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**A REVIEW OF  
THE GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE  
ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE**

**A REPORT BY  
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AND  
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PREPARED FOR  
GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT**

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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This report is a summary of research undertaken for Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment, a branch of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, about the Gabriel Dumont Institute's Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative. The initiative was administered by Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment.

The report is divided into five sections. The next section (Section 2) provides a general overview of the labour market in Saskatchewan with particular emphasis on Aboriginal people and the skilled trades. Included in that section is a short-term outlook for employment in the apprenticeable trades. Section 3 describes the Saskatchewan apprenticeship system including statistics about the total number of apprentices and the number of Aboriginal apprentices in Saskatchewan.

Section 4 contains the bulk of the material in the report with its focus on the Gabriel Dumont Institute's Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative (sometimes referred to as just "the initiative" in this report). It begins with a brief description of the initiative in Section 4.1. Statistics about the number of clients/trainees are provided in Section 4.2 and a brief financial summary is included in Section 4.3. GDI has conducted two surveys of employers and the results of these are summarized in Section 4.4. As part of this review, we conducted interviews or surveys with the three project partners, the employers, and the clients/trainees. These are summarized in Section 4.5. A summary of best practises for apprenticeship programs is included as Appendices A and B. The relevant parts of the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative are compared with these "best practices" in Section 4.6.

The final section contains a summary of findings with observations and recommendations about a future GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative. It also serves as a kind of "executive summary" of the report.

This report was prepared by a team of researchers including Wayne McElree and Bonnie Durnford from *D.C. Strategic Management Inc.*, and Doug Elliott from *Sask Trends Monitor*. This report contains both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The authors would like to thank the staff of the Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment for their support during the preparation of this report. In particular, we would note their careful review of previous drafts and the quick turnaround times for data and meeting requests. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of the Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment or individual staff members. Errors remain the responsibility of the authors.

## SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

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This section looks at recent trends in the Saskatchewan labour market vis-à-vis the labour market in Canada generally. Particular attention is paid to the role of journeypersons in the labour market and the labour market experience of Aboriginal people in general and in the skilled trades specifically.

The main source of statistics about the labour market is Statistics Canada's monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is a monthly telephone survey conducted across Canada with a large sample size – typically more than 6,000 Saskatchewan residents per month. The LFS has the drawback of excluding the on-Reserve population from the sample so the data about the First Nations population is incomplete. Some of the statistics presented here are from published sources (CANSIM tables) and some are based on special tabulations performed by the authors on the microdata files from the LFS.

The data from the LFS are retroactively revised every five years to take into account the results of the Statistics Canada decennial census. The revisions to the data in this section are scheduled to be released later in 2014. The general labour market trends described in this report are not expected to be significantly affected by these revisions.

The other useful source of statistical information is the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) which is the name given by Statistics Canada to the “voluntary” part of the 2011 census. There are concerns about the quality of the NHS data because of the voluntary nature of the survey. In particular, those with lower socioeconomic status are probably under-represented among respondents to the NHS.

## 2.1 THE SASKATCHEWAN LABOUR MARKET IN 2013

In both the LFS and the NHS, Statistics Canada classifies all adults (fifteen years of age and older) into one of three categories.

**Employed** persons are those who, during the week prior to the survey:

- did any paid work at all at a job or business, that is, work in the context of an employer-employee relationship, or self-employment. Employment also includes unpaid family work, which is defined as unpaid work contributing directly to the operation of a farm, business or professional practice owned and operated by a related member of the same household; or
- had a job but were not at work due to factors such as an illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, vacation, labour dispute or other reasons (excluding persons on layoff, between casual jobs, and those with a job to start at a future date).

Note that this definition excludes unpaid household work.

**Unemployed** persons are those who, during the reference week, were available<sup>1</sup> for work, were not working:

- and were on temporary layoff with an expectation of recall, or
- were without work and had actively looked for work in the past four weeks, or
- had a new job to start within four weeks from reference week.

Persons **not in the labour force** are those who, during the reference week, were neither employed nor unemployed.

The **labour force** is the sum of the employed and the unemployed.

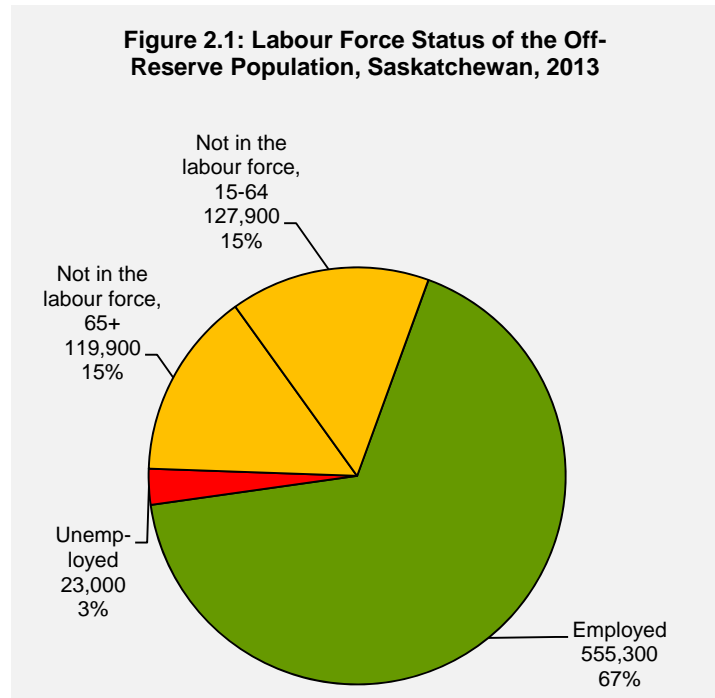


Figure 2.1 shows that, in an average month in 2013, there were 826,100 adults in Saskatchewan. Of these:

- 578,300 or 70% were in the labour force, that is either working or looking for work;
- 555,300 or 67% were working on a full-time or part-time basis, as a paid worker or self-employed;
- 23,000 or 3% were unemployed; and
- 247,800 or 30% were not in the labour force, that is, neither working nor looking for work.

<sup>1</sup> Persons are regarded as available if they reported that they could have worked in the reference week if a suitable job had been offered (or recalled if on temporary layoff); or if the reason they could not take a job was of a temporary nature such as an illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, or because they already have a job to start in the near future, or because of vacation. Full-time students currently attending school and looking for full-time work are not considered to be available for work. Instead, they are assumed to be looking for a summer or co-op job or permanent job to start sometime in the future, and are therefore not “unemployed”.

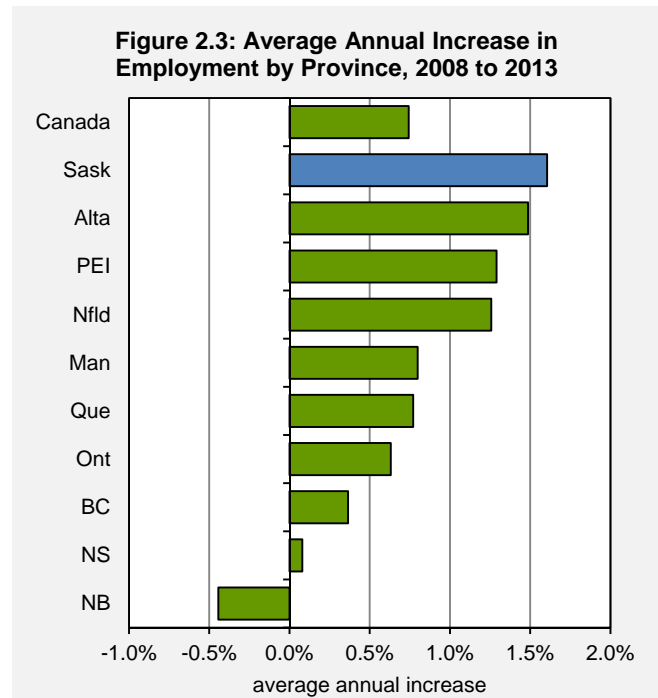
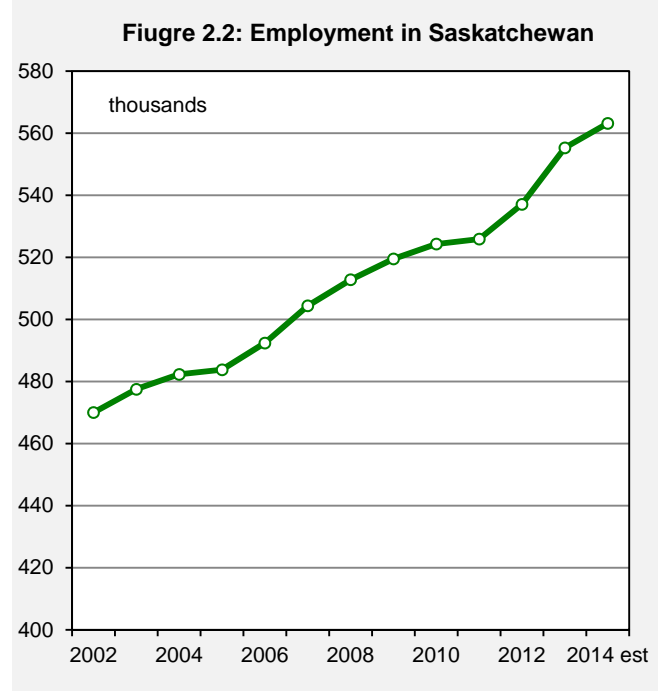
The employment rate, the percentage of the population that are working, is the best measure of employment success for a particular population. This is because it measures what proportion of the population are able to find work and whether or not the economy is able to provide the jobs suitable for them.

The employment rate in Saskatchewan was 67% in 2013. The employment rate is more meaningful if it is restricted to the population 25 to 64 years of age because this removes young people, who are probably still in school, and seniors, who are probably permanently retired, from the calculation. In 2013, the employment rate in this “primary labour market age group” was 81.5% in Saskatchewan. In other words, more than eight out of ten Saskatchewan residents in the primary working age group were employed in 2013.

### RECENT EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT RATE TRENDS

A strong economy and a growing population in Saskatchewan means that employment has grown steadily in recent years (see Figure 2.2). Over the five years ending in 2013, employment grew at an average annual rate of 1.6%, which is the equivalent of 8,500 jobs per year. This follows a period of about fifteen years with virtually no employment growth at all. Based on the first few months of data, employment will continue to grow at this rate in 2014.

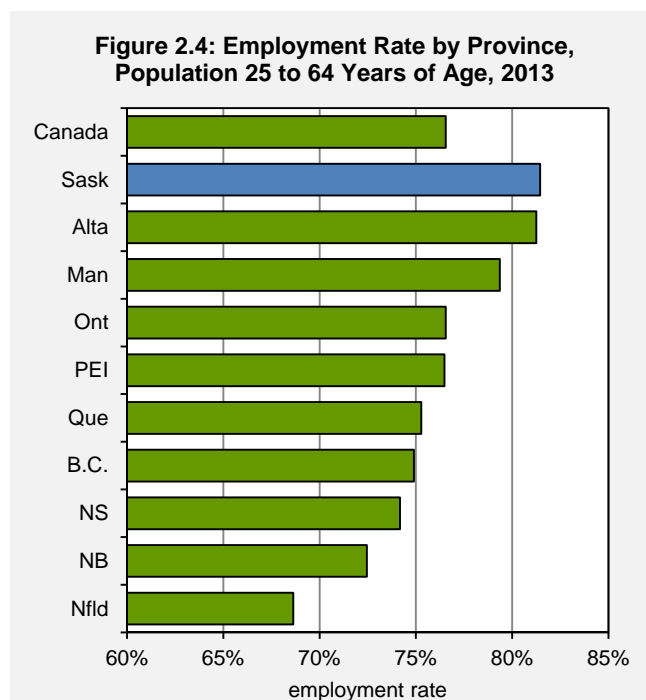
This period of growth is unprecedented in recent history. Instead of trailing the provinces, the average annual increase from 2008 to 2013, was the highest in Canada, surpassing even Alberta’s 1.5% rate of increase (see Figure 2.3)<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> At the same time, we must remember that the growth in Alberta, while lower in percentage terms, was the equivalent of 31,000 jobs per year compared with Saskatchewan’s 8,500. Labour market demand from Alberta’s booming economy will always put pressure on the Saskatchewan labour market.

One of the consequences of the rapid employment growth is a tight labour market<sup>3</sup> in the province. This is evident as a general shortage of skilled and unskilled workers in specific locations (e.g. the Southeast) and specific skill shortages for certain occupations (e.g. construction trades).

The evidence for this tight labour market is indirect. The best evidence is the high employment rate in the province. Figure 2.4 shows that, in the primary labour market age group of 25 to 64 years, Saskatchewan had the highest employment rate (81.5%) among the provinces in 2013. In effect, this means that almost all Saskatchewan adults with at least a Grade 12 diploma and seeking employment were able to find it.



There is other indirect evidence of a tight labour market in the province.

- Saskatchewan has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.
- Employment is growing among older workers.
- The demand for temporary foreign workers has increased exponentially.
- Wage rates are growing much more quickly than inflation.

While not examined in detail here, other employment trends from 2008 to 2013 are listed below in point form.

- Employment grew more quickly among men (1.8% per year on average) than among women (1.3%).
- Employment grew the most quickly among the comparatively few persons 65 and older (7.4%). It declined among those 15 to 24 years (-1.1%).
- Self-employment grew more quickly (2.3%) than permanent employment (1.5%) or non-permanent employment (1.1%).
- Full-time employment grew more quickly than part-time employment (1.7% compared with 1.1%).

Employment trends by industry group, level of educational attainment, and for regions within the province are discussed later in this section. The next section looks at employment trends for the Aboriginal population during this period of unprecedented employment growth in Saskatchewan.

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<sup>3</sup> A “tight labour market” is one where employers typically have difficulty hiring qualified workers and job seekers typically have no trouble finding work.

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS FOR THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION

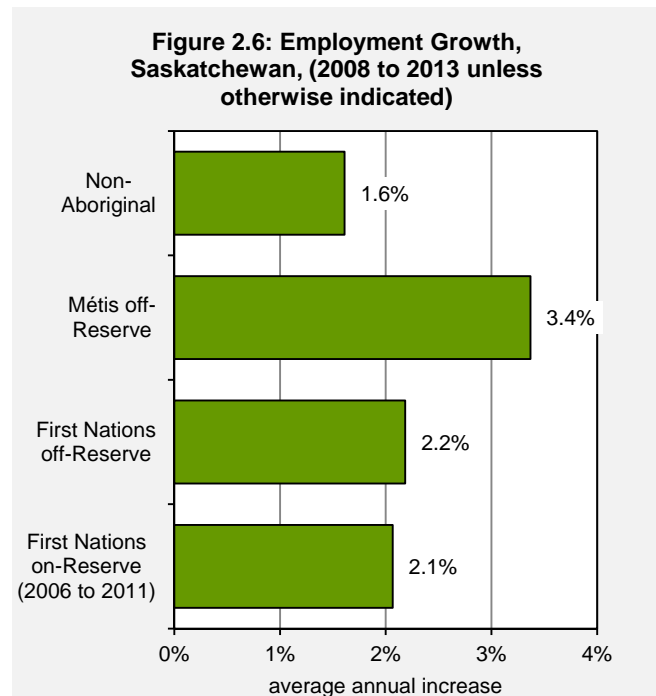
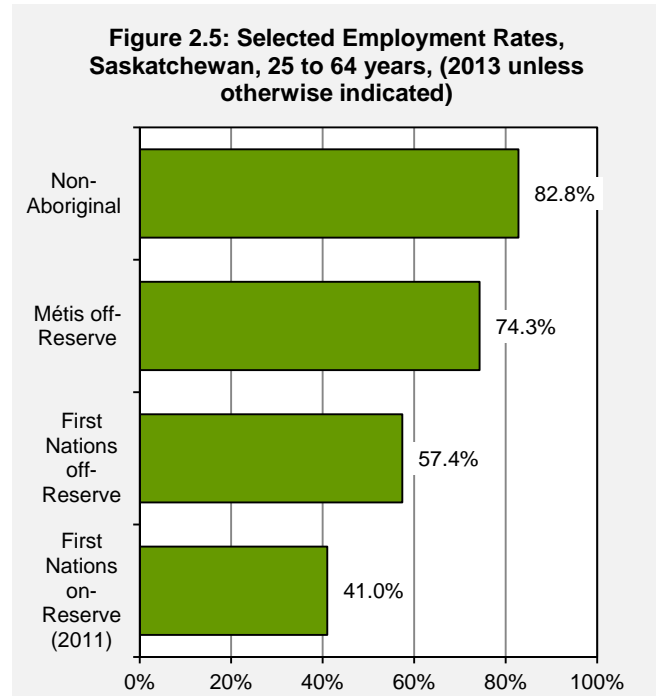
The Aboriginal population in general and the First Nations population in particular, have low employment rates<sup>4</sup>. Figure 2.5 shows that the employment rates among those 25 to 64 years of age are significantly lower among Aboriginal people than among non-Aboriginal people. Within the Aboriginal population, rates are higher off-Reserve than on-Reserve and higher among the Métis than among the First Nations population.

The Aboriginal population is growing rapidly in the province so, all else being equal, one would expect employment to be increasing as well. Figure 2.6 shows that this is the case. Looking at the off-Reserve population, employment has grown, over the five years ending in 2013, by an average of 3.4% per year for the Métis and 2.2% for the First Nations population. Both of these growth rates are above the equivalent growth rate of 1.6% in the non-Aboriginal population.

Over the five years from 2006 to 2011, the employment growth rate for the First Nations population on-Reserve was also relatively high, growing at an average of 2.1% per year.

An examination of the employment rates for these populations, restricted to those 25 to 64 years of age, shows that the employment rates are up only slightly from 2008 to 2013 (see Figure 2.7).

Employment rates are up slightly among both the Métis and the First Nations populations off-Reserve and down slightly on-Reserve. In effect, this means that the employment growth rates shown in Figure 2.6 are about the same as the population growth rates.



