

Program Review

Final Report and Action Plan

Carpentry Trades

Foundation and Apprenticeship Harmonized



Trades and Technical Programs

North Island College

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Submitted to
Cheryl O’Connell, Dean
Trades and Technical Programs

North Island College
1685 S Dogwood Street
Campbell River, British Columbia

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Preamble

As we continue working through the process of program review and renewal we are guided by the college's overarching, interwoven strategic plans, **BUILD 2026**, **Widening Our Doorways**, and **Working Together – the NIC Indigenization Plan**. The recommendations put forth (and the action items detailed in the accompanying Action Plan) align with commitments articulated in the guiding documents and are part of our continued effort to meet the needs of our diverse community of learners.

A. Summary

The Carpentry Trades program area engaged in the program review process. The outcome of this document is an action plan that details the upcoming work to enhance the program.

B. Background

In accordance with North Island College's Policy 3-11, the department undertook the program review process. This final report synthesizes recommendations and next steps from the department's self-study and the external review report.

The self-study was completed March 2025 and submitted to the dean of Trades and Technical Programs, Cheryl O'Connell. Survey data from current students, alumni, and faculty were included to support the conclusions and recommendations shared in the self-study.

The external review visit was conducted on March 12 & 13, 2025.

The external review team consisted of:

- David Dunn, Associate Dean, Building Design and Construction Trades, British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Jessie Chalmers, Campus Administrator, Former Carpentry instructor, Chair & Associate Dean, Vancouver Island University
- Don Naidesh, Department Head, Carpentry, British Columbia Institute of Technology
- David Redmond, Instructor, Carpentry, British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Jacques Gartner, Instructor, Plumbing & Piping Programs, North Island College

The external review team, in fulfillment of its responsibilities, met with:

- Vice-President Academic: Tony Bellavia
- Dean, Trades and Technical Programs: Cheryl O'Connell
- Faculty
- Students and Alumni

This final report is based on the program self-study, the external review report, and responses from program faculty.

C. Program Overview

Mission

The mission of North Island College's Carpentry Apprenticeship and Foundation Program is to provide high-quality, in-class and hands-on training that equips students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to succeed in the carpentry trade. Through a blend of classroom instruction and real-world experience, we strive to foster a strong foundation in safety, craftsmanship, and technical expertise, preparing students to meet the demands of the construction industry. We are committed to the continuity of curriculum, ensuring a seamless progression of learning from entry-level to advanced apprenticeship, while adapting to industry standards and evolving technologies.

Vision

To be a leading provider of carpentry education, fostering a skilled and innovative workforce through comprehensive training, industry collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Our program will empower students to excel in the carpentry trade, adapt to the changing needs of the construction industry, and apply critical thinking skills to solve complex problems. We are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of safety, craftsmanship, and professional development.

Purpose

The purpose of North Island College's Carpentry Apprenticeship and Entry-Level Program is to provide students with the foundational knowledge and practical skills necessary for a successful career in carpentry. By offering a blend of hands-on training, classroom instruction, and real-world experience, our program prepares students to meet the diverse challenges of the construction industry. We are committed to developing highly skilled, safety-conscious professionals who demonstrate strong critical thinking abilities, craftsmanship, and a dedication to ongoing learning and innovation in the trade.

Program Structure

Applicants must be SkilledTradesBC registered apprentices to enter the apprentice pathway. Apprentices enrolling in technical training must take their training in sequential order: levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Apprentices must complete all levels of technical training to be eligible to write the Interprovincial (Red Seal) examination: [Carpentry Apprenticeship Program Details](#)

Applicants entering the Carpentry Foundation level learn essential workplace skills in addition to earning the Level 1 training credit and work-based training hours towards the Interprovincial certification when registered as an apprentice. See: [Carpentry Foundation Certificate details](#) (including entrance, course and completion requirements).

D. Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Identified Strengths of the Program

From current and past student surveys inputs from student support groups and a current student focus group, the following strengths were raised:

- Students consistently praise the instructors at North Island College (NIC) for their knowledge, engagement, and support. They highlight the exceptional teaching, real-life experience, and ability to create a supportive learning environment.
- The practical assignments and hands-on projects are highly valued by students. They find these experiences crucial for developing their skills and applying classroom theory to real-world scenarios.
- The practical assignments and hands-on projects are highly valued by students. They find these experiences crucial for developing their skills and applying classroom theory to real-world scenarios.
- Many students commend their instructors for being knowledgeable, patient, and engaging. They find the instructors' teaching methods effective and appreciate the support provided.
- There is a strong network of academic and non-academic supports and resources provided by the Library & Learning Commons.
- The Carpentry Trades programs have an active Program Advisory Committee (PAC) providing input and guidance to the department.

Current students have meaningful learning experiences and former students go on to achieve success in the community and convey that the program did a good job in preparing them for the workforce. The program and its instructors have been successful in providing students with a comprehensive base of knowledge and skill development resulting in gainful employment.

