

Consider a Career in Engineering

***“You have a community
that is really proud of you
[...] they are rooting for
your success.”***

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ROLE MODEL:

SKYLAR MANITOWABI

AGE: 24

COMMUNITY:

Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

SCHOOL:

McMaster University

PROGRAM:

Bachelor of Technology; Civil Engineering Infrastructure with a certificate in Management



As a young man from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Skylar strongly believes that pursuing a technical career will give him the tools and experience he needs to be successful.

After graduating from Algonquin College with an Advanced Diploma in Civil Engineering Technology, Skylar decided to enrol in the Bachelor of Technology - Civil Engineering Infrastructure Technology program at McMaster University. As a result, he has a lot of advice for other youth wishing to take a similar path in school.

“Students that are considering post-secondary schooling should not feel any pressure to have a quick decision about what they want to do for the rest of their lives,” said Skylar. “It can be scary to think that but try to base your decision on your own interests/skills/what you are good at and try to find a program that best suits you!”

Skylar values education as a strong foundation to build upon and having hands-on job experience is important to him. “Seeing the efforts and labour of your work has such a positive impact on you,” he said. “That sense of pride in your work will only push you farther in your career.”

In the future, Skylar hopes to be an inspiration to First Nation youth both within and outside of his home community. “I hope that my successes in education and a career in STEM will motivate youth to pursue a similar path.” Skylar would like to bring what he learned back to his community so he can “integrate new solutions with traditional teachings and most importantly, teach our communities.”

Skylar is a recipient of OFNTSC’s 2019 Robert Olivier Memorial Award.

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Consider a Career in Environment and Solid Waste

***“Don’t give up.
Don’t lose focus.”***

ROLE MODEL

HEIDI MANITOWABI

AGE: 33

COMMUNITY:

Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

OCCUPATION:

Waste Management Coordinator

EMPLOYER:

Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association
of First Nations

SCHOOL:

Sir Sandford Fleming College

PROGRAM:

Environmental Technology, Advanced
Diploma



Through her travels as a youth, Heidi learned about the negative impacts that North American lifestyles have on Mother Earth. This was the driving force behind her decision to enter the environmental field. “It took me a little while to connect the dots between being an Anishinaabe-Kwe and my feelings of responsibility towards being a steward of Shkagamik-Kwe (Mother Earth).”

Heidi has completed an advanced diploma in Environmental Technology from Sir Sandford Fleming College as well as Indigenous Environmental Science from Trent University. This career path has allowed her to achieve employment as Waste Management Coordinator at Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association of First Nations. When it comes to being a role model, Heidi hopes to inspire other youth in her community and beyond!

“I love connecting with our future leaders; letting them know that there are many opportunities in this field of work,” said Heidi. “I hope to inspire them, even if it’s just a fraction of the amount of inspiration I gain from them.”

This career has also given Heidi the opportunity to travel extensively throughout Ontario and Canada. When speaking about how this experience has positively impacted her, Heidi said, “I’m not afraid to do anything on my own anymore. It’s quite liberating. I’d miss out on a lot of opportunities if I didn’t learn how to keep myself company, let my guard down, and enjoy life unapologetically.”

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Consider a Career in Housing

“Creative and artistic skills are just as important as the technical ones.”

ROLE MODEL:
EMILY OUELLETTE

AGE: 22

COMMUNITY:
Moravian of the Thames

SCHOOL:
St. Clair College

PROGRAM:
Architectural Technology



Emily is currently in her last semester of the Architecture Technology Program at St. Clair College. Creativity comes naturally to Emily because she enjoys the process of designing something and seeing that design come to life.

“I’m most excited to be part of a project and see that building be completed in real life,” Emily said. “Before studying architecture, I didn’t realize how big of an affect a building can have on a community and I look forward to being able to create that effect positively.”

Emily completed her Woodworking Technician Diploma in 2017 and is also a recipient of OFNTSC’s 2019 Student Scholarship Awards. She is now the president of the Architecture Club at her school. Her skills and interest in woodworking transferred perfectly into the field of Architecture and she loves the career path she has chosen. Emily believes that First Nations youth should pursue technical careers

because there are “many transferrable skills such as analytical thinking, problem solving, attention to detail, communication, and computer skills.”

“A common misconception about the technical field is that you only need technical skills,” Emily said. “It’s important to be able to communicate your technical skills in a way that can be understood by clients, or someone who doesn’t know anything about the field.”

Emily looks forward to one day giving back to her community and hopes that other youth will choose to pursue a career in architecture technology, or a related field. “I hope, in the future, to be able to make an impact in the First Nations communities with my innovative ideas and passion for sustainability,” Emily said. “I also hope to be able to encourage other First Nations people, especially women, to study science and technology related fields, and to utilize their knowledge to help our communities.”