<sup>4</sup> The labour force statistics are based on self-identity – respondents are simply asked if they are Aboriginal. The off-Reserve statistics are based on special tabulations from the Labour Force Survey purchased by the authors. The on-Reserve statistics are from the 2006 and 2011 censuses (called the NHS in 2011) – Tables 97-559-XCB2006008 and 99-012-X2011044



The average annual increases for the population fifteen years of age and older were:

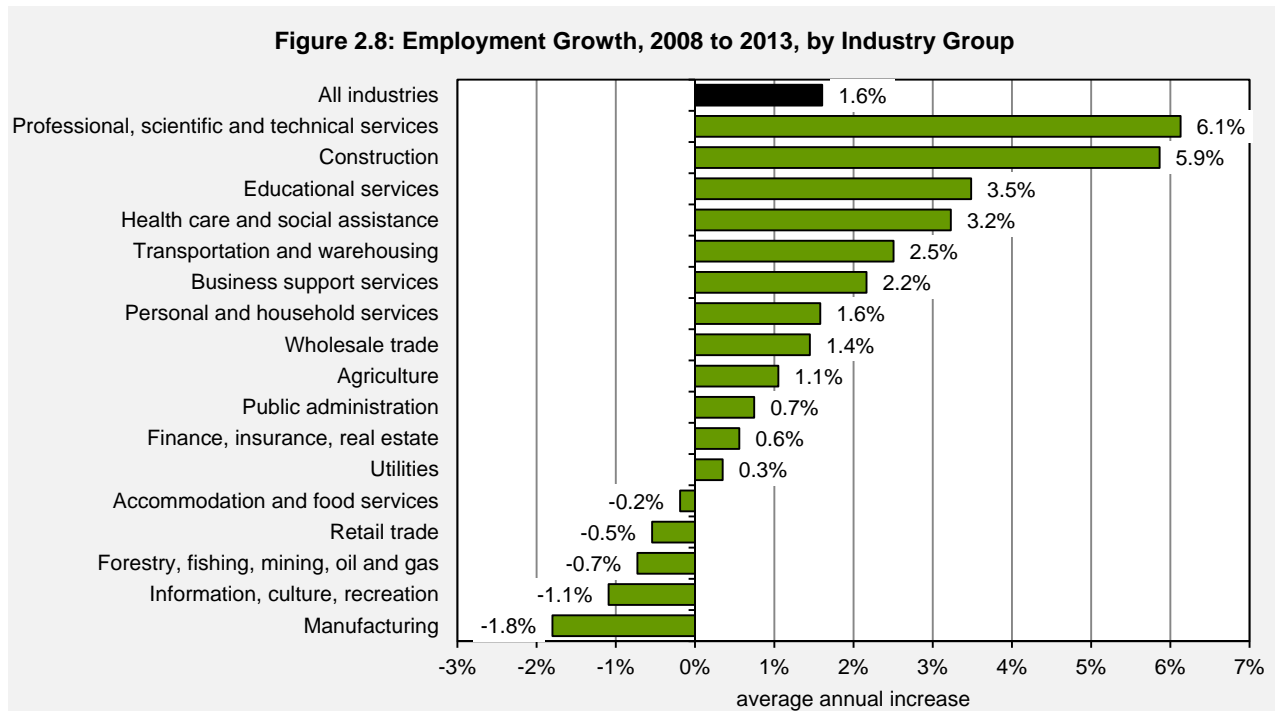
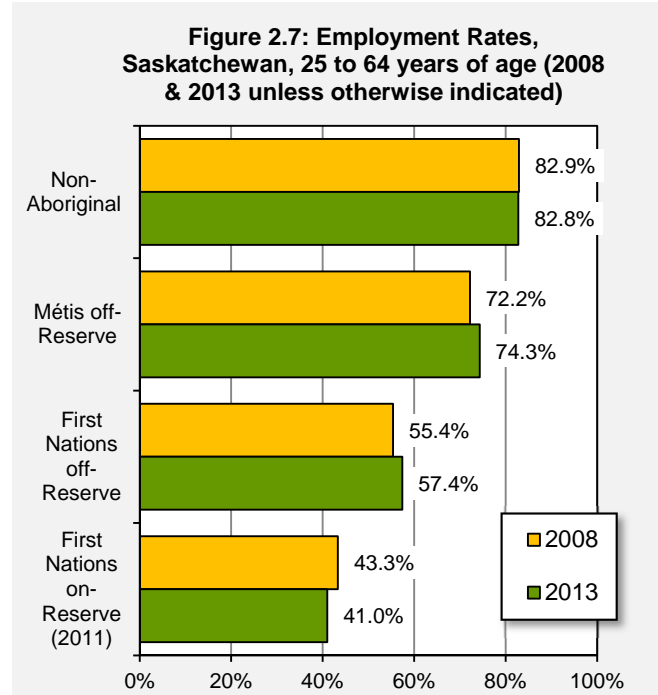
- 2.2% for the Métis population off-Reserve between 2008 and 2013 compared with the 3.4% employment growth rate;
- 2.1% for the First Nations population off-Reserve between 2008 and 2013 compared with the 2.2% employment growth rate; and
- 3.0% for the First Nations population on-Reserve between 2006 and 2011 compared with the 2.1% employment growth rate.

In effect, the number of jobs for Aboriginal people is barely keeping pace with the growth in the population.

### EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION GROUPS

As noted above, employment has grown by an average of 1.6% per year in Saskatchewan over the past five years. Figure 2.8 shows that several industry groups registered growth well in excess of this average while others lagged behind.

The fastest growing industry groups were construction and the “professional, scientific, and technical services” group. The latter group includes engineering and architectural firms (where growth is typically



related to construction activity) as well as lawyers, accountants, and information technology firms.

Growth was also above average in two industry groups that are dominated by the public sector namely educational services and health care/social assistance. At the other extreme, employment declined in several industry groups including manufacturing, the “information/culture/recreation” group, and the resource sector. These industry groups will also employ a relatively large proportion of skilled trades.

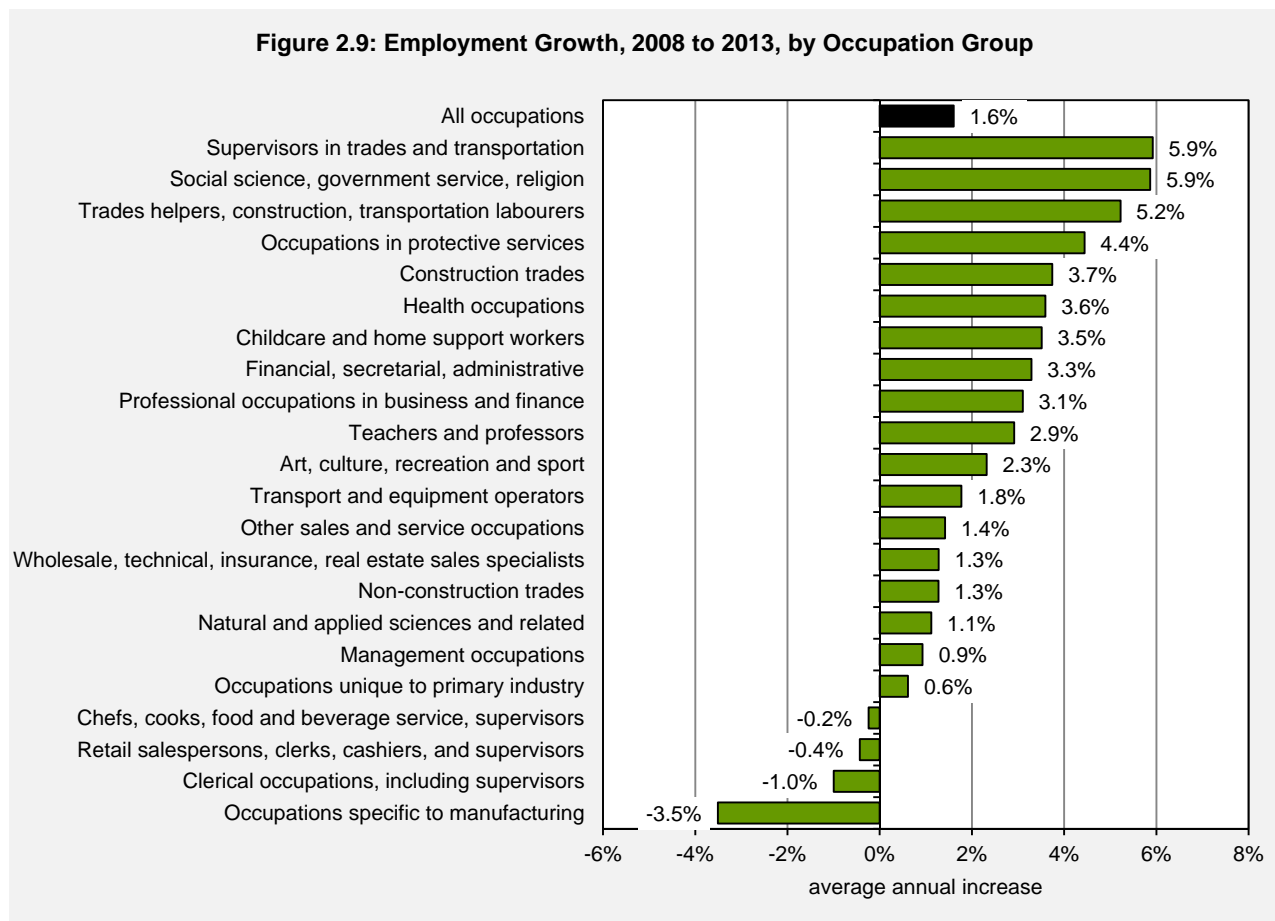
Employment is expected to continue growing in the construction and transportation sectors and both of these industry groups employ a significant number of apprentices.

Figure 2.9 shows the employment growth from 2008 to 2013 by occupation group. Trends in employment by occupation tend to mirror the industry trends described above. In particular, some of the fastest growing occupation groups are either related to construction or transportation:

- supervisors in trades and transportation;
- trades helpers, construction, and transportation labourers;
- transport and equipment operators; and
- construction trades.

Other fast growing occupation groups are predominantly in the public sector including social science occupations, health occupations, and occupations in protective services.

At the other end of the scale, there are employment declines among occupations in manufacturing, clerical



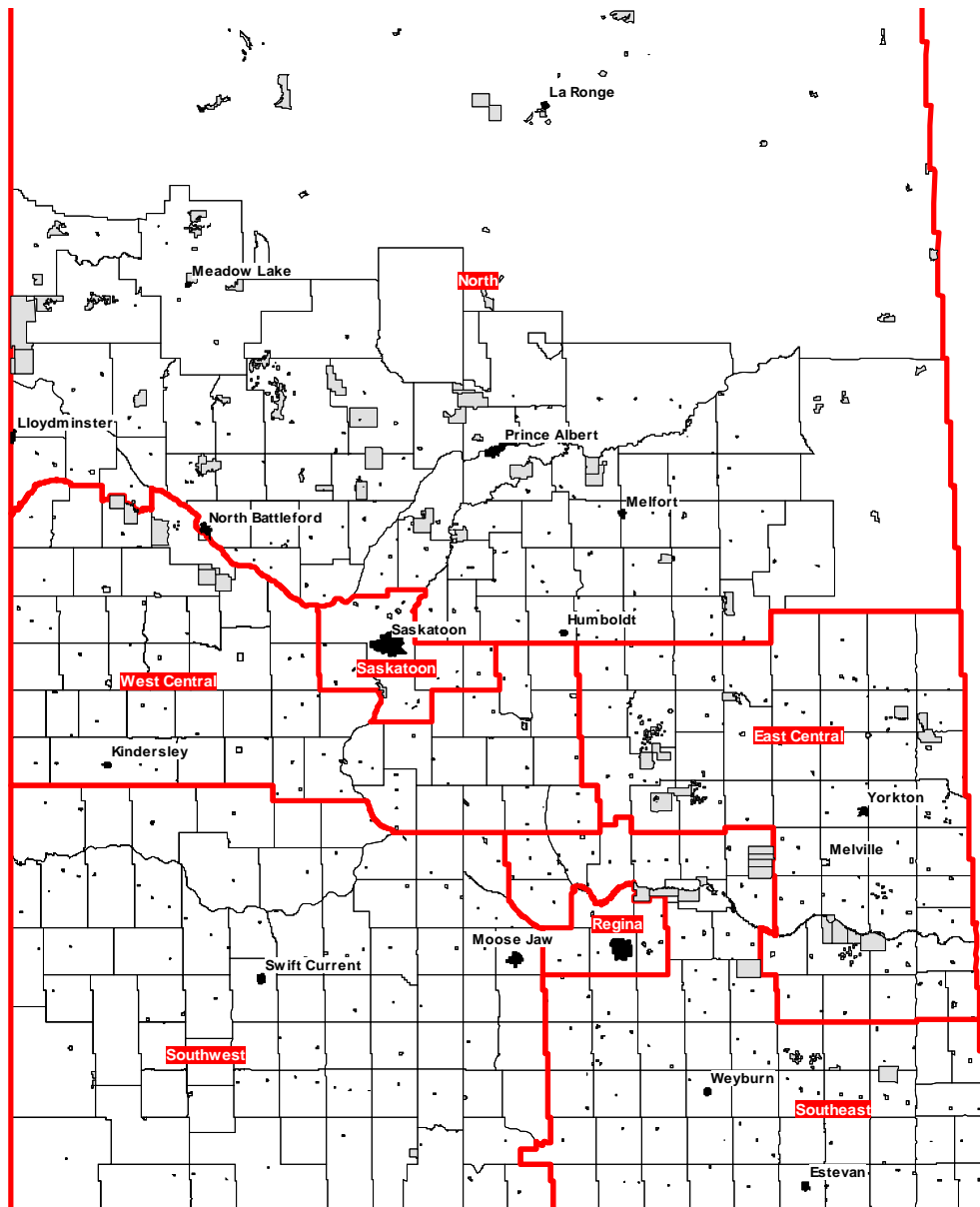
occupations, and several low-skill occupation groups in accommodation and food services and retail trade.

As with the industry trends, most of these occupational trends are expected to continue in the short term.

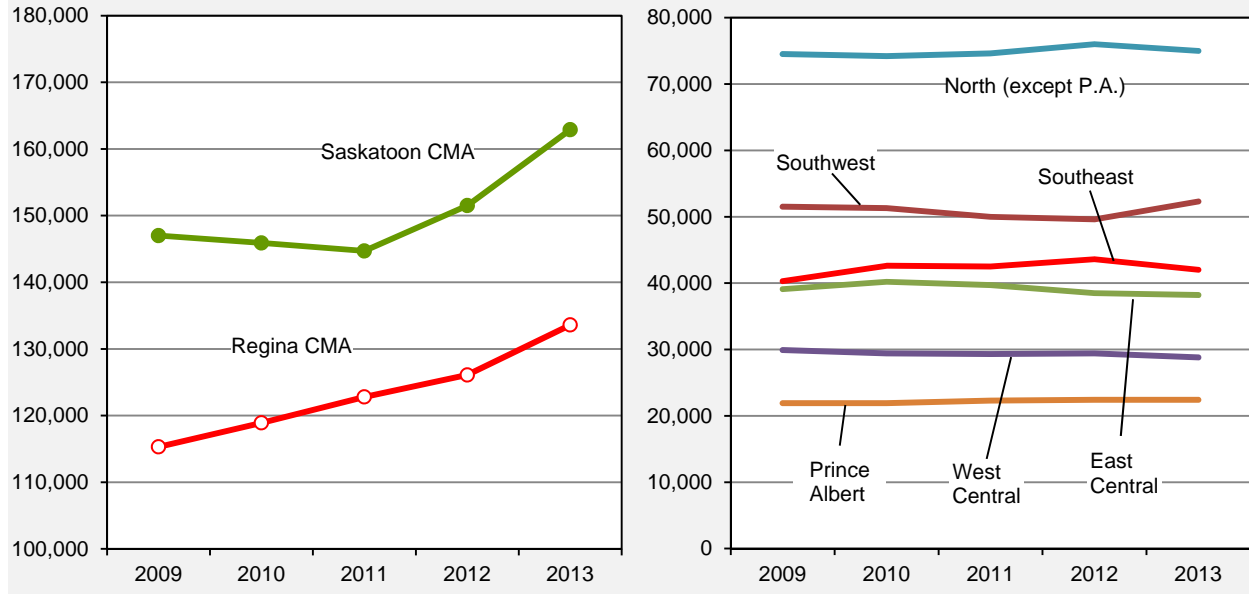
### REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The Labour Force Survey has a large enough sample size to enable employment trends to be published for seven separate regions within the province (see map in Figure 2.10). These figures are based on where the worker lives which may not be the same region where he or she works. Note that both the Regina and Saskatoon regions include the surrounding “bedroom” communities.

**Figure 2.10: Labour Force Regions**



**Figure 2.11: Employment Trends by Sub Provincial Region**



It is clear from the data in Figure 2.11 that the majority of the employment growth over the past five years has been in the major urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon. In percentage terms, employment has grown by an average of 3.8% per year in the Regina CMA and 2.6% in the Saskatoon CMA. Outside the two urban centres, employment has been effectively constant, growing by an average of 0.1% per year. In particular, employment in Prince Albert and the North has been effectively unchanged over the five years. From 2009 to 2013, employment in Prince Albert has increased by 500 persons and employment in the rest of northern Saskatchewan increased by the same amount.

In absolute terms, the difference is even more stark. Employment increased by 35,700 between 2009 and 2013 with an increase of 34,200 in the two cities and an increase of 1,500 in other regions.

A large proportion of Aboriginal people live in Regina and Saskatoon. In 2011, the proportion of Aboriginal adults (15 years of age and older) living in the Regina and Saskatoon metropolitan areas was:

- 38% for the Métis; and
- 22% for the First Nations population.

## 2.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

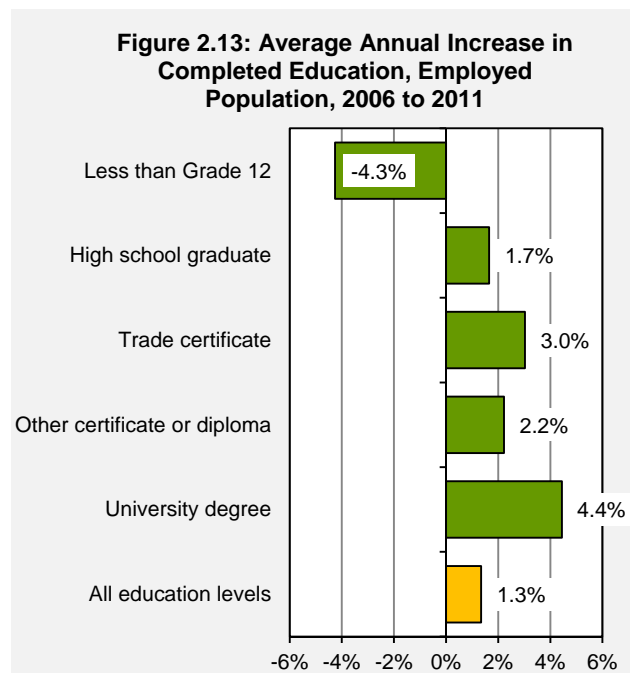
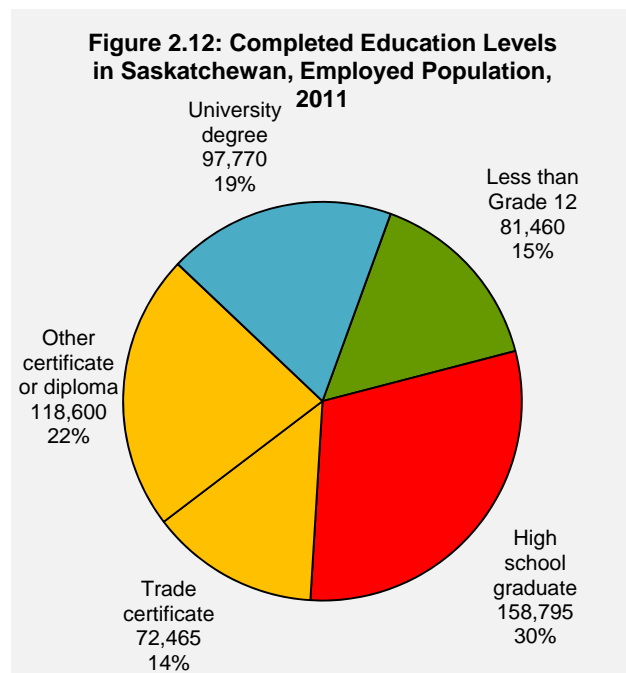
There will always be a small number of jobs available for those who have lower levels of education but the trend towards higher levels of education is clear. All of the past job growth was among those with at least a Grade 12 diploma and most was among those with a post-secondary education. The same will be true in the future. This section looks at Saskatchewan employment by level of completed education.

In the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 85% of the employed population had at least grade 12 and 55% had a post-secondary education (see Figure 2.12). A trade certificate was the highest level of completed education for 14% of the employed population that year. This is equivalent to approximately 72,500 individuals. Of these, approximately one-half reported that they were journeypersons and one-half reported that they had “other trades certificates” such as pre-employment or vocational certificates and/or diplomas from brief trade programs.

Statistics Canada uses a hierarchical scheme to measure educational attainment. The highest level of completed education refers to the highest grade or year of elementary or secondary school attended, or to the highest year of university or other non-university education completed. University education is considered to be a “higher” level of schooling than other non-university education so a person with both a trade certificate and a university degree will be classified as having a degree. Apprentices who have completed their program are counted under certificate and diploma, even if they did not complete grade 12. There is no requirement that the education be received in Canada.

Note that the positions in which individuals are employed will not necessarily require the level of the education that they have.

From 2006 to 2011, employment in Saskatchewan increased by an average of 1.3% per year. Figure 2.13 shows that the growth rate was much higher than this for those with a university degree (+4.4%) or a trade certificate (+3.0%). Employment declined among those with less than a high school education. Looked at another way, 30% of the 34,200 employment increase from 2006 to 2011 was among those with a trade certificate. The number of persons with a trade certificate will need to increase by more than 2,000 per year to sustain the recent growth rate.



The Labour Force Survey does not provide as much detail about the level of completed education as the NHS but it shows that this trend has continued after 2011. From 2011 to 2013, the highest growth rates among the employed population have been among those with a university degree (10.0% growth per year). Employment among those with a post-secondary certificate or diploma (including a trade certificate) has increased more slowly (0.7% per year).

### ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

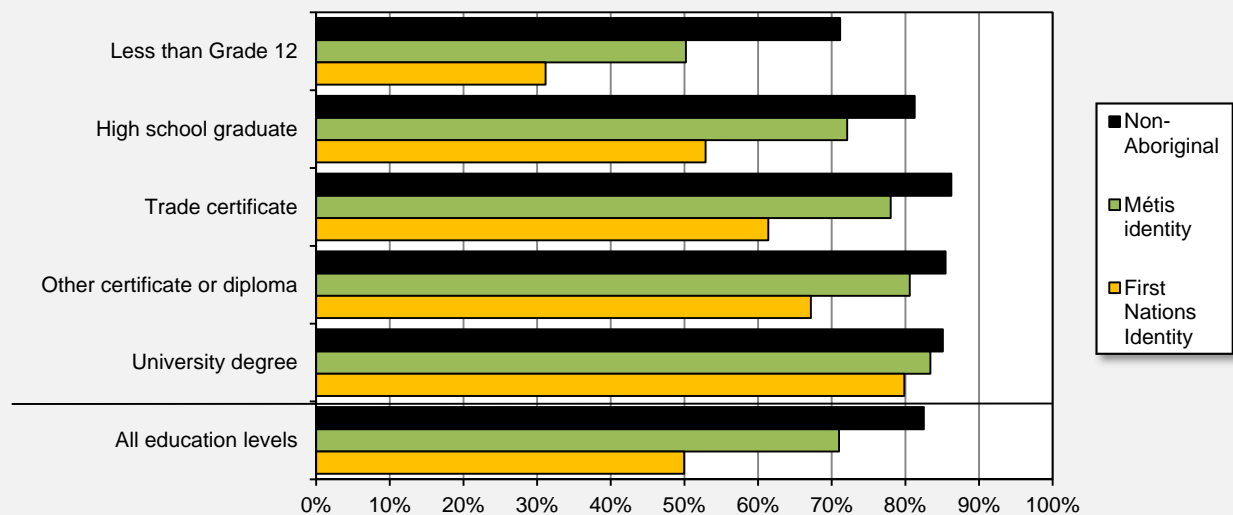
The same relationship of higher employment rates for those with higher levels of education is evident in the Aboriginal population. In fact, the correlation between the two is even stronger than it is in the non-Aboriginal population.

Restricted to the primary labour market age group, Figure 2.14 shows that among the Métis, the employment rate increases from 50% among those with less than Grade 12 to 78% for those with a trade certificate and to 84% for those a university degree<sup>5</sup>. Among the First Nations population, the employment rate increases from 31% for those with less than Grade 12 to 61% for those with a trade certificate and to 80% for those a university degree.

In effect, taking an Aboriginal person with less than a high school education to the completion of a trade certificate increases the employment rate from 37% to 69%, effectively doubling the probability that they will be working. The increase is even more dramatic among young people.

- Among Aboriginal people 15 to 24 years of age, the employment rate increases from 17% for those who have not completed high school to 58% for those with a trade certificate.
- Among Aboriginal people 25 to 34 years of age, the employment rate doubles from 32% for those who have not completed high school to 65% for those with a trade certificate.

**Figure 2.14: Employment Rates by Completed Education, Aboriginal Identity, Population 25 to 64 Years, 2011**



<sup>5</sup> Source: Statistics Canada NHS 99-012-X2011039

## 2.3 SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM OUTLOOK

There are a variety of forecasts for employment growth in Saskatchewan and most observers expect the employment trends to continue. The provincial Ministry of Finance, for example, is projecting growth of 7,000 jobs per year over the next five years. This is equivalent to an average annual increase of 1.3% per year. Others forecast even higher growth rates.

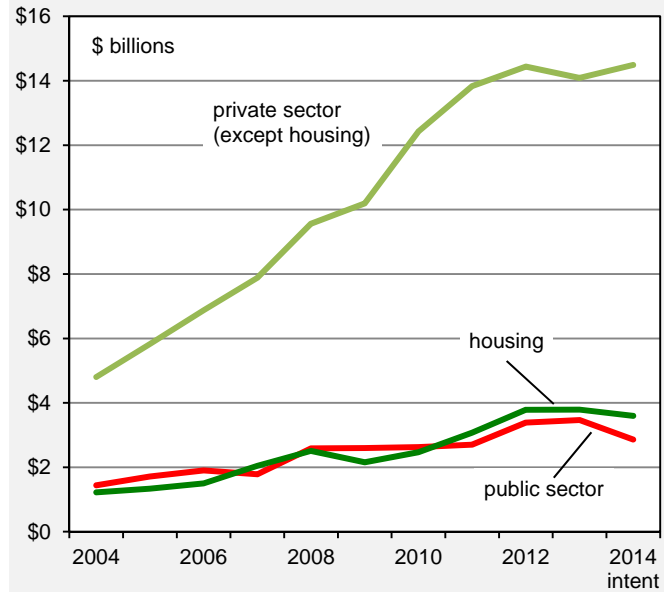
Barring an abrupt downturn in commodity prices, the outlook for the province's economy is strong in the short to medium term<sup>6</sup>, that is, for the next five years. This optimism is based on several leading indicators with the most important one being capital investment.

These capital investment data are based on a survey of public and private sector investors conducted annually by Statistics Canada. Investment in new machinery, equipment, and facilities is one of the best indicators of future employment growth, increases in productive capacity, productivity, and general prosperity. The construction industry, in particular, will benefit from the new capital investment in facilities because this almost always means more work for Saskatchewan construction firms.

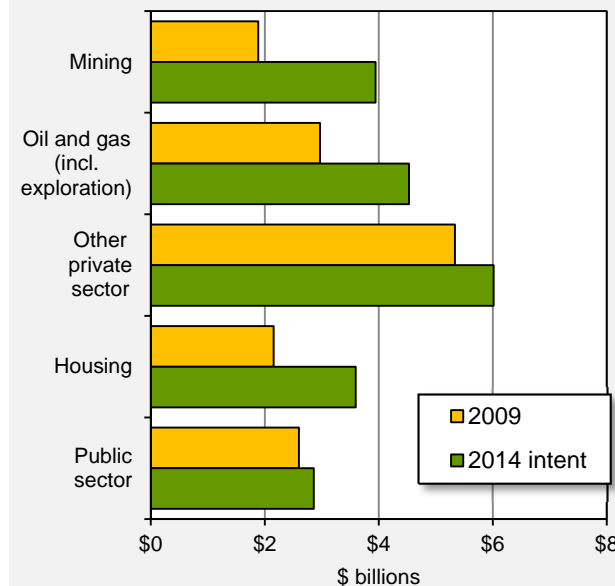
Aggregate capital investment is expected to be \$20.9 billion in 2014 which is double the level in 2006 and three times the level in the early 2000s. Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show that the vast majority of this investment will be in the private sector in general and the resource sector (mining and oil/gas) in particular.

The province needs to plan for employment growth of 10,000 jobs per year over the next five to ten years.

**Figure 2.15: Capital Investment in New Machinery, Equipment, and Facilities, Saskatchewan**



**Figure 2.16: Capital Investment in New Machinery, Equipment, and Facilities, by Sector**



<sup>6</sup> The outlook for the longer term (five or more years into the future) is harder to assess. The inevitable downturn in commodity prices will hurt the province's economy.

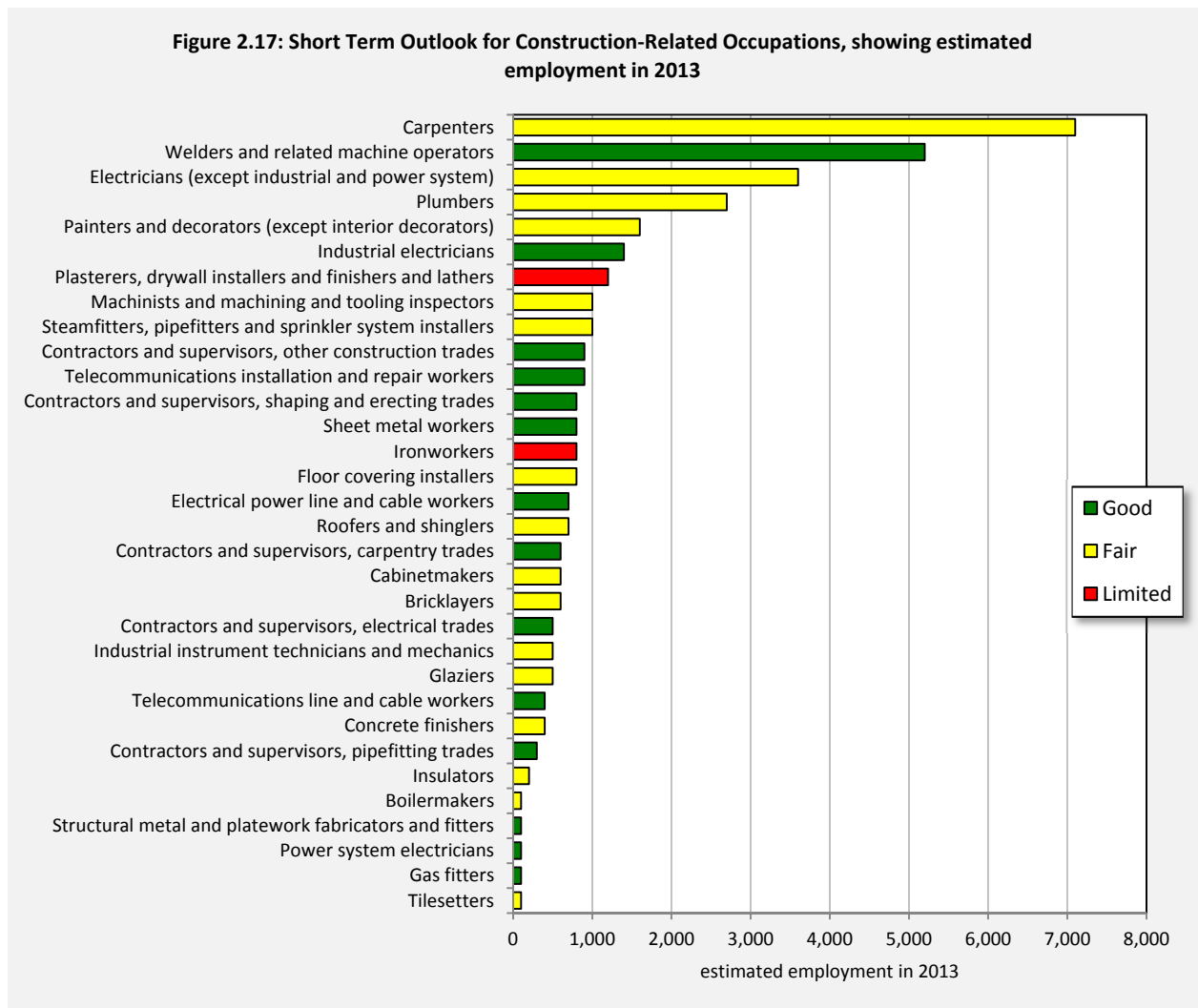
## FORECASTED GROWTH IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS

How will this expected growth in employment over the next few years translate into increased demand for specific occupations? This section tries to answer this difficult question with a short-term forecast of demand for specific occupations. We focus on occupations that are “apprenticeable” or related to apprenticeable occupations, broken down into four categories:

- construction trades and their supervisors;
- transport operating occupations and supervisors;
- non-construction trades; and
- occupations in tourism.

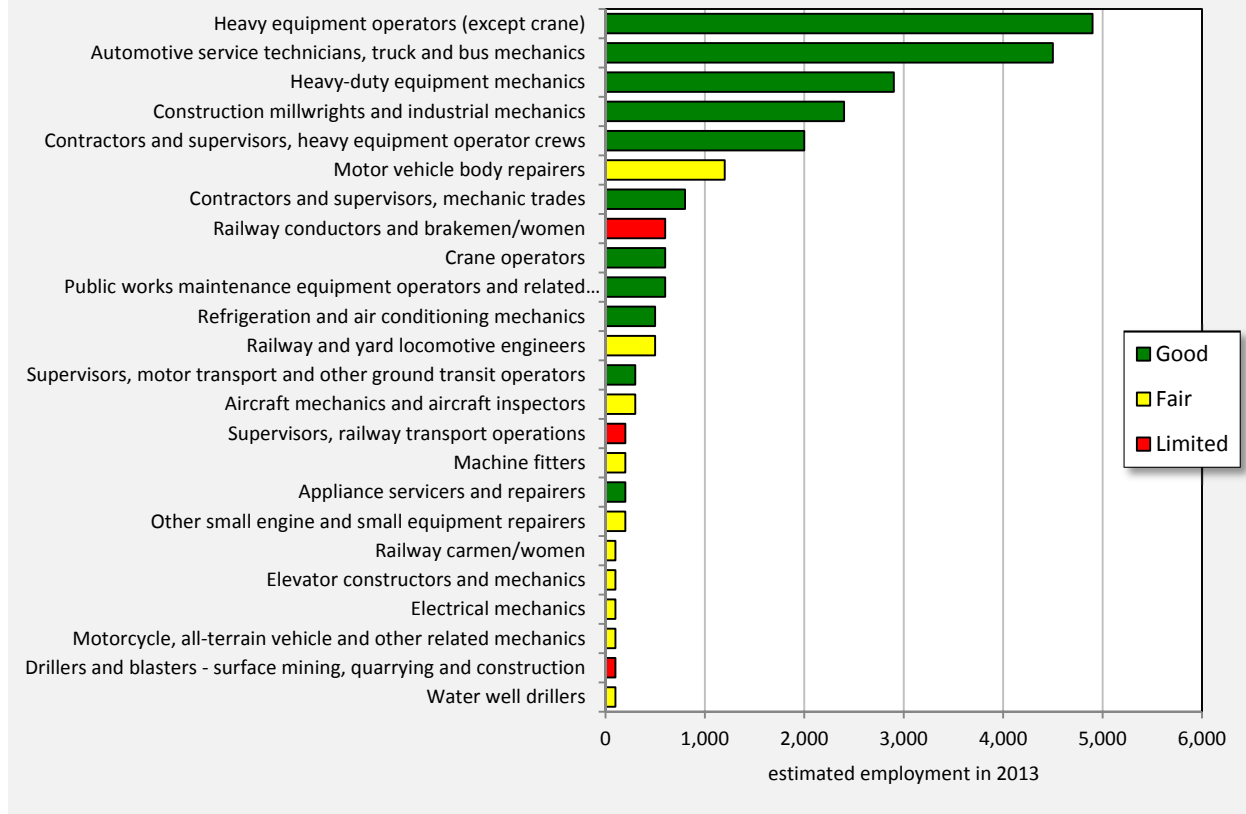
These figures are based on employment forecasts developed by the Ministry of the Economy and updated for this study by the authors.

Figure 2.17 shows the short-term outlook for the construction trades and related occupations taking into account the prevalence of the occupation in Saskatchewan. Demand is classified into three categories – limited, fair, or good. Note that a “fair” outlook for a common trade such as carpentry will translate into more job openings than a “good” outlook for a less common one such as sheet metal workers.





**Figure 2.18: Short Term Outlook for Selected Trades and Transport-Related Occupations, showing estimated employment in 2013**



The majority of the construction trades have a “fair” rather than a “good” outlook. Only two trades have a “limited” outlook, namely ironworkers and drywall installers. The dominance of “fair” rankings is in spite of the high levels of capital investment noted earlier. This is because the expected slowdown in the residential housing sector over the next few years will lower demand slightly from the frenetic pace in the recent past. Another factor is that the majority of the workers in the construction trades are young so retirements are not expected to significantly contribute to the demand for new workers.

Note that all five of the supervisor categories have a “good” outlook, reflected the increased demand for experienced managers in the construction industry.

Figure 2.18 shows the same data for the non-construction trades including equipment operators. As with the construction trades, the demand for supervisors is expected to be good. There is also a good demand for most mechanics including automotive mechanics and heavy duty equipment and truck mechanics. Motor vehicle body repairers are the only major repair trade where demand is expected to be lower with a “fair ranking”.

The demand for most transport equipment operators, including the large heavy equipment operator category, is expected to be high.

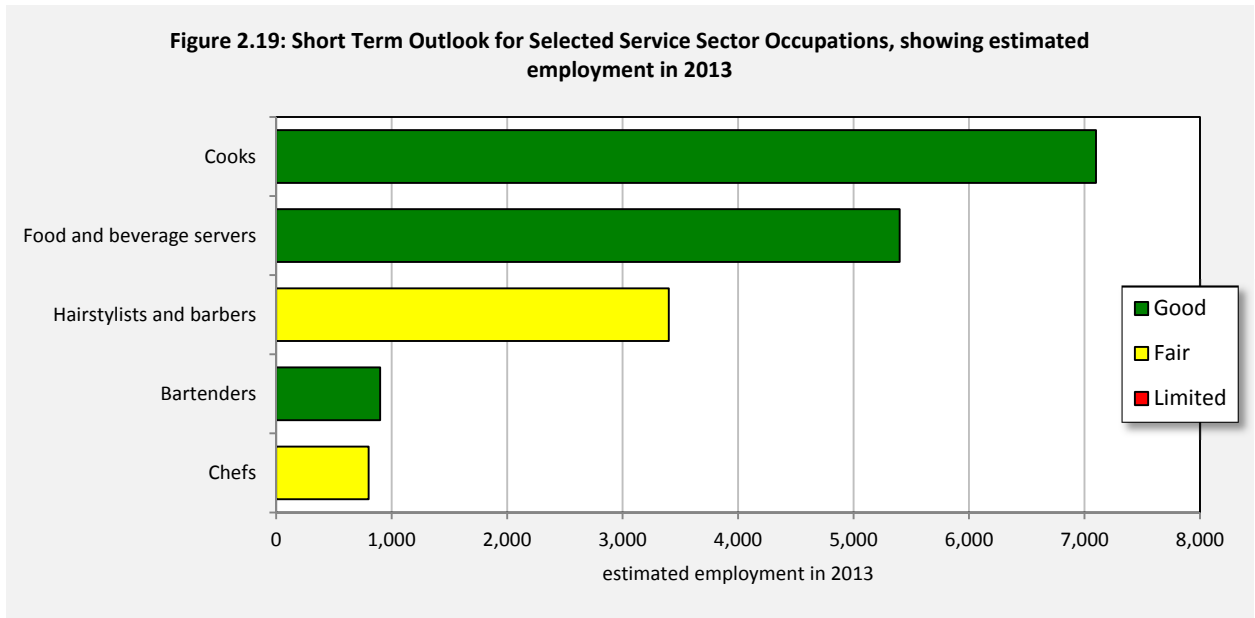


Figure 2.19 shows the same data for hospitality trades. All five selected occupations are classified as having a fair or a good ranking.

## 2.4 SUMMARY

Employment in Saskatchewan is growing rapidly. From 2006 to 2011, for example, employment in Saskatchewan increased by an average of 1.3% per year. The growth rate was much higher than this in the construction and transportation industries and, partly as a consequence, for journeypersons. This trend is expected to continue. For the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative, the main consequence is a strong demand for apprentices in the construction and transportation sectors.

- 30% of the 34,200 employment increase in Saskatchewan from 2006 to 2011 was among those with a trade certificate.
- To maintain this rate of growth, the number of persons with a trade certificate will need to increase by more than 2,000 per year in the short-to-medium term.

Other key findings of this environmental scan are summarized below in point form.

- The new Saskatchewan workers are coming from interprovincial and international migration, the Aboriginal population, those with higher levels of education, and temporary foreign workers.
- From 2006 to 2011, 30% of the 34,200 employment increase was among those with a trade certificate. To maintain this rate of growth, the number of persons with a trade certificate will need to increase by more than 2,000 per year.
- Using 2011 NHS data, increasing the education level of an Aboriginal person 25 to 34 years of age from someone with less than Grade 12 to a trade certificate doubles their employment rate from 32% to 65%.
- Employment is growing among Aboriginal people living off-Reserve but only as quickly as the adult population so the employment rate is not increasing.
- In 2011, a trade certificate was the highest level of completed education for 14% of the employed population. This is equivalent to approximately 72,500 individuals.
- The fastest employment growth rates are in the construction industry and the business services group. Employment has declined in manufacturing, the resource sector, and the information/culture/recreation group.
- The majority of the employment growth over the past five years has been in the major urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon. A large and increasing proportion of Aboriginal people live in these large urban centres.
- The short-to-medium term outlook for employment growth is good because aggregate capital investment is expected to be \$20.9 billion in 2014 – double the level in 2006 and three times the level in the early 2000s.
- Some of the fastest growing occupation groups are related to construction and transportation, for example,
  - supervisors in trades and transportation,
  - trades helpers,
  - construction, and transportation labourers,
  - transport and equipment operators, and
  - the construction trades.
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## **SECTION 3: ABORIGINAL APPRENTICES IN SASKATCHEWAN**

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This section looks at the system of apprenticeship in Saskatchewan and how many Aboriginal apprentices are registered.