Gaps and Weaknesses of the Program

Instructors acknowledge some gaps in the program as follows:

- AutoCAD implementation
- Curriculum development time (PD time) required to learn and teach AutoCAD
- Alternative Delivery Methods – might there be ways to explore how to deliver and engage students in learning
- Other certifications (learning opportunities) to help students (e.g., Fall Arrest)
- Time for Content development
- Substitute instructor process
- Team building

E. Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

The external review team felt the quality of the instruction in the North Island College Carpentry programs were very good and in alignment with SkilledTradesBC curriculum expectations.

Throughout this report, the external review team provides recommendations, insights, and suggestions for enhancement in areas such as:

- Build more and stronger connections with industry members and organizations
- Continue to develop alternative learning resources/delivery formats for learning
- build stronger relationships and more frequent engagement with industry for work-integrated learning, demos and talks, program advisory committee and job fair enhancements
- develop more relationships within North Island College and externally with other post-secondary institutions
- Alternative learning resources

F. Program Response to External Reviewers' Recommendations

This section outlines the recommendations made by the external review team and our department responses.

Theme 1: Enhancing Relationships and Connections

While the department has demonstrated that some relationships exist already, the external review team recommends enhancing these connections and engagement with Indigenous communities, industry, regional communities and local high schools.

Recommendation 1: Indigenous Connections and Relationships

- It was evident to the external review team that there is the desire and interest to expand and deepen Indigenous connections and relationships within the Carpentry program. The team recommends a few ways to explore and enhance these connections.
- Initially, the team recommends ensuring that all instructors further their understanding of what Indigenization of the trades can look like and expand their knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Once this has been established then the focus can be on how to integrate these ways into their teaching practices.
- It's recommended that the department examine further how they can be of service more in local First Nations communities, this could include:
 - Offering construction services on small residential projects
 - Building small structures like sheds or decks
 - Consulting on projects that are being managed in-community
 - Expand the frequency of offerings of a trade's sampler course or Carpentry foundations program within First Nations communities.

Recommendation 2: Industry Relationships and Engagement

- The external review team acknowledges that this is a common challenge that most institutions face and that having a collaborative and sustainable approach to building and fostering connections is the best way forward. The following are several tactics the NIC Carpentry department could employ to further their industry relationships and engagements.
- Develop an engagement and communication plan
- Host events that industry members can be invited to/participate in. A specific example the external review team recommends due to the proximity to several golf courses, is a golf tournament. The marketing department could be engaged to assist in the planning and promotion and industry connections (current and new) could be invited. This would serve as a fundraising opportunity and an opportunity to network with the industry connections that attend.
- Enhance and deepen the connections with employers that actively employ NIC apprentices. These could lead to further work integrated learning opportunities.

Recommendation 3: Community Relationships

- There is an opportunity to further enhance the relationship with the regional community, this will not only further the good reputation of the program in the community but also provide additional learning opportunities for the Carpentry students.
- Build tiny homes and sheds in the NIC Carpentry shops as group projects and sell them to community members. This not only provides practical experience for the students but also an opportunity to raise funds for the program.
- Endeavour to offer construction services within the local community. This could include small residential project work, work for non-profit organizations and contribution to projects that local builders are managing.
- Develop the relationships needed to have more field trip opportunities for the students.
- Visit projects that are being completed by local construction companies, both residential and commercial.
- Visit projects at the various stages of completion that are being built on NIC property, e.g., the NIC housing projects.

Recommendation 4: Foster Connection with High Schools

- It is evident that the dual credit path for students is already providing a barrier free entry into the NIC Carpentry program. It's recommended that this relationship to the high schools continues to be fostered and enhanced to ensure that the high schools remain a source of enrolment.
- Offer mentorship opportunities for high school students with Level 4 apprentices. The high school students could be paired as assistants to a Level 4 student who is completing a
- project. This provides the Level 4 student an opportunity to grow their leadership skills and the high school student an opportunity to gain hands on practical experience.
- Connect with the local high schools to determine if there are ways NIC could become involved within the high school itself, this could be a career fair or within the shops.

Theme 2: Enhancing Teaching & Learning Practice

Recommendation 1: Integration of AutoCAD into the Carpentry Program

- There is a need to integrate AutoCAD learning into the curriculum. There are several steps that need to occur before this can happen though, these include:
 - Instructors must become proficient in AutoCAD by either collectively or individually taking introductory courses using PD time.
 - Collaboratively determine the content that should be included and at what point/what level is this AutoCAD content introduced e.g. instead of hand drafting.
 - Develop the resources needed to deliver the AutoCAD content.
 - Establish a clear path with IT for students to gain access to the software, this may include having IT support when students are first accessing AutoCAD.

