

Background

Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS) have attained Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) Agreement Holder status as of October 2011 through Service Canada. The new five year ASETS program makes more emphasis on demand driven skills development, partnerships with private sectors and accountability for improved results. KKETS is committed to delivering relevant demand driven programs that meet the needs of employers and trainees by ensuring a better skilled Aboriginal workforce for all Matawa First Nations. KKETS offers support services to assist First Nation members that include financial tools and resources, educational workshops, flexible regional service delivery and ongoing access to training, in addition to equality and fairness among all Matawa members. The Matawa Tribal Council Consists of 5 remote First Nation Communities:

Webequie First Nation

Marten Falls First Nation

Eabametoong First Nation

Neskantaga First Nation

Nibinamik First Nation

And 4 Road Access Communities

Constance Lake First Nation

Ginoogaming First Nation

Long Lake #58 First Nation

Aroland First Nation

It is no secret that the Aboriginal Population is the fastest growing and youngest segment of the Canadian Population; in fact between 2001 and 2006, the aboriginal Population grew four times than the non-Aboriginal population and, with a median age of 26.5 years, is 13 years younger on average than the rest of the Canadian population. Over the next 10 years, 400,000

Aboriginal Canadians will reach an age to enter the labor market, which represents a significant opportunity to help meet Canada's long term demand for workers. Matawa First Nations must take advantage of this unique opportunity by preparing our people through education and training that will see great returns in the near future.

Skills Inventory

A statistical database was created and implemented in 2008 for each of the Matawa First Nations for the sole purpose of data collection for a Matawa Skills inventory which reflects community profiles, needs and strengths. The Employment Community Coordinator (ECC) in each First Nation assists clients with completing applications for the purpose of attaining funding for training; these have also been included in the skills inventory, which captured the current education, training and employment status for membership residing on each First Nation.

The data collected identified the following attributes in each First Nation:

- Registered membership on and off First Nation
- Gender
- Age
- Level of Education
- Training achieved
- Employment Status

The empirical data from the surveys was synthesized and used to develop a skills inventory that would assist in formalizing a Matawa Regional Training Plan for KKETS in 2012. To date there are 1753 members that have contributed to the database. The youth aged 16-26 attribute to 524 represented in the database/skills inventory. The snapshot of each community allows

KKETS to assess the education and skill gaps that need to be filled in order to meet training demands for future employment.

A number of identified gaps in Training and education had surfaced to be a starting point for future planning. Within each of our First Nations it has become apparent that there are gaps in education attainment leading to lack of specific training certification. Although the 9 First Nations are under Matawa Tribal council they are also very distinct as individual communities with similar training and educational demands. The Historical hindrances First Nations are contending with are the generational effects that the previous school systems have imparted on our current social and educational systems within our communities. In strengthening our Employment and training within First Nations we are also strengthening our education systems as both are closely interrelated.

Currently Matawa First Nations has a population of over 10,000 members on reserve with a 70%-75% unemployment rate, approximately of this 10,000 population, 65 percent is attributed to our youth. Within our First Nations the majority of employment for youth comes from summer student employment programming this prepares youth with job readiness skills and an income for the majority of secondary and returning post –secondary students in our communities throughout the summer. These jobs are focused on band infrastructure and community capacity building. These positions are minimum wage and last for the duration of summer break.

What the youth are saying

Qualitative research on our Matawa Youth was done in 2010 for the sole purpose of giving them a voice to be heard and the encouragement to engage in their futures. Discussion topics ranged from community politics, drugs and alcohol to what they desired for their community wellbeing, the report spoke to the reality of life in our First Nations for the present youth generation. The testimonies were shared from groups of 15-25 youth from each First Nation,

the youth dialogue revealed recommendations stemming from categories prevalent throughout the report; Training/Education, Cultural and Health and Wellness.

Training and Education

- ✓ Programming that supports the transition from First Nation Community to college, additionally; coping skills.
- ✓ Continued opportunities for training and awareness focusing on the trades industry
- ✓ Continued support with academic upgrading /OSSD attainment

Cultural

- ✓ Programming that places emphasis on traditional teachings and activities
- ✓ Support groups for traditional practices
- ✓ Elder contribution and support in passing on knowledge and skills; additionally elder/youth workshops

Health & Wellness

- ✓ Programming that places emphasis on traditional healing methods
- ✓ Projects focusing on additions awareness
- ✓ Parenting workshops to strengthen family values and coping skills
- ✓ Self-esteem/ lateral violence and coping skills

Lack of employment for youth throughout the year, and furthermore showed that educational attainment in order to receive further training was a challenge. Youth had spoken about the challenges that they faced when they tried to leave their community to attend post-secondary, even after graduating from High school, they had encountered new challenges that high schools had not prepared them for, the work at post-secondary level. Although Education and Training go hand in hand the training piece for older adults is more prevalent than for youth attaining highschool diplomas and furthering onto Post-secondary. There is a need to become trained in the various trades however the academic skill level does not meet the requirements, and thus a vicious cycle begins.

