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## **“Train For Technologies”, Thompson Region Students Urged**

Local industry, government and education leaders this week declared that a serious shortage of skilled technologists and technicians is threatened for the Thompson region. A Kamloops meeting hosted by the 9,500 member Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC, identified countering the looming retirement of baby-boomers as critical to meeting the needs of industry.

The main finding of the meeting was the need for a drive to promote science and technology careers and education, says John Leech, the Executive Director of ASTTBC. “Actions recommended to prevent a full-blown crisis included promoting math, science and technology in K-12 education, supporting groups like the Big Little Science Centre and the Bert Edwards Science & Technology Elementary School, engaging First Nations youth, providing bursaries and other financial aid, mentoring students to show them the great career opportunities as a technician, technologist, engineer or geoscientist, and for employers to get involved with the BC Government's Year of Science project.”

Kamloops and area leaders attending the meeting urged regional students to enroll in technology education programs like the Architectural and Engineering Technology program at TRU. Among those contributing ideas were TK'MLUPS Indian Band Chief Shane Gottfriedson, Ken Christian, an ASTTBC member and Chair of the District School Board, Kamloops Deputy Mayor Marg Spina, Kamloops City Engineer Deven Matkowski, and the Branch Chair of the Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of BC, Matt Davis.

"British Columbia was facing a crisis in 2008 due to a shortage of technical talent," John Leech commented. "The 2008 recession gave us a little breathing room, but that is disappearing. We must continue our efforts to attract people to technology careers or we will again face serious shortages."

Kamloops has some very promising initiatives underway including the Bert Edwards Science and Technology Elementary School, and a proposed Trades and Technology High School. The Big Little Science Centre is another major asset in encouraging students to pursue science and technology careers, stated the ASTTBC Executive director.

ASTTBC's Regional Manager, Bruce Stevens, told the group about ASTTBC's special effort during the Year of Science to find job shadowing opportunities for students in Grades 11 and 12. ASTTBC received a grant from the BC Government to link employers and students as part of the Year of Science initiative. "We are meeting with great success and support from employers," said Bruce

Stevens. "We have several placements in Kamloops but need many more to ensure Kamloops youth get as much exposure as possible to careers in science and technology." For information on the YOS Job Shadow project visit <http://www.asttbc.org/careers/yos/>.

ASTTBC launched a First Nations Careers Council in Kamloops in 2009 to attract First Nations youth into technology careers. The 9,500 member association has sponsored several First Nations bursaries for TRU students in Architectural and Engineering Technology and has been working with provincial groups such as the First Nations Technology Council seeking ways to further engage First Nations youth.

ASTTBC is concerned that its members usually work behind the scenes and are largely 'invisible' to the public. "Technology professional have rewarding and almost recession-proof careers," said Leech. "We hope more parents, teachers and youth will take a hard look at the opportunities in applied science and engineering technology. You can find information on an amazing variety of careers on our web site under 'Technology Careers': <http://www.asttbc.org/>"