

Case study

Opportunities Agreements and training initiatives for Saskatchewan First Nations partners



Introduction to Mining participants being toured through the service shaft permanent headframe area at the Jansen project.
Photo Credit: Carlton Trail College.

Since 2012, BHP Billiton Canada has partnered with local First Nations communities to support industry-focused training initiatives and employment.

One of the pillars of our Community Strategy at BHP Billiton Potash is to support the inclusion of local labour in all phases of our projects and at all employment levels. Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan remain under-represented in both the general workforce and in the potash industry. While partnerships in the uranium industry have led to remarkable strides in northern communities, BHP Billiton recognised that the Jansen Potash Project presented a significant and mutually beneficial opportunity for ourselves and the First Nations communities in Southern Saskatchewan.

BHP Billiton Potash's two Opportunities Agreements (OAs), signed with five local First Nations in 2012 and 2013 are the first of their kind in the potash industry. The agreements set out to provide these First Nations with the opportunity to maximise the economic opportunities that arise from our Jansen Project in the form of employment, business and economic development, education and training. As part of these agreements, we intend to develop a long-term relationship between the First Nations and BHP Billiton based on mutual respect, understanding and trust.

Each year BHP Billiton works cooperatively with our partner First Nations communities to identify and support training initiatives that will provide the most benefit to their community members. In many cases the communities work cooperatively with one another, pooling their funding to access these valuable industry-relevant training opportunities exclusively for their people, in training centres close to the community. The Introduction to Mining program is an example of an initiative that has been successfully run for the past two years and has led to direct employment.

Participants who complete the Introduction to Mining program attain key certifications, including First Aid, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, Confined Space, Fall Arrest, Environmental Monitoring, and Construction Safety training. An employment readiness module and a work placement program support the training. Finally, over the past two years, BHP Billiton Potash has hosted participants from this program and others in our Discovery Lodge camp at the Jansen Project site. The Introduction to Mining participants stay at Discovery Lodge for a full week, meet directly with many of the contracting employers onsite and have a chance to acclimatise to camp life, experience a project site, and prepare for entry into the industry in various areas of expertise (security, camp services, construction, and operations).

This program is one of many initiatives that prepares First Nations members to enter the workforce immediately. Several of our construction contractors have hired people directly from the Introduction to Mining program as well as from our other initiatives. Seeing these individuals working at our project site or elsewhere in industry is a true measure of success of the Opportunities Agreements.