Recommendations were made that recognized the need to implement more opportunities to gain awareness in various industries specifically mining and forestry for youth. Programming that we have seen to be beneficial for our youth and that we continue to work with is the First Nation Natural Resources Youth Employment Program (FNNRYEP) which is offered through Confederation College and Outland Inc., we have sent over 30 Matawa youth to the program for the 7 weeks over the past 3 summers. Mining Matters is another program where youth are given the opportunity to understand the mining process at more of a juvenile level for elementary school aged youth. Mining Readiness has been offered to each of our Matawa First Nations and has seen a total of 168 clients complete the training with a second program currently being offered in one of the communities. The Mining Readiness Program creates an awareness of the mining field and helps prepare clients with job readiness skills and is targeted at adults both young and old. There is great success in these programs primarily because they speak to the reality of our First Nations, they focus on the land and we as Nishinawbe are traditionally keepers of the land. These programs are all relevant as they speak to where we come from historically. Presenting training opportunities that are relevant to youth and their environment are presenting to be beneficial.

Since its inception in 2011 KKETS has witnessed growth throughout the years and new continued opportunity that is upon our doorsteps. As you are aware our Matawa First Nations are located in the center of the Ring of Fire project and we will have a surmountable amount of pressure to train and provide education for our members especially now when we have so many youth reaching the labor market age.

Social Assistance

We are witness to a generation of youth whose households are supported by Ontario Works social assistance 65-70% percent of our members are recipients. Ontario works is cost shared with 60% funded by AANDC and 40 % funded by Ontario. With the majority being administered by AANDC compared to the 40% that is being administered by the province it seems contradictory that it is the Province whose policy and mandate is followed by First Nations; a

policy that First Nations should have input to; this is a possibility for the failing system; the goal of Ontario works is get EMPLOYMENT, easier said than done, it's not so easy for our youth to do so when they do not have the educational skills or the employment skills to fulfill meaningful careers or even part time employment. The federally funded education systems within our first Nations are not reaching the expectations of those schools in our urban centres and are producing grade 8 and grade 12 graduates who are functioning far below the provincial standards. This in itself is problematic because our youth are now unable to maintain grade level and therefore are unable to achieve further skills training without the grade 12 math or English requirement. Academic mentorship programs need to be developed for youth of Matawa First Nations, the youth need to be engaged in their futures and be given the opportunities explore programming that interests them, particularly in the fields that will affect their communities and become a huge part of their everyday lives.

In order to meet the educational needs of young and older adults alike Matawa and KKETS with the help from the Province of Ontario have developed and implemented with great success the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program (ASAP). ASAP is an education training program designed for Matawa First Nation Community members and specifically aimed at adult learners aged 22 and older, this 10 month program includes academic upgrading, a high school diploma program, and links participants to their future career and employment goals. The success of ASAP is reflected in its numbers of clients who have attained their Ontario Secondary School Diploma, a total of 63 Matawa First Nation members since October 29th 2012. The proof is in the pudding.

Preparing for Future

Additional research focusing on the employment opportunities that will be occurring over the next 5 years pertaining to the "Ring of Fire" is ongoing and has been used to develop the Ring of Fire Aboriginal Training Alliance (RoFATA). RoFATA is an established partnership with KKETS, Noront Resources Ltd. and Confederation College. On October 3rd 2012 a memorandum of

understanding was sined acknowledging the willingness to work cooperatively to plan, promote, secure funding, deliver and expand the opportunities for the development of a highly skilled workforce for activities associated with the Ring of Fire. RoFATA focuses on skills development and training for Matawa First Nations members to gain long term meaningful employment, participants from the nine Matawa communities will be supported in making informed career decisions during their transition from training to employment. The objective is to provide long term sustainable career pathways in the mineral and mining sectors, or other related occupations resulting from the Ring of Fire, through specialized mining and trades training. RoFATA's objectives are to provide access to skills development in demand driven occupations linked to the Ring of Fire for 260 participants with 196 directly hired on with Noront. 422 participants have been recruited and provided with assessment activities. To date there have been 10 Mining readiness programs completed and due to popular demand a second program is being delivered currently in one of the First Nations.

Matawa Talent Pool

Strategies are required in order to develop an Aboriginal talent pool to meet current and future labor market demands, this is the goal for all Matawa First Nations, to groom and prepare our young for meaningful careers. Possible approaches to further developing and retaining an aboriginal talent pool include:

- Developing communication strategies to promote mining curriculum and mining matters, as well as a strategy to including the promotion for the development of an Aboriginal Apprenticeship Unit
- More emphasis on communication strategies surrounding environmental impacts and awareness, engaging youth in these processes
- Expand on linkages with MTCU pertaining to Common Core Programs, and Ontario youth apprenticeship programs (OYAP)

- Increased awareness on Education and Training opportunities for adult learners and early school leavers
- Early awareness for careers in mining and forest industries i.e., First Nations Natural Resources Youth Employment Program and Mining Matters

Overall there has been a process that Matawa and KKETS have taken in order to meet the needs and demands of employment and training for their members, the research done reflects the reality of our Matawa Community members, Matawa strives to know their members young and old, picking up the pieces that have been lost along the way is at the helm of developing and steering training programs for its members.