



NEWS RELEASE

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OTDC Trades Forum strengthens links between First Nations and business leaders

Collaboration between business, communities, and Indigenous organizations to strengthen partnerships across industry and First Nations is the focus of Okanagan Training Development Council's (OTDC) *Workforce Connect* forum being held October 8-9 in Kelowna.

Business owners and community groups from across the Okanagan have been invited to take part in two days of cultural awareness and group discussion activities as part of the event aimed at increasing regional Indigenous participation in apprenticeship and trades.

Having open conversations with business leaders, community representatives, and training institutions provides a wider Indigenous worldview and understanding to stakeholders.

"Fostering an environment that gives Indigenous people more control over—and success in—trades training, apprenticeship, and employment benefits both our member communities and the regional economy," said Raf DeGuevara, OTDC Board Chair. "This forum allows businesses and OTDC to learn from each other and encourages those that haven't been working with First Nations to work with them."

There's great value in creating new opportunities to involve Indigenous organizations and individuals in apprenticeship and trades, says Michael Cameron, Director of Indigenous Initiatives at Industry Training Authority (ITA), which is an event partner.

"The OTDC Indigenous Trades and Apprenticeship Forum is designed to bridge the understanding industry has of Indigenous culture, to help forge new partnerships with First Nation communities, and to increase the number of Indigenous people being sponsored in an apprenticeship," said Cameron. "This design and forum theme is proving to be so successful that we're now working with other ISETS across B.C. to bring the same type of opportunity to their regions, to increase the discussions between the First Nation and industry, to increase the cultural understanding, and to ultimately increase the number of Indigenous people trades training and apprenticeships in B.C."

This is the first in a series of trades and apprenticeship forums that ITA is partnering on across B.C. with Indigenous organizations in the coming year, with the next two scheduled for January 27 in Fort St. John with North East Native Advancing Society and February 13 in Campbell River with North Vancouver Island Aboriginal Training Society.

In early 2019, ITA introduced its Indigenous Inclusion Strategy, to reduce the attainment gap of Indigenous apprentices by creating and maintaining more flexible and inclusive training opportunities. These forums support ITA's work with Indigenous leaders, communities and stakeholders to identify ways to improve access to, and success in, trades training resulting in meaningful employment.

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