



MEDIA RELEASE

Portage College Teams Up with Classroom Connections and Samson Cree Nation to Launch “Change it Up! Trades”

Portage College has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Classroom Connections and Samson Cree Nation to bring “Change it Up! Trades” to the Maskwacis, Alberta region. The program made possible by the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada is a unique bridge to employment for young, unemployed Aboriginals that focuses directly on Alberta’s shortages in skilled trades.

“Sometimes you just need a new system – a new pathway,” said Heather McTaggart, Executive Director of Classroom Connections. “This pilot project demonstrates that there are many ways to help First Nations people get the skills training they need for employment. As a result, we will now have 29 community members with guaranteed employment as skilled tradespeople at the end of this program.”

Portage College will help by creating a step-by-step program pathway for the Samson Cree Nation community, bringing a combination of up-skilling and apprenticeship training through college programming. This brand new hybrid trades program is specifically targeted to help Aboriginals gain the skills and training necessary to enter the oil, gas and construction industries.

“We all know that employment is key to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, we partnered with Classroom Connections and Portage College because they are thinking outside the box to address First Nations barriers to employment,” said Derek Bruno, Councillor, Samson Cree Nations.

Portage College and Classroom Connections recognize that Canada’s thriving energy sector is facing an employment crisis. Over one-third of its core workforce is poised to retire within the next decade, creating a need for 39,000 new workers.

“We recognize that there is a shortage of skilled workers in Alberta,” said Dr. Trent Keough, President and CEO of Portage College. “The College is proud to enter into this partnership with Classroom Connections and the Samson Cree Nation to help make a difference, not just for Alberta’s energy sector, but for the community of Samson Cree Nation.”

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