



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **MOU increases trades education and employment opportunities for OTDC communities**

Westbank, B.C. August 13, 2019 - As part of its commitment to supporting success in trades education and apprenticeship for First Nations, and actively working towards reconciliation, Industry Training Authority (ITA) in partnership with Okanagan Training & Development Council (OTDC), is pleased to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

“We’ve always had an excellent working relationship with ITA,” said Raf DeGuevara, OTDC Board chair. “And now the signing of this MOU recognizes and validates the work of OTDC and the support of ITA in assisting indigenous apprentices to move through the apprenticeship system towards their Red Seal.”

Through this MOU, OTDC becomes the sponsor of apprentices working on local projects, ensuring employment for their local community’s, and creating an appropriate cultural approach to an apprenticeship pathway and experience. As an apprenticeship sponsor, OTDC has the responsibility to register apprentices, track their hours, and work within their community’s Community Benefit Agreements to ensure contractors are hiring registered apprentices.

This MOU formalizes an agreement to support apprenticeship opportunities and training that will offer greater local skills creation and employment opportunities, economic development, and a sustainable work force.

“Fostering an environment that gives Indigenous people more control over - and success in - trades training and apprenticeship is an essential part of our journey towards reconciliation,” said Michael Cameron, Director of Indigenous Initiatives with ITA. “We’re confident that this will attract new and different contractors and urge those that haven’t been working with First Nations employers to work with them.”

In October 2018, OTDC along with ITA and other sponsors, hosted the first Workforce Connects Trade Forum in Kelowna where indigenous employment services staff, employers, unions, educational institutions and other community service providers came together for 1.5 days to learn about each other. The event included cultural sharing workshops and a series of strategic conversations about how to attract and retain more indigenous apprentices in a variety of Trades’ areas. The highlight of the event was the Cultural Feast with Red Seal and acclaimed chef (and former ITA Apprenticeship Advisor) Andrew George.

“We are excited to announce we will be hosting another event on October 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> at the Capri Hotel, with ITA as a supporter again this year. The first event was so successful we will be continuing with the same format, including the feast,” said Karen Abramsen, OTDC Program Manager.

More information on last year’s 2018 forum and to find about the 2019 event, visit [www.workforceconnects.ca](http://www.workforceconnects.ca)

### **About Okanagan Training & Development Council**

The Okanagan Training & Development Council (OTDC) is an ISETS (Indigenous Skills & Employment Training Strategy) agreement holder funded through Service Canada with a mandate to provide employment & training programs and services for indigenous individuals within the Okanagan, Similkameen and West Kootenay service areas. The Board of Directors is appointed from the six Okanagan Nation (Syilx) Bands (Okanagan Indian Band, Westbank First Nation, Penticton Indian Band, Osoyoos Indian Band, Upper Similkameen Indian Band and Lower Similkameen Indian Band) within the OTDC Service Areas. More information can be found on [www.otdc.org](http://www.otdc.org).

### **About Industry Training Authority**

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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