### 3.1 SASKATCHEWAN'S APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

Apprenticeship is an industry-based training system in which skilled tradespersons (usually journeypersons) pass on knowledge and skills to learners (apprentices) in a workplace setting. Apprenticeship is a proven means of skills development for the trades that has been practiced for hundreds of years around the world. A structured system was put in place as far back as the medieval European craft guild system.

The fundamental elements of the modern day apprenticeship system include the following.

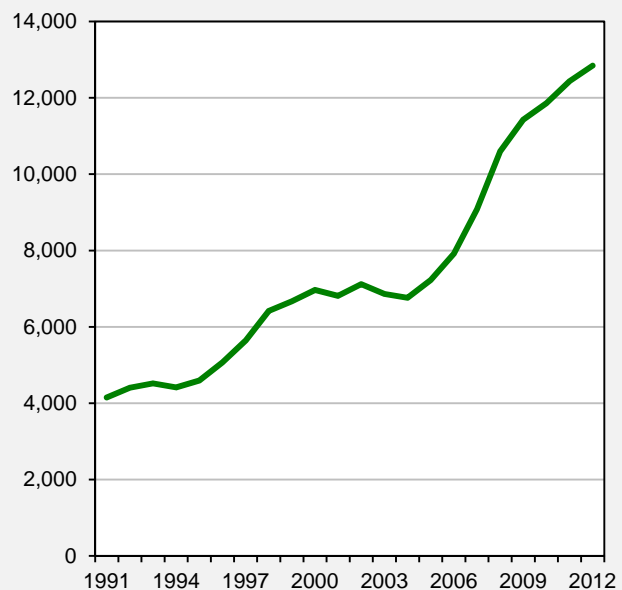
- The system is industry-driven with employers and employees establishing the standards for training and certification.
- A contract of apprenticeship establishes an on-going relationship between the employer and apprentice, identifying the responsibilities and obligations of each party.
- The majority of the skills development occurs in the workplace (approximately 80%) under a mentorship model of learn-by-doing with a journeyperson teaching and supervising the apprentice.
- The work-based training is supplemented by periodic periods of training at a technical institute over the course of the apprenticeship period.
- There is some public contribution to the institute training but the majority of the training is paid for by the private sector, that is, by employers (i.e. wages and benefits) and employees (tuition fees).

A formal apprenticeship system was implemented in Saskatchewan in 1944 by an act of the provincial legislature to help deal with the growth of the post WWII economy. At that time, thirteen trades were designated. At the end of the first year, 49 contracts of apprenticeship were registered in Saskatchewan. By 2013, Saskatchewan had 10,023 registered apprentices in 47 trades and 23 sub-trades with 2,750 employers employing apprentices.

Figure 3.1 shows the dramatic increase in the number of Saskatchewan apprentices since the mid-2000s<sup>7</sup>. Between 2005 and 2012, the number of registered apprentices in Saskatchewan grew by an average of 8.6% per year.

The government's role in apprenticeship is to help fund the system and support industry through the registration of the apprenticeship contracts, administration of examinations, issuing trade certifications and in the development of standards. While government largely covers the cost of the institutional technical training, industry continues to pay the largest portion of producing a skilled, certified tradesperson through its investment in on-the-job

**Figure 3.1 Registered Apprentices in Saskatchewan**



<sup>7</sup> These figures are from Statistics Canada (CANSIM Table 477-0053). They differ slightly from the ones published by SATCC because they use a different time frame and a different methodology for counting registered apprentices.

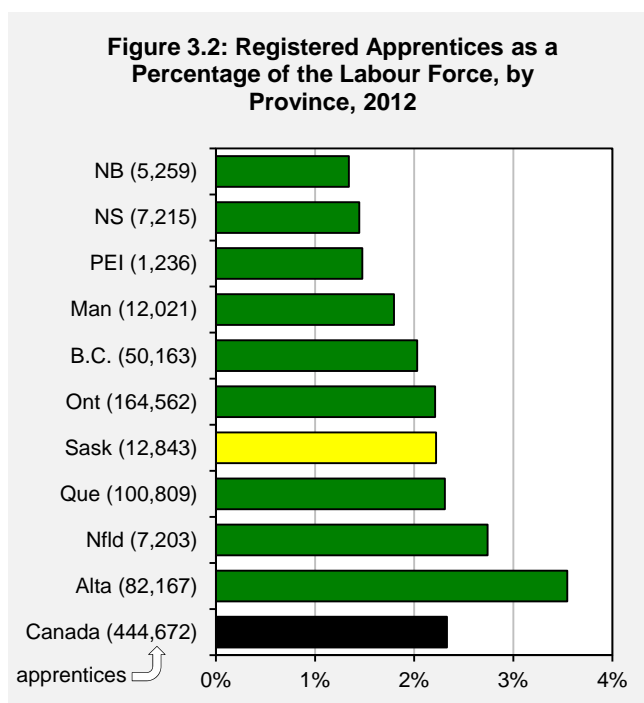
skills development. The average annual cost to government of an apprenticeship training position is approximately \$3,000. This compares to government’s annual average cost for other types of post-secondary training estimated to be in the range of \$12,000 to \$15,000<sup>8</sup>.

Since October 1, 1999 the apprenticeship system in Saskatchewan has been governed by the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC), a non-departmental government agency with an industry (employers and employees) Board of Governors. SATCC is responsible for the governance, management and administration of the apprenticeship system in Saskatchewan. It sets the strategic direction for the system in consultation with the Minister, and is responsible for the planning and performance of the program, as well as reporting results to industry, government, and the general public.

### INTERPROVINCIAL COMPARISON

Apprenticeship programs are more common in some provinces than others. This is partly because of the different nature of the provincial economies but it is also affected by government policies and by the demand from employers.

Figure 3.2 shows the number of registered apprentices in 2012 as a percentage of the labour force that year. Alberta is clearly the heaviest users of apprenticeship in Canada; Saskatchewan is near the national average.



### ABORIGINAL APPRENTICES

One of the key performance results for the Commission is to increase the number of Aboriginal apprentices across the trades<sup>9</sup>. In 2001-02 the provincial government provided SATCC with \$400,000 in annual targeted funding for the implementation of Aboriginal apprenticeship initiatives. This funding has been used to support first-year apprenticeship training on-Reserve for First Nations apprentices and to provide other supports like career exploration, transportation, and mentorship. In 2011-12 the SATCC was directed to repurpose an additional \$600,000 from its operating grant to targeted Aboriginal apprenticeship initiatives.

The number of Aboriginal apprentices as of June 30, 2013 stood at 1,383 or 13.8% of the total number of apprentices. The next section looks at this group in more detail.

<sup>8</sup> Source: The Apprenticeship System in Saskatchewan, SATCC, March 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Aboriginal identity for SATCC is based on the concept of voluntary self-identity. Apprentices are simply asked to indicate if they are First Nations or Métis.

### 3.2 ABORIGINAL APPRENTICES IN SASKATCHEWAN

Starting in 2007, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) began tracking the number of Aboriginal apprentices using a voluntary question on application forms<sup>10</sup>. This section looks at the number of Aboriginal apprentices in the province and in which trades they are registered. These data can then be compared with the statistics from GDI's apprenticeship program to determine the impact that the program has had (see Section 4.2).

Figure 3.3 shows that there were 1,383 Aboriginal apprentices in Saskatchewan as of June 2013. Of these, 905 or about two-thirds reported a First Nations identity and 474 reported a Métis identity with the remaining two reporting an Inuit identity. Aboriginal apprentices therefore represent 13.8% of all apprentices in the province – 9.1% for the First Nations population and 4.7% for the Métis population. This is near the proportion of the adult population in Saskatchewan who are Aboriginal – 14.4% of the population 15 to 64 years of age in 2011.

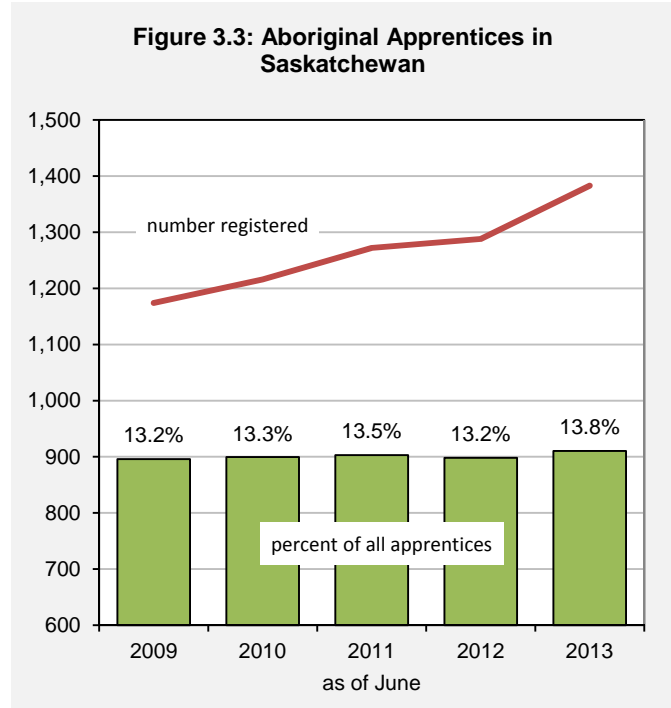
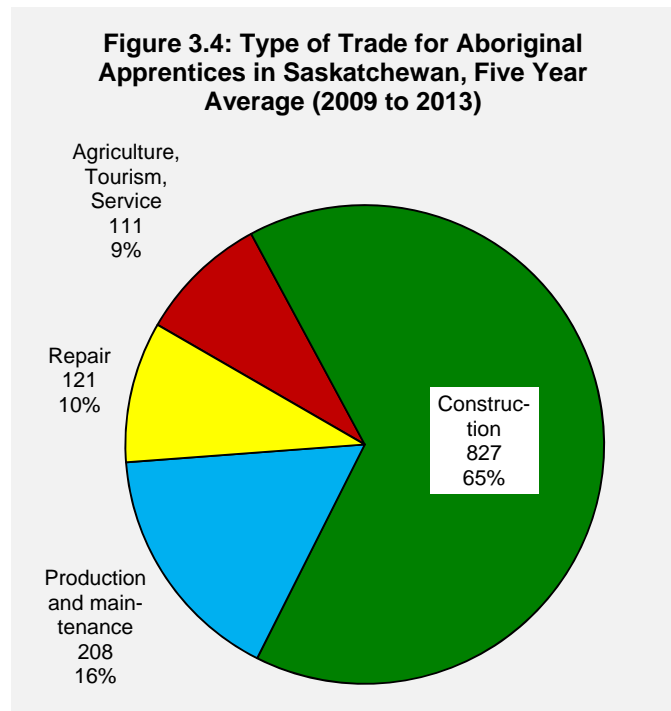


Figure 3.3 also shows that the number of Aboriginal apprentices is increasing. From 2009 to 2013, the increase has averaged 3.3% per year. This is above the 2.3% growth rate for all apprentices over the same period so the proportion of Saskatchewan apprentices who are Aboriginal has increased over the five years.

Aboriginal apprentices are concentrated in the construction trades (see Figure 3.4). Two-thirds are in one of the construction trades with the remaining one-third more or less equally spread across the other three trade categories.

This dominance of the construction trades is typical among apprentices. In fact, Aboriginal people are only slightly more likely to be apprentices in one of the construction trades



<sup>10</sup> In effect, this means that the number of First Nations and Métis apprentices is based on the concept of self-identity.

than non-Aboriginal people. Over the five years from 2009 to 2013, the proportion of apprentices who were Aboriginal averaged 13.4% overall but:

- 16.3% in the agriculture, tourism, and service group;
- 14.8% in construction trades;
- 11.2% in production and maintenance trades; and
- 9.1% in the repair trades.

Table 3.1 on the next page looks at the number of Aboriginal apprentices in the trades in more detail.

Several trades have an above-average proportion of Aboriginal apprentices including:

- cooks and servers in the service sector; and
- carpenters, roofers, and bricklayers in the construction industry.

At the other extreme there are relatively few Aboriginal apprentices in several common trades including:

- plumbers;
- electricians including power linepersons;
- sheet metal workers; and
- automotive service technicians.

The data in Table 3.1 is used later in this report (in Section 4.2.1) to show the impact that GDI's initiative has had on the number of Aboriginal apprentices in Saskatchewan.



**Table 3.1: Aboriginal Apprentices in Saskatchewan**

Category	Trade	Aboriginal Apprentices	Total Apprentices	Percent Aboriginal
Agriculture, Tourism, Service	Hairstylist	62	462	13%
	Cook	28	138	20%
	Food And Beverage Person	19	48	40%
	Guest Services Representative	2	19	9%
	Locksmith	1	4	14%
	All others	0	10	2%
	Total	111	682	16%
Construction	Carpenter	433	1,340	32%
	Electrician	158	1,680	9%
	Plumber	59	956	6%
	Scaffolder	39	270	15%
	Steamfitter-Pipefitter	23	196	12%
	Roofer	21	44	47%
	Sheet Metal Worker	16	275	6%
	Power Lineperson	16	204	8%
	Bricklayer	15	61	24%
	Ironworker Structural	12	124	10%
	Hydraulic Crane Operator	6	53	11%
	Refrigeration Mechanic	5	112	4%
	Insulator	4	44	9%
	All others	21	225	9%
	Total	827	5,585	15%
Production and maintenance	Welder	107	701	15%
	Industrial Mechanic (Millwright)	53	501	11%
	Motorhand (Level One)	17	177	10%
	Industrial Instrument Mechanic	9	124	7%
	Machinist	8	154	5%
	Steel Fabricator	7	47	14%
	Derrickhand (Level Two)	4	87	4%
	Driller (Level Three)	2	55	4%
	All others	0	11	2%
Total	208	1,856	11%	
Repair	Heavy Duty Equipment Mechanic	50	296	17%
	Automotive Service Technician	31	395	8%
	Truck and Transport Mechanic	16	212	8%
	Motor Vehicle Body Repairer	9	132	7%
	Agricultural Machinery Technician	7	211	3%
	Partsperson	5	79	6%
	All others	1	2	70%
	Total	121	1,327	9%
All trades		1,267	9,450	13%

## **SECTION 4: THE GABRIEL DUMONT ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE**

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This section focuses on the Gabriel Dumont Institute’s Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative – sometimes referred to as just the “initiative” in this report.

We begin with a brief description of the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative in Section 4.1. Statistics about the number of clients/trainees are provided in Section 4.2 and a brief financial summary is included in Section 4.3. GDI had regular contact with employers and the feedback received from employers involved in the initiative is summarized in Section 4.4. As part of this review, we conducted interviews or surveys with GDI’s project partners, a sample of participating employers, and a sample of the trainees. These are summarized in Section 4.5. Relevant characteristics of the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative are compared with best practises in Section 4.6.

## 4.1 GDI ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION

The GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative was a three-year program operating from June 2011 through to March 2014. A portion of the funding for the initiative was from the Government of Canada's Strategic Partnership Fund administered by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) but there were significant in-kind contributions from GDI's project partners and from employers.

The objective of the initiative was to:

“provide training and work experiences in the apprenticeship trades to Aboriginal people, with a priority on Métis people, living in Saskatchewan”.

More specifically, the initiative had the following objectives.

- The initiative will increase the number of Aboriginal people enrolled in apprenticeship programs as well as the number of companies and industries involved.
- It will provide the opportunity to initiate and develop relationships between industry and the Aboriginal labour market.
- The initiative will make the link between apprentices and employers and will support both the employer and apprentice through to journeyman status.

The GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative accomplishes these objectives with a comprehensive program.

- Partnerships were developed with industry, SATCC, and technical institutes.
- Potential employers were identified, clients were matched with the appropriate employer and the apprenticeship process was initiated.
- Employment counsellors were assigned to provide dedicated support to the initiative.
  - They recruited both employers and client/trainee for possible participation in the initiative.
  - They conducted client/trainee interviews and assessments to determine their apprenticeship qualifications and interest in the trades.
  - They helped prepare qualified clients with résumé preparation and interview skills and matched them with employers who had needs in their chosen trades.
  - Once a client/trainee was interviewed and hired by an employer, they provided job coaching services/supports to both the client/trainee and the employer as required.
  - They monitored the progress of the client/trainee with monthly follow-ups.
  - They helped with the paperwork required by both the initiative and the apprenticeship system.

In terms of quantifiable targets:

- a minimum of 140 Aboriginal people will be “indentured” in apprenticeship programs, that is, registered by SATCC as apprentices;
- 60 of the clients will be registered at the second level or higher; and
- 60 different employers in 17 different trades will be involved in working with the employees.

## 4.2 GDI ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE STATISTICS

This section has the basic statistics about the initiative including the characteristics of both the employers and the clients. Particular attention is paid to those who were “successful” in the sense of becoming indentured.

### BASIC COUNTS

Based on data provided by the GDI, Table 4.1 shows that over the course of the initiative’s operations, there were 222 clients involved with 135 different employers<sup>11</sup>.

These participating statistics were well above the targets set of the initiative. In particular there were 157 indentured clients compared with a target of 140 and 135 different employers compared with a target of 60.

**Table 4.1 GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative Statistics**

Number of participating employers	135
All placements of clients/trainees*	222
Of which: Indentured clients	157

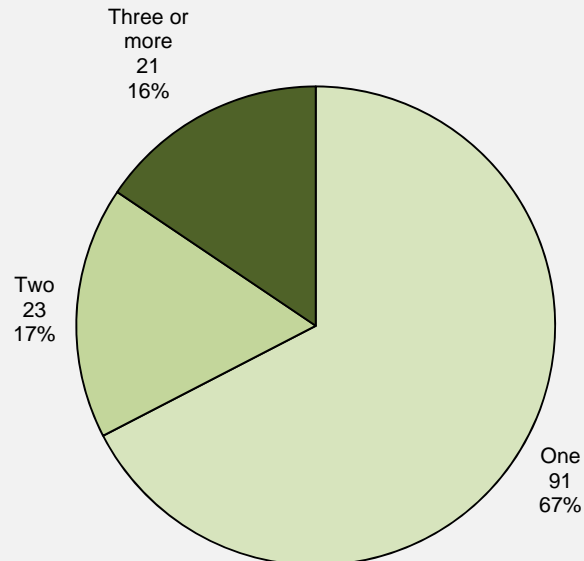
*\* the actual number was 223 but statistics were only available for 222 when this report was prepared*

Of the 65 clients/trainees who did not become indentured, 43% resigned before becoming indentured, 32% were dismissed, and 11% were laid off. Other reasons accounted for the remaining 14%.

Two-thirds of the 135 employers involved in the initiative employed a single client/trainee but 17% employed two and 16% employed three or more (see Figure 4.1). In particular, eleven were employed by the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure (a project partner) and six were employed by Cameco.

In the balance of this section, we look at the characteristics of these 222 clients/trainees with a particular emphasis on the 157 of these who were indentured.

**Figure 4.1: Number of Employers by Client Count**



<sup>11</sup> The actual number of clients/trainees was 223 but statistics were only available for 222 when this report was prepared.

## 4.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF CLIENT/TRAINEES AND INDENTURED CLIENTS

The database provided by GDI for this analysis enables an examination of all client/trainees and the subset of those who became indentured apprentices broken down by sex, Aboriginal identity, trade, and location. These data are calculated separately for 222 client/trainees and for the 157 of these who were indentured. The ratio of the two (71%) provides what we can call the “indenture rate” – the proportion of client/trainees who were “successful” in the sense that they became indentured.

