



# WHAT WE HEARD:

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## **Indigenous Engagement on Skilled Trades Certification in British Columbia**

January 2022



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

Supported by the Province of British Columbia

Ministry of  
Advanced Education  
and Skills Training

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Submitted to: Ministry  
of Advanced Education  
and Skills Training  
Submitted by:



# Message from Parliamentary Secretary

## Andrew Mercier



This year, government took a significant step toward meeting the urgent and growing demand for a highly skilled trades workforce by introducing Skilled Trades Certification. By requiring all workers in designated trades to be either a certified journeyman or a registered apprentice, Skilled Trades Certification ensures trades workers across the province meet the same high-quality standards and have the most up-to-date skills to build a strong, sustainable and clean B.C.

While this change holds enormous potential to benefit trades workers and employers, its rollout will also have impacts for individuals, business and communities as they adjust to a new way of learning and working. This is true for Indigenous Peoples whose talent and experience add considerable value to British Columbia's society and economy.

That's why, in partnership with Indigenous communities, government is committed to providing both the opportunity and the support to overcome existing barriers to certification and help all Indigenous trades workers to gain the formal credentials that will allow them to progress in their careers and gain equal access to stable, family-supporting jobs.

This summer, I had the distinct honour of participating in a series of provincewide engagement sessions with First Nations, Métis and urban Indigenous communities to hear their perspectives on Skilled Trades Certification and how it should be implemented. These sessions were conducted with the understanding that Indigenous Peoples know best what supports are required to successfully implement Skilled Trades Certification in their communities.

I heard from participants that Indigenous Peoples are passionate, talented, skilled and keen to access certification. I also heard the need for a cultural shift in how we approach trades training that celebrates the unique knowledge and strengths of Indigenous Peoples. Finally, I heard that collectively we can and must do more to overcome systemic barriers of racism, poverty, access to education and the legacies of the residential school system that keep many Indigenous workers from taking full advantage of all the trades have to offer.

Addressing these issues has never been more urgent, particularly as we acknowledge and honour the grief felt by Indigenous communities and all British Columbians on learning about the remains of 215 children found at the former Kamloops Residential School in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, and the thousands of other remains identified since that day.

On behalf of Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training, and myself, I want to express my gratitude for the invaluable knowledge shared by Indigenous governments, people and organizations during this engagement process. This input, summarized in the following *What We Heard* report, is and will continue to provide a strong foundation for successfully moving forward with Skilled Trades Certification in the spirit of healing, truth and reconciliation.

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.

**Andrew Mercier,**  
Parliamentary Secretary for Skills Training







# Introduction

**By 2031 B.C. can expect approximately 85,000 new job openings for workers in trades occupations.<sup>1</sup>**

To meet this demand, B.C. will need to attract new workers to the skilled trades – which requires building a more diverse workforce that is welcoming and inclusive of all British Columbians.

In addition, B.C.'s Labour Market Outlook forecasts that nearly 80% of the more than 1,000,400<sup>1</sup> job openings over the next decade will require workers to have some level of post-secondary training, including apprenticeships. We are already seeing increasing levels of skill needed in the trades, with rapid technology changes, automation and new occupations being driven by emerging sectors like the clean economy.

Finally, like many other sectors of our economy, the trades have struggled to recover in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and many already vulnerable workers have lost their jobs. Evidence has shown that people who have post-secondary education or skills training are more resilient and remain attached to the labour market during economic downturns.

Skilled Trades Certification is an opportunity to begin addressing these issues and to support British Columbians to get the skills they need for the jobs that are opening up in our economy.

As government, in partnership with the Industry Training Authority (ITA), begins implementing this policy, it is vital that Indigenous British Columbians who are most impacted have a say in what they need to be successful.

That's why throughout the summer of 2021, government engaged broadly with trades workers, employers, industry, training providers, Indigenous leadership and communities, and other partners to better understand potential challenges and opportunities presented by Skilled Trades Certification.

