


# BACK TO WORK PROGRAM: PATHWAY TO CONSTRUCTION TRADES

## EAST PRESTON EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY



Due to the hardships and drastic changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, people across the world have struggled in a constantly changing job market. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) individuals and communities have been hit the hardest by the pandemic due to the already lack of support from the government, systemic racism and fewer job opportunities since many businesses have been shut down. Although the pandemic seems to be coming under control and business are opening up, there are still a large amount of people who are either unprepared or under trained to return to some form of work. Luckily the East Preston Empowerment Academy has identified this issue and has decided to help BIPOC return to work by creating the “Back to Work” program.

This relatively new program is rather simple. Like the name implies, it was created to help marginalized individuals get back to work after being out of a job due to the pandemic. The program started in April of 2021. Divine Gbeve of EPEA helps run the program and communicates with participants as the format is online to keep up with public health safety protocols. She said, “The main goal of this program is to help marginalized people get back to work. So, what we're going to do is we have about 20 participants that are going to be working with us from 8 to 12 months. Some of that will be with some safety training, some soft skills training and then also provide them with an explanation and they'll get to do a six months work placement in a trade study in June”.

The continued goal of this program is to help bridge the gaps between training and employment, increasing the number of African Nova Scotians, Black

Canadians, Immigrants, and other Racialized people in the growing construction trade industry. The program EPEA provides focuses on a multitude of trades. These trades include training to become a carpenter, concrete finisher, drywall finisher, bricklayer, flooring, painter decorator, sheet metal worker, and glazier. We have experienced carpenters, construction workers, concrete finishers, and even electricians come in to help educate our participants and to further help them enter the work force more smoothly and as soon as possible. EPEA's partnerships with organizations such as the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, Y-NS Works Employment Services, Nova Scotia Community College, DORA Construction, En Point Mentorship, and Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Council help participants find employment fast. These are only just some of the organizations we get to work with, the possibilities are nearly endless.

EPEA will also assist in connecting participants of the program with potential employers if need be. This program will be ongoing from June through December of this year as more people are able to return to work with the many pandemic restrictions being lifted over time.

<https://epeacademy.com/> | (902) 434-2255 | [admin@epeacademy.com](mailto:admin@epeacademy.com)