

LABOUR/ADVANCED EDUCATION--Apprenticeship Program Trains 16  
People in Mi'kmaw Communities

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Sixteen people from Mi'kmaw communities in Cape Breton are receiving specialized apprenticeship training and work experience to achieve Red Seal carpentry certification, filling the need for local carpenters.

The Enhanced Direct Entry Carpentry Program is being led by the Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office with support from the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, the St. Francis Xavier University Extension Department's Centre for Employment Innovation, Nova Scotia Community College, Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat and Cape Breton First Nation communities.

"Apprentices can stay in their communities while learning practical carpentry skills, and complete the required classroom training," said Chief Norman Bernard, Wagmatcook First Nation. "They are learning their trade here at home while helping to address the need for more skilled carpenters in Mi'kmaw communities."

"The program demonstrates how working collaboratively is the way forward to creating a more skilled, resilient, and productive workforce," said Alex Paul, Executive Director, Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office of Nova Scotia. "We have developed a truly innovative initiative that addresses multiple needs in our communities, made possible by leveraging partnerships and programs available within our province."

This winter, participants from Cape Breton First Nation communities started the program with basic carpentry, math and safety training, delivered by the Nova Scotia Community College. Students began work placements this spring and will alternate between classroom-based technical and on-site training until certification is complete. The program also includes weekly communication sessions between participants and workplace mentors during the on-the-job training phase.

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office are overseeing the program including workplace

monitoring, apprenticeship technical training and certification of apprentices.

The New Opportunities for Work program, facilitated by the Centre for Employment Innovation, supports the first two work-terms and some of the required training and wrap-around supports for the apprentices, as well as employer training for diverse and inclusive workplaces. The provincially funded program provides a wage subsidy to employers to help cover wages for two years. It was designed to help create meaningful opportunities for people who are underrepresented in workplaces and connect employers to trained workers.

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will continue to support these apprentices throughout the certification process.

"Hands-on, practical experience is the best training for any job, and the best way for us to learn the carpentry trade," said program participant Richard Benson of Waycobah First Nation. "I am grateful for the opportunity to take my carpentry apprenticeship classroom training and get the necessary work experience in my own community."

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