

Ready to Work in the tourism industry

Twenty participants, including 19 from MACC, graduate from local TIANB-sponsored course

By Brigitte Marsden

Atlantic Inns in Jacksonville was the venue last Thursday for a graduation with a difference. Twenty Carleton County residents, who originate from all over the world, gathered to celebrate their successful completion of a tourism course provided by the Tourism Industry Association of New Brunswick (TIANB).

Trevor Wilkinson, employment counsellor with MACC (the Multicultural Association of Carleton County) explained that they had approached TIANB through the New Brunswick Multicultural Council, which had recognized the program's potential benefits for newcomers to the province. As a result, a total of 20 people took part in the six-week, part-time program that was held at Atlantic Inns - 19 of them being MACC clients.

"Most of our clients have years of work experience in his or her home country, but lack Canadian work experience," Wilkinson noted.

Not only do the graduates of the Ready-to-Work program gain valuable skills sought by Canadian employers, he added, but participants are trained to the standards of which employers are familiar, rather than relying on foreign credentials.

Certification gained by participants included Food Safety, First Aid and CPR.

"It's a very good course," said Camelia Veres, a kindergarten teacher. "I learned many useful things. I would

like to work in a hotel or maybe work with children."

Fellow graduate Ute Harvey noted that the group bonded well through the program and helped each other out, as participants' levels of language ability varied. The former geriatric nurse said she took the program to gain ideas about where she could go in tourism, and particularly appreciated the practical training in safety and CPR.

"The course gives us the possibility to find jobs," explained Beatriz Alfonso, an experienced front desk agent, "because almost everybody here doesn't work. It's a very good course, and free - that's very important for us."

Catherine McPhee, TIANB's education resource co-ordinator, explained that the goal of the program is employment, with around 80 per cent of graduates finding and continuing in employment.

"Because they have had intensive theoretical tourism training, as well as receiving industry certificates, these graduates integrate quickly into the workforce," McPhee noted. "Customer service is the main concern when it comes to tourism operations because they don't get more than one chance to impress a visitor who is only staying for a few days, or even a few hours. Having tourism trained employees whose training is centred around service excellence and upholding industry standards reassures the operators that their customers will leave happy and



PHOTO BY BRIGITTE MARSDEN

Twenty students started and graduated from TIANB's Ready to Work program in Jacksonville.

will potentially share their experience with others."

McPhee also points to a current labour shortage in the tourism industry, with a potential shortfall in New Brunswick of as many as 6,500 full-year jobs by 2025, and says that TIANB's Ready-to-Work program is aimed at helping to meet that need.

As well as providing a variety of training programs, TIANB has a wide membership base and, as the association for the tourism industry, is an advocate for the industry with the government. TIANB helped to develop the government strategy for tourism and works directly with the Department of Tourism and Parks on areas including marketing.

The 2010-2013 Provincial Tourism Strategy: The Time Is Now describes

New Brunswick as a leading tourism destination in Canada, with the tourism industry contributing to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the province.

According to the Department of Tourism and Parks' New Brunswick Tourism Development Guidelines (March 2010), in 2007 alone, tourism-related expenditure in New Brunswick contributed almost a billion dollars to the provincial economy - 3.2 per cent of the provincial GDP, which is more than the GDP contributed by agriculture, forestry and fisheries combined (3 per cent), and considerably more than the nationwide GDP contribution of tourism at 2.2 per cent.

The guidelines point to additional benefits of tourism that include providing employment across the province

and enhancing quality of life for residents through revenue for services; the places and events that attract tourists are also able to be enjoyed by New Brunswickers.

TIANB provides around eight Ready-to-Work courses a year in both English and French, usually with eight to 10 participants, and works with local agencies to identify the need and demand for the training in different areas of the province.

Wilkinson noted a waiting list has already been started with the names of more MACC clients who are keen to boost their skills and knowledge in tourism, and he points out that the program will be open to everyone in the area.

To find out more, call TIANB on 1-800-668-5313 or visit www.tianb.ca.