This report provides an overview of the insights and themes raised in the Indigenous engagement sessions. In the context of this report, the term Indigenous refers to the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous Peoples who participated in this engagement process. We acknowledge the diversity of cultures and history between these distinct Nations, and between each First Nation community in B.C.

Engagement sessions took place between July and September 2021, and brought together Indigenous communities, workers,

<sup>1</sup> Source: 'British Columbia Labour Market Outlook 2021-2031 Forecast'



on Indigenous Peoples in B.C. The goal of this engagement was to help to identify opportunities to develop and/or enhance supports, services, or programs to enable a successful transition for Indigenous people.

Key themes that emerged throughout the Indigenous engagement process included:

- Continuing to make trades education welcoming, inclusive and culturally relevant — especially for Indigenous youth at the start of their careers.
- The need to explore more accessible and flexible learning options such as digital and remote instruction, as well as evening and weekend classes so that Indigenous apprentices can continue to work and stay close to their families and communities while learning.
- Ensuring a range of targeted supports are in place to help ensure uncertified Indigenous workers can access the right programs and services when and where they need it – particularly in rural and remote communities.

In addition, many specific opportunities to support Skilled Trades Certification implementation were identified, including actions to improve administrative processes and communication, as well as enhancements to accessibility, training programs and exams, youth participation, and funding that support Indigenous needs and values.

This *What We Heard* report summarizes the rich content that was shared by Indigenous participants during seven dialogue sessions, supported by one-on-one meetings and comments made through an online survey and written submissions.



# Background

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In June 2021, the B.C. government announced a shift to a new trades certification model to ensure B.C. trades workers are credentialed at the highest possible skill level. Known as Skilled Trades Certification, this change will require workers in designated trades to either be a certified journeyperson or registered as an apprentice to legally work in that trade.

Since 2003, B.C. has been the only province in Canada without some kind of mandatory trades certification. Without a recognized credential, it can be challenging for trades workers to transition between projects and industries, resulting in lost wages and fewer job opportunities – especially for women, Indigenous Peoples, new Canadians and youth who already face greater barriers to employment in the trades.

Employers also lose out on the benefits and efficiencies that come with a highly-skilled workforce, particularly at a time when new technologies and construction materials are rapidly transforming the buildings we live and work in, and the way we get around.

In response, government developed a comprehensive business case to look at the potential benefits of introducing Skilled Trades Certification for certain trades. The business case determined that this approach would provide opportunities for more trades workers to benefit from post-secondary training and certification that leads to better jobs, higher wages and improved employment stability. It also showed significant potential to raise the skill level of B.C.'s trades workforce that in turn will help attract more people to trades careers and support strong and sustainable economic growth across the province.

Based on recommendations from a 16-member stakeholder advisory working group representing industry associations, labour groups, post-secondary institutions, Indigenous skills trainers and the ITA, government designated the following 10 initial trades for Skilled Trades Certification.



**Mechanical:** Gasfitter Class A and B, Steamfitter/Pipefitter, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic and Sheet Metal Worker;



**Electrical:** Powerline Technician, Industrial Electrician and Electrician (construction);



**Automotive:** Heavy-Duty Equipment Technician, Automotive Service Technician, and Autobody and Collision Technician.

To ensure high standards of supervision, safety and quality training for apprentices, government will also be working with industry stakeholders to introduce journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios for each of these 10 trades, as is done in every other province.

These changes will be phased in gradually over several years, allowing workers and employers ample time to access the information, programs and services they need to make a successful transition. Feedback obtained from stakeholders and partners from across the trades training system is and will continue to be critical to ensuring these supports are effective and accessible to all.







# How We Engaged

As part of a broader public engagement strategy on Skilled Trades Certification, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training retained Pinna Sustainability to facilitate a series of focused dialogues with Indigenous partners and communities across the province. In advance of this process, the ministry consulted with First Nations leadership on this engagement to ensure a respectful and collaborative approach.

