



One Solution

This comprehensive session highlighted the idea of the Aboriginal population as One Solution to meeting the skills shortage in the Construction Trades in Ontario. One of the major trends of the construction industry is the need for skilled workers. Presenter Regional Chief Angus Toulous of the Chiefs of Ontario discussed the need for the provincial government and industry to continue to support AABO to continue to build beneficial partnerships which result in skilled workers. Further, chronic underfunding of First Nation education is damaging the Aboriginal community making it impossible to prepare for careers. There is a critical need to collaborate and find means to incorporate measures to make First Nations students at all ages aware of careers in trades.

Supply Meeting Construction Demand: Past, Present, and Future

John Beck has 45 years in the industry with AECON, one of the most diverse operations in Canada. Through his experience he has found there is nothing more important than building relationships and partnerships. Looking to the future there are four trends developing that will shape the industry and apprenticeship stakeholders must prepare for:

- A period of strong demand
- Greater reliance on private sector investment
- Growing reliance on partnerships
- A period of labour shortage

Whether or not the industry and Aboriginal organizations can rise up to meet the challenge will determine the levels of future development.

LINK = Aboriginal Supply + Construction Demand

Presented by Brian Pelletier of the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario, the LINK = Aboriginal Supply + Construction Demand session focused on the approach to LINK through developing a sustained collaborative working relationship amongst the 17 ASETAs.

With planned pilot sites in Toronto and Thunder Bay, LINK is intended to support the work of the ASETAs through increased partnerships. Each LINK office will work with the ASETAs and industry to determine how to connect the Aboriginal supply with the construction demand within their individual regions, and create and implement Aboriginal recruitment strategies. Further, LINK will create and expand marketing opportunities for Aboriginal clients to obtain employment in construction and the trades.

LINK will not replace the ASETAs but will increase their access to opportunities by creating a central point of contact for employers, making them more likely to reach out. While the ASETAs will still continue their own programming in terms of apprenticeship coordination, LINK will offer a 1-800 number which is hoped to attract even more employers and create other partnerships.

Since its establishment in 2009, AABO has operated without a budget. Moving into the future and implementing LINK will require funding and AABO is seeking funds to hire and pilot the program.





Barrier Busting

Identifying well documented barriers Aboriginal people face in regards to entering the trades, such as stereotypes, gender issues, lack of training and geographical location, this session explored the ways in which individuals and organizations are overcoming these barriers in their own communities.

Presenters John Wabb of the Canadian Union of Skilled Workers (CUSW) and Gina Simon – John Wabb of CUSW introduced Gina Simon and her presentation View from the Top. As an electrical tradesperson, Gina Simon, from Wik-wemikong, shared her experiences overcoming discouragement and making her way as a successful apprentice. As a female in the trades she feels that women often have to prove themselves on male dominated sites. However, she feels women on sites raise the bar for all tradespeople. She works as hard as her male counterparts and finds the trades to be a confidence builder.

ENABLE - Presenter Paul Giles of Hardy Giles Consulting presented the ENABLE skills development program put through by the Union of Ontario Indians Anishinabek Employment and Training Services. Standing for Empowering Northern Aboriginal People By Eliminating Employment Barriers, ENABLE overcame barriers with unique techniques like having participants set their own goals, creating individualized training plans and promoting strong support systems.

Hammer Heads/WRAP - Erin Monture of Grand River Employment and Training (GREAT) introduced the Work Ready Aboriginal People (WRAP) program. Modelled on the successful Hammer Heads program, WRAP partnered with unions to offer a thorough look at the various careers the trades have to offer.

Aboriginal Recruitment and Assessment Strategies

Being an experienced tradesperson doesn't mean you'll automatically get the job. What makes one person stand out over another. Through this workshop, presenters Al Page of the Construction Sector Council, Ron Sarazin of Gezhtoojig Employment and Training and Guy Freedman of Nation Media + Design Ltd discussed Aboriginal Recruitment and assessment strategies ASETAs can use.

Al Page – Private Sector Consultant - Through his experience Al Page has found that when employers need to recruit they choose the simplest process possible. Posting a job opportunity can result in hundreds of applications which then need to be weeded through, costing the employer valuable time and money. That's why employers often rely on referrals from other workers or partnerships with employment agencies. In order to get first access to these jobs it's important for ASETAs to develop partnerships. How do you do this? Understand the industry, be aware of local opportunities and know local employers. By developing key partnerships you'll be in the know when a job is available.

Ron Sarazin – Gezhtoojig Employment and Training - As an employment and training organization, Ron Sarazin has found that the best way to promote the Aboriginal talent pool is through partnerships. Through AABO, sitting on various boards, the unions, and interacting with local companies, Gezhtoojig has maintained and developed new partnerships. Because of these key contacts employers now contact them when they need to hire. The more they partner the better chance they have to develop and prepare applicants employers want.

Guy Freedman – Nation Media + Design Ltd. - Hired by AABO to develop a communications strategy to get Aboriginal people in the trades, Guy Freedman actually has a background in mining from his hometown of Flin Flon, Manitoba. Speaking of his own experiences, he's seen first hand the importance of building and maintaining a good work reputation. Be on time, learn how to work and keep it together because your reputation on one job site can follow you to another and make or break you.

