to go and have that kind of responsibility,” says 29-year-old Greg Corston, a first year mobile crane apprentice. “If something happens on a job site involving a crane, whether the operator was responsible or not he will always get the blame. That’s just the way it works.” With that level of responsibility it’s a wonder anyone undertakes the training to control the powerful rigs which build cities, but the men and women in the mobile crane business are a different breed.

Leadership, integrity and a keen eye are the skills demanded of a job which affects all other trades people on a site. “You definitely have to know when to step in, especially when it’s a group of guys you’re not familiar with because they’ll do things around the cranes that you’re not supposed to do so you kind of have to teach them in a way,” explains Greg.

Handling heavy equipment is quite a change for Greg, a member of Moose Cree First Nation, who was previously employed as a security guard at a Polar Bear habitat in Cochrane, Ontario. “The opportunity came up and I wanted to try, I’ve always enjoyed challenging myself with different careers because I was never really happy with the work that I was doing,” he says.

Taking a chance on a new opportunity, Greg went through the testing and completed an AZ course in Morrisburg, Ontario before moving on to Oakville to the Operating Engineers Training Institute of Ontario. Now he is successfully

employed and working on the Ontario Power Generation's Lower Mattagami River Project north of Kapuskasing.

Greg admits he's still pretty green, but is picking up the tricks of the trade quickly. “I do a lot of pre-op with the crane. I work with my operator and basically I’m the eyes and ears for him when he’s operating,” says Greg. While Level 1 apprentices don’t usually get much seat time, Greg has been fortunate to have the confidence of his crew. “The guys that I’ve been working with have said I’ve been doing very well and I’ve been given a lot of seat time. They’re helpful, they do push you and challenge you but you have to have the willingness to learn from them.”

While he’s been enjoying the challenge of the trade Greg does feel the cost of a life on the road. “You miss a lot from home, you basically go where the work is needed so being away from the family is always hard,” he says. With six children, including one under one years old, being so far away means sacrificing not only time but seeing much of his son’s first year.

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So what is it about the job that makes it worth the sacrifice? According to Greg, it’s the challenge and variety of work which keeps him going. “For me that’s the most important thing is to stay on top of my toes, especially with the safety factors that are involved, there’s a lot of responsibility. I’ve always enjoyed being in charge so the responsibility there is very important to me,” he says.

Greg has about 300 more hours before he moves up to Level 2 in his apprenticeship and so far the future is looking bright. While he says he doesn’t dwell much on the future and focuses on enjoying himself and learning what he can for that day he says someday he would love to have his sons apprenticing for him.

It's a WRAP!

Any good chef knows you need to put quality ingredients into the mix if you want to bake a cake successfully. In employment and training the same rules apply but the ingredients are in the form of willing participants, proven curriculum and community support. Grand River Employment and Training (GREAT) in partnership with the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council incorporated the lessons learned from other training programs to create the right blend for the Work Ready Aboriginal People program (WRAP).

Based on the successful Hammer Heads program out of Toronto, WRAP consisted of 12 weeks of safety and trades training with an additional six weeks of upgrading for specialized trades like electrical. "They were having a lot of success with that program and we thought it's very similar to the client group we're working with in terms of multi-barriered clients," explains Brandy Jonathon, project coordinator. Many clients she sees know they want to be in the trades but don't know how to get involved or specifically which trade they want to enter due to lack of exposure. With 12 different trades covered throughout the program, Brandy says it's a real eye opener for participants in terms of what different trades do and the education required to get into them.

Funded through Aboriginal Education, the WRAP program received a great deal of community support, which allowed funding dollars to reach even further. Thanks to the support of the Six Nations Police who provided a van and driver, participants traveled to different union training facilities across Southern Ontario for their training. "The transportation costs we were looking at in terms of renting a bus was around \$25,000 whereas this way we partnered with Six Nations Police, they provided us with the van as well as the driver and what we paid for out of the contract was for the driver and the gas money," says Brandy.

As well as community support, WRAP found enthusiastic supporters in the unions who provided the training. The unions, which already offer their own apprenticeship



training following a specific curriculum, were surprisingly accommodating in terms of allowing WRAP participants into their classes. "I couldn't ask to work with a better group in terms of them saying what can we do and how can we help you," says Brandy.