### LOCATION

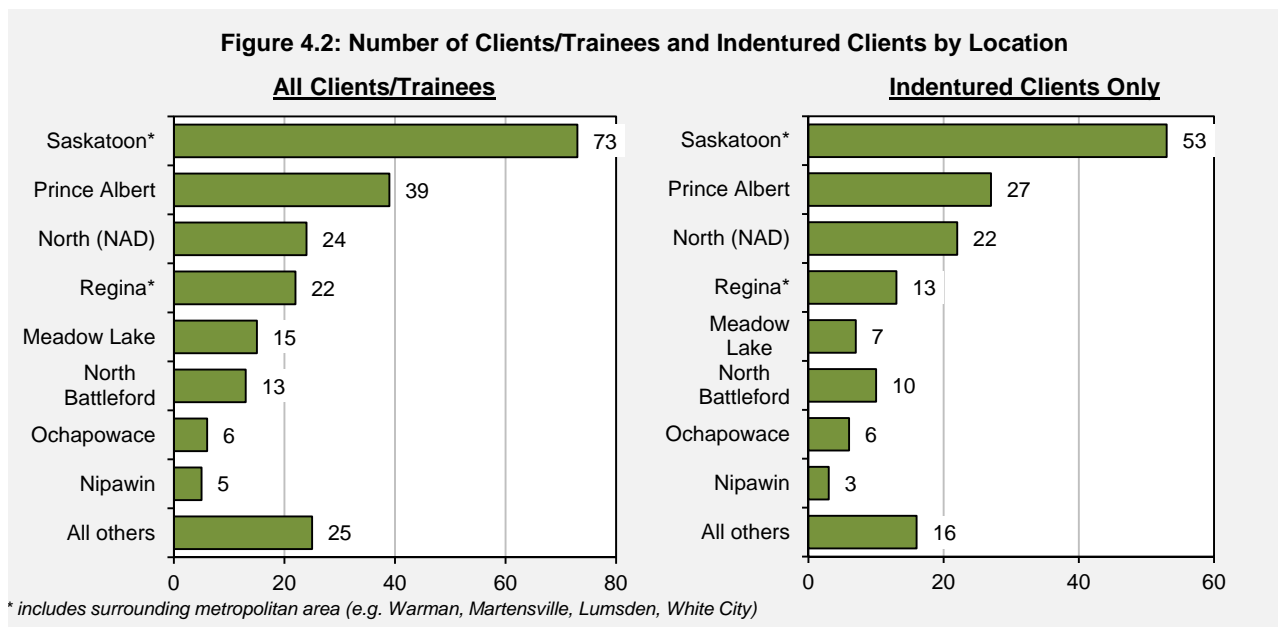
Figure 4.2 shows the employer location. One third of the 222 client/trainees went to work in the Saskatoon metropolitan area (the city proper and the surrounding “bedroom” communities such as Martensville or Warman). The second most common location was Prince Albert and the third was for various locations in the Northern Administrative District (NAD).

The indenture rate was highest in the North (92%) and on the Ochapowace Reserve (100%). It was also above average in North Battleford (77%). The indenture rate was below average in Regina (59%) and Meadow Lake (47%).

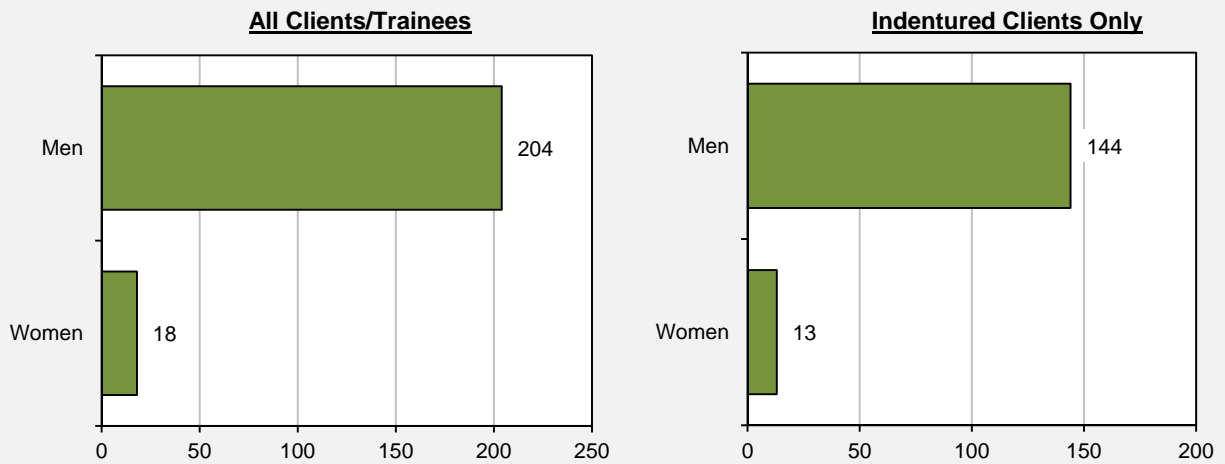
Compared with employment in the province, client/trainees tend to be concentrated in the northern and central parts of the province in general and Saskatoon in particular. This was also where the indenture rate was the highest – clients/trainees in this part of the province were more likely to become indentured.

### SEX

Figure 4.3 shows that the vast majority (92% in fact) of client/trainees were men. The indenture rate was similar for men and women. In other words, male and female clients/trainees were equally likely to become indentured – 92% of indentured clients were men. The disproportionate representation of men in GDI’s initiative is not surprising given the dominance of construction and maintenance trades among



**Figure 4.3: Number of Client/Trainees and Indentured Clients by Sex**



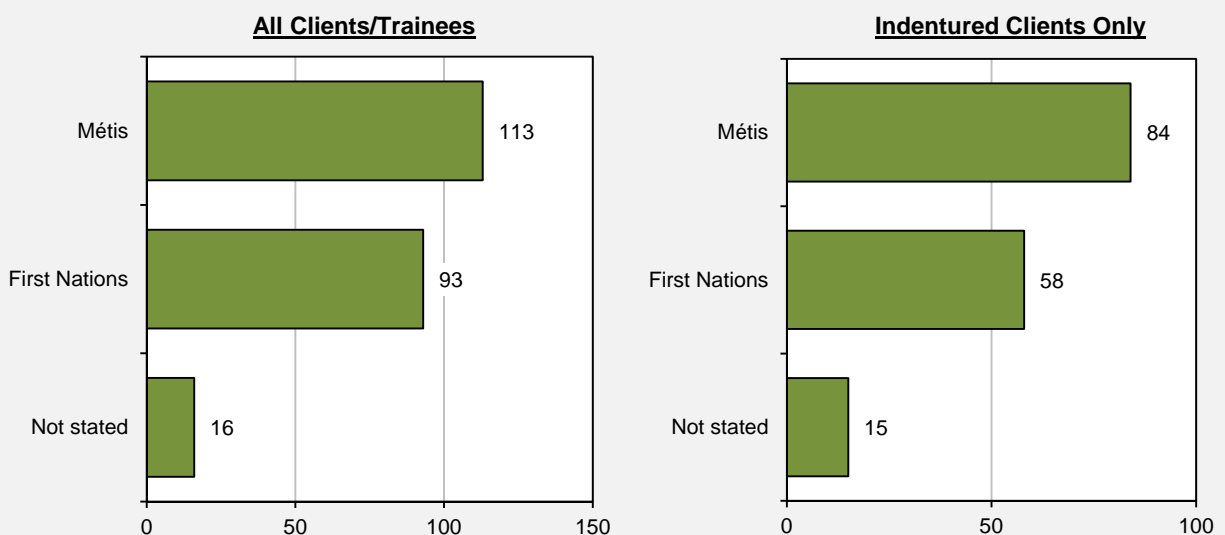
clients/trainees (see Figure 4.5).

### ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

In the province as a whole, two-thirds of those who report an Aboriginal identity are First Nations but employment is almost equally split among the Métis and the First Nations populations. (In 2011, exactly 50% of employed Aboriginal people were First Nations and 50% were Métis.)

Among clients/trainees in the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative who reported an Aboriginal identity, Métis slightly outnumbered First Nations members with 55% reporting a Métis identity and 45% reporting a First Nations identity. The Métis had a higher indenture rate (74% vs. 62%) so the proportion of indentured clients who were Métis was 59% and the proportion who reported a First Nations identity was 41%.

**Figure 4.4: Number of Client/Trainees and Indentures by Aboriginal Identity**



## TRADES

Figure 4.5 shows the trades for both clients/trainees and those who became indentured. As with apprentices in general, the construction trades dominate with carpenters and electricians accounting for more than one half of the clients/trainees. The indenture rate (71% for all trades) was above average for:

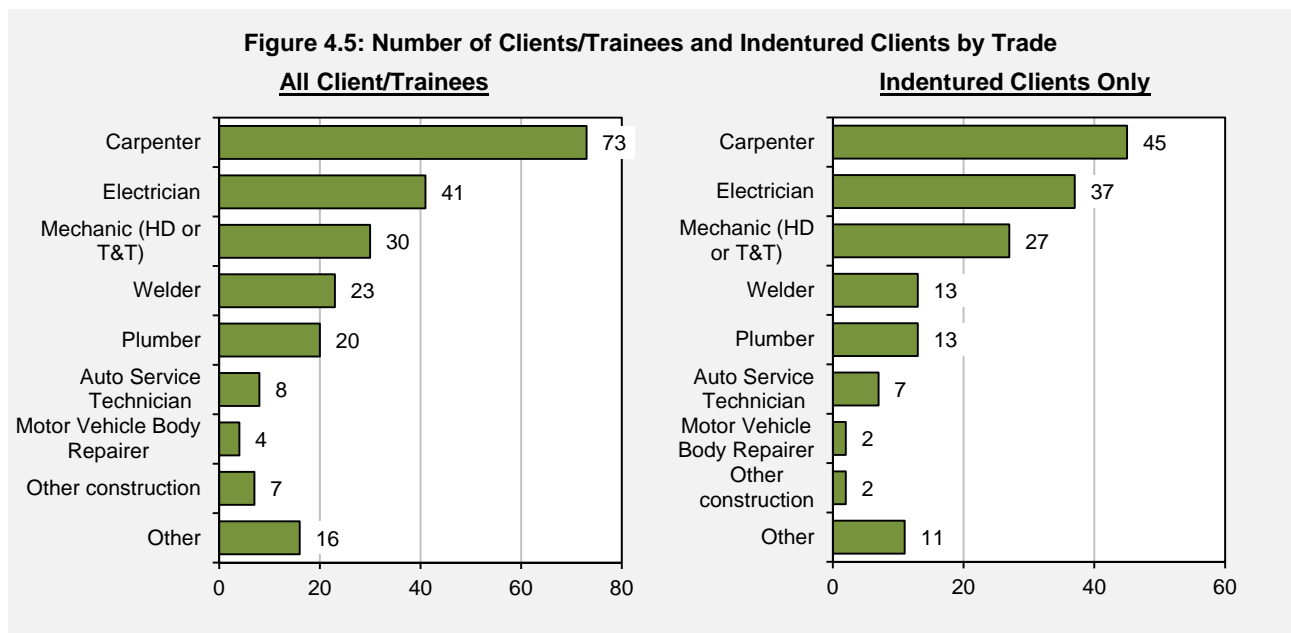
- electricians (90%);
- heavy-duty or truck-trailer mechanics (90%); and
- auto service technicians (88%).

It was below average for:

- plumbers (65%);
- carpenters (62%); and
- welders (57%).

A comparison between the number of indentured GDI clients with the number of Aboriginal apprentices in Saskatchewan (see Section 3.2 of this report) shows the impact that the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative had on Aboriginal apprenticeship in the province. Note that the number of Aboriginal apprentices in Saskatchewan is a “snapshot” of a point in time whereas the number of GDI clients who were indentured is cumulative over three years.

Overall, indentured GDI clients represent 11% of the apprentices registered at SATCC as of June 2013. Assuming that all of the indentured GDI clients were still apprentices at the end of June 2013, this means that the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative is responsible for about one in eleven Aboriginal apprentices in the province. Looked at another way, the number of Aboriginal apprentices registered with SATCC increased by 167 over the three years ending in June 2013. This is almost the same number of clients indentured under the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative.



**Figure 4.6: Number of GDI Indentured Clients as a Percentage of Aboriginal Apprentices in Saskatchewan by Trade**

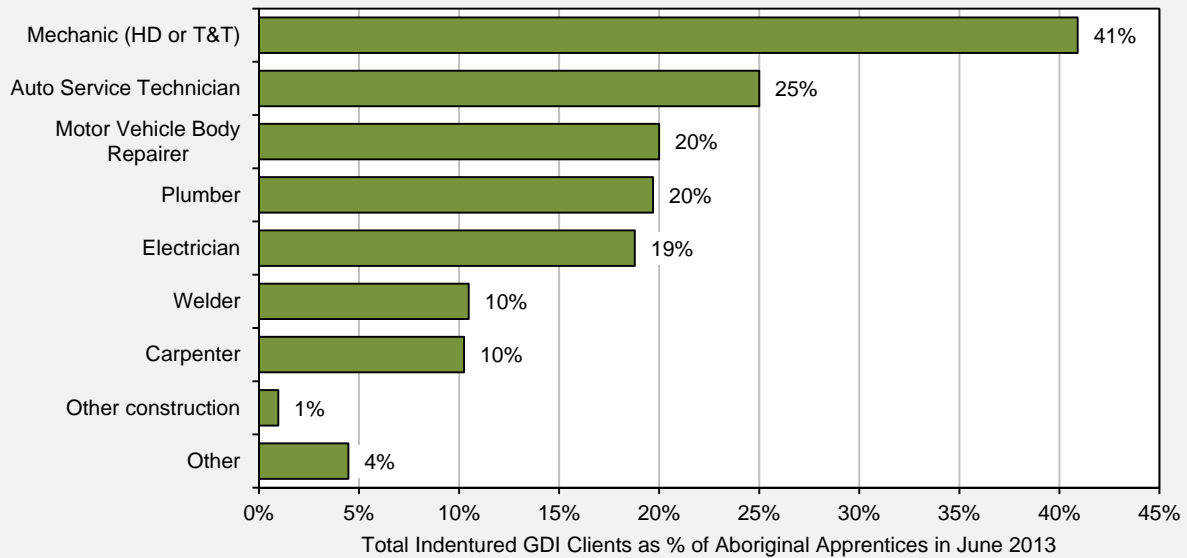


Figure 4.6 shows the proportion of GDI indentured clients to SATCC apprentices is much higher for several trades including heavy-duty or truck-trailer mechanics (four in ten), auto service technicians (one in four), and motor vehicle body repairers (one in five). There are relatively few indentured GDI clients outside of the construction and mechanic trades.



### 4.3 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative was partially funded by a contribution from Employment and Social Development Canada under the Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF). The SPF supports Aboriginal organizations in creating partnerships with governments, businesses, and community organizations that drive change, improve skills training, and create opportunities for Aboriginal people.

GDI Training and Employment received a \$2.9 million contribution under the SPF towards the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative. The contribution was heavily leveraged against industry and partner contributions.

Table 4.2 summarizes the funding for the initiative over the three fiscal years from 2011-12 through 2013-14.

The aggregate resources provided to the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative totaled \$8.1 million of which \$2.9 million was funded by the SPF and \$5.2 million provided by the partners and employers. Three quarters of the total was participant subsidies and supports (the wage subsidy and the wages/benefits paid by employers). Project administration accounted for 12% of the total.

**Table 4.2: Program Expenditures**

	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		Three Year Total	
	Funded	Partner contributions in Kind	Funded	Partner contributions in Kind	Funded	Partner contributions in Kind	Funded	Partner Contributions in Kind
Staff salaries, wages, benefits	\$185,696	\$0	\$312,255	\$0	\$199,769	\$0	\$697,720	\$0
Project staff MERCs	\$12,196	\$0	\$15,920	\$0	\$11,291	\$0	\$39,407	\$0
Professional fees	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$27,675	\$0	\$27,675	\$0
Staff/board travel	\$11,281	\$7,031	\$11,177	\$4,665	\$11,174	\$8,397	\$33,632	\$20,093
Overhead costs (utilities, rent, material, supplies, postage)	\$5,473	\$29,771	\$4,355	\$36,141	\$1,189	\$30,984	\$11,017	\$96,896
IT support	\$208	\$0	\$413	\$0	\$18	\$0	\$639	\$0
Printing	\$887	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$887	\$0
Staff training	\$0	\$0	\$1,079	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,079	\$0
Advertising	\$19,264	\$933	\$17,608	\$0	\$8,130	\$0	\$45,002	\$933
<b>Total Project Administration</b>	<b>\$235,005</b>	<b>\$37,735</b>	<b>\$362,807</b>	<b>\$40,806</b>	<b>\$259,246</b>	<b>\$39,381</b>	<b>\$857,058</b>	<b>\$117,922</b>
Participant subsidies and supports	\$363,159	\$762,089	\$596,140	\$1,425,023	\$859,351	\$2,052,629	\$1,818,650	\$4,239,741
Participant living allowances	\$0	\$68,402	\$11,106	\$61,271	\$25,042	\$32,450	\$36,148	\$162,123
Participant related costs	\$5,028	\$190,040	\$5,169	\$165,220	\$11,304	\$140,400	\$21,501	\$495,660
Tuition costs	\$696	\$61,900	\$3,299	\$71,752	\$7,057	\$67,132	\$11,052	\$200,784
Payments to third parties - participant assistance	\$0	\$0	\$96,154	\$0	\$70,346	\$0	\$166,500	\$0
<b>Total Participant Assistance</b>	<b>\$368,883</b>	<b>\$1,082,431</b>	<b>\$711,868</b>	<b>\$1,723,266</b>	<b>\$973,100</b>	<b>\$2,292,611</b>	<b>\$2,053,851</b>	<b>\$5,098,308</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$603,888</b>	<b>\$1,120,166</b>	<b>\$1,074,675</b>	<b>\$1,764,072</b>	<b>\$1,232,346</b>	<b>\$2,331,992</b>	<b>\$2,910,909</b>	<b>\$5,216,230</b>

Source: GDI

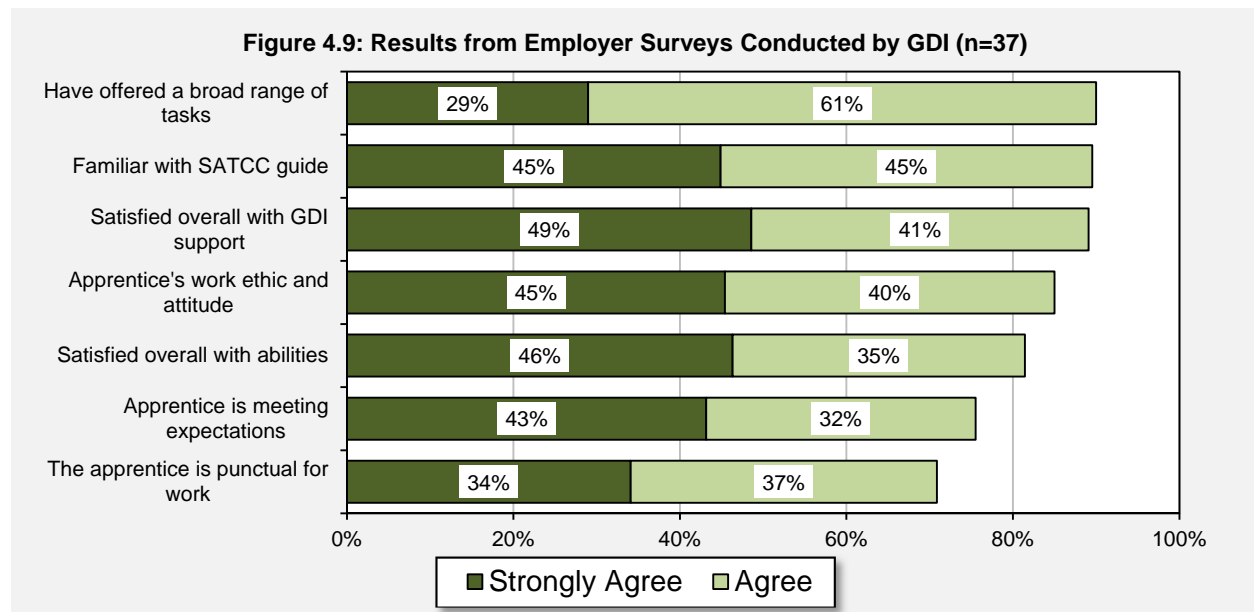
## 4.4 EMPLOYER SURVEYS

GDI conducted monthly and bi-annual employer surveys during the initiative to assess employer satisfaction with the initiative and to specifically assess the performance of the apprentice. A summary of the survey results are shown in Figure 4.9 below.

