

## **Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program**

Jurisdiction: Manitoba

Contact: Joe Black

Level: Post-Secondary

Theme: Transition/Linkages

### Description of Practice:

Established in 2002, the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program (AAP) provides Aboriginal people in Manitoba with an entry path to trades training through a renewed public enterprise between the provincial apprenticeship program and First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Aboriginal communities. The AAP is intended to increase participation by Aboriginal people and promote mobility and opportunities in the skilled trades while establishing a qualified and competent local labour force that respects local community and economic development needs.

The AAP is composed of, and requires the successful completion of the current units for technical training, as well as the required journeyman supervised work hours specified in the trade regulation that the apprentice is registered in to qualify to write the certification exam. Successful completion of the certifying exam then qualifies the individual as a journeyman with the ability to work anywhere in the Province of Manitoba or Canada.

The AAP is a formal arrangement for First Nations and Métis communities to offer community-based apprenticeship training combined with any necessary academic upgrading components.

If a participant chooses to terminate their apprenticeship agreement in order to work in their community and then, at a later date, indicates an interest in resuming their apprenticeship training in order to obtain journeyman status, they will be given credit for prior training.

The AAP documents, in detail, the various elements of the program including:

- Commitment to community-based training;
- Prior learning assessment and recognition;
- Provision of academic upgrading components;
- Allowance for higher apprentice to journeyman ratios;
- Mature student entry; and
- Provisions to waive the re-activation fee if inactivity/lack of progress was due to low or no economic activity in the community.

The AAP includes a marketing and communications mechanism to promote the program to all eligible First Nations and Métis communities in Manitoba, and commit the Apprenticeship Branch to proactively engaging in the delivery of the program in First Nations and Métis communities.

An AAP Advisory Committee was established by the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board. The Advisory Committee works in cooperation with the Director to

monitor the effectiveness of the program, liaise with the various provincial trade advisory committees (PTACs), report regularly to the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board, and make recommendations on any necessary changes to the program and/or policy.

The Advisory Committee is comprised of two (2) certified journeypersons, one (1) of First Nations heritage and one (1) of Métis heritage; two (2) apprentices active in AAP training, one (1) of First Nations heritage and one (1) of Métis heritage; and two (2) community representatives. Community representatives must come from a community that is currently, or has in the past been involved in a community-based offering of apprenticeship training. The board will identify a chair from the six members appointed. Appointments will be made for terms of no less than two (2) years and no more than three (3) years. Membership will be restricted to a single term with individuals being eligible for reappointment after sitting off the committee for a term.

The committee is responsible for establishing their own operational guidelines for conducting meetings, making decisions and developing recommendations.

An independent party must review the AAP within five years of establishment through motion of the Board.

#### Background:

The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program was established by the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board on the recommendation of an advisory committee established to examine the former Aboriginal Apprenticeship Training Initiative (AATI) and make recommendations for a new Aboriginal apprenticeship option. The Province, with Manitoba's northern Aboriginal communities, developed the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Training Initiative (AATI) in 1992. The AATI rationale was based on the need for skilled tradespeople at the community level to build and maintain local infrastructure, in conjunction with the perceived shortcomings of the existing apprenticeship system's ability to act as the required training and employment mechanism to produce tradespeople.

The AATI advocated for three key modifications to the regular apprenticeship framework to:

- Develop a community-based delivery format for the technical component of apprenticeship training – deviating from the traditional eight-week training block delivered through the colleges.
- Develop and utilize a revised curriculum – emphasizing residential applications over commercial/industrial applications, and
- To reduce journeyperson/apprentice ratios – thereby enabling an increased number of apprentices to journeypersons.

In October 1996, the Province of Manitoba enacted amendments to the regulations of three specific construction trades to give effect to AATI. These trades include Carpenter – Building Technician, Electrician – Building Technician and Plumber.

Due to numerous factors, including the withdrawal of financial support, difficulties in the coordination of apprentices by First Nation communities and Apprenticeship Branch administrative issues, the AATI met with limited success but provided new information

and parameters for future policy and programs for the Apprenticeship Branch, Manitoba Advanced Education and Training.

Development:

The Branch concluded a thorough study of Aboriginal apprenticeship training, an evaluation of the AATI program and an analysis of Aboriginal training demands in Manitoba in October, 2001.

The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board (the Board) established a special Committee on Aboriginal Apprenticeship Programming (CAAP) to develop recommendations regarding the AATI and a redesigned Aboriginal apprenticeship program option. The Committee was comprised of two certified journeypersons of First Nations ancestry, two certified journeypersons of Métis ancestry and two Board members.

CAAP reached the conclusion that the AATI sub-regulations should be repealed and replaced with an Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program (AAP). The AAP would offer an alternative community-based stream within the apprenticeship program for residents of First Nations and Métis communities and establish an advisory committee to monitor the AAP and report to the Board. The advisory committee would provide a mechanism for formal participation by First Nation and Métis people in the apprenticeship decision making process. A formal recommendation to repeal the three AATI regulations and adopt the proposed AAP, as Board policy, was passed by the Board at their September 11, 2002 meeting.

The Board appointed six members to its Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program Advisory Committee (AAPAC) at its November 2002 meeting. The Committee has established terms of reference, policy and procedures for community-based apprenticeship training and promotional materials for use in Aboriginal and northern communities.

Evidence:

The first community-based apprenticeship training programs began in 2002-2003. Since then, 9 northern/rural communities have participated in community-based training with 23 courses in the trades of Carpenter, Plumber and Cook being delivered. Over 203 apprentices have participated in community-based apprenticeship training delivery since 2002.

Community-based training, combined with improved Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition techniques and Essential Skills initiatives, is expected to:

- improve retention and completion rates in apprenticeship training programs;
- increase success rates on certification examinations;
- lead to more certified tradespeople in Aboriginal communities and an overall increase in the number of Aboriginal apprentices.

Adaptability:

The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program is an innovative approach, providing accessibility to trades training to northern and rural First Nation and Métis communities. Apprentices are able to complete the classroom component of their apprenticeship training in or near their home communities. As well, on-site training also provides

communities with the opportunity to develop or enhance facilities that complement their local infrastructure.

Further information:

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