Begun on September 15, 2012, WRAP trained a total of 15 participants, though due to transportation limitations, only 12 went through the full trades training. Throughout the program, participants received a number of safety certificates and exposure to trades such as steam fitting and plumbing, electrical, iron working, masonry, heavy equipment, painting and glazing, sheet metal, carpentry, millwrights, and construction craft worker. "They have all the certificates they need to go on a job site right now," says Brandy.

While the program has now wrapped up Brandy is hopeful that they will find the funding to put another group through. "It should be run again because I think it provides exposure for people who might not know what they want to do and I think that a lot of our people are hands-on learners and this is the perfect opportunity for them to gain some exposure."

Will Pipe Dreams Go Down the Drain?



From the outside, 105 Middleton Street in Brantford, Ontario doesn't look like much, but the heart of the building is teeming with activity as pre-apprenticeship students hone their welding skills through the Pipe Dreams School of Welding. An initiative of the Niagara Peninsula Area Aboriginal Management Board and the UA67 welders union out of Hamilton, Pipe Dreams is geared towards Aboriginal youth looking to enter a welding apprenticeship.

Started in late 2010, under the coordination of Cathy General, Pipe Dreams has recruited 74 participants with 53 successfully completing the program and entering the workforce. Initially a 13-week course focused on obtaining Canadian Welding Bureau (CWB) certification for flat, horizontal and vertical up, the training was expanded to 16 weeks to incorporate testing for all position, MIG and flux core training. "The school and union recognized the need for more training to get jobs and added the CWB MIG testing as well as forklift operators certification," says General, adding, "For 16 weeks it's a great bang for your buck, and the skill sets the union provides are excellent." In addition to extensive welding training, participants receive WHIMIS training and a variety of safety skill sets. "The more we provide the trainees the less the employer has to worry about," she says.

For all its success, the Pipe Dreams program is now facing termination due to a lack of funding. Originally funded through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) program under a two and a half year contribution agreement, Pipe Dreams has not been extended and is now seeking funding from industry partners and the private

sector. Niagara Peninsula Area Aboriginal Management Board (NPAAMB) executive director Sherry Lickers says this is a common problem for Aboriginal skills and training programs. "Our Aboriginal people are disappointed because programs get started up and closed as soon as they begin. This is what we're faced with now, another disappointment because it is a really good program," she says.

As of March 31st, Pipe Dreams is initiating an exit strategy and winding down a program which has provided not only employment benefits to Aboriginal youth but increased the workforce in Brantford and the surrounding area. "The results are tremendous, it speaks for itself, it needs to continue. It's employing people and the employers are local here, it's amazing how much work is available in this whole region," says General. "We've had some of our young welders between 20 and 25 actually get jobs, good paying jobs, been able to support their families and they've also moved onto supervisory levels," says Lickers.

With the Canadian government's recent announcement to push forward with the Alberta Pipeline to sell oil to the United States, Lickers sees a true need for qualified trades people. "With the state of the economy and the jobs that are being lost this would be a good opportunity for the federal government to re-fund this program. Specifically this one because when our youth are finished they can be stick, TIG or MIG and depending on their skill level the union can advance their training," she says. General agrees, arguing that many employers are searching overseas for welding professionals when they could be cultivating them here in Canada. "We have 53 employed in the welding industry, we're contributing and globally the work is going to be there down the road from coast-to-coast with welders at the heart of it," says General.

With support from employers and participants who've seen the benefits of the program, Pipe Dreams, along with NPAAMB and the UA67 presented their case at a conference on February 6th to garner financial support. "It's our last ditch effort to attract potential industry partnerships from private and public sector, just to make them aware, show them our model, what we have and that it works," says General. "We would like to approach Debeers and those types of people to see if they could supply funding to keep this initiative going," adds Lickers.

March 31st will be a sad day for Pipe Dreams if the program falls to the wayside but General is confident that the benefit to the industry, the city and the clients will speak for itself. "I see a lot of Aboriginal organizations spend thousands of dollars on employment and training but the bottom line is what are the results. You can have the best training but are they working, because that's what you want as a result and we can say, yes they are."

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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. LINK = Aboriginal Supply + Construction Demand is an AABO initiative and works directly with AHRDA's, Employers, and Apprentices to become a sponsoring agent and indenture Aboriginal clients who enter into apprenticeships.



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