



# RACOL

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Rural Advanced Community of Learners

## **Welding course from NAIT to FVSD**

### **1.1 Project outcomes**

This project has set the stage for a viable and different model of apprenticeship training. In comparison to traditional or face-to-face training, this project has shown us that we can provide theory training, and project (in this case welding assignments) discussion via videoconference technology. Our students are writing their final exams now and although not all have written our exams and to date none yet have written the provincial exams, indications are that they are succeeding and largely quite confident.

The population of students we had in this cohort is nine. Clearly our outcomes will have to be tempered by the fact that this is a very small number.

### **1.2 Learnings**

Students are able to become indentured to a journeyman, and maintain employment during our videoconference-delivered theory and discussion course.

Students are able to stay in their home community during the delivery time; this avoids costly travel and temporary accommodations in Edmonton.

Further students who are able to handle both continued employment and our studies, are possibly able to avoid drawing Employment Insurance.

Because our cohort is as small as it is, these Learnings may need to be re-examined in new studies.

#### **1.2.1 Tangential learnings**

With a high speed province-wide network that Alberta's SuperNet promises to provide, our delivery costs will possibly be so low that we will be able to assemble cohorts of some target number by collecting as few as single registrations from multiple sites. Within the Supernet, we will expect to avoid metered long distance charges and not need a service equivalent in cost to a video bridge. Removing these two barriers, may dramatically change the requirement of achieving a critical mass at a specific geographic site in order to justify delivery.

This is an additional benefit to adding the aspect of providing a highly interactive distance modality.

Through the many conversations and my four trips to High Level and area, I became aware of a sociological barrier to the local encouragement for trades candidates to pursue apprenticeship and accreditation. In the mode where students need to leave their home community to take classes in a distant city, there is a significant risk that the subject student will elect to move permanently. With trades having three or four periods of apprenticeship training, the risk to out migration can be quite significant. The very people who would do well by establishing professional credentials would also be very likely to make significant contributions to their local community. In some cases, I believe that consciously or unconsciously, one's community would prefer maintaining their population of willing, and possibly intuitive trade employees than lose a significant portion and have higher credentials among those fewer residents.