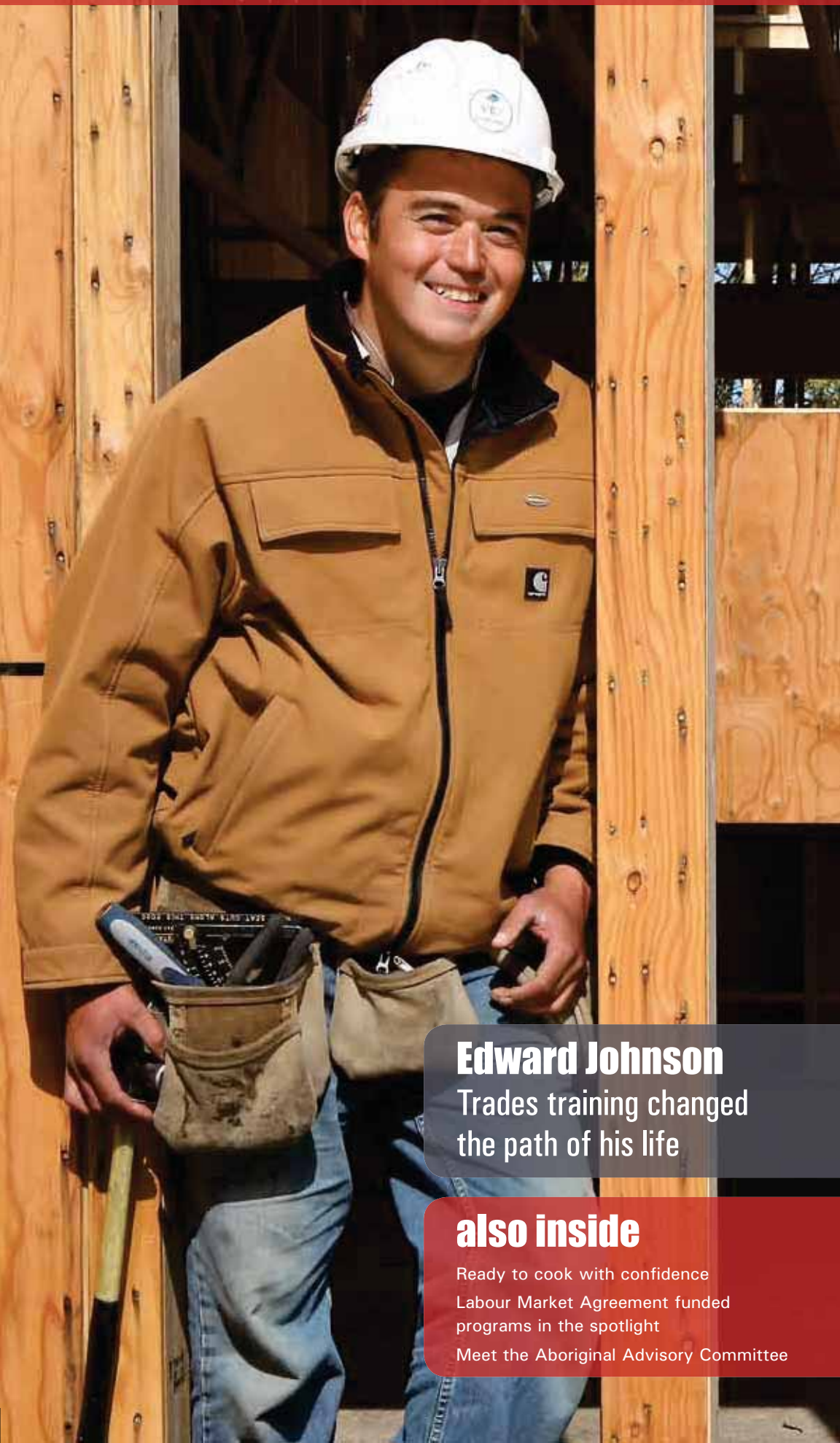


Your Journey Starts Here



Edward Johnson
Trades training changed
the path of his life

also inside

Ready to cook with confidence

Labour Market Agreement funded
programs in the spotlight

Meet the Aboriginal Advisory Committee

Aboriginal Organizations, Industry and Governments Partner to Train Aboriginal People in the Trades



Aboriginal Initiatives

Success Report



ITA Senior Lead, Aboriginal Initiatives, Gary McDermott, (third from right) with Aboriginal tradespeople.

Aboriginal people such as **Edward Johnson**, **Ashley Thomas** and many others have upgraded their skills to become a part of the future of BC's labour force through the Industry Training Authority's Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement (LMA) Funds for Aboriginal people.

Available funding under the LMA for the ITA Aboriginal Initiatives is approximately \$1 million per annum with potential funding per project of up to \$250,000 per annum.

