

For Immediate Release

June 26, 2020

## **Student participation in skilled trades training earns Cowichan Valley SD79 award from Industry Training Authority**

***“Youth apprenticeships are essential to building and growing a robust economy.”***

Duncan – Cowichan Valley School District No. 79 has received the Industry Training Authority (ITA) Youth Work in Trades Performance Award for the highest number of students in trades training in their region.

“Congratulations to Cowichan Valley School District for partnering with the ITA in order to deliver the highest standard of trades training to students in the region,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “Our government is helping support B.C. youth in every corner of the province to explore dynamic career opportunities in the trades while also acquiring their high school credentials. I am so proud of all the young people who are pushing the envelope and finding their passion in the trades. As Minister, I sincerely believe that a Red Seal certification is just as valuable as a degree.”

ITA’s Chief Executive Officer Shelley Gray thanked all partners for helping students on a path to success. “The Cowichan Valley School District, teachers, and employers in the program are providing students with crucial hands-on experience that is required for their apprenticeship training.”

“The welding program provided an amazing head start on my career,” said Jake Walters, a student at Lake Cowichan School. “I struggled with regular school, but I looked forward to going to school for welding. This program taught me what it means to work hard.”

Aaron Thorne, a graduate from Frances Kelsey Secondary School and a member of Cowichan Tribes, agrees. “The welding program was an extremely positive experience. I was able to get a job in industry on my completion. I do not know when I would have been able to take the program if it was not offered through my school.”

The award includes \$5,000 in additional funding to assist the district to further develop their [Youth Work in Trades](#) program. Seven other school districts received a Youth Work in Trades Performance Award.

“Youth trades programs and youth apprenticeships are essential to building and growing a robust economy,” said Larry Mattin, Director of Instruction (Secondary) of Cowichan Valley SD79. “Without trades programs for school-aged students, many youth would be forced to delay stepping into their career path for a number of years as they work a minimum wage job saving money to pay for a foundation program. Youth apprenticeships have helped many youth find purpose and a direction in their lives. Trades programs are changing lives in the Cowichan Valley and around the province.”



**About the Industry Training Authority (ITA)**

The Industry Training Authority (ITA) leads and coordinates British Columbia's skilled trades system. ITA works with apprentices, employers, industry, labour, training providers and government to fund training, issue credentials, support apprenticeships, set program standards, and increase opportunities in the trades. For more information, visit [itabc.ca](http://itabc.ca).

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