



## **Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program Wraps Up Unprecedented Year**

Staff at the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) continued to promote the Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship (SYA) program, apprenticeship, and careers in the skilled trades throughout 2020-21. However, that promotion looked a little different than in previous years due to COVID-19.

While SYA program staff typically deliver face-to-face presentations in classrooms across the province, this past year they used software like Zoom and Microsoft Teams to deliver presentations remotely. They also recorded presentations and uploaded them to the SATCC's website and YouTube channel so educators can access the material when it's convenient for them. They also participated in virtual career events.

"It was a challenging year, but I'm proud of the work our SYA Champions and our staff accomplished this year," SYA Manager Paul Blankestijn said. "We adapted to the circumstances; we love interacting with students and educators in-person, but this past year proved we can also engage folks virtually."

SYA, overseen by the SATCC, gives students the opportunity to learn more about apprenticeship and careers in the skilled trades through research and hands-on learning. Participants complete 12 activities – or challenges – including attending a career fair; interviewing a journey person; researching and preparing a report on a designated trade; and completing Practical and Applied Arts course credits. Participating schools designate an educator to serve as the school's SYA Champion. These are the people who submit student registrations and administer the SYA challenges.

One of SYA's goals is to help facilitate increased diversity within the broader apprenticeship system. Currently, 27 per cent of SYA participants self-identify as female and 22 per cent of SYA participants self-identify as Indigenous. Women remain an underrepresented group in the skilled trades – they currently make up about 11 per cent of the apprenticeship population in Saskatchewan, and about 5 per cent of the apprenticeship population in trades where women are underrepresented. Indigenous apprentices currently make up about 18 per cent of the apprenticeship population.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the SYA program continued to grow in 2020-21. There are nearly 4,500 students currently registered in the program, an increase of seven per cent over the total number of participants as of June 30, 2020.

Students who complete the program and register as apprentices within five years of graduation receive 300 trade time hours; plus, their apprenticeship registration fee and their Level 1 technical training tuition are waived.

SYA participants also have the opportunity to be nominated for an SYA Industry Scholarship. In 2020-21, the SATCC issued 100 SYA Industry Scholarships to students from 79 Saskatchewan communities. The \$1,000 scholarships are unique – they're not awarded up front. To redeem them, students must demonstrate they're actively pursuing a career in the skilled trades within two years of graduation, either by registering as an apprentice and completing Level 1 technical training; or by completing a pre-employment course in a designated trade.

The SYA Industry Scholarship fund is supported by both the Government of Saskatchewan and industry sponsors. To date, 59 industry organizations, including private businesses; trade associations; and labour organizations; have contributed to the fund.

“The SYA Industry Scholarship program incentivizes recipients to start their skilled trades careers as soon as possible following high school graduation,” Blankestijn said. “The two-year redemption window encourages young people to embark on their career paths sooner. Whether we're talking to educators, or presenting to students, we always emphasize that the skilled trades are first-choice careers, not fallback careers.”

To learn more about SYA, visit [saskapprenticeship.ca/youth\\_apprentices](https://saskapprenticeship.ca/youth_apprentices). To learn more about the SYA Industry Scholarship and how to contribute, visit [saskapprenticeship.ca/sya-industry-scholarship](https://saskapprenticeship.ca/sya-industry-scholarship). To contact the SYA Coordinator, call 306-787-2368 or email [youthapprenticeship@gov.sk.ca](mailto:youthapprenticeship@gov.sk.ca).