

Aboriginal Involvement With Apprenticeship in Residential Construction in Saskatoon

Final Report

To: Bridges and Foundations
Alan Anderson – Research Director
9 Campus Drive, Arts Building
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5

From: Valerie Sutton, BSc. M.B.A.
Director of Research
Sun Ridge Residential Inc.
Saskatoon, SK S7J 3L3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bridges and Foundations project seeks to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people through affordable quality housing options in Saskatoon. Developing apprenticeships in housing construction and renovation is an important part of this project.

The objectives of this study are:

- To determine the number of Aboriginal people currently working in residential construction jobs in Saskatoon
- To determine the number of Aboriginal people currently enrolled in an apprenticeship program in residential construction in Saskatoon
- To determine how many Aboriginal people may be interested in enrolling in an apprenticeship program in the residential construction industry in Saskatoon

A telephone survey of residential construction companies in Saskatoon was conducted. In addition, the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, SIAST and Construction Careers Saskatoon were contacted.

Out of 440 residential construction companies in Saskatoon, 290 completed the survey. Of the 258 companies that had employees (32 companies were sole proprietorships), 28% employed Aboriginal people. Roofing Contractors and Concrete Contractors had the highest percentage of Aboriginal employees.

The majority (63%) of Aboriginal employees had been employed for three years or less. Forty-two percent of Aboriginal employees were classified as labourers, an occupation that likely has a high turnover rate.

Only 15 individuals were currently enrolled in an apprenticeship program even though 25% of the respondents indicated they were willing to take on new apprentices.

It appears that owners/managers of residential construction companies in Saskatoon have a positive attitude towards hiring Aboriginal people. In addition, there are many opportunities to apprentice in a trade.

Based on the results, it is recommended that steps be taken to encourage Aboriginal people to enroll in apprenticeship programs.

Firstly, Aboriginal organizations and schools need to be informed of the opportunities that exist in residential construction and encouraged to provide information on apprenticeship, including the new subtrades that will be available. The positive aspects of apprenticeship need to be stressed, such as higher wages, job stability and long-term career prospects. Also, women need to be informed of the opportunities. Secondly, the list of companies willing to take on new apprentices needs to be distributed to schools and organizations such as Construction Careers Saskatoon, and finally, schools and Aboriginal organizations need to act as liaisons between potential apprentices and employers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|---|
| 1.0 | Introduction | 1 |
| 2.0 | Objectives | 1 |
| 3.0 | Methodology | 1 |
| 4.0 | Results | 2 |
| 5.0 | Conclusion | 4 |
| 6.0 | Recommendations | 4 |

List of Tables

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| TABLE 1. | NUMBER OF ABORIGINALS EMPLOYED IN RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES IN SASKATOON | 5 |
| TABLE 2. | POSITIONS HELD BY ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES | 6 |
| TABLE 3. | NUMBER OF ABORIGINALS APPRENTICES | 7 |
| TABLE 4. | NUMBER OF COMPANIES WILLING TO HIRE NEW APPRENTICES | 8 |

1.0 Introduction

The Bridges and Foundations Project seeks to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people through affordable quality housing options in Saskatoon. An important part of this project is to develop apprenticeships in housing construction and renovation. The Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association, a Planning Circle Member, coordinates the recruitment and selection of qualified candidates from the Aboriginal population to receive bursaries in support of their enrollment in the apprenticeship program.

It is not known how many Aboriginal people are currently working in the residential construction industry in Saskatoon, how many are currently enrolled in an apprenticeship program, and how many may be interested in becoming an apprentice in a residential construction subtrade or trade.

2.0 Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To determine the number of Aboriginal people currently working in residential construction jobs in Saskatoon
- To determine the number of Aboriginal people currently enrolled in an apprenticeship program in residential construction in Saskatoon
- To determine how many Aboriginal people may be interested in enrolling in an apprenticeship program in the residential construction industry in Saskatoon.

3.0 Methodology

A database of Saskatoon residential construction companies (Appendix A) was compiled using the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association directory and the Saskatoon phone book.