Employers who responded were generally very familiar with the apprenticeship system; 90% or more reporting that they were familiar with the SATCC guide and have offered clients a broad range of tasks.

Nine out of ten were satisfied with GDI's support.

There was also a general level of satisfaction with the apprentices. The work ethic and attitude was reported as good for 85% of respondents and the level of ability was reported as good for 81%. Three quarters (75%) reported that the apprentice was meeting expectations with 16% "neutral" and 8% disagreeing. The lowest rankings were for punctual attendance but, even so, almost three quarters (71%) were satisfied.



## 4.5 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The Aboriginal Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF) is a partnership-based program that funds projects contributing to skills training for Aboriginal workers. The main objective for the Gabriel Dumont Institute Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative, operating from June 2011 through March 2014, was to increase Aboriginal participation in the trades. There were three major groups involved in this initiative – project partners, employers, and clients/trainees.

As part of this review, interviews were held with the project partners and questionnaires were distributed to employers and, through them, to the clients/trainees. The purpose of these interviews and questionnaires was to solicit input on the strengths of the initiative, as well as any suggestions for improving future initiatives in this area. These suggestions are found in Section 4.6 – Best Practices and the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative.

## 4.5.1 PROJECT PARTNERS

There were five project partners in the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative:

- the Gabriel Dumont Institute;
- the Dumont Technical Institute;
- the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure;
- the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission; and
- Service Canada.

The project partners acted as goodwill ambassadors for the initiative, provided direction to the program, and brought specific expertise, information, and resources to the initiative. The partners met seven times during the initiative and, at the end of each meeting, completed surveys. In those surveys, 98% indicated that they were very satisfied with the partnership and 100% strongly agreed that the partnership was valuable in meeting the project goals.

As part of this review, interviews were held with individuals from each of these organizations.

### GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE (GDI)

The Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment is a branch of the Gabriel Dumont Institute. GDI identified the key initiative strengths listed below.

#### Funding Flexibility and Scope

The Gabriel Dumont Institute Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative was federally funded under the Skills and Partnership Fund. These funds were provided as one fund, thereby giving GDI flexibility in how they were utilized across capacity building and employer/client/trainee supports. This allowed GDI to build their counsellors' knowledge of apprenticeship, negotiate wage subsidy levels with employers and provide client/trainee assistance (books, tools, apprenticeship fees, etc.) based on individual employer and client/trainee needs. GDI has had other subsidized programming including the ASETS-funded Apprenticeship Subsidy Programming that assists Métis people to enter trades and apprenticeship. However, these programs are typically not as flexible nor as adequately resourced as this three-year initiative, for example, the length of employer partnerships available, the partnership approval process, the financial resources available to clients for tools and equipment, and SATCC application resources.

#### Internal Capacity Development

The initiative enabled GDI to build its internal capacity with respect to employment partnership development, knowledge of the complex apprenticeship system and processes, and labour market needs in the province. This is an ongoing need as economic growth continues, apprenticeship procedures evolve, and as normal employment staff counsellor turnover occurs at GDI.

#### Employer and Client/Trainee Selection

The increased capacity of GDI employment counsellors regarding the apprenticeship system has enabled an effective front-end process of employer and client/trainee selection and referral. Knowing

the employer's needs and the trade-specific skills and education requirements has enabled appropriate client/trainee referrals to employers. Flexibility in funding both First Nations and Métis trainees, within the eligibility of this specific initiative, has meant a larger pool from which to select qualified applicants for referral to employers. The final decision about a client/trainee selection after GDI's front-end assessment is an employer decision.

### Job Coaching

The enhanced capacity of GDI employment counsellors throughout the province provided knowledgeable job coaching skills to interact with trainees and employers at the beginning of contracts and on a monthly basis for reporting purposes (GDI/Service Canada/SATCC). They were particularly important in assisting with apprenticeship processes and procedures and on an as-needed basis to deal with any job maintenance issues that a client/trainee and/or employer might experience.

### Wage Subsidy

The wage subsidy was an important element in encouraging employers to take on trainees that they might not have otherwise hired. Wage supports were negotiated on an employer-by-employer basis. For example, larger employers were able to afford a lower wage subsidy. The wage support provided was up to 50% of wages to a maximum GDI contribution of the minimum wage and up to 100% of the Mandatory Employment Related Costs (MERCs) mandated by Service Canada. GDI advises that the average contract was \$15,000 to \$20,000 in wage subsidies and \$3,000 to \$7,000 in MERCs. Contracts were negotiated for up to 52-week terms. If a second term was negotiated to take an apprentice beyond their first-year training, GDI employment counsellors would typically try to lower the wage subsidy percentage and eliminate the MERCs support.

### Partnership Support

The project partners have been most supportive in their provision of advice, information and contacts. This assistance has been ongoing through regular scheduled meetings and as-needed interactions.

### Client/Trainee Selection/Assessment/Preparation

The initiative placed 223 Aboriginal trainees with employers. Of these 157 became indentured in 17 different trades. Of the 223 trainees, 92% were male and 8% were female. The number one barrier for clients attempting to access this initiative was education completion with respect to meeting the SATCC educational requirements for a specific trade. Many more clients met with employment counsellors but were not captured within the scope of reporting for this initiative as they did not meet educational requirements to be eligible or lacked the skills and experience needed by employers. Dumont Technical Institute put on two GED programs in an attempt to assist with overcoming this educational barrier<sup>12</sup>.

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12 The GED programs were advertised as trades focussed but there was only a nominal trades component (more like an exploratory segment of the course).

## **DUMONT TECHNICAL INSTITUTE (DTI)**

The Dumont Technical Institute is a branch of the Gabriel Dumont Institute. DTI offers community-based programming such as Adult Basic Education and skills training. DTI viewed this initiative as very successful. “This initiative was way more successful than past approaches that had been tried.” DTI identified the key initiative strengths listed below.

### **Approval Process**

A quick turnaround of five days on partnership approvals was definitely a strength, particularly when dealing with smaller employers. In comparison, ASETS-funded project approvals have a more restrictive and time consuming process because of both Service Canada and GDI requirements<sup>13</sup>.

### **Employment Counsellors**

These positions were key to the initiative’s success. They did significant employer contact work to build a sizeable pool of potential workplaces for client/trainees. Once client/trainees were referred to and selected by employers, the employment counsellors maintained regular contact with both the employers and trainees. This was particularly important in the first month or two of a client/trainee placement and was responsible for faster indentures.

### **Wage Subsidy**

The wage subsidy component was essential to getting employers to sign on to the initiative, particularly smaller employers. The ability to negotiate employer specific wage subsidy rates was key to helping stretch available funding across wages, training supports and internal capacity building.

## **MINISTRY OF HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure has partnered with GDI for many years including the Ministry’s Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program in Prince Albert.

In the interviews, the Ministry was very supportive of this initiative – “The initiative is an excellent resource for addressing our future labour requirements and skilled labour shortages across the province.” The Ministry identified the wage subsidy as a key project strength. The wage subsidy provides financial relief for employers while training apprentices. Additionally, the provision of educational aides and personal supports throughout the apprenticeship from both DTI and the Ministry helped to ensure apprentice success.

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<sup>13</sup> The GDI Board has since revised this policy to better meet the needs of employers and apprentices.

## SASKATCHEWAN APPRENTICESHIP AND TRADE CERTIFICATION COMMISSION (SATCC)

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission (SATCC) and the Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment share the goal of increasing Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship in the province and have worked together previously on this issue.

SATCC viewed this initiative as successful but incomplete because of the progress of the apprentices. “There should be better and sustained tracking of indentured apprentices’ progress through the apprenticeship levels, including reasons for lack of progress.”<sup>14</sup>

The SATCC identified the trade placements as the key project strength. The initiative resulted in a number of Métis and First Nations individuals being indentured across a diversity of trades and some women being indentured in traditional male trades. Often these types of initiatives end up focussing on larger trades such as welders and carpenters. However, this initiative had other trades such as sheet metal worker, plumber, electrician, cabinetmaker, millwright, meat cutter, and refrigeration mechanic, to site a few examples.

## SERVICE CANADA

Service Canada rated this initiative as “one of the strongest projects in the region.” Service Canada identified the key project strengths listed below.

### Partnerships

The already-existing relationships with SATCC, the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure, and DTI proved to be a key strength as GDI could “hit the ground running” and spend less time than other initiatives on relationship building. This enabled early attention on employer and client/trainee connections, and an early focus on measurable results. Partners were also able to assist GDI make employer connections through their networks.

### GDI Organization and Staff

“Governments know they can count on GDI for results.” GDI has a steady track record of delivering results even in times of Métis political uncertainty. This initiative had clear objectives, a strong staff and a province wide structure to connect with potential employers and trainees. The province-wide GDI structure and network enabled their staff to make productive connections effectively and efficiently. The project team was knowledgeable and proactive. When a problem was identified, they

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<sup>14</sup> Upon reviewing the GDI client database we noted that there were a number of apprentices for which no completed technical training and level progression are shown. SATCC indicated that it is unknown at this time if this is simply a data shortfall due to a lack of communication/measurement between GDI and employers/apprentices, or if there are other more substantial reasons as in apprentice quits, employers not allowing apprentices leave for technical training, or long waiting lists at SIAST and other technical institutes.

Most apprentices were indentured between 3 and 6 months after being placed. This allowed for about half the hours required for technical training to be logged during the 52-week subsidy. Some apprentices did not continue with a second subsidy period, while those that did would receive their call to training 3-6 months before that period ended. Unfortunately, there are still wait-lists for some technical training, and some clients could not attend within their time in the program.



also brought forward solutions – e.g. GED courses to assist trainees who were deficient in some apprenticeship academic requirements. Required meetings and reports were held and delivered in a professional manner and on a timely basis. It was also beneficial that GDI staff could help employers with required paperwork to indenture apprentices and report to SATCC. GDI also developed a quick turnaround employer-approval process to ensure timely placement of client/trainees.

### Wage Subsidy

The wage subsidy enabled GDI employment counsellors to get the attention of employers and likely enabled a greater placement and more client/trainee indentures than would otherwise have been possible, particularly with smaller employers. Efforts were made to negotiate lower wage subsidies with larger employers and any employers who contracted for a larger number of trainees. The fact that funding could also be used to provide client/trainee supports was also very important to the initiative's success.

## 4.5.2 GDI ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE EMPLOYERS

The GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative entered into partnership with more than 250 employers. Of these 135 offered employment opportunities for 223 clients/trainees, 157 of which were indentured. Questionnaires were developed to get a snapshot of employer and client/trainee views of this initiative. These questionnaires were distributed to 19 employers and, through them, to their trainees. A total of 14 employer and 17 client/trainee responses were received. The employers were located in Regina (2), Saskatoon (5), Prince Albert (4) and North Battleford (3). These 14 employers received 45 client/trainee placements via the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative, 34 of which were indentured, 7 who quit, 2 who were laid off, 1 who was fired, and 1 who is employed but not yet indentured.

All of the employers that responded were very supportive of this initiative and they all indicated that they would continue to participate if there was a second phase or similar initiative in the future.

### Successful Elements

Four employers specifically mentioned the wage subsidy.

- It allows employers to lessen their risk at employing unskilled labour.
- The wage subsidies were crucial in that we were able to hire and train employees that would otherwise not have been hired.
- The provision of financial assistance to employers provides incentive to invest in relatively “green” apprentices.

Four employers specifically mentioned that GDI was helpful and supportive in the initiative.

- Good communication between GDI and Cameco. GDI was diligent on paperwork and flexible, working with several groups in Cameco to make it work.
- Continual follow-up and support for business and trainee.
- Close working relationship with GDI.
- Continual follow-up and support for business and trainee.

Six employers specifically mentioned aspects of client/trainee access.

- It gives the trainee a chance to see if this is what they want to do.
- Because of the program, we received a reliable employee who was interested in learning the job.
- The more young people we can get in the trade the better.
- It is very good for employee to get on the right track in life.
- The program helped to identify and screen two of the four participants.
- Gives us, as the employer, another source to find people that want to be in the trade.

### Initiative Weaknesses

Ten employers either indicated that the initiative had no weaknesses or mentioned the fact that it ended was a weakness.

Two employers mentioned reporting requirements as a weakness.

- Too much paperwork in a monthly report.
- The monthly reports were a bit much, quarterly would have been sufficient.

Two employers mentioned financial concerns.

- Only allowing limited number of trainee(s) per business for the full wage subsidy.
- The only perceived weakness would be the limitation of financial assistance to employers following the second year of apprenticeship. Without the financial assistance employers may not be able to continue the apprenticeship. As a result some Aboriginal apprentices may be laid off.

A variety of client/trainee barriers to success were identified by employers.

- Going south for training can be a barrier, such as culture shock and adjusting to city life.
- Academics are also a barrier but Cameco provided on-site support and tutoring support offsite as needed.
- Attending school for two months each year with no income maintaining a residence in Prince Albert, one when at training in Saskatoon and possibly a home in a different community where the family is from.
- Lack of relevant work experience and academic readiness (i.e. math preparedness etc.).
- Getting that first job that includes indentureship!
- High competition for positions, location, hard when starting without vehicles.
- For the most part, no previous experience or exposure.
- Not enough knowledge about the program is out to potential employers. Most do not even know it exists.

Employers were unanimous in stating that GDI staff were readily accessible for support if needed. On the specific question of GDI staff assisting in overcoming barriers employers again were very positive.

- The GDI staff provided assistance to the apprentices and the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure in overcoming the barriers. Regular on-site visits and performance reviews with the employer and the client/trainees are invaluable.
- We had no problems but I am sure (name withheld) would have solved them if we did.
- Yes, (name withheld) was great to work with, and we look forward to working with her in the future.
- Yes, they provided support that allowed us to invest in development.
- GDI staff aided us where required, and were responsive to questions.
- Yes, once (name withheld) was employed we got support and information from (name withheld) at GDI.

Employers focussed on the attitudes of trainees as a key determinate for success.

- It has nothing to do with the program. It has everything to do with the individual's attitude and desire.
- Some had more drive than others for reasons unknown.
- Some see this as a great opportunity to start a career, and come to work with ambition. Others see it just as a job.
- It is all up to the trainee on success.
- Yes, some are more interested than others.
- Yes, some trainees are more successful than others. This applies to all trainees, and not just those hired through the GDI program.
- Some trainees are more mechanically inclined than others
- Some take more initiative than others
- Some have a better work ethic than others

Employers focussed on positive attitudes, good work ethic and a willingness to learn as the key elements that trainees need to bring to the job.

- Good work ethic. Initiative, driven to succeed. Education, experience and motivation.
- A good work ethic, ability to learn and upgrading their math skills.
- Willing to learn, and want to be at the place they are working, part of the team.
- A willingness to learn and be coached.
- A positive attitude and a willingness to work.
- Trainee must want to succeed in this field of work.
- Positive attitude, ability to take direction.
- A good work ethic and willingness to learn.
- Attitude and willing to learn.
- Strong work ethic; non-entitlement.
- They need to be reliable, and have a good work ethic.
- A desire to learn and not just work for a paycheque.
- An attitude of pride in their work.
- Willingness to listen and take direction.
- Aboriginal apprentices need to bring a positive attitude and a willingness to learn to be successful.
- I think the realization of how fortunate they are to be able to receive this help from GDI, and that this may be a chance to start a lifetime career, but to pass if it is not of interest to them.

Employers focussed on their trainer responsibilities as the biggest area for assisting client/trainees to be successful.

- Give them proper training and set goals that are attainable for them.
- Have well-trained journeymen who are good at coaching and mentoring.
- Patience and must be willing to teach them the trade.
- Regular feedback and ongoing training.
- Employers need to offer a workplace and a supervising person.
- Personnel to work and mentor the trainees.
- Employers need to realize that the majority will be coming with no experience, (which requires constant mentorship), to take time to talk to the new hires, emphasize their importance to the rest of the crew that they show up every day, and the importance of doing things correctly and safely.
- Have well trained journeymen who are good at coaching and mentoring.
- Employers should provide access to educational aides such as tutors and textbooks for apprentices.
- Provide on and off site support systems. Have follow-up discussions with trainees when problems arise. Keep on top of their progress.

Employers indicated a strong willingness to assist trainees deal with any difficulties they might experience.

- Provide access to workplace education tutors. Being available to listen or answer questions makes a big difference.
- Deal with issues immediately and find out why there is a potential problem.
- Do a good assessment of the individual to confirm what the barriers are, are they fixable and how?
- Work with the project staff to help the individual be successful. Everyone learns at a different rate.
- Open communication.
- Contact GDI to see if arrangements can be made to solve any issues.

- Assist them by giving them good training, and access to HR department if personal issues.
- Staff that take time to answer questions.
- Every case is different. Work with your people.

Most employers did not do any special workforce preparation for the arrival of new Aboriginal trainees.

- Cameco's northern workforce has a significant percentage of Aboriginal employees so it is built into our culture. Site orientation etc. helped new hires transition into the team.
- They go through a new hire orientation.
- No preparation was needed. We already have several Aboriginal employees.
- Not specially, we already had and have a number of Aboriginal and European employees in our diverse workplace.
- No, we have many cultures that work for us.
- No, we have a fairly representative staff.
- No, as 90% of our employees are Métis/Aboriginal.
- No, not at all, not any different than any other person.
- Yes, met in person, discussed any questions, tried to relate my experiences as First Nations supervisor.
- No we did not. We already have employees with different cultural backgrounds on staff, and have never had any issues.
- Our standard orientation includes a section on harassment and stresses the importance of acceptance of diversity. We did not treat the Aboriginal trainees any differently than any other new hire.
- The Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure has a permanent full-time position dedicated to workplace diversity. Diversity workshops and other activities are regularly supported across the Ministry.

All responding employers indicated that the wage subsidy was an important part of this initiative.

- Very important as resources could be allocated to other positions or projects.
- It allows the company to hire an apprentice, put him through the program and keep the costs of staffing low, and once they are certified, have a long-term employee.
- Provides additional flexibility to make more successful.
- It can very well make the difference between an individual being hired or not hired. We would not have hired our trainee without the program.
- Very important. Sometimes these trainees are very inexperienced and there is a cost involved to the employer to supervise these employees on a one to one basis. We would not normally hire persons with that lack of experience.
- For our business it was make or break. Without the subsidy we would not have been able to participate.
- The wage subsidy is important since it offsets the employer training costs and encourages employers to indenture Aboriginal people with little relevant experience outside of a pre-employment program in the trade.
- The wage subsidy is extremely important as it allows the employer to pay the trainee a higher hourly rate. The subsidy allowed us to pay a higher wage and hire an extra trainee.
- It definitely is an incentive. I would describe it as test driving your new employee.

- I think it is very important as many employers do not want to spend the time, or cannot spend the time, needed to start a young person off in a trade. If there is some financial compensation they would be more willing to give our young workers a chance.
- It gives us, and the employee longer to catch on with situations that, otherwise would be hard for a company to sustain.
- It helps but it is a small factor.
- Somewhat. If it is not the right person, the money does not help.

Twelve employers believed that the wage subsidy could be decreased as an apprentice progresses to higher levels; two employers did not agree.

- Likely, as they begin to add more value over time.
- Yes, 50% first year, 40, 30, 20 until their red seal. Shows commitment from parties involved.
- Not until apprentice has completed their second set of classes.
- Maybe completion reward per level. Subsidy amount was very generous.
- Yes, after one year of employment the employee is already established within our organization and becomes a valuable asset to our company.
- The subsidy could be reduced in later years of the apprenticeship program, but the apprentices in years 1 to 3 require a lot of training and supervision and do not provide much of an income stream for employers.
- I do. Once an apprentice has filled 2 years of apprenticeship and successfully passed schooling. There are lots of opportunities for 3<sup>rd</sup> year apprentices provincially.
- No, the subsidy does not last long enough to see the apprentice progress to any great degree. This would be a good option if the length of the time of the subsidy is provided was extended.
- The wage subsidy should be established and maintained throughout the apprenticeship. Journey person status should be the goal.

Eleven employers had recommendations for improving the initiative.