The ministry's goal was to ensure that a wide range of Indigenous perspectives are heard and incorporated into Skilled Trades Certification implementation planning to honour B.C.'s commitments under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and achieve the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In support of this goal, government took a distinctions-based approach, with separate sessions for Indigenous organizations, First Nations communities, and Métis Nation BC to acknowledge the unique rights, interests and circumstances of Indigenous Peoples in B.C.

Multiple avenues for participation were offered, including seven virtual dialogue sessions; an online survey; an option for written submissions; and one-on-one meetings. Providing this flexibility allowed Indigenous participants to provide feedback on their own timelines, given challenges many communities are facing related to the COVID-19 pandemic, wildfire season and the traumatic findings related to the residential school system.

There were two rounds of engagement with First Nations, Métis and Indigenous organizations to fully explore participants' experience and input. Participants in the dialogue sessions were offered an honorarium to acknowledge and value the time and wisdom shared by Indigenous participants during the sessions.

**In total, 54 Indigenous people participated in the dialogue sessions and one-on-one meetings, and 60 Indigenous people provided answers to the online survey. A dialogue participation table can be found in Appendix A.**

As part of the ministry's overall engagement strategy, a separate but complementary public consultation process was facilitated by Argyle to focus specifically on the impacts and supports needed for all communities and individuals more broadly during implementation of Skilled Trades Certification. A summary report of these engagements is available at: [engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/bc-skilled-trades-certification-results](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/bc-skilled-trades-certification-results).



# What We Heard

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During the dialogue sessions, participants were asked to share strengths, challenges and barriers they experience in the trades today as well as concerns with moving towards Skilled Trades Certification. Additionally, participants were asked about potential opportunities that Skilled Trades Certification may provide and supports that are needed to successfully implement the policy in an Indigenous context. These key areas were also reflected in the online survey.

Many themes emerged over the course of this engagement. Some themes are foundational and speak to aspects of the trades system in general, while others are more related to Skilled Trades Certification and Indigenous participation in trades training.

These themes offer critical insight into how to support successful implementation of Skilled Trades Certification for Indigenous workers. Themes are summarized below with some highlights of individual opinions and experiences from the dialogue sessions.

## **Respect for Indigenous culture and history is a fundamental starting point for attracting, retaining and certifying Indigenous people in the trades.**

Respect and acknowledgement of Indigenous culture and history was an overarching theme that arose throughout the engagement process. Dialogue participants from diverse Indigenous territories and homelands shared stories about their rich and unique histories and culture, and how this should be seen as an asset by employers.

“ **Employers are starting to realize that they need us to thrive. When I am chatting with an employer I [want to know they] see the beauty, prosperity, resilience and skill sets [of our culture]. It is more than just having a ticket, this is important, but use a more holistic lens to see what we have to offer.** ”

– Indigenous dialogue participant

Participants felt strongly that including traditional cultural practices in the classroom and on the job site would make a difference in countering racism and making Indigenous people feel welcome and valued, particularly youth who are just starting their careers.

Participants shared that identifying the interests and talents of young Indigenous people is often a cultural practice along with hands-on learning. Community Elders are particularly important in guiding this process.

Participants also shared that some employers lack understanding of how to support Indigenous apprentices, stressing that broader cultural sensitivity training and anti-racism training is needed. They noted that mentors and sponsors with Indigenous cultural knowledge can make a significant difference in the success of an apprenticeship, and that having Elders and Knowledge Holders connected to employers and training programs would help to enhance learning environments and improve learning outcomes.

“ **Creating a culturally-safe environment with cultural mentors - Elders assigned to the program reduces impacts of systemic racism. [We need to] bring employers into this.** ”

– Indigenous dialogue participant

Overall, participants stressed that creating culturally-safe and inclusive environments is not just a check box; it is a complex issue that needs a holistic approach across multiple partners. Many suggestions were made to ensure culturally-safe workplaces and learning environments are created for Indigenous apprentices, including:

- Supporting more cultural safety training across the trades training system, including assessment tools to determine the competencies and skills needed to support Indigenous apprentices.
- Building and strengthening meaningful relationships with local Indigenous communities.
- Providing more culturally appropriate supports, including expanding access to advisors to mentor and provide assistance to Indigenous apprentices.
- Ensuring Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous ceremonies are part of training programs.
- Providing stable, multi-year and flexible funding that allows for inclusion of these cultural components across the trades system.





