

Blog: Environmental Monitoring Technician Training Program – Pilot 2015

Even though training programs exist, one of the biggest hindrances to being involved in environmental services is still attributed to lack of training, which is why AESN focuses on piloting different training opportunities geared towards Indigenous people. AITF collaborated with AEMERA to conceptualize and deliver the Environmental Monitoring Technician Training Program pilot for First Nations and Métis Communities in Northeastern Alberta in 2015. Fifteen representatives from 8 Indigenous communities, and approximately 35 science and monitoring staff from the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA), Alberta Innovates-Technology Futures (AITF) and the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) participated in the 2015 Environmental Monitoring Technician Training Program pilot. The 5-week training program focused on safety, water quality monitoring and wildlife monitoring to enable individuals to work in environmental monitoring service crews. All 15 participants successfully completed the training program, and joined in a program celebration upon completion. As part of the safety training, they received certifications in bear and wildlife awareness and avoidance, ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle) operation, standard first aid with level “C” CPR, water safety-swift water (3-day advanced technician), WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) 2015, Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) Ground, defensive driving, ice safety and rescue (2-day advanced technician) and collision avoidance.

The pilot program demonstrated that our approach to training in Indigenous communities increased community participation in environmental monitoring. Outcomes of the training program included expansion in the sites monitored in Indigenous communities, submission of a multi-year proposal to initiate a community-based wildlife monitoring program, and employment of some trainees by Indigenous communities. Another key success of this pilot was the personal connections that were built amongst the trainees, their communities, and the trainers.