- There was a lot of paperwork throughout the course of this project. It seemed a lot of follow-up, random paperwork was needed. If all the paperwork could be done up front it would be less disruptive to the apprentices and the work site. Or at a minimum set a better schedule/expectations of when information/paperwork was needed.
- My best recommendation would be to streamline the monthly paperwork involved. Having to record the hours and fill in all those charts with the exact hours each day is not necessary. A simple summary of hours that match the paycheck stub should be enough.
- Although it may create more work for GDI, I think all prospects should come through GDI, and not only qualify them as Aboriginal descent, but conduct a bit of an aptitude test to see if trades are really what the person's interest really is.
- Allow the same amount of wage subsidy for each trainee, this will ensure more trainees are entering the workforce, getting into a trade and can become successful in their future careers.
- Mandatory 90-day probation to help make the clients and employers more successful by preventing turnover issues. Then indenture after 90 days.
- Pre-employment safety training for trainees would be helpful.
- Better resources at training centres.
- Keep it going... also continue the part of the program that gives the trainee a small \$ bonus at different levels of completion of their program.

- The program could provide financial assistance for apprentices attending school away from home location to limit financial hardship and to help ensure academic success.
- More frequent visits.

### 4.5.3 GDI ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE CLIENT/TRAINEES

All 17 of the client/trainee respondents recommended this type of training project and employment opportunity for others. The respondents found out about the opportunity via a variety of means – a supervisor, friend, family member, GDI, and Kijiji. They all had their Grade 12, GED 12 or Adult 12. Ten of the trainees had pre-employment training, two had some apprenticeship training, and five had no previous training. Previous employment experience included work as a heavy equipment operator, radiation technician, motor shop labourer, hot tub sales, grocery store work, maintenance, municipal administration, youth outreach, apprentice carpenter, and construction labour. At the time of their responses to the client/trainee questionnaire they were all indentured in an apprenticeable trade.

A variety of challenges were identified by the trainees, but the most frequently mentioned challenge was a positive one, namely simply learning the trade and progressing. Five trainees mentioned learning as their main challenge. A variety of other challenges were mentioned by other trainees. Four trainees indicated no main challenges.

- Reaching the next level of apprenticeship and eventually reaching my goal (red seal).
- There is an excessive amount of things to learn. I take it day by day.
- Just learning new things on the job.
- Main challenge in the project was learning how to apply pre-employment knowledge in everyday work setting.
- To learn the skills necessary to succeed in school.
- Being a woman in a male dominated trade, proving you can do the job is a big thing.
- Physical strength to do some jobs.
- Finding a business to hire you with no experience.
- Transportation, money.
- Transportation and money.
- My main challenges are personal at the present time but am determined to finish.
- Too much monthly paperwork. Quarterly would be better.
- Working space.

All 17 of the trainees identified GDI as helping them by giving them an opportunity and helping them financially.

- By giving me this opportunity to advance in the workforce in a trade.
- GDI continues to make this possible for me, as in funding for when I go back to school, and wage subsidy while I work towards a career I love. It's great.
- They put me through school and funding.
- Funding and school got my foot in the door.
- They helped me acquire a job and helped financially.
- They helped with the indenture fees and employment supplement(raised our wage).
- They provided me with this opportunity and funding to do so.
- Subsidized half my wage and talked to the employer.

The questionnaire asked about how job coaches helped the trainees and did not specify GDI job coaches. Therefore it is uncertain in some cases whether the client/trainee was thinking of the GDI employment counsellor or their journey person mentor. Overall, there was a high level of satisfaction with job coaches but there appears to be some concern about their accessibility.



The quotes below are those which obviously refer to GDI job coaches:

- The job coaches are very helpful. They are easily reachable by e-mail and phone.
- Always offered support, not a lot of issues came up. Sometimes when I called the coach was not in the office for a few days.
- If I needed help, they would be there. They were easily reachable and answered any questions.
- They met with me, but they were not easily reachable all the time.
- They answered any questions that were related to the program.
- Calling and clarifying my wage. My job coach was not easily reachable as I work until 4:30 and could not drive to see him.

All of the client/trainee respondents felt welcome in their new workplaces. They identified that employers helped them by providing a job, hands-on training, and funding for schooling.

- Got along with the new crew greatly upon hiring.
- Very welcome, great co-workers.
- I certainly feel welcome in my workplace.
- Pay for schooling, and giving me this opportunity and necessary training.
- Gave me a job and excellent training.
- Keeping me employed until I get indentured.
- Employer was very patient and extremely knowledgeable.
- Provide me with knowledge and a good journeyman to teach me the ins and outs of the trade.

Only a few of the client/trainee respondents had recommendations for improving the workplace.

- Longer program.
- More Aboriginal foremen, and supervisors,
- It needs no improvement – being an Aboriginal I feel comfortable.
- I think it is fine. So nothing.
- Not sure. I was welcomed with no issues.
- You are handed the opportunity to become something with great help by not only GDI but by the employer as well, so work hard, show up on time and show them you want to be there, and by that... there shouldn't be any need to improve a workplace.

## 4.6 BEST PRACTISES AND THE GDI ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP INITIATIVE

In 2012, the B.C. Industry Training Authority collaborated with Aboriginal employment agencies, First Nations, post-secondary institutions, industry, and trade unions who had been involved in designing programs and services to attract and retain Aboriginal people into the trades. The resultant document, *Doing It Right – A Best Practices Guide to Attracting, Training, Employing and Retaining Aboriginal People in Trades*, shares the lessons learned. A summary of this report is included as Appendix A. Some examples of other approaches to Aboriginal trades employment across western Canada are included as Appendix B.

A look at the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative in comparison to this “Best Practices Guide” shows that the initiative included many of the identified “best practices”. The following describes this, as well as presenting suggestions, from the project partner interviews and the employer and client/trainee questionnaire responses, for an extension of the current initiative or a future initiative.

### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CLIENTS

#### Best Practice

An effective program that targets increasing Aboriginal participation in the skilled trades provides support that enables Aboriginal learners to be stronger candidates for the job and successful in the workplace and the classroom on an ongoing basis.

#### GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative

GDI’s provincial system of regional service delivery sites and employment counsellors provides a coherent and consistent approach to working with clients. The provincial GDI system enabled the enhancement of employment counsellor knowledge and capacity development regarding the apprenticeship system, labour market needs, partnership development and employer recruitment. The increased capacity of GDI employment counsellors enabled an effective front-end process of employer and client/trainee selection and referral. The funding partner, Service Canada, provided flexible funding to enable support for this capacity development, as well as wage subsidies and client/trainee supports.

Employment counsellors were assigned to work on this initiative to provide focussed support. Clients were interviewed using an Employability Assessment Worksheet and Career Cruising, an interactive career guidance and pathways planning tool. These tools helped to identify clients that were ready and qualified to pursue a career in the trade. Knowing the employers’ skill needs and the trade-specific education requirements enabled appropriate client/trainee referrals to employers. Client/trainees were referred to and selected by employers for training and indentureship. Employment counsellors continued to provide “job coaching” services to both trainees and employers during the initiative.

#### Suggestions for Future Projects

Future initiatives will continue to need flexible and increased funding to enable ongoing capacity development as economic growth continues, apprenticeship procedures evolve and as normal employment staff turnover occurs at GDI. It will be important to document processes and procedures for use in future initiatives and for ongoing staff orientation and enhancement. Support for professional development workshops would be very beneficial in this area.

Additional client/trainee assessment tools should be investigated to ensure that clients are fully assessed and prepared for the apprenticeable trades.

## **TRAINING PROGRAM DESIGN**

### **Best Practice**

Successful employment counselling services and training programs include an understanding of industry needs/opportunities, client/trainee training and learning needs and continuing client/trainee supports in the workplace.

### **GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative**

The initiative focussed on increasing the number of Aboriginal indentured apprentices in the province. As such, it matched industry needs and opportunities with client/trainee interests and qualifications. Significant effort went into soliciting qualified client/trainee applicants and receptive employers who would provide quality job/training opportunities for the initiative. The initiative continued to provide client/trainee supports in the workplace to both the employer and client/trainee as required.

### **Suggestions for Future Initiatives**

Future initiatives could take a strategic approach to recruiting employers in order to find the best opportunities for potential Aboriginal apprentices. This would require a front-end assessment of industry trades opportunities and skilled worker needs. It would want to look at high apprentice demand sectors like construction, mining and manufacturing as well as the service sector which accounts for roughly two thirds of the province's employment. Contacts could be made through the industry associations representing those sectors to solicit member interest and participation. Such a strategic approach could also assist in finding more apprentice opportunities in smaller urban and northern regions for clients located in those areas.

Future initiatives could also look at increased efforts to get more Aboriginal women into apprenticeship.

Future initiatives could also reach out to the younger Aboriginal population by recruiting graduating Grade 12 students as a source of trainees.

## **ASSESS READINESS: PREPARE THE PARTICIPANT FOR SUCCESS**

### **Best Practice**

Service and training programs include components that prepare the program participants for success in training and employment. Prior to entering a program, applicants complete an assessment process. The assessments are provided to:

- assist with identifying the most suitable trade for the participant's interest and skills;
- identify the skill and readiness level of participants, and any upgrading required; and
- determine whether the applicants should be referred to a training or job opening by pre-screening to establish if the initial qualifications are met.

Assessments are typically performed in two parts: 1) an interview, and 2) testing. Assessment and testing tools are industry-recognized grading systems that have effectively determined the skills needed to prepare individuals for success in learning and the workplace. The most common tests focus

on Workplace Essential Skills (WES) – Technical Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working With Others, Thinking Skills, Computer Use and Continuous Learning.

### GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative

The initiative focussed primarily on finding job-ready client/trainees because the workforce was ready and willing to participate. Assistance included interviews to determine workplace readiness and Career Cruising to determine trade interest. Client/trainees were required to complete a full client application package, as well as submit high school and other transcripts, as well as a current professional résumé and cover letter. Transcript evaluation was made in order to ascertain an individual's education completion level to ensure they met the minimum education level for the apprenticeship trade they were seeking. If they did meet employer needs, their résumés were referred to partnering employers. Client/trainees were made aware of which company their résumé had been referred to in order to follow-up with the company. Client/trainees were also provided with interview preparation and advice if needed. Clients who were not workplace ready or did not meet education requirements for a chosen trade were referred to other GDI support services separate from the initiative.

### Suggestions for Future Initiatives

A close look could be taken at what are the best tools to select, assess and prepare clients for referral to apprenticeship opportunities. This may be particularly relevant as a continuing strong provincial economy will mean fewer and fewer apprenticeship-ready Aboriginal clients will be available as they will be increasingly sought after and employed by industry in Saskatchewan.

One such tool is ACCUPLACER, a tool used by SATCC to test and upgrade areas of academic weakness preventing individuals from entering a trade. ACCUPLACER is a suite of computerized tests that determine an individual's knowledge in math, reading and writing in preparation for entry into a post-secondary program, including apprenticeship. SATCC uses the tool when an apprenticeship applicant fails to meet the educational prerequisites for a trade. The individual is placed in ACCUPLACER and their apprenticeship contract cannot be registered until they complete the program successfully at which time they are deemed to have met the requirements. An example would be someone who has a Grade 12 but has modified math. Modified math is not accepted as meeting requirements so they would then have to do ACCUPLACER to ensure they have the required level of math skills. Once completed SATCC would then register their contract of apprenticeship. SATCC uses this tool, if necessary, when an application for apprenticeship is received. It could also be used as part of a front-end client/trainee preparation process. This would appear to hold significant potential for any future Aboriginal apprenticeship projects given that the number one barrier for clients has been educational requirements. The use of the ACCUPLACER tool costs approximately \$80/client.

The TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) offers a valid, reliable and effective assessment, curriculum and training support for organizations and individuals looking to assess and improve Essential skills needed to carry out everyday tasks for work, learning and life. TOWES assesses Reading Text, Document Use, and Numeracy, all of which are particularly important in the trades.

Essential Skills 3G was designed in British Columbia by the Aboriginal Skills Group for trades-specific assessment

ITA Essential Skills was created in British Columbia to help people prepare for success in the first two levels of technical training during their apprenticeship

## **PROVIDE PARTICIPANT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

### Best Practice

Many programs also provide resources that the candidates require to be successful in the classroom or to secure a job. Examples of resources include: books and supplies, transportation assistance, daycare, work and safety gear, tutors and job coaches.

### GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative

The initiative provided an employer wage subsidy including MERCS, client/trainee assistance with tools and equipment, technical school tuition, books and living away allowance based on the circumstance of each client, and job coaching support.

### Suggestions for Future Initiatives

Consideration could be given to expanding the range of client/trainee supports based on individual needs for training and workplace success. Supports for things such as transportation and tutors, particularly during the first few months of a placement, could very well make the difference between failure and success.

Particular attention should be paid to the need for daycare support. Enabling single parents to become apprentices is virtually impossible unless there is affordable, long-term, flexible, daycare available throughout the program period. This may be one of the reasons why only 8% of initiative clients were women (see Section 4.2.1).

Efforts should be made to ensure a timely response to client/trainee requests for job coach access and help as a couple of the trainees identified problems with timely access.

Consideration could be given to extending the wage subsidy to include Level 3 of apprenticeship but at a declining rate per level as the apprentice's value in the workplace increases. For example, up to 50%, 40%, and 30% for each of Levels 1, 2, and 3. This would help ensure a greater retention of the Aboriginal apprentices with employers.

## **ESSENTIAL PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

### Best Practice

Components that set out the framework for an effective Aboriginal trades program include:

- Operations and staffing are structured to provide direct and tailored support for Aboriginal participants.
  - Employment/Career Counsellors – assist the applicants with understanding their career options, and assess their skills and qualifications.
  - Job Coaches – provide guidance and encouragement, promote and coach on how to relate with supervisors, bosses and co-workers, mediate disputes, and ensure the apprentice hours are documented.

- Instructors – should have industry recognized credentials, possess a teaching certificate, be certified in their field of instruction, and demonstrate high proficiency in their trade with hands-on experience.
- Tutors – assigned on an as-needed basis as a result of a deficiency identified in the initial assessment or when in training.
- Partners/partnerships are a key element for the success. They provide expertise, credibility, industry knowledge, linkages and resources, whether in-kind or financial.
- Program Elements – the most fundamental element that every program should have is industry recognition. The following are program elements that industry supports.
  - Program hours should reflect the industry the participant will be working in.
  - In the case of a major initiative or isolated community it can often be more effective to take the training to the trainees than to send the trainees out of their community.
  - Certified/industry-recognized instructors should be designed for the industry the person is training to enter.
  - Safety training is essential for every trade occupation.
  - Basic Certified Programs include drivers' licenses, first aid, and workplace safety.
  - Where possible, design the training situation to simulate the work environment for the trade, including hands-on practical training.
  - Create the right environment means being clear and realistic regarding learning behaviour expectations.
  - Workplace training connects trainees with potential employers during the training.
  - Prepare participants by measuring their skills and knowledge to determine their readiness for workplace and apprenticeship
  - Life skills are essential elements where participants have been out of the workforce for a while – how to manage time, manage money, be part of a team and communicate effectively.
  - Having the abilities to search for jobs, prepare a résumé, complete an application, and be prepared for an interview are part of essential skills.
  - Work with employers prior to a training program's completion to identify their employee needs.
- Monitoring and Reporting – from the commencement of the initiative, tracking and monitoring the participant's progress is critical for all – the participants, the program, the organization, and its funding partners.

#### GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative

The initiative was not a technical training program but rather an apprenticeship support service program. As such it includes a number of the “best practices” mentioned above. These include a dedicated staff, employment counsellors, job coaches, partnerships, job search skills, employer referrals and quality reporting.

#### Suggestions for Future Initiatives

Consideration could be given to designing customized group preparation and/or training components to prepare clients for success in the apprenticeship workplace. This could include GED programming with all components specifically designed to help clients meet the apprenticeship trades qualifications (e.g., trades math). This could also include Essential Skills and Workplace Safety training, or they could be offered separately as part of Job Ready Component as in the case of the Blade Runners

program in BC or as done by the Regina Trades and Skills Centre as part of their client/trainee orientation (see Appendix B).

Consideration could be given to adding additional project partners to future Aboriginal apprenticeship initiatives. This could include SaskPower, a large employer of apprentices and industry associations such as the Saskatchewan Construction Association, the Saskatchewan Mining Association and the Saskatchewan Hotels association, all of which employ significant numbers of apprentices.

Linkages could be made with both the Regina Trades and Skills Centre and the Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centre. Both these organizations have a large percentage of Aboriginal trainees in short pre-apprenticeship programs. They receive Essential Skills orientation, practical hands-on trades training, SATCC recognition for training time and employer connections. They have a high rate of employment success. A partnership with an Aboriginal apprenticeship could further mutual objectives of increasing the number of Aboriginal employees and apprentices in the province.

While reporting is an essential part of the accountability requirement, time taken and paperwork for reporting were issues raised by partners, employers and trainees. Efforts could be undertaken to explore possible reductions on the amount and/or frequency of required reporting for future initiatives.

The key measure in the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative was indentured apprentices. A future program could expand the mandate to include apprentice progression through levels and technical training. A closer working relationship between GDI and SATCC could provide for a proactive tracking of Aboriginal apprentices from the current and any future initiatives. This would enable SATCC to flag any gaps in apprentice progression, either in required on the job training hours or attendance at technical training. Such flagging would enable GDI to offer assistance in its job-coaching role.

Another key measure for consideration could be the number of Aboriginal persons employed.

## **ON THE JOB AND RETENTION**

### **Best Practice**

Post-training supports and services have been a key ingredient to retaining Aboriginal people on the work site, and moving them through to completing a trade certification.

### **GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative**

The initiative provided on the job supports via their job coaches. They provided guidance to trainees and advocated and assisted employees with communicating with their employers

### **Suggestions for Future Initiatives**

Explore ongoing job coaching supports for client/trainees even after a project has ended to see apprentices through to journey person achievement as in the ACCESS Trades program in BC (see Appendix B).

## SECTION 5: SUMMARY, OBSERVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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In many ways, the Gabriel Dumont Institute Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative is the right program at the right time in the right place. Saskatchewan is in the middle of an unprecedented economic boom without enough skilled workers to meet the demand. At the same time it has a large Aboriginal population entering the labour market age group but with many lacking the training to take advantage of the opportunities.

The demand is concentrated in the construction sector, an industry group that employs a large number of apprentices and the demand for skilled trades is expected to continue for the short term. The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission has a mandate to increase Aboriginal apprentices in the province including other sectors such as transportation, manufacturing, and the hospitality sector.

So there is a clear need for a program that would enable Aboriginal people to become apprentices in the trades. The Gabriel Dumont Institute has a proven track record in delivering programs efficiently and effectively. The GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative used best practises and has exceeded the targets set at the outset. It has made a substantial contribution to the number of Aboriginal apprentices in the province and it should be continued and expanded.

The GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative has clearly worked well. The recommendations that follow focus on improving a program that is already successful.

### SUMMARY

This report begins with a general overview of the Saskatchewan labour market and apprenticeship system supplemented with specific data about employment among the Aboriginal population. The findings from that section support a continuation of the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative because of ongoing demand for the apprenticeable trades and the need for increased Aboriginal employment.

1. Employment is growing at unprecedented rates in the province, increasing by 1.6% per year from 2008 to 2013, the highest rate of growth among the provinces. The low unemployment rate and high employment rate means that employers need to go to untapped populations, including Aboriginal people, for workers.
2. The fastest growing industry groups are those that are heavy users of apprentices – construction and transportation, for example. Capital investment surveys suggest that the Saskatchewan economy will continue to grow over the next few years in much the same way that it has grown in the recent past so these sectors will continue to grow.
3. Reflecting this increase in demand, the number of apprentices in Saskatchewan grew by an average of 8.6% per year from 2005 to 2012. To maintain that growth rate, the province will require 2,000 new journeypersons per year in the coming years.
4. Aboriginal apprentices make up 14% of the growing number of apprentices in Saskatchewan; the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative is responsible for as many as 11% of Aboriginal apprentices in the province.



5. Employment in the Aboriginal population in general and the Métis population in particular is growing. The rate of growth is near the rate of increase in the Aboriginal population so the employment rate has not increased substantially, at least in part, because education levels tend to be low. Among Aboriginal people 25 to 34 years of age, the employment rate doubles from 32% for those who have not completed high school to 65% among those with a trade certificate.
6. The bulk of the new jobs are occurring in the major urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon.

Section 4 summarizes the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative, provides some statistical characteristics of trainees and indentured clients.