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Consider a Career in Mining

*“Whenever
an opportunity
comes, just
take it.”*

**ROLE MODEL:
DEAN DEBASSIGE**

AGE: 26

COMMUNITY:
Chippewa of the Thames

OCCUPATION:
Water and Wastewater Intern

EMPLOYER:
Ontario First Nation Technical Services
Corporation

EDUCATION:
3-year mining engineering technology
advance diploma, underground common
core for mining and mining plants.



As a child, Dean always wanted to “work with really big equipment and blow stuff up.” Naturally, mining was the perfect fit! However, what Dean didn’t expect to find when he chose to work in the mines was a community of people who are extremely hardworking, funny, and passionate about helping society. “My favorite part of the job was working with the older people in the mines who have been there for a long time,” said Dean. “They have a lot of interesting stories and they’re some of the funniest people you’ll ever talk to. I think that makes it worthwhile, just the history of mining through their eyes.”

Dean also saw the benefit he was bringing back to his community, and First Nations people in general. “I think First Nations youth should pursue technical careers because you bring a lot of respect back to your community,” Dean said. “You show that Indigenous people can work really hard and accomplish big things. It will help our youth in the long run and in their futures.” On sharing some advice for students attending school Dean emphasized the importance of going to class and studying something that you love. “Showing up to class is half the battle... attendance will bring you a long way in school.”

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Consider a Career in Science

*“I want to be able
to give back to my
community.”*

**ROLE MODEL:
VANESSA SMITH**

AGE: 22

COMMUNITY:
Six Nations of the Grand River

SCHOOL:
McMaster University

PROGRAM:
Medical Radiation Science



As a young woman from Six Nations who always had a fondness for math and science, Vanessa knew early on that she wanted to work in a health-related field. Though currently in her first year of the Medical Radiation Science Program at McMaster University, it wasn't a straightforward path to get there.

“I did my first year of post-secondary at Six Nations Polytechnic in the one-year consortium program,” Vanessa said. “After this I applied at McMaster for Medical Radiation Science, but I didn't get in, so I switched into Indigenous studies. In the Indigenous studies program, I completed my 3rd year before I transferred over to Medical Radiation Science, which is a 4-year program.”

Vanessa demonstrates the kind of resilience and determination needed to achieve your dreams, and proves that even though there may be setbacks, giving up is never an option. Now that she's in her dream program, Vanessa values every moment – good or bad.

“The best part about being in a health/science program is being able to implement Indigenous knowledge into the research I am doing,” said Vanessa. “And after I [graduate], I hope to be able to use my knowledge to benefit Indigenous communities.”

Giving back to her community is extremely important to Vanessa and she encourages other Indigenous youth to do the same! “With a technical career, there will be so many opportunities for First Nations students to work along [with] many First Nations communities to help so many things that most First Nations lack, such as adequate housing and fresh drinking water.”

Vanessa's advice to students considering a post-secondary education is to “make sure you do your research and make sure the school you pick is some place you will enjoy.”

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Consider a Career in Trades

*“Set a goal and never
ever give up.”*

ROLE MODEL:
ASHLEY MONTOUR

AGE: 29

COMMUNITY:
Six Nations of the Grand River

OCCUPATION:
Welder Fitter

EMPLOYER:
Fowler Metal Industries

SCHOOL:
Six Nations Polytechnic

PROGRAM:
We Are Welders



After having two children, Ashley knew that she wanted to provide for them, and be a good role model as they grew up. “It’s rewarding having my kids see me as a role model for them,” said Ashley. “I have two sets of eyes on me at all times so what I do is what they’ll do.”

When she saw the “We Are Welders” program being advertised at Six Nations Polytechnic in Brantford, she decided to give it a try. Little did she know, she was about to embark on a career that she not only loved, but found extremely rewarding as well.

One of the things Ashley loves most about being a Welder are the opportunities to learn and grow. “My favourite part of my job is probably working with other people, gaining new knowledge, [and] anything that has to do with learning.”

“I think that First Nations youth should pursue a technical career or trade because it’s more hands on,” said Ashley. “It’s rewarding. If you start right out of high school then you’ll never know where you’ll end up by the time you’re 40 or 50.”

And while Ashley is employed full-time now, it was not an easy road to get there. She initially failed the Certified Welding Bureau test three times, but finally on the fourth test, she passed with flying colours.

“Never ever give up,” is something Ashley tells herself and her children frequently. Ashley’s message to other First Nation youth is to “Find something you’re passionate about. You have to have the love for it in order to love it. So, find something you’re very passionate about. After that it’s smooth sailing.”

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Consider a Career in Water and Wastewater

“Don’t give up. You will hit many bumps in the road, but in the end it’s all worth the pain and failures. Keep going.”

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ROLE MODEL:
AMY WABOOSE