A telephone survey was designed (Appendix B) and tested. Minor modifications were made based on ease of use. The surveys were conducted by Valerie Sutton and Rhiannon Reddekopp, both of the Sun Ridge Group. All companies were called during working hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) over an eight-day period. In cases where there was no answer, companies were re-called at least once. Messages were left where possible.

The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission and SIAST were contacted to determine the number of Aboriginal people interested in enrolling in an apprenticeship program in the construction industry in Saskatoon; however, neither had this information. The Trades and Training Coordinator of Construction Careers Saskatoon was also contacted, but indicated that the information was confidential.

4.0 Results

There were originally 545 companies in the database; 105 were eliminated during the survey because they either were not involved in residential construction (i.e., commercial or industrial) or they were no longer in business. Therefore, the total number of companies included in the study was 440.

A total of 290 surveys were completed or partially completed (in many cases, the appropriate person was not available and some information could not be obtained), resulting in a 66% response rate.

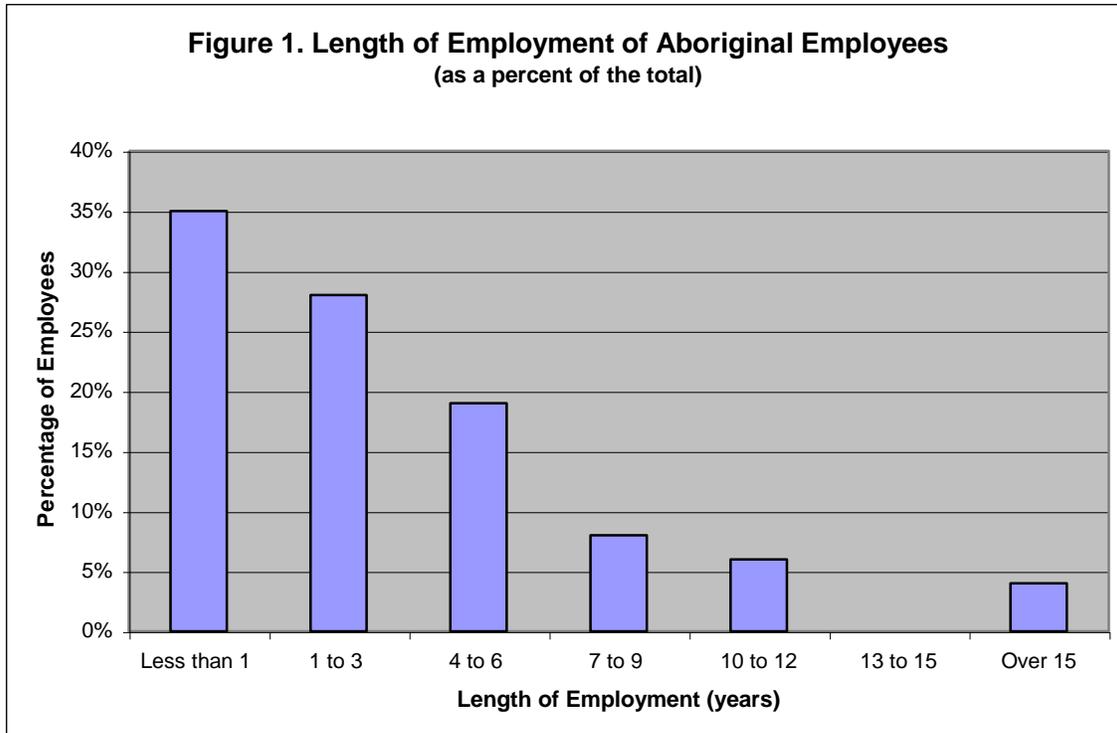
Thirty-two of the companies surveyed were sole proprietorships. Of the 258 companies that had employees, 28% employed Aboriginal people¹. A total of 177 (169 males and 8 females) Aboriginals were employed in some capacity by the residential construction companies in this study.

