

ICE Network CoLab Summary: Training and Employment in Community Energy Efficiency Projects

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Indigenous Training and Employment in Community Energy Efficiency Projects

Event date: Wednesday, August 14th at 13:00 EDT

Background

As Indigenous communities go through the process of planning energy efficiency projects, there are many opportunities to benefit from training and employment. By getting community members trained and working on these projects, more dollars are staying in the community, and the skills of community members will be deeply anchored into the lives of the people in the community.

CoLab Resources

- Hosted by Kim Scott, 20/20 Catalyst and Co-Chair of the ICE Advisory Council
- Presenter Craig Nootchtai, Project Manager of Conservation on the Coast and President of CNootchtai Technical Services
- Presenter Cara Sanders, 20/20 Catalyst, 20/20 Mentor, and Principal of ASKII Environmental Inc.

Lessons and Advice from Conservation on the Coast

[Conservation on the Coast](#) has developed a detailed training and employment strategy for the energy efficiency projects that they have done in the Attawapiskat, Fort Albany and Kashechewan communities in the James Bay region of Ontario.

There are four primary areas that the strategy focuses on:

1. *Training goals & programming*: planning for deep community engagement, local staff training which can lead to local employment for installations, testing and maintenance.
2. *Procurement*: Taking advantage of opportunities in purchasing materials, General contractor work such as electrical work, shipping & transportation, goods & services, technicians, and general labourers.
3. *Funding*: funding for training and employment was built into planning and proposals from early in the process, coming from multiple funding sources.
4. *Reporting Impacts and Outcomes* demonstrates the cumulative impacts of how much money has entered the community, how many people have developed capacity and skills, and how many gained employment through the project.

Craig shared his experiences with the participants in detail, and the recording of that presentation can be found in the webinar [media file](#). Some of the key questions that were asked and answered here:

Q: *How was gender taken into consideration in terms of job creation and certification, since a lot of these seem to be more geared towards men?*

A: We have male and female staff in all our communities, in fact, we even have a crew that is 80% female, as long as the community members were experienced and were trained, the jobs are available to both men and women.

Q: *How was the training and employment strategy beneficial to youth in the community?*

A: When we posted opportunities in the community, we had quite a few younger people apply, and in the first three years (when we took on training funding) we emphasized that we would be staffing our teams with three youth in a six-person crew, with the other three people being experienced staff that can work in a mentorship capacity. From those crews, we have seen several young people really blossom and take on leadership roles in the community through their jobs or set them up to build the skills that they can use to build a career.

Q: *What advice do you have about funding opportunities for communities looking to do training programs and local employment?*

A: I think one of the most important actions the project team needs to take is to try and talk to all the local agencies that are in the region because they always have some set-asides for training. It might not be enough to run a big program but if you got three or four local agencies together and combine those dollars, you might be able to sustain a healthy training program that can take you into operations and the point where the community can operate more self-sufficiently. Also, try and collaborate with other communities so that they can cost-share on training, especially if you're in a remote Community flying in a trainer. Bringing someone in on your own is instantly doubling or almost tripling your cost, so if you can spread it out over a few different organizations, that would help.

Opportunities for developing support through Community Energy Planning

Cara Sanders is a clean energy consultant with active projects across northern Ontario. She joined us from one of these remote communities to share how she uses her Community Energy Planning (CEP) process to determine how communities want to incorporate training and local employment into their projects. Cara's key take-away points were:

- Make sure your CEP is community-driven and designed to reach the community's goals
- When looking at the community and opportunities for energy efficiency, look at the band assets as well as housing
- For communities that are struggling in finding project funding opportunities, conservation is a great place to start. *"It costs more to generate a kilowatt of every than it does to conserve one"*
- Cara shared how savings from one energy efficiency project on band assets were turned into dollars that could be invested into the next project, so starting centrally can grow a project fund in a community that will pay for future updates and retrofits

Some of the key questions that were asked and answered here:

Q: *What is the best practice for insulation, especially for a wet climate?*

A: Well, it's really going to depend on your building's construction and whether you are looking at a retrofit or a new build. There are situations where you can go into a building and upgrade the insulation, but it often has a lot to do with the air sealing as much as the insulation. You can also look at attaching foam board insulation to the exterior under the siding, which will increase the insulation without disturbing the interior. What you need first is a sense of what kind of construction you're dealing with. There is also a question of making sure that you don't create any air quality issues with mold, especially in a wet environment, as well as fire rating for the materials, which is a much more pressing issue when you're in a remote community where the fire service is limited.

Q: *What were some of the things you found difficult to get the community involved in for training and get that engagement and interest at the community level?*

A: In my experience, it just takes time. One method of engagement that I believe is really important is the kitchen table meetings where people in the community could ask questions about things that they missed from the community engagement sessions or just didn't ask about at the community events. It is a great way to develop a relationship with people in the community.

Q: *What are the key traits of someone that you would want to recruit for training and staffing an energy efficiency project team from the community?*

A: I think it's like any job, you want to be working with people that are excited about what they are doing and want to be there every day. The strongest staff are people who are the ones that are committed to the community. The people that have really worked hard for us are the ones that showed up on time, had a really humble approach and were willing to learn. The people with the right attitude, motivation and work ethic were the ones that were the most successful and became the most skilled.

CoLab Participants:

Vanessa Abban, MK Anand, Jeff Blais, François Boivin, Darrell Brown, Kevin Brown, Kimberley Brown, Mariah Byers, Claire Cameron, Leon Cardinal, Colleen Fisk, Taylor Ferguson, Eryn Fitzgerald, Rob Harris, Dylan Heerema, Chris Henderson, Darryl Hill, Leona Humchitt, John Kenney, Morice Labossiere Gail Lawlor, Martha Lenio, Andreane Lussier, Adam Lynes-Ford, Katya McClintock, Melissa McDonald, Felix Mercure, Mitchell Niles, Matthew Obee, John Olsen, Etienne Patenaude, Carlos Sanchez-Pimienta, Cara Sanders, Victoria Sandre, Ian Scholten, Jenny Scott, Emma Sharkey, Harnav Channi, Roland Kemuksigak

tags : employment, CoLab, EnergyEfficiency, training