The projects vary in size and assist Aboriginal people to become ready for trades employment. Many students ladder or register directly into a foundation or apprentice program that leads to certification and/or an ITA credential.

The LMA funds focus on supporting Aboriginal people who were ineligible for Employment Insurance benefits and programs, or who were employed and low skilled, lacking a high school diploma, certification or essential skills.

All work with Aboriginal Initiatives is guided by six values that were identified by the Aboriginal Advisory Committee: **Inclusive, Collaborative, Innovative, Outcome Focused, Effective and Respectful.**

In 2009/2010, 16 Aboriginal organizations, in partnership with Aboriginal agencies, training providers and industry, delivered training programs to build essential skills and provide Aboriginal students with the industry-entry training required for the trades.

The result is that more Aboriginal people are getting the support and training they need to contribute towards the strength of British Columbia and the pride of First Nation communities in areas large and small.

BC Communities Served by LMA-funded Programs



"A concerted effort to increase the knowledge and skills of BC's labour force will be critical to improving labour productivity, leading to BC's continued economic prosperity."

*Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement
Annual Plan 2009/10*





An Apprenticeship Journey

“The program was life-changing,” Edward Johnson said about the Aboriginal Construction program at Vancouver Island University (VIU).

Edward completed his Carpentry Level 1 and is a registered Carpenter Apprentice. He was one of the first students hired after completing the ten-month program, employed within two weeks after graduation by PenBay Construction, Nanaimo.

“I made it,” Edward said. “My sense of accomplishment was so exciting. It made me believe in myself and what I am capable of doing. After writing and passing the Carpentry Level 1 exam, I came home to a pile of books spread over the table, left there from studying. My first thought was, ‘I don’t want this learning to end. What’s next?’”

Brad Turner, owner/operator of PenBay Construction, started his career through a similar program at VIU. “Edward reminded me of myself when I first began my career – green, but willing to ask questions,” Brad said. “He came out of the VIU training program with a strong work ethic and good base of essential skills.”

But Edward would not always have been described this way. His learning story begins much differently.

Edward, a 32-year-old, Nuu-chah-nulth father of four, entered the Aboriginal Construction program having never read a book. Yes, he graduated from high school, but describes his years there as “not the greatest.”

"My high school was not the greatest experience for me," Edward said. "I could never read well and I didn't understand why. I just got passed from grade to grade. When I graduated, I did not feel proud. I knew I had never really completed anything. I didn't feel like a grad."

Edward eventually went to work on the West Coast Trail, spending over a decade doing minor construction and trail repairs for Parks Canada.

While he liked the work and being outdoors on a six days-out and 18 days-in camp cycle, the time away from his young, growing children was difficult. "I missed my family," he said.

Still, Edward stuck with the work until an unexpected encounter changed the path of his life and his sense of self.

"I was taking lunch to my wife who was attending the Vancouver Island University," Edward explained. "I happened to walk by the construction site of Shq'apthut, A Gathering Place, and spoke with an employee who told me about the Aboriginal Construction program. I looked into it and knew it was right for me. But I wasn't very happy with the idea of going back to school."

To prepare for the schooling ahead, Edward was first enrolled in Bladerunners, a construction employment readiness program designed to give First Nations people experience and training. Through Bladerunners, Edward was diagnosed as dyslexic. "I finally got the support I needed to help with my reading," Edward said. "And my confidence started to grow." The first book Edward read was a 1000 page carpentry book.



Edward with his employer, Brad Turner, owner of PenBay Construction.

The 10-month program also enhanced Edward's cultural pride. In the first month of the program, students crafted paddles and drums from local yellow cedar.

VIU Construction Instructor, Mike Braun, was impressed by the First Nations traditions that were incorporated into the program. "The students learned a lot of skills from the program but I learned a lot from the students," Mike said. "They opened up their hearts."

VIU's Dean of Trades, Fred MacDonald, agrees. "We graduate students every day on this campus," Fred said. "But this program has been special. It has motivated us to learn more about ways to deliver successful programs like this one for Aboriginal students. The Aboriginal Construction program and the students' work on A Gathering Place has inspired all of us."



Edward with Construction Instructor Mike Braun.

ASHLEY THOMAS Ready to Cook with Confidence

"Cooking was the only part of high school that came naturally to me,"

Ashley Thomas said. "I never liked school and, growing up on the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation near Fraser Lake, I had very little work experience. By the time I graduated, I did not know what I wanted to do with my life and I had no idea what I could do as a career." Now 23, Ashley (Carrier) is excited about her future.

After a move into Prince George, Ashley went to the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association (PGNAETA) to check out job postings. Instead, she discovered the Apprenticeship Access program. She researched several trade options and was thrilled to learn that she could turn her high school interest into an occupation. "I got to job shadow at the College of New Caledonia's (CNC) cooking class. I loved it. The classes were very hands-on. The Chef really encouraged me to follow through on the chance to become certified," Ashley explained. "After spending time at CNC, I could see myself as a Professional Cook."