Table 1 shows the types of residential construction companies in Saskatoon, the number of each that responded to the survey, and the number within each type that currently employ Aboriginal people. Roofing Contractors and Concrete Contractors had the highest percentage of companies that employ Aboriginals, 80% and 53% respectively. This was followed by Masonry Contractors (38%), Drywall Contractors (36%), and Framers (33%). In some cases the sample size was too small for analysis.

The majority (63%) of Aboriginal employees had been employed for three years or less, as shown in Figure 1. Some respondents commented on the high turnover rate of Aboriginal employees.

Table 2 shows the positions held by Aboriginal employees in residential construction. Forty-two percent were employed as labourers. Two of the eight women in the study were employed in a trade, one as a cabinetmaker and the other as a roofer; the remainder were employed in office jobs. It should be noted that an individual does not need to have a designation to work in a specific occupation. For example, working as a carpenter does not necessarily mean the individual has a carpentry designation (i.e., journeyperson status).

¹The definition of Aboriginal was based on the opinion of the respondent. Respondents were told to include Métis.



Twelve companies indicated they had Aboriginal employees currently enrolled in an apprenticeship program (a total of 15 individuals). Table 3 shows the trade areas in which they were apprenticing. Although the sample size is small, the data shows that the majority were apprenticing as Carpenters and Electricians (three and four respectively).

Sixty-five companies (25% of the 258 companies that have employees) indicated they would be willing to take on new apprentices (Table 4). This number is probably low – in many cases, the person answering the survey was not in a position to make this decision. The types of companies most willing to hire new apprentices were: Framer (67%), Electrical Contractor (52%) and Plumber (43%). It should be noted that Framer, along with Concrete Former, Interior Finisher and Exterior Finisher, is being considered for subtrade status by the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. Confirmation is expected by the end of 2004. Additional subtrade designations will be considered in the future.

Forty-nine of the 65 companies willing to hire new apprentices indicated that their company's name could be put on a contact list (Appendix C). Those that did not want their name on the list preferred to find apprentices through referrals.

Overall, response to the survey was very positive. Only five negative comments were received, and these related to unreliability and not staying with the job.

Two respondents actively sought Aboriginal employees through Construction Careers Saskatoon.

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the results, it appears that owners/managers of residential construction companies in Saskatoon are generally willing to hire Aboriginal people. However, most of the Aboriginal employees in the study have not worked for the same company for more than three years. It is not known if this is due to employees being fired or quitting. A large number of Aboriginal employees in the study are classified as labourers, a job that probably has a high turnover rate as a result of mobility. It is less likely that an individual will stay in a job that does not provide a career path.

Of the 177 Aboriginal employees in the study, only 15 (9%) are currently apprenticing in a trade. Based on the finding that one quarter of the respondents are willing to take on new apprentices, there is ample opportunity for Aboriginal people to pursue a career in residential construction in Saskatoon.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the low number of Aboriginal apprentices and the receptive attitude displayed by Saskatoon residential construction companies, both in terms of hiring Aboriginals and taking on apprentices, it is recommended that steps be taken to encourage Aboriginal people to enroll in apprenticeship programs.

Firstly, Aboriginal organizations and schools need to be informed of the opportunities that exist in residential construction and encouraged to provide information on apprenticeship, including the new subtrade designations that will be available. The positive aspects of apprenticeship need to be stressed, such as higher wages, job stability and long-term career prospects. Also, women need to be informed that there are many opportunities in residential construction.

Secondly, the list of companies willing to take on new apprentices needs to be distributed to schools and organizations such as Construction Careers Saskatoon, and the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association. Finally, schools and Aboriginal organizations need to act as liaisons between potential apprentices and employers.