- An alternative to integrating the AutoCAD learning into the curriculum is to develop and offer an additional course (not a micro-credential) that could be taken in tandem with the program that would include additional competencies that students need, such as:
 - AutoCAD basics
 - Fall Arrest
 - Scissor Lift
 - OFA
 - WHIMIS
 - Confined Spaces

Recommendation 2: Enhancement and Evolution of the Trade

- Consideration should be given to the ongoing enhancement and evolution of the Carpentry trade and how NIC will continue to evolve and adapt to industry needs. One way to achieve this, which is also in alignment with furthering community engagement, is to engage the students with local projects where they can see real sets of plans and construction documentation and how they are being actualized on-site. This real-world learning opportunity will enhance the students overall learning journey and practical understanding of how construction sites operate.
- As mentioned in Theme 1, utilizing building projects, e.g. the NIC house projects, that are occurring on NIC property presents the least barriers. These sites could act as “living labs” for the students to see a large-scale build progress throughout the lifespan of the project. Terms could be added to the contract with the firm that is building on NIC property that includes the on-site education of the NIC Carpentry students.

Recommendation 3: Curriculum & Assessment Enhancement

- While it’s clear that the NIC Carpentry instructors are delivering an excellent learning experience for students, there are several ways that this could be enhanced even further.
- Make use of the resources and support offered by CTLI. When examining pedagogical questions and concerns, assessment design and curriculum delivery, CTLI will be an asset and can provide ongoing support.
- Make a shift to an online testing hub instead of traditional in-person written tests. This will provide:
 - Ease in creating/editing and assessing the tests.
 - An opportunity for instructors to develop a central question bank to draw from and easily add to their tests.
- Add opportunities for students to learn how to use the BC Building Code online versus just using the hard copy version. The external review team heard from students that they only access it online on the job site, so ensuring they are efficient in how they access and use the BC Building Code online is important and should occur at the same time as using the hard copy version.
- Focus more on quality assurance of the same course taught by multiple instructors. More consistency is needed across teaching and learning practices when teaching the same course, this ensures that students are receiving the same experience and gaining the same knowledge regardless of who is teaching the course.

Recommendation 4: Safety Protocol and Practice Enhancement

- There is room to enhance some areas of the delivery of safety protocols to students and how safety is practiced within the shops. Aiming for consistency in the delivery of safety lessons between instructors should be a top priority.
- Ensure the safety section in each level is delivered in the same way by all instructors. This level of quality assurance will allow all students to understand all safety protocol in the same way.
- Add additional safety information to all equipment in the shops.
- Utilize the BCIT safety videos that are available on their website. A QR code can be downloaded and posted at each piece of equipment and students can scan the code for video demonstration on that piece of equipment.
- Add a laminated quick reference how to guide at each piece of equipment.
- Conduct a safety review (using a contracted inspector) of shops so that any deficiencies can be identified and mitigated.

Recommendation 5: Level 4 Apprenticeship Mentoring Opportunities

- As mentioned in the community enhancement recommendation, creating mentorship opportunities for Level 4 students could provide them with an enhanced experience in leadership. They could be paired either with a high school student or a Foundations student as they complete one of their Level 4 projects. The high school student or Foundations student would act as an assistant and gain hands on experience while also getting a glimpse at what they can look forward to later in the program.

Recommendation 6: Technology Enhancements

- While the external review team feels the classrooms are well-equipped overall, there are a couple of ways that enhanced access to technology could improve the student learning experience.
- It's recommended that the department purchase a set of iPads or tablets and/or a set of laptop computers that can be shared between classes.
 - Having handheld devices like an iPad or tablet would allow students to have quick access to information while in the shop and potentially track projects as they would be doing on the job site.
 - A new set of classroom computers, that are compatible with AutoCAD, would allow for the introduction of AutoCAD and online testing.

Theme 3: Taking Action and Enabling the Advancement of the Trade

The advancement and evolution of the Carpentry trades in BC is a priority that all institutions should be considering. It's an institutional responsibility to ensure that adequate action is taken to impart the most up to date knowledge and skill to students, this may mean that collaboration with other provincial institutions is needed to elicit change at the higher levels (e.g. STBC, government).

The external review team has identified several possible actions that can take place at both the institutional and provincial level that would assist in enabling the advancement of the Carpentry trade in the province.

Recommendation 1: Institution Level

- Add a departmental chair that can take on some of the tasks that instructors do not have time for. This may include building industry connections, assisting with curriculum development and subbing when required.
- Work as a department to minimize the release time required by optimizing PD time.
- Develop a detailed plan to complete the action items outlined in the Self-Study. Identify who will be responsible for what and who will drive the work and completion of the action items.
- Outline and communicate the responsibilities of the associate dean and trades coordinator so it's clear what the instructors are and are not responsible for.
- Begin to explore succession planning for the department.
 - Create a plan for how to translate current success and quality of the program into the future. A department chair could assist in this process.

Recommendation 2: Provincial Level

- Leadership from all BC institutions should come together to collaboratively and creatively drive change in the trades, bringing this to STBC and the ministry.
 - There is strength when working together, it can drive change more effectively
- All institutions face funding constraints in the trades; it would be ideal to work together on a provincial level to review these constraints and challenges faced by NIC and all other institutions.
 - The intent is to drive change and continually evolve the delivery of the programs in BC

G. Indigenization of Teaching and Learning Experiences

See action plan.