



NEWS RELEASE  
COMMUNIQUÉ

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Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation

### **Funding and research support Aboriginal trades training**

VANCOUVER – Aboriginal trades training in B.C. received a major boost today after a significant funding and research announcement was made by Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Mary Polak at an Industry Training Authority-sponsored National Aboriginal Day celebration at Klahowya Village in Stanley Park.

A total of \$2.2 million in funding will be provided to ITA through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement this year for trades training programs for Aboriginal people. The training will be delivered by First Nations and other agency providers to an estimated 350 participants in more than two dozen communities in B.C. through ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives program.

Polak also announced funding under the federal-provincial Labour Market Partnerships Program for a \$200,000 research project that ITA will undertake to identify barriers that limit the success of Aboriginal people entering and completing skilled trades certification.

ITA CEO Kevin Evans says the funding and research are two significant strides forward in the organization's efforts to increase Aboriginal participation in the trades.

Since 2006, Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship training has increased by 118 per cent. Last year, ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives program served 21 communities across the province, resulting in 355 Aboriginal people being ready for trades employment.

Aboriginal tradesperson David Ward is an example of how well the program is working and the positive benefits it is providing to workers and their families. Ward is a 36-year-old first-year apprentice sheet metal worker from the Kaska Dene and Taku River Tlingit First Nations. He took a Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement funded sheet metal foundation program through ACCESS Trades, and is now working fulltime as an apprentice.

The announcements were made during a National Aboriginal Day celebration sponsored by ITA, Aboriginal Tourism (AtBC) and Fortis BC. The event welcomed more than 100 representatives from Aboriginal employment and training organizations, industry, labour, government and local First Nations.

The celebration featured speeches from Polak, ITA Aboriginal Initiatives director Gary McDermott, ITA CEO Kevin Evans and AtBC CEO Keith Henry. An opening prayer was delivered by Elder Marge George of the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation and a cultural performance was given by Le-La-La Dancers.

ITA is a provincial crown agency responsible for managing and expanding B.C.'s industry training and apprenticeship system to ensure we have enough skilled workers to support B.C.'s future prosperity.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development–**

“Aboriginal communities, with their young and vibrant populations, play an important role in the long-term viability of Canada’s workforce. Through the Canada-B.C. Labour Market Agreement, we are helping Aboriginal people get the training they need to get good jobs and build better futures.”

##### **Pat Bell, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation –**

“The programs provided by this funding will help empower people to better reach their full potential through skills training. It will lead to new and better jobs that will benefit families and communities in all regions of British Columbia.”

##### **Mary Polak, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –**

“The Industry Training Authority understands the importance and potential of Aboriginal people in B.C.’s workforce. This funding and research will give more Aboriginal people the opportunity to build their skills, in order to get the jobs they want; and that’s something that will benefit families and communities in all regions of B.C.”

##### **Kevin Evans, CEO of ITA –**

“We know the skilled trades are particularly attractive to Aboriginal people. Many Aboriginal communities are located close to major provincial construction projects and the hands-on approach to the trades and apprenticeships offers components that are consistent with the values of many Aboriginal cultures. We need to continue to ensure Aboriginal people have access to training and assessment that is, flexible and responsive to their needs.”

##### **David Ward, first-year Aboriginal sheet metal apprentice –**

“My time with ACCESS Trades has been thoroughly helpful in starting my career in Sheet Metal. I feel I’ve been blessed having my BCIT tuition and books paid so I can learn as much as possible in my first year of apprenticeship training! I have been installing slab duct, and over head ducts in a high rise in Richmond. Now I have a job working towards my goal of becoming a Red Seal Journeyman and have the opportunity of moving ahead in my life with a secure feeling!”

## **Background:**

### **Labour Market Agreement –**

Under the Canada-B.C. Labour Market Agreement (LMA), the Government of Canada is providing the province approximately \$66 million annually until 2013-14.

Through a variety of programs, these funds increase access to skills training for unemployed people who are not currently Employment Insurance clients, including those who are under-represented in the labour market. Funding also supports training for employed individuals who are low-skilled, do not have a high school diploma or recognized certification to reach their full potential in the current marketplace.

### **ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives –**

Since April 2008, ITA has leveraged LMA funding to deliver programming for under-represented groups including Aboriginal Initiatives. Together with industry and employers, ITA partners with First Nations communities, Aboriginal training organizations and providers to deliver pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs across the province.

### **Aboriginal Apprenticeship Research Project – Barriers for Aboriginal People in the Skilled Trades –**

The purpose of the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Research Project is to conduct and share relevant research that identifies and recommends actions to reduce barriers and increase the number of Aboriginal people in the skilled trades. The research will also examine other successful models of preparing Aboriginal people for the skilled trades as well as identify best practices designed to reduce or eliminate employer and industry barriers to recruiting and retaining Aboriginal people in apprenticeship skilled trades programs.

Led by ITA's Aboriginal Initiatives program, the research project will take approximately one year to complete and is being funded through the Labour Market Partnerships Program under the Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement.

## **Quick Facts:**

- British Columbia has more than 38,000 apprentices, youth and pre-apprenticeship participants.
- B.C. now has more than 9,800 apprenticeship employer/sponsors in B.C., up 46 per cent from 2004.
- Last year, ITA issued more than 7,300 Certificates of Qualifications, up 208 per cent from 2004.
- The number of Aboriginal people in the trades has grown over the last four years by 118 per cent..

**Learn More:**

Industry Training Authority: [www.itabc.ca](http://www.itabc.ca)

2010/2011 Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement Industry Training Authority Success Report ([www.itabc.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=2116](http://www.itabc.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=2116)) highlights ITA programs delivered to British Columbia's with funding provided by the LMA during the 2010/2011 fiscal year.

Skills for Growth: [www.workbc.ca/docs/Skills\\_for\\_Growth\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.workbc.ca/docs/Skills_for_Growth_Strategy.pdf) is British Columbia's labour market strategy, helping to ensure B.C. has the right people with the right skills to fill the over one million jobs that will be available by 2010.

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