TABLE 1. TYPES OF RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES AND THE NUMBER OF EACH EMPLOYING ABORIGINALS

| Type of Company | # of Companies | # Employing Aboriginals |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Builder | 41 | 6 |
| Cabinet Installer | 28 | 4 |
| Carpenter | 1 | 0 |
| Concrete Contractor | 19 | 10 |
| Door & Window Installer | 16 | 4 |
| Drywall Contractor | 11 | 4 |
| Eavestroughing Contractor | 5 | 0 |
| Electrical Contractor | 27 | 4 |
| Fireplace Installer | 2 | 0 |
| Floorcovering Installer | 6 | 2 |
| Foundation Contractor | 2 | 1 |
| Framer | 9 | 3 |
| General Contractor | 25 | 6 |
| HVAC Contractor | 27 | 3 |
| Insulation Contractor | 3 | 0 |
| Masonry Contractor | 8 | 3 |
| Painter | 16 | 4 |
| Plumber | 21 | 5 |
| Roofing Contractor | 10 | 8 |
| Siding & Soffits Installer | 5 | 2 |
| Stucco Contractor | 2 | 1 |
| Tilesetter | 6 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 290 | 71 |

TABLE 2. POSITIONS HELD BY ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES

| Position | Number of Aboriginal Employees | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Administration/Office Management | 8 | 5% |
| Supervisor | 1 | 0.6% |
| Sales | 1 | 0.6% |
| Labourer | 69 | 42% |
| Equipment Operator | 1 | 0.6% |
| Service Technician | 1 | 0.6% |
| Bricklayer | 1 | 0.6% |
| Cabinet Maker/Installer | 1 | 0.6% |
| Carpenter | 9 | 5% |
| Concrete Finisher | 3 | 2% |
| Door & Window Installer | 1 | 0.6% |
| Drywall Installer | 9 | 5% |
| Electrician | 4 | 2% |
| Floorcovering Installer | 3 | 2% |
| Framer | 6 | 4% |
| HVAC Installer | 3 | 2% |
| Painter | 9 | 5% |
| Plumber | 5 | 3% |
| Roofer | 18 | 11% |
| Sheet Metal Worker | 1 | 0.6% |
| Siding Installer | 1 | 0.6% |
| Stuccoer | 10 | 6% |
| Tilesetter | 1 | 0.6% |
| TOTAL | 166 | 100% |

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL APPRENTICES

| Trade | # of Aboriginal Apprentices |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Bricklayer | 1 |
| Cabinetmaker | 0 |
| Carpenter | 3 |
| Concrete Finisher | 0 |
| Drywall Installer | 2 |
| Electrician | 4 |
| Floorcovering Installer | 0 |
| Gasfitter | 0 |
| Insulator | 0 |
| Painter and Decorator | 0 |
| Plumber | 1 |
| Rofer | 2 |
| Sheet Metal Worker | 1 |
| Tilesetter | 1 |
| TOTAL | 15 |

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF COMPANIES WILLING TO HIRE NEW APPRENTICES*

| Type of Company | Total # of Companies | # of Companies Willing to Hire Apprentices |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Builder | 41 | 1 |
| Cabinet Installer | 28 | 9 |
| Carpenter | 1 | 1 |
| Concrete Contractor | 19 | 3 |
| Door & Window Installer | 16 | 0 |
| Drywall Contractor | 11 | 3 |
| Eavestroughing Contractor | 5 | 1 |
| Electrical Contractor | 27 | 14 |
| Fireplace Installer | 2 | 0 |
| Floorcovering Installer | 6 | 2 |
| Foundation Contractor | 2 | 1 |
| Framer | 9 | 6 |
| General Contractor | 25 | 3 |
| HVAC Contractor | 27 | 2 |
| Insulation Contractor | 3 | 0 |
| Masonry Contractor | 8 | 2 |
| Painter | 16 | 3 |
| Plumber | 21 | 9 |
| Roofing Contractor | 10 | 1 |
| Siding & Soffits Installer | 5 | 2 |
| Stucco Contractor | 2 | 1 |
| Tilesetter | 6 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 290 | 65 |

*Shaded areas represent types of companies that have apprenticeable jobs. Values in unshaded areas represent the willingness of companies to hire new apprentices if the occupation becomes designated as a subtrade in the future.