Ashley Thomas (left) & PGNATEA's Trades Manager, Paula Bellerose (right).

Back at the Apprenticeship Access program, Ashley completed several certificate programs that set her up for success. "The program really built my confidence," Ashley said. "It also helped to be in a class with other people who were like me. We all encouraged one another." Ashley is registered to begin her Professional Cook 1 at CNC in August.

The Apprenticeship Access program in Prince George has a 75% graduation rate for the September to December 2010 intake. According to PGNATEA's Trades Manager, Paula Bellerose, 41% of the students have registered for further courses at CNC, and 16% have registered for trades courses and/or with the Industry Training Authority.

"I guess I needed a push," Ashley said. "The whole experience has pushed me in a positive way."



Make the Earth Move: Heavy Equipment Operator

Heavy Equipment Operators are earthmovers. They work in heavy construction, building roads and clearing land for mining, forestry and mega projects such as hospitals.

Before operating heavy equipment, students train on state-of-the-art Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) simulators. They practice safely in imitation situations, terrains and conditions. HEO students learn how to dig with a backhoe, clear land with loaders and excavators, smooth roads and sites with graders, and transport earth with the articulated truck hauler. They are also trained to be responsible for the basic maintenance and repair of their equipment, ensuring safety on and near it.

Certified HEOs complete four weeks of in-class training and 200 to 600 hours of seat-time on the equipment, plus work experience, which typically takes 10 to 18 months.

In the VanASEP LMA-supported program, students receive an additional six weeks of essential skills training to help them become familiar with construction sites and earn additional certification such as first aid.

These extra qualifications give the VanASEP graduates a better chance of getting hired on projects throughout BC like road and bridge building, hydro projects, new construction sites and above ground mines.

The Heavy Equipment Operator program is available at four locations across the Lower Mainland and Northern Vancouver Island.



Everyday Skills: Residential Building Maintenance Worker

The **Residential Building Maintenance Worker (RBMW)** program teaches students industry standards and practical skills in plumbing, roofing, flooring, heating systems, outdoor power equipment and electrical, to name only a few of the many elements covered in this diverse program.

In addition, students earn certification in first aid, WHMIS and forklift operations and become proficient in trades math, project management, resume writing and other valuable employment skills.

The training offers three levels of certification that enable students to begin employment at any stage. Certified workers have a wide variety of employment opportunities in large and small communities as well as in remote and isolated locations where qualified trades people with a multitude of skills are difficult to find.

Students have found work as Band Maintenance Workers doing general building repairs such as keeping community facilities operating and open and maintaining Elders, seniors and rental homes. Other students have secured work for large companies doing general building maintenance or started their own handyman businesses.

The program was conceived by the Kamloops area First Nations and is now offered through the Secwepemc Aboriginal Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AAIT) organization. LMA dollars then funded Camosun College to deliver the program to Coast Salish First Nations in the Victoria area. Today, the Residential Building Maintenance Worker program is offered in several locations province-wide.

Aboriginal Advisory Committee

The Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC) was established in 2008 to provide advice to the Industry Training Authority (ITA) on its mandate to increase the number of Aboriginal people in the industry training and apprenticeship system in BC. The AAC has provided vision and given counsel to the ITA as well as contributed to the development and execution of the Aboriginal Initiatives Business Plan.

The identified purpose of the plan is to develop and maintain an industry training system in BC that serves Aboriginal people with supported and unobstructed access to opportunities and success in apprenticeship and the skilled trades.

The **ITA Aboriginal Trades and Apprenticeship Business Plan** is available for review on the ITA website, www.itabc.ca.



Aboriginal Advisory Committee:

Back (L to R)

1. Andrew George
2. Jerry Asp
3. Dianne Shanoss
4. Pam Eales
5. Brian Pelletier
6. Gary McDermott
7. Dan Pope

Front (L to R)

1. Helen Boyce
2. Roger Leclerc
3. Mary Kenny
4. Jeannie Cranmer

Missing

- John Harper
- Karin Hunt
- Jeff Lekstrom
- Doug Moulton
- Bruce Falstead
- Blaine Pierre
- Audrey Sam

Building Capacity Through Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Experiences

The Industry Training Authority (ITA) is charged with the responsibility of managing BC's trades training system to develop the province's skilled workforce.

As a provincial crown agency, the ITA works collaboratively with Aboriginal communities and agencies, industry, training providers, career counsellors, labour unions, government and others. The ITA has made a special commitment to providing industry training opportunities for Aboriginal people, youth, women and immigrants.

For more information about ITA Aboriginal Initiatives, contact:



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Visit the ITA website section on Aboriginal Initiatives to learn more: www.itabc.ca