## **Indigenous Peoples want to be included in developing trades policies and supports that impact them – relationship building and fostering strong partnerships with Indigenous communities is vital for the success of Skilled Trades Certification.**

Throughout the dialogue sessions many participants expressed their passion for the trades, and a strong desire to be involved in all aspects of implementing Skilled Trades Certification for Indigenous workers.

Participants stressed the importance of collaboration, partnerships and relationship building with Indigenous communities as key not only for Skilled Trades Certification, but also for the health of the trades system in general. Examples were shared of successful models for collaboration with educational institutions, including the ITA's Indigenous community-based training programs.

“ ***We need to sit at the same table... that is when we get to UNDRIP.*** ”  
– Indigenous dialogue participant

Conversely, participants stressed that when legislation, policies and programs are developed without Indigenous Peoples' input, they often fail to meet their specific needs and can exacerbate existing challenges and barriers. Suggestions for supporting stronger, relationship-based decisions processes included:

- Taking the time needed to build community trust and connection, with the knowledge that policy and program development benefit greatly when they are designed to align with Indigenous community needs and balances other commitments.
- Understanding the importance of participating in ceremony and celebration with communities as a way to build respectful relationships.
- Continuing to develop relationship-based agreements with First Nation and Métis communities to break down silos and ensure more meaningful connections among partners.

## **More outreach is needed to increase general awareness of the services and supports available to help Indigenous apprentices navigate the trades training system.**

Participants recognized that the ITA is improving its engagement and support for Indigenous apprentices but stressed that there continues to be a significant number of Indigenous people and communities who are unaware of the resources available to them. Additionally, participants shared that employers also need more support to understand and navigate existing resources to help their workers succeed.

Participants noted that in some cases, this lack of awareness results in Indigenous apprentices not being referred to Indigenous Skills Employment and Training, Indigenous organizations or government programs to access supports, which in turn could lead to communities losing contact with apprentices over time.

Ideas to promote increased awareness and outreach included:

- More in-person, remote-area visits by the ITA that include community leaders and leverage existing regional processes/events. This provides a great opportunity to share information and to support connections between people who may already work together.
- Support more collaboration between companies, employers and Indigenous organizations to share resources, opportunities and information so apprentices don't have to rely entirely on their employer.
- Create a formal referral system between the ITA and First Nations as well as Indigenous support organizations to help prevent students and apprentices from falling through the cracks.
- Share more success stories of Indigenous communities supporting Indigenous workers to succeed in the trades and provide a venue for lessons learned from community to community.
- Create communications tools specific to Indigenous communities such as a regional map of services, funding opportunities and engagement opportunities, as well as relevant ITA contact information in a graphic and/or online format.



## **Successfully implementing Skilled Trades Certification requires a concerted effort to address barriers experienced by Indigenous people with respect to accessing training and getting certified.**

Participants shared many challenges with accessing trades training that hinder Indigenous peoples' full involvement in the classroom and the certification process. For some, going back to the classroom was described as intimidating as it is not something they have done for several years. Other participants stressed the need to build inclusive, hands-on training programs that support alternative ways of learning.

Childcare was another barrier that came up frequently in discussions, particularly for Indigenous women. Participants noted that cohort-based community programs have done a good job of supporting many Indigenous women to enter the trades, but that additional child support options and flexible hours, especially in remote areas, would help women better access training programs.

Training opportunities are often less accessible to those living in rural communities requiring travel and relocation to urban centres. Indigenous people living away from the support of their families, communities and Elders can cause stress. For example, many participants shared that leaving family for educational opportunities can be traumatic for those traveling, and for family left behind, creating a dynamic that could be reminiscent of residential school to some survivors and intergenerational survivors.