7. One-third of the 135 participating employers had more than one trainee.
8. Among clients who were not indentured, just under one-half resigned and a similar number were laid off or dismissed.
9. Both the 223 client/trainees and the 157 of these who were indentured were disproportionately located in Saskatoon and the northern part of the province.
10. The vast majority (92%) of client/trainees and indentured clients were male.
11. Just under one-half (45%) of client/trainees who reported an Aboriginal identity were Métis. The proportion of indentured clients was 59%.
12. Client/trainees who were more likely to become indentured were, on average:
  - a) more likely to be in Saskatoon and the northern part of the province,
  - b) equally likely to be men or women, and
  - c) more likely to be Métis.
13. The construction trades in general, and carpenters and electricians in particular, accounted for the majority of client/trainees and indentures. Many of the client/trainees in the mechanics trades, on the other hand, became indentured.

The employers who responded to surveys from GDI were very supportive of the program with, for example, 90% indicating that they were satisfied with GDI support. Punctual attendance was the only characteristic of the clients/trainees where employers were not enthusiastic.

Based on comparison of “best practices” and the GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative, there were a number of essential elements that contributed to its success and that should be included in any future initiatives.

14. Funding flexibility – funding should continue to be provided to GDI as a single fund. This allows flexibility in how the funds are utilized across capacity-building and employer/client/trainee supports.
15. Employer and client/trainee selection – GDI employment counsellors played a key role in soliciting both employers and client/trainees. This included assessing client/trainee qualifications and interest

in pursuing a career in the trades. Qualified clients were matched with employers' needs and referred to appropriate employers. The final decision regarding client/trainee selection after GDI's front-end assessment must continue to be an employer decision.

16. Job coaching – GDI coaching supports, both at the beginning of a client/trainee placement and during the term of the contract, are essential to helping the client/trainee and employer achieve success in the apprenticeship objective.
17. Wage subsidy – the wage subsidy is key to encouraging employers to take on trainees that they otherwise not hire.
18. Client/trainee supports – financial support for books, tools, safety gear and apprenticeship fees was vital for Aboriginal trainees just starting out in a trade career.

This analysis suggest some changes for a future GDI Aboriginal Apprenticeship Initiative. These could be introduced either at the outset or phased in over time.

19. Provide flexible and increased funding to enable increased capacity development as labour markets continue to grow, apprenticeship procedures evolve, and as normal staff turnover occurs at GDI. It will be important to document processes and procedures for use in future Aboriginal apprenticeship efforts and for ongoing staff orientation and training. Support for professional development workshops would be very beneficial.
20. Extend the wage subsidy to include Level 3 of apprenticeship to ensure greater retention of apprentices.
21. Let the wage subsidy decline as the apprentice's value in the workplace increases. For example, up to 50%, 40%, 30% of wages and benefits for Levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively. This would help ensure a continuing commitment to individual apprentices by the employers.
22. Take a strategic approach to recruiting employers in order to find the best opportunities for potential Aboriginal client/trainees. This includes targeting sectors with high apprenticeship demand such as construction, transportation, mining, and hospitality services. This would involve extending the focus of the initiative to the apprenticeable trades in the service sector in general and the food/beverage sector specifically.
23. Recruit additional project partners in future initiatives. This could include SaskPower, a large crown corporation employer of apprentices, and industry associations such as the Saskatchewan Construction Association, the Saskatchewan Mining Association, the Saskatchewan Tourism Authority and the Saskatchewan Hotels Association.
24. Increase efforts to solicit more employers and client/trainee placements in the Regina area which were under-represented in the current initiative. Contacts could be made with industry and community business associations to solicit industry and business member interest and participation.

25. Increase efforts to get more Aboriginal women to participate in Aboriginal apprenticeship initiatives and apprenticeable trades careers. More focus on non-construction trades would help with this.
26. Extend client/trainee recruitment to the younger Aboriginal population by recruiting graduating Grade 12 students as a source of trainees.
27. Take a close look at what are the best tools (for example, TOWES, ACCUPLACER, Essential Skills 3G, ITA Essential Skills) to select, assess and prepare clients for referral to apprenticeship opportunities. This will become particularly relevant as a continuing strong provincial economy will mean that fewer apprenticeship-ready Aboriginal clients will be available.
28. Discuss the application of ACCUPLACER with SATCC and determine how it could be used as a front-end assessment and preparation tool to prepare clients.
29. Expand the range of allowable client/trainee supports to include day care, transportation, and tutors. Support for these, especially during the first few months of a placement, could very well make the difference between success and failure for trainees.
30. Design customized group preparation and/or training components to prepare clients for success in the workplace before their referral to an employer. This could include GED programming with all components specifically designed to meet the apprenticeship trades qualifications (e.g., trades-level math). This could also include Essential Skills and Workplace Safety training. They could be offered separately as part of a Job-Ready component as in the case of the Blade Runners program in B.C. or as done by the Regina Trades and Skills Centre as part of their client/trainee preparation.
31. Establish working linkages with the Regina and Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centres. Both these centres have a large percentage of Aboriginal trainees in short pre-apprenticeship programs. They receive Essential Skills orientation, practical hands-on trades training, SATCC recognition for training time, and employer connections. A partnership with these centres could further mutual objectives of increasing the number of Aboriginal employees and apprentices in Saskatchewan.
32. Establish apprentice progression as a key outcome measure. A close working relationship with SATCC would enable tracking of Aboriginal apprentices in the initiative. SATCC could flag any gaps in progression, either in required on-the-job training hours or attendance at technical training. This would enable GDI to offer assistance in its job-coaching role. Measuring progress would focus more efforts on success towards journeyperson certification.
33. Continue ongoing job-coaching supports for client/trainees even after an initiative has ended to assist apprentices, where needed, to achieve their journeyperson status.
34. Establish a job coach “timely service” standard for responding to employer and employee requests for assistance.

## APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICES – DOING IT RIGHT

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In 2012, the BC Industry Training Authority collaborated with Aboriginal employment agencies, First Nations, post-secondary schools, industry and trade unions who had been involved in designing programs and services to attract and retain Aboriginal people into the trades. The resultant document, *Doing It Right – A Best Practices Guide to Attracting, Training, Employing, and Retaining Aboriginal People in the Trades*, shares the lessons learned by these organizations in how to design a program that will best assist Aboriginal people with finding the trade that works for them and succeed in becoming a certified tradesperson. This guide provides a number of recommendations.

### 1. TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CLIENTS

An effective program that targets increasing Aboriginal participation in the skilled trades provides support that enables Aboriginal learners to prepare to be stronger candidates for the job, and successful in the workplace and classroom.

- Be non-judgmental – provide unrelenting support.
- Have a long-term commitment to training – be supportive and monitor program participants' success through every stage of their training, even when they are employed.
- Build a personal relationship with every student – be there for the students, but establish boundaries on the level of support – support must enable participants to be self-supporting, rather than dependent.
- Be flexible – in development and delivery.

### 2. TRAINING PROGRAM DESIGN

Experience of Aboriginal organizations, educators, industry and employers confirms that successful employment counselling services and training programs include the following essential elements.

- Identify the program purpose and the reason the program is proposed (e.g. industry opportunity, major project, etc.)
- Understand their area needs, industry market, and community members' training and learning needs
- Are flexible and tailored to the learners
- Show how the program will be accountable to funding organizations
- Are flexible and supportive of the Aboriginal participant
- Are recognized by industry
- Provide a workplace experience
- Connect trainees with potential employers
- Supports continue long after the program ends providing services such as counselling, and assistance with continued training.

The programs must be designed to ensure that the Aboriginal participants will be experienced and skilled to be competitive with others looking for work in the industry.

### **3. ASSESS READINESS – PREPARE THE PARTICIPANT FOR SUCCESS**

Service and training programs include components that prepare the program participants for success in training and employment. Prior to entering a program, applicants complete an assessment process. The assessments are provided to:

- Assist with identifying the most suitable trade for the participants' interest and skills.
- Identify the skill and readiness level of the participants, and any upgrading required.
- Determine whether the applicants should be referred to training or a job opening by pre-screening to establish if the initial qualifications are met.

Assessments are typically performed in two parts – 1) an interview, and 2) testing. Employment/Career Counsellors conduct interviews and administer testing. These assessment and testing tools are industry recognized grading systems that have effectively determined the skills needed to prepare individuals for success in learning and in the workplace. The most common tests are:

- ITA Essential Skills – was created to help people prepare for success in the first two levels of technical training during their apprenticeship.
- Essential Skills 3G – developed by Aboriginal Skills Group this program has been designed for trade-specific assessment.
- TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) – measures three essential skills needed in many occupations today – Reading Text, Document Use, and Numeracy.

### **4. PROVIDE PARTICIPANT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

Many programs also provide resources that the candidates require to be successful in the classroom or to secure a job.

- Examples of training resources include tuition, books and supplies, meals during training, grocery vouchers, shuttle service to/from the classroom or bus passes, daycare and living allowance.
- Examples of employment resources include work gear, safety equipment and shuttle service to/from the workplace in the first month.
- Support services include employment/career counsellors, instructors, tutors and job coaches.

### **5. ESSENTIAL PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

Components that set out the framework for an effective Aboriginal trades program include i) Operations and Staffing, ii) Partners, iii) Program Design Elements, and iv) Monitoring and Reporting.

#### **Operations and Staffing**

Projects supporting Aboriginal participation in the trades are structured to provide direct and tailored support for Aboriginal participants. Operations will have dedicated staff (i.e., Program Co-ordinators) that oversee the program and ensure program compliance with contract terms and monitor and support participants at various stages as they move along the career path. Throughout all support services, there are monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place to follow the participants' progress and adjust services and content as needed.

Counsellors assist the candidate with understanding their career options, and assess their skills in preparation for training and job placement skills.

Job Coaches provide assistance with job search and are liaison for the employee and employer, as well as the employment services organization. Job coaches mediate disputes, ensure the apprentice hours are documented. Most often, they provide guidance and encouragement, promote and coach on how to relate with supervisors, bosses and co-workers.

Instructors should have industry-recognized credentials, possess a teaching certificate, be certified in their field of instruction, and demonstrate high proficiency in their trade with hands-on experience. Aboriginal instructors can also increase the Aboriginal students' comfort and success in the classroom, as they are seen as role models and can provide examples of situations that the Aboriginal learner is familiar with.

Tutors are assigned on an as-needed basis. The need may be identified during the initial assessment or by the instructor while in the classroom training. Math is often where the greatest support is needed.

## Partners

Partnerships are a key element for the success of training and employment programs targeted at attracting more Aboriginal persons into the trades. Relationships with employers, trainers and industry organizations are crucial to success for the participants and the program overall. Partners provide expertise, credibility, industry knowledge and linkages, and resources whether in-kind or financial. For the greatest success, partners must be involved from start to finish- from the design of the program to the celebration of success. Examples of elements that partners can bring to a program are training facilities, course content, transferable credits, field trips, work experience, industry recognized training, access to employment, cultural content, support services, program coordination, safety certification and industry certification.

## Program Elements

The most fundamental element that every program should strive to have is industry recognition.

- Program hours should reflect the industry the participant will be working in. For example, programs that are preparing students for construction work should set their hours to the typical worksite which starts at 7:00 am, thus introducing the participants to construction work schedules.
- The right location for the training environment sets the stage for learning. Often it is more affordable and effective to take the training to a community that is isolated or remote, than to send the trainees out of their community. Also, when a major project is involved that has a high number of jobs, delivering training locally will attract more local people who will be able to connect training with the chance for employment.
- Training components must be industry recognized and certified, and be designed specifically for the industry the person is training to enter. Partnering with an industry and ITA recognized trainers will ensure the components meet requirements. Safety Training is essential for every trade occupation. The safety training should be designed for the occupation.
- Basic certified programs include driver's licenses, first aid, and workplace safety.
- Give the students the chance to practice hands-on. Trades is hands-on work; the more opportunities the learner has to practice the lesson in the classroom, the greater chance they have of mastering the lesson. Where possible, design the situation to simulate the work environment for that trade.
- Creating the right environment means being realistic with expectations by being clear on how the learner is expected to behave, such as attending, arriving on time and participating in the class.

Expectations can be outlined in a Student Participation Contract. An environment of sharing, supporting and participating can be aided by using Sharing Circles, Ice breaker exercises and weekly pot luck lunches.

- Workplace training connects trainees with potential employers, providing them on-site workplace based training during the training program, allowing the client/trainee to explore first hand various aspects of the trade or trades.
- Prepare participants by measuring their skills and knowledge to determine their readiness for the workplace and apprenticeship. Apprenticeship requires annual in-class training and testing. Testing indicates if the student requires additional support such as tutoring.
- Life skills are essential elements in a program where participants have been out of the workforce for a while. Life skills training for adults often include how to work at a job and be part of a team, manage money, manage time, live as part of a family and learning effective communication skills.
- Job search skills are important. A participant can be top of their class and still be unable to find a job. Being job-ready also means having the abilities to search for jobs, knowing where to look, preparing a résumé, completing an application, and being prepared for an interview.
- Work with employers prior to a training program's completion to identify their employee needs. Provide employers with referrals of job ready qualified candidates for their hiring considerations.

### Monitoring and Reporting

From the commencement of the project, tracking and monitoring the participant's progress is critical for all – the participants, the program, the organization, and its funding partners. Tracking participant success during and after training, helps the Program Coordinators determine if the program has been successful, and helps inform program funders and partners. An organization's tracking may also provide needed support to an apprentice with gaining level advancement and journeyman status.

## 6. ON THE JOB AND RETENTION

Once a training program is complete that is designed to build skills for a person to enter employment, various types of services can be offered to assist the prospective candidates to secure employment. Projects have discovered that these post-training supports and services have been a key ingredient to retaining Aboriginal people on the work site, and moving them through to completing a trade certification.

- Prepare for Job Search and the Workplace
  - workshops on how to look for work, prepare a résumé, and develop interviewing skills
  - offer Job Search clubs
  - provide employer referral and assessment services, along with upgrading and counselling services
  - make your organization and its team 'accessible' to participants after the training has completed
- Provide Support Services While on the Job
  - have a job coach available to provide guidance to the Aboriginal employee – they may advocate and assist employees with communicating with their employer
  - offer transportation to/from the worksite in the first month of employment
  - assist apprentices with tracking hours, and with the reporting of these hours to the ITA
  - continue offering employment and career counselling services, and as possible, provide support for upgrading

## **APPENDIX B: OTHER APPROACHES/INNOVATIONS IN ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP**

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There has never been a better time for Aboriginal people to enter the skilled trades in Saskatchewan. Certified skilled tradespersons are in high demand right across the province. Trades training and certification provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to work in rewarding jobs with excellent career paths. With Red Seal certification tradespeople are qualified to work anywhere in Canada.

In fact, there is a strong demand for Aboriginal tradespeople right across Western Canada. Aboriginal organizations and governments have implemented a number of special initiatives to attract, train, employ and retain more Aboriginal people in the trades. This Appendix provides some examples.

### **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

#### **ACCESS Trades**

ACCESS Trades is a component of the ASETS funded Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society. This program describes itself as “your one stop” for Aboriginal apprenticeship. Its services are specifically designed for men and women interested in entering into apprenticeship training and becoming certified in one of the trades. ACCESS Trades works closely with the Industry Training Authority (ITA) of British Columbia to provide Aboriginal apprentices with the training and support they need for success. They have established partnerships with government, training institutes, employers, trade organizations and community groups to provide their clients with industry certified training and connections to employment.

Apprenticeship counsellors are on staff to assist apprentices throughout the full term of their apprenticeship. Currently three counsellors monitor the progress of approximately 400 Aboriginal apprentices and journey people in over 30 different trades. Counsellors assist individuals determine which trades they want to pursue. They provide access to Workplace Essential Skills training that specifically supports trades employment success and retention including trades related training such as First Aid, Confined Space and WHMIS. They also help determine eligibility for the entrance to a trade and financial assistance.

Once an individual is registered in a training program ACCESS Trades provides the following:

- monitors the progress of an individual’s training;
- assists with the completion of apprenticeship registration documents;
- connects an individual with employers;
- may serve as a sponsor for an apprenticeship in co-operation with an employer or union;
- ensures that the work based training hours are recorded and submitted to the ITA;
- assists with the completion of apprenticeship grant applications;
- assists each year with the registration of annual technical training; and
- provides the support and resources needed to successfully complete the apprenticeship.



## Blade Runners

This program is a component of ACCESS. It targets at-risk youth (15-30 years of age) and provides them with basic training designed to facilitate entry into the labour force. Companies from all sectors of the economy provide employment opportunities for participants and the ultimate goal is for them to gain sufficient skills and experience that will translate into a long-term attachment to the labour force.

All Blade Runners receive certified health and safety training and learn life skills and job readiness skills that help them build self-esteem and confidence. Through workplace training and integration, the participants acquire marketable skills that enhance their long-term prospects.

Blade Runners has four main phases:

### Recruitment Phase

Two major activities characterize this phase: firstly, marketing and liaising with the community and development of the industry relationships and, secondly screening participants by assessing their desire to work, their employment status and referring non-successful participants to other programs.

### Job Ready Phase

Lasting approximately 2 weeks, the participant focuses firstly on development of life skills (estimated at 35 weeks) consisting of time management, financial management, anger management and workplace and cultural awareness. Secondly, the participant focuses on job readiness training, specifically health and safety certification, occupational first aid and WorkSafeBC awareness. The final element is placement readiness training in which training specific to the individual worksite is provided to the participant.

### Placement Phase

Lasting 8 to 16 weeks, the participant works on the job site for wages at or above minimum wage. The program provides 24 hour, seven days a week support services for the first 8 to 16 weeks of employment. This service is intended to help the youth both inside and outside the worksite. These support services are provided by a job coach. The coach can advocate for the client, resolve problems and support the participant's workplace supervisor.

### Career Phase

Over a 24-month period, the participant is provided at least 20 hours of career development services and is monitored for career progress at six months and twelve months.

## ALBERTA

### Aboriginal Futures

Aboriginal futures provides educational, training and employment services to Aboriginal people who live in Calgary or the surrounding area. It employs four full-time counsellors who can help with career decision making, education and training enhancement and employment preparation.

In-house training related services include a Job Club and an Aboriginal Workplace Learning Circle. The Job Club is a 2 week group assisted job search program where participants explore the hidden job market, build relationships with employers, learn how to get results with the use of today's technology and

participate in interview coaching. The Aboriginal Workplace Learning Circle is a six-week program designed to help participants gain confidence, learn essential skills, better their communication skills and set solid career and employment goals. Participants build a personal plan to succeed in the workplace, home or school. They also gain job search skills and tools (résumés, cover letters, interview skills, applications, emails, internet browsing) needed to apply for work and get employed.

### Trade Winds to Success

This program is a component of Aboriginal Futures. It is an 18-week pre-apprenticeship training program targeted at individuals interested in pursuing a career in one of the following high demand trades: boilermaker, ironworker, carpenter, plumber, steamfitter, pipe fitter, and welder.

The program begins with a two to three trades streaming process including assessment, testing and visits to training sites, shops and local education facilities. Clients then flow through to the informed Career Decision Making course to ensure they choose to study the trade that is right for them. Clients then move to the pre-employment training which includes:

- personal development (1 week);
- academic upgrading (4 weeks) to ensure they have the competencies to pass the Alberta Industry Trade Exam;
- shop training to learn basic hands on skills needed by the apprentice including safety and tool usage; and
- employment placement.

All participants must possess a Grade 10 or equivalent based on the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES).

## MANITOBA

### Building Urban Industries for Local Development (BUILD)

Established in 2006 by Aboriginal community stakeholders, BUILD is an initiative to support the construction industry by developing skilled labourers and by providing a gateway to trades-related apprenticeship programming in Winnipeg. The program provides retrofits to both private and public housing units. These improvements increase energy efficiency and reduce heating costs for low-income households and the agencies that support them. BUILD helps respond to the high demand for skilled labour in Manitoba's construction industry by helping individuals get entry-level job experience. Participants get employability skills and basic construction training.

Trainees receive six months on the job training and mentorship with a journey person and Level 1 apprentice. They also have access to a Life Skills Co-ordinator, Drivers' Training Instructor and an Employee Liaison. Trainees who complete this six-month period are hired as apprentices in the BUILD program. They work under journey persons or Apprenticeship Manitoba Designated Trainers.

### aWEST- Essential Skills for Trades

aWest is a component of Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM), an initiative dedicated to providing access to Essential skills required to determine and pursue goals related to learning, the workplace and life.