



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 8, 2021

New motivation, career and success for Gitxaala/Bird Program participants as apprentice carpenters

Kitkatla, B.C. – For the recent graduates of the Gitxaala/Bird Introduction to Carpentry Program, the possibilities are endless. Many skilled trades careers are in great demand, and eight out of the ten graduates are now working for Bird Construction as carpenter apprentices on the LNG Canada site in Kitimat, B.C.

“This collaboration is the perfect example of why government is committed to funding short-term skills training that provides participants direct entry into a trade making an immediate and positive impact on their employment prospects,” says Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training. “These 10 new carpenter apprentices from the Gitxaala Nation now have skills for in-demand jobs that will empower their futures and help build back B.C. stronger than ever.”

Four of the ten participants were women, including Patricia Lewis who is a member of the Gitxaala Nation and a new carpenter apprentice. Growing up and throughout her career, she always had a knack for using her hands, such as fixing vehicles with her dad and working as a deckhand for two years. In 2020, she took a trade sampler course and found that carpentry had sparked her interest, so she decided to take the Gitxaala/Bird Introduction to Carpentry Program as the next step. The program was funded in part by Industry Training Authority (ITA).

“The program was absolutely amazing for me and apprenticeship has been an eye opener. It was one of the best experiences I've had in a long time,” says Patricia, carpenter apprentice. “I didn't expect to receive all the props for the work I've done so far but it feels good. My job gets me out of bed every day and I wouldn't have this opportunity if it weren't for the program.”

Being an apprentice has brought her not only motivation and focus, but also financial stability and a way to provide for her 4-year-old son. She enjoys being on site and the feeling of working with a team toward completing a building or a project.

“They're just a great bunch of people to work with,” Patricia continues. “I've built many connections and experienced good, positive energy from the crew and others within the program. I've learned something valuable from each and every person I've met along the way.”

First introduced in March 2020, the Gitxaala/Bird Introduction to Carpentry Program was born out of an idea from Evie Nance (Gitxaala Nation), Rebecca Kragnes (Bird Construction), and Mark Derton (British Columbia Regional Council of Carpenters (BCRCC)). Their vision was to help the Gitxaala Nation develop a local workforce and provide career paths for its community members.

This partnership aligns with ITA's dedication to reconciliation and removing barriers to ensure the success of trades training in Indigenous communities.

"I love how this program not only provides positive impact for individuals, it provides a positive impact for the Gitxaala Nation as a whole," says Lisa Langevin, Director, Equity & Engagement at ITA. "It was also exciting to see not only so many women sign up for the course, but for them to have an amazing role model in their instructor, Kristine Byers, a Red Seal carpenter."

"As an Indigenous woman who started my career in the skilled trades, I am excited that 40 percent of participants who applied and completed this program are women," says Rebecca, Indigenous Business Relations Manager at Bird Construction. "I am passionate about finding and creating opportunities for Indigenous participation on our projects. This program demonstrates that with collaboration and support from the right stakeholders, there is opportunity for true Indigenous participation in industry."

Looking ahead, participants are continuing along their apprenticeship path with technical training in Carpentry Level 1 and 2 later this year.

-30-

Additional Quotes:

"My passion is to see individuals employed in careers that are meaningful to them. Partnering with the ITA, BCRCC and BIRD Construction to open doors for Gitxaala Nation members has been an amazing experience. Participants have shared how apprenticeship has made a positive impact on their lives, both at home and financially."

Evie Nance, Continuous Learning Center Prince Rupert Manager for the Gitxaala Nation

"These collaborative programs not only give me the opportunity to teach carpentry, the craft that I love, but to inspire and motivate people to get outside of their comfort zone, to get that feeling that 'I can do this, this career is for me!' and bring impactful change to them and their community. I am a strong believer that people do not see themselves in a career until they see someone like them doing it. I want them to see that carpentry is the foundation, the building blocks, that construct endless possibilities and growth potential."

Kristine Byers, Red Seal Carpenter and Instructor at BCRCC

"The program was built on a meaningful collaboration amongst industry, government, labour and the Indigenous community. This is a partnership the BCRCC is honored to be a part of and believe it is a model that should be considered and relied on going forward."

Mark Derton, BCRCC President

"Assisting the Gitxaala leadership and Continuous Learning Center staff to create the Gitxaala/Bird Introduction to Carpentry Program was not an easy task, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the dedication of the Gitxaala participants and community, instructors from BCRCC, and Bird Construction to making this happen successfully speaks volumes to their strength and perseverance. ITA is excited to witness the impact that community-based training initiatives has made in Indigenous communities across B.C."

Jacob McKay, Indigenous Advisor at ITA

“Bird is pleased to be the employer sponsor of the Gitxaala Nation Introduction to Carpentry program. Through early engagement and alignment with our partners, Gitxaala Nation, BCRCC and ITA, we achieved significant success with this program. As an organization that is committed to our Indigenous Engagement policy and has pledged to improve the representation of women in skilled trades, we are excited to welcome the Gitxaala Nation apprentices – of which 40 percent are women – to our team!”

Bird Construction

About Gitxaala Nation

Gitxaala territories stretch from the Nass river to Aristazabel Island, on the north coast of what is now British Columbia. The Gitxaala, also known as Git Lax M'oon, people of the saltwater are one of the most ancient societies on the coast. The village of Lach Klan (Kitkatla, BC) has been continuously inhabited since time immemorial. Gitxaala hereditary leaders from the four clans, Gisputwada, Ganhada, Lax'sgiik and Laxgibuu, manage and protect their territories and resources according to their ayaawx, traditional laws. Gitxaala harvesters use almost 100 different marine and terrestrial resources to feed their community. Gitxaala citizens, currently numbering 1992, wherever they reside, celebrate their history, practice their traditions, respect their laws, and cherish their lands, waters and resources. For more information, visit gitxaalanation.com.

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.

About Bird Construction

Bird is well-respected in the construction industry for its strong operational capabilities and has been active in the Canadian market for over 100 years now. The strategic focus of Bird is to secure and execute challenging projects that take advantage of the technical strengths of the company and its talented employees in order to generate superior and sustainable margins. In the industrial market, Bird self-performs earthworks, concrete, process and mechanical, and fabrication scopes. Bird also has the systems and capabilities to undertake contracts to design and build process and non-process buildings, often on remote sites with relatively small populations.

Delivering projects across Canada and for a wide variety of sectors, Bird works with a diverse group of employees, subcontractors, partners, and clients including a growing number of projects and partnerships with Indigenous communities and companies. For decades, Bird has been actively engaging with Indigenous communities across Canada, building relationships, establishing long-term beneficial partnerships and helping our clients meet their commitments to communities. For more information, visit bird.ca.

About British Columbia Regional Council of Carpenters (BCRCC)

The British Columbia Regional Council of Carpenters (BCRCC) represents over 3,000 journey person carpenters, floor covering installers, scaffolders, and apprentices throughout British Columbia and Yukon Territory. The BCRCC delivers trades training and career preparedness programs that meet or

exceed industry standards, to ensure that local Indigenous people, women and area residents capitalize on opportunities being created by large industrial projects in their region. For more information, visit bcrc.ca.

-30-

Media Contact

Angela Osborne

Manager, Communications

Industry Training Authority

604 764 8764

aosborne@itabc.ca