“ **When Elders come to speak with the class it gives students connection to culture and encouragement to keep on going.** ”  
– Indigenous dialogue participant

Community-based programming and a strong mental health support system are vital to increasing cultural safety. Participants felt these programs allow for greater opportunities for connection to Elders and Knowledge Holders, as well as other cultural supports that provide encouragement to complete training programs.

“ **[Things like] sending off a small document can become a barrier because [students] cannot get online to register. [It's common for] one community to have Wi-Fi but not cell service – some people are able to use Wi-Fi but not everyone.** ”  
– Indigenous dialogue participant

Remote communities also have challenges with internet connection and phone service access. This lack of connectivity can impact things such as accessing of resources, registration for programs or online learning components. Additionally, there is a need to increase access to various devices such as computers, tablets and phones to provide better access digital learning opportunities.

In almost every session, participants brought up barriers associated with driver's licenses. Many trades workers do not or cannot have a driver's license, and therefore do not have transportation to fulfill job requirements or to get to a job site. This is a fundamental requirement to accessing work in most regions, especially remote areas.

“ **Ensure that transportation is part of the program, embed a bus system into the program with a driver. This needs to be a funding consideration and program design [consideration]. These [supports] are not 'extras,' they are what is needed.** ”  
– Indigenous dialogue participant

Compounding this issue is that remote communities often have no bus system available. Therefore, ensuring transportation considerations are part of any support program design to ensure these apprentices can access training opportunities is important.

Some participants expressed challenges with the examination process for trades certification. We heard that some Indigenous apprentices experience barriers in passing exams for different reasons including challenges with reading, math, computers or specific exam areas. Without additional supports, participants worried that some Indigenous trades workers would be unable to pass exams resulting in some trades workers leaving the trades.



Participants suggested that the examination process might be concerning for older Indigenous trades workers who learned their trade on the job. These workers are often the most experienced and have significant value as mentors. Concerns were expressed that older uncertified trades workers may leave a trade if there is no exemption or supported path to challenging an exam requirement of certification.

Participant suggestions for improving access to training and supporting the certification exam process included:

- Conduct training in cohorts. Often Indigenous apprentices are alone in their training (the only Indigenous person) and a cohort of Indigenous apprentices can help ease the sense of isolation.
- Identify ways to support partnerships between neighbouring communities to pool resources to support community-based learning in rural areas.
- Expand proven Indigenous programming such as the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Trades Trailer, Mentorship Matters program and summer youth trades programs.
- Give Indigenous communities a leadership role in program delivery. This method allows for culturally safe and community-supported learning which session participants say leads to stronger learning outcomes and develops the local capacity and workforce.
- Design supports in a holistic way to include mental health supports, cultural supports and Elder supports that leverage and reinforce each other.
- Dedicate specific funding for rural and remote communities to address their unique and individual needs. Different communities have very different needs based on a number of factors and they know best what their people need.
- Provide more driver's license training, and have supports for those who have lost their license due to a previous offence to be retrained and made eligible. Bring these training programs to the community or have 'train the trainer' initiatives to build local driving instruction capacity.

## **Increasing Indigenous participation in trades careers means getting youth interested early on.**

Participants shared the need to increase the prestige of the trades with Indigenous youth by promoting trades careers as an important part of the economy and not a second-tier education pathway. There is a need to find ways to motivate youth as early as elementary school to ensure Indigenous students are encouraged and supported to explore different trades.

Participants also shared the importance and success of dual credit programs offered in high schools. These programs allow Indigenous students to gain experience in the trades and also receive credits to graduate from high school. This program is strong in some regions of the province but in other regions needs to be further promoted and developed. Participants shared that job shadowing with a local company has proven to be very successful, offering students a chance to explore their interests before committing to a trade.

Participants shared a variety of strategies to make trades careers more appealing, including:

- Sharing stories of Indigenous Peoples' success in the trades with youth, strengthening mentorship programs, and involving Elders in recruitment.
- Communicating with youth using social media, youth conferences and events, trades trailers, trades fairs in high schools, and other fun ways to learn about the trades while still in high school.
- Bringing Indigenous trades workers into the community to showcase the work they do.
- Create space in communities to host trades-related activities.
- Provide for credit 'try-a-trade' programs for high school students to help them become familiar with trades before deciding to become an apprentice.



## **Funding for Indigenous programs and supports needs to be available, accessible, and more effectively communicated.**

Funding was a theme that consistently emerged throughout the dialogues and online survey. Participants said that increased funding is needed overall for trades training in multiple areas including enhancing necessary skills, improving mental health and cultural supports, and to offset bills such as childcare, internet and the cost of devices/equipment for Indigenous apprentices. Participants also shared the need for infrastructure investments to support community-based training in rural areas that don't currently have appropriate trades training space or equipment.

Some participants also expressed a lack of understanding and accessibility of available supports and funding opportunities for Indigenous people interested in pursuing trades careers. They stressed that financial supports need to be available, accessible and more effectively communicated to Indigenous workers.

Specific suggestions for improving funding for supports and services included:

- The need to simplify application processes to ease the administrative burden of funding programs for apprentices, employers and training institutions.
- Create more liaison/concierge staff roles that can act as an interface between workers, communities and funders to make funding more accessible. This would help workers, employers and communities connect to each other and better navigate funding processes.
- Structure funding programs over two- to three-year cycles to provide continuity and stability for Indigenous communities to hire and retain skilled support staff.





# Conclusion

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The Government of British Columbia deeply appreciates the views and comments received during this engagement. Together with First Nation, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous people, government is committed to continuing this dialogue to ensure Skilled Trades Certification benefits all Indigenous workers, businesses, families and communities throughout B.C.

We clearly heard from participants that implementing Skilled Trades Certification should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Working with Indigenous Peoples to successfully transition to Skilled Trades Certification means being responsive to a range of individual and regional historical, cultural, economic, and social contexts. We also heard that building respectful relationships and partnerships is central to this process, and that financial supports must be more available, accessible, and better communicated to be effective.

We are confident that by working with all partners across the trades training system in a spirit of reconciliation we can realize our shared goals of enhancing access to a culturally-supportive trades training system; overcoming existing barriers to full Indigenous participation in post-secondary education; enhancing opportunities for mentorship, inclusion and career advancement on the worksite; and improving recruitment and retention of Indigenous youth in the trades, now and in the future.

This investment in the success of Indigenous Peoples in the trades ultimately benefits all British Columbians by helping to build a better, stronger and more inclusive B.C.



# APPENDIX A

## List of Participating Communities and Organizations

The list below is of the communities and organizations represented at the sessions.

### Organization/Nation

Adams Lake Indian Band	Huu-ay-aht First Nations	Penticton Indian Band
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres	k'awat'si Economic Development General Partner Corporation	Prince George Métis Community Association
Construction Foundation of B.C.	Kelowna Métis Association	Seabird Island Band
Council of the Haida Nation	K'omoks First Nation	Stk'emplupsemc te Secwepemc Nation
Cowichan Tribes	Lax Kw'alaams Business Development LP	Sto:lo Aboriginal Skills & Employment Training
Elk Valley Métis Nation	Lhoosk'uz Dene Nation	Squamish Nation
?Esdilagh Nation	Lower Kootenay Band	Tk'emplups te Secwepemc
First Nations Education Steering Committee	Lower Similkameen Indian Band	Tla'amin Nation (formerly Sliammon)
Fort Nelson First Nation	Mamalilikulla First Nation	Tsal'alh
Fraser Valley Métis Association	Métis Nation British Columbia	Tsawout First Nation
Gitanmaax Band	Neskonlith Indian Band	Tsleil-Waututh Nation
Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs	Nisga'a Lisims Government	Vermillion Forks Métis Association
Gitksan Watershed Authorities	North East Native Advancing Society	Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Gitxaala Nation	Old Massett Village Council	Westbank First Nation
	Penelakut Tribe	



# APPENDIX B

## List of Existing Supports Available to Apprentices and Employers

Apprentices in British Columbia have access to many different financial and service-based supports to reduce barriers to accessing trades certification. Available supports are outlined below and help to cover costs such as tuition, travel, living away from home, childcare costs and loss of wages.

Additional ancillary supports not listed here may be available to apprentices and employers through WorkBC Employment Service Centres, Service Canada, trainers, and various other government or community-based support organizations.

### Financial Supports for Employers

#### Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit

Employers who hire apprentices registered in Red Seal programs are eligible to claim 10% of wages up to a maximum of \$2,000 per year for each apprentice, for the first 24 months of registration (max of \$4,000 total over two years).

#### B.C. Apprentice Employer Tax Credit

Employers who hire apprentices registered in non-Red Seal programs are eligible to claim 20% of wages up to a maximum of \$4,000 per year for each apprentice, for the first 24 months of registration (\$8,000 over two years). An additional \$4,000 may be claimed by employers (\$2,000 per year) for the first two years if employing Indigenous apprentices or Persons with Disabilities (PWD).

#### B.C. Employer Completion Tax Credit

B.C. provides eligible employers of both Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprentices with up to 15% of eligible salary (up to \$5,500 per year) in tax credits during the final two years of the apprenticeship, with an additional \$2,750 for Indigenous apprentices or PWD.

#### B.C. Employer Training Grant

The B.C. Employer Training Grant, under the Foundational Training Stream, reimburses eligible employers for up to \$10,000 per employee to gain essential, transferable and certified skills to obtain good-paying jobs and increase long-term job security. Employers are eligible to receive up to \$300,000 per fiscal year (April 1 – March 31). All costs are to be paid for in full by the employer before applying for reimbursements through this program. To be eligible, employees must be either apprentices, low-skilled workers, or working in a low-skilled occupation.

Eligible training costs for reimbursement includes essential skills training (e.g. literacy, communication skills, digital skills, soft skills, and Adult Basic Education), apprenticeship training, occupation certification (e.g. Early Childhood Certification), or industry related training (e.g. FoodSafe, WHMIS, and First Aid).



# Financial Supports for Apprentices

## B.C. Youth Work in Trades Scholarship

The *B.C. Youth Work in Trades Scholarship* (\$1,000) is available to secondary school students upon graduation and completion of the Youth Work in Trades program. The scholarship is designed to encourage secondary school graduates to enter a trades training foundation program and apprenticeship.

## B.C. Access Grant

The *B.C. Access Grant* provides eligible low- and middle-income student enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship (foundation) program with a grant of up to \$4,000. The grant is provided by the Province of British Columbia and administered through StudentAid BC.

## Provincial Tax Credits

Provincial training tax credits provide refundable income tax credits for apprentices registered in Industry Training Authority (ITA) Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprenticeship programs. Enhanced tax credits provide additional tax credit funds and are available for ITA-registered apprentices who are Indigenous or who are living with disabilities.

- The *Training Tax Credit* for apprentices provides up to \$2,000 in tax credits within the first two years of a Non-Red Seal apprenticeship, with an additional \$1,000 for Indigenous apprentices or PWD.
- The *Apprentice Tax Credit* for Completion provides Red Seal and non-Red Seal apprentices with up to \$4,500 in tax credits in the final two years of their apprenticeship, with an additional \$2,250 available to Indigenous apprentices or PWD.

## Federal Tax Credits

The *Federal Exam Tax Credit* provides eligible exam takers with tax credits to offset the costs associated with taking an exam.

The *Federal Tools Deduction* provides up to \$500 in tax credits per year to help with the purchasing of new tools needed for trades related work. Non-apprentices are also eligible to receive this tax deduction.

## Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG)

The *Apprenticeship Incentive Grant* is an annual taxable cash grant of \$1,000 a year for the first two years of an apprenticeship, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per person.

The *Apprenticeship Incentive Grant* for Women provides up to \$6,000 in cash grants to women in a Red Seal apprenticeship within the first two years of apprenticeship.

## Apprenticeship Completion Grant

*Apprenticeship Completion Grant* (ACG) is a one-time taxable cash grant of \$2,000 provided upon completion of the apprenticeship program.

## Canada Apprenticeship Loan

The *Canada Apprenticeship Loan*, offered by the Federal Government, provides interest-free loans over the course of their apprenticeship to help registered apprentices with the cost of their training. Apprentices in a Red Seal trade can apply for the Canada Apprenticeship Loan and receive up to \$4,000 in interest-free loans per period of technical (in-class) training (regular B.C./Canada student loans are only available for foundation/pre-apprenticeship training). Repayment of the Canada Apprentice Loan does not begin until after the loan recipient has either completed or terminated their apprenticeship.

## Employment Insurance (E.I.) Supports

*Employment Insurance* (E.I.) Part I & Part II is available to support apprentices during their in-classroom technical training. Apprentices registered with ITA may be eligible for temporary financial supports while they attend approved training for their apprenticeship.

- *Part I Financial Supports* are typically income replacement and are provided through Service Canada. Part I may help replace lost income while away from work to complete the required in-class technical training components of an apprenticeship.
- *Part II Financial Supports* are known as WorkBC Apprentice Training ("wrap around") supports and often include basic expenses for living away from home, including dependent care, daily commuting, and other ancillary costs while completing in-class technical training.





# Non-Financial Supports for Employers and Apprentices

The ITA has a comprehensive support system to help workers and employers navigate through the trades training process. Supports and services include trades training program information, employer guidebooks, targeted initiatives (e.g., Women in Trades), exam supports, customer service team, apprenticeship advisors, apprenticeship completions team, and an industry relations team.

## Community Based Training

As an outcome of ITA's Indigenous Training Plan, ITA is sponsoring Community Based Training (CBT) Programs which enables Indigenous students who are receiving training, to remain close to their home and culture. The CBT program model creates mentors and skilled tradespeople, and provides communities with direct input on their training needs, which will help to guide future generations of apprentices within Indigenous communities across B.C.

## Memorandums of Understanding

ITA directly supports Indigenous apprentices in their communities by entering into Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Indigenous organizations and First Nation communities. MOUs become the sponsor of record for Indigenous apprentices, helping them to secure employment and ensuring their on-the-job training hours are recorded, documenting their progression to completion.

## Apprenticeship Advisors & Customer Support

The ITA has 20 apprenticeship advisors located in all regions of the province. Advisors are a key part of the ITA's ability to support apprentices and maintain strong working relationships with trainers, employers, and the broader trades training community. Advisors have many years of experience in B.C.'s trades training system and are there to help guide apprentices through their apprenticeship to completion.

The ITA also has a customer support and call centre team who are available to hear from and support apprentices, employers, and the public.

To further support apprentices and foundation students, the ITA and WorkBC launched a new innovative online Apprentice Job Match tool which will better connect British Columbian apprentices looking for on-the-job training they need to boost their skills and achieve certification in their chosen trade.

## Completions Team

The ITA's Apprentice Completions Team provides individualized support to apprentices while working proactively to address barriers and challenges when apprentices are at risk of not completing and assist apprentices and trade qualifiers who reach out for support.

## Challenge Exam & Supports

Trades workers with extensive experience working in a trade but have never been certified in Canada may be eligible to challenge the certification exam to receive a recognized credential in their trade. The ITA offers exam challengers a variety of supports and services to help them successfully pass the exam, including refresher courses and study materials, translator/ interpreter services for ESL exam takers, and accommodations for individuals living with a disability (e.g., extra exam writing time).

Visit <https://www.itabc.ca/> for more information on available supports and services.





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