

Creating a stronger safety system with Indigenous partners

IHSA's Line Crew Ground Support program provides training opportunities to Indigenous youth.



Since 2013, IHSA has been providing Line Crew Ground Support (LCGS) training to Indigenous workers to help support their communities' transition to renewable, sustainable, and affordable sources of energy.

The 15-week LCGS program is intended for Indigenous youths, and helps prepare them for employment in the powerline and construction sectors with companies seeking well-trained, safety-conscious workers. With the development of new power grids and infrastructure projects throughout Ontario and across Canada, skilled tradespeople are in high demand.

David Hinojosa can attest to that. A member of the Bkejwanong First Nation, he completed the LCGS program in 2022. "It probably was one of the best experiences in my life. A real game changer," he says. LCGS set up Hinojosa to join Hydro One's line school, where he is currently working toward the goal of becoming a powerline technician.

Hinojosa's path is common among youth graduating from the LCGS program. The program prepares students for entry-level ground support roles in the powerline industry, and puts them in a position to pursue further career growth as a powerline technician apprentice.

LCGS can also be a stepping-stone to a variety of other opportunities: students gain theoretical knowledge as well as practical, hands-on experience in topics such as electrical safety, confined-space work, and more. Graduates earn a long list of training certifications—in everything from WHMIS 2015 to working at heights to traffic control.

Supporting skill-building and safety

In 2021, IHSA supported Indigenous workers throughout Ontario by providing the LCGS program in Walpole Island First Nation, Fort William First Nation, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Tyendinaga, and Ottawa. In Thunder Bay, women comprised 100 per cent of the training class.



Thunder Bay all-women graduating class, 2021

Students received comprehensive instruction from IHSA's expert trainers. With years of on-the-job experience, IHSA instructors are committed not only to upholding the highest standards of health and safety, but also to helping their students make a positive impact in their communities.

"The LCGS program allows us to work in partnership with Indigenous communities to provide individuals with new skills that open up doors for future employment," says Chris Poole, an IHSA Powerline Technician Training and Apprenticeship Consultant who has led several LCGS courses. "It's rewarding to see people make life-changing decisions about their careers, with the potential to work meaningfully within their communities to help build, maintain, and upgrade new and existing infrastructure."

A leg up in the utilities industry

Hinojosa credits Poole and his IHSA colleague, Steven Buhl, with providing the motivation he needed to work toward his career goals. "They inspired me to work hard in this program and become a powerline technician like them and earn my stripes," he says, adding that completing the LCGS program helped him get his foot in the door of the utilities industry.



LCGS graduate David Hinojosa (centre), with IHSA's Chris Poole (left) and Steven Buhl

The credentials earned through the LCGS program, not to mention the valuable knowledge of safe-work practices and techniques that students come away with, are immediately useful at all manner of workplaces. Employers can trust that LCGS alumni have completed critical training and understand the importance of health and safety on the job.

“The LCGS program has successfully paired newly skilled individuals with opportunities to travel and work with different distribution and transmission contractors and utilities throughout Ontario,” Poole says.

It's through initiatives like the LCGS program that IHSA aims to serve groups that have not traditionally been able to access or participate in work that IHSA members conduct—while strengthening knowledge of workplace health and safety across a wider community.

Thriving partnerships

IHSA acknowledges that it carries out its services, including training, consulting, and stakeholder engagement, on lands originally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. There are 46 treaties and other agreements that cover the territory now called Ontario. IHSA is privileged to collaborate with Indigenous clients, stakeholders, and communities throughout these lands.

In particular, IHSA thanks our Indigenous-led partners that helped deliver LCGS training in 2021:

- **Fort William** - Opiikapawiiin Services LP
- **Ottawa** - Kagita Mikam Aboriginal Employment & Training
- **Sudbury** - Gezhtoojig Employment & Training
- **Thunder Bay** - Opiikapawiiin Services LP; Wataynikaneyap Power
- **Tyendinaga** - Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle
- **Walpole Island** - Walpole Island First Nation Employment and Training; Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario



Learn more about LCGS

For more information on IHSA's Line Crew Ground Support program, visit ihsa.ca/lcgs

IHSA is Ontario's trusted health and safety resource for the construction, transportation, and utility sectors. We have everything you need to help your business work safe every day.

Health and safety resources

From job-specific manuals to electrical utility work tags, IHSA has products to help you improve every aspect of jobsite health and safety.

Expert training

Whether you're looking for hands-on working-at-heights training or on-demand eLearning about defensive driving, IHSA offers dozens of valuable skills-based courses taught by industry veterans.

Consulting services

Our experienced consultants conduct site-safety evaluations, COR™ and IRS audits, ergonomic assessments, in-cab evaluations, and much more.

Industry collaboration

IHSA works closely with industry partners and associations through our network of Labour-Management committees, advisory councils, and Section 21 committees—to advocate for healthier, safer workplaces.

Small business supports

We help small business owners protect themselves and their workers, with resources to help you understand your legal obligations, perform jobsite inspections, formalize your health and safety practices, and much more.