



Photo by Andrew Johnson

Blazing crash

A driver was killed Monday after his dump truck rolled over and caught fire on Hwy. 401 at Bowmanville. The 32-year-old man was thrown from the vehicle after slamming into the median, sending chunks of concrete hurling towards oncoming cars. The truck's trailer tipped and spilled gravel and debris over the highway, closing it down for hours.

Loyalist offers aboriginal construction program

By Annie Sakkab

The aboriginal construction renovation program is halfway through its second session after a successful start in February. The 16-week program is funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Students gain hands-on experience in the construction and renovation field, preparing them for employment opportunities. Graduates of the program may also choose to continue to further their education in the construction renovation program at Loyalist. Tuition is free for those accepted, and is geared towards unemployed or under-employed aboriginal students.

This year's second session of the program started Oct. 6, taking into consideration that a few students had some preparatory work through the summer, while others needed to wrap up their hunting season to provide meat for their families.

The program is based on a total aboriginal way of life.

Paul Latchford, co-ordinator at the aboriginal resource centre at Loyalist, explains that the program is not inclusive, it's more or less exclusive, in the fact that "we're trying to be respectful of the culture."

"We have basically taken the mainstream program and just changed the process of how we achieve those outcomes, while trying to address the needs of the learner, being more or less conscious of, for the lack of better word, of where they're at and where their family comes from," explains Latchford.

"It's the tools and resources to make change. So really the program is all about empathy for the learner," Latchford adds. "In most cases, we are finding multiple gifts and strengths. So when they come to apply that to this opportunity, all of a sudden the learner is empowered."

"One of the key opportunities is to provide them with lots of training, so they get their fall arrest," Latchford says.

Fall arrest is a key component for students to allow them to get a job. It's a basic training for health and safety regulations.

'We are trying to give them an opportunity. Not only that, we see future opportunities in the community for more housing to be built.'

Co-ordinator Paul Latchford

Other components to the program are fork lift, high lift, boom lift and scissor lift. Students also get some basic training in CPR, first aid, propane tanks as well as WHMIS training, a health and safety information course associated with chemicals.

"We are trying to give them an opportunity. Not only that, we see future opportunities in the community for more housing to be built. There is a housing crisis, and we think that with the new water plant coming, there will be more opportunities. So they're starting to understand that this is an opportunity for them," explains Latchford.

The housing crisis on reserves is a huge obstacle for natives. For off-reserve land owners, a deed is given to show ownership. For the native population, however, they are given a certificate of possession, and the land is held in trust by the government.

"You actually have ownership to the first six inches of land. The government owns everything above that and everything below that. So you can never have a clear title. I can't go to the bank for a loan and say here's my certificate of possession, my equity," Latchford explains.

"So it's how you work around that. It's about understanding our limitations. With this course, we teach them the building code so they can get funding form the bank."

One other aspect to this course is the pre-auto apprenticeship program. In a short period of time, students master some core skills that may have taken other people a lot longer time to learn, giving them a head-start to go out into the working environment.

"They learn, from a native perspective, that group cohesion," Latchford says.

"We've turned it around from the mainstream. We ask them what would you like to learn and how would you like to learn it."

"We've taken away the one biggest fear, virtually no tests. Because they display their learning by doing projects and activities, we do evaluations and they evaluate themselves. They can mark each others papers and open books."

"All of a sudden the stress goes way down, and then they have success, and then you see the attendance comes up."

"I can't even start to touch on what I've learned, I've learned so much, but now I know I can be great," says Mandy Smart, a native student from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory attending this year's program.

"I definitely hope to retain enough knowledge to go home and build myself a home, and do some renovation work on the side for family members, giving them a fair and an honest deal."

With this program, Smart hopes to give back to the community the knowledge she's acquiring.

"It's wonderful and magnificent. I absolutely enjoy it."



Photo by Graeme Murphy

Belleville crash

A paramedic comforts the victim of a single-vehicle collision at 5:10 p.m.w in Belleville on Sunday. The vehicle collided with a hydro pole at the intersection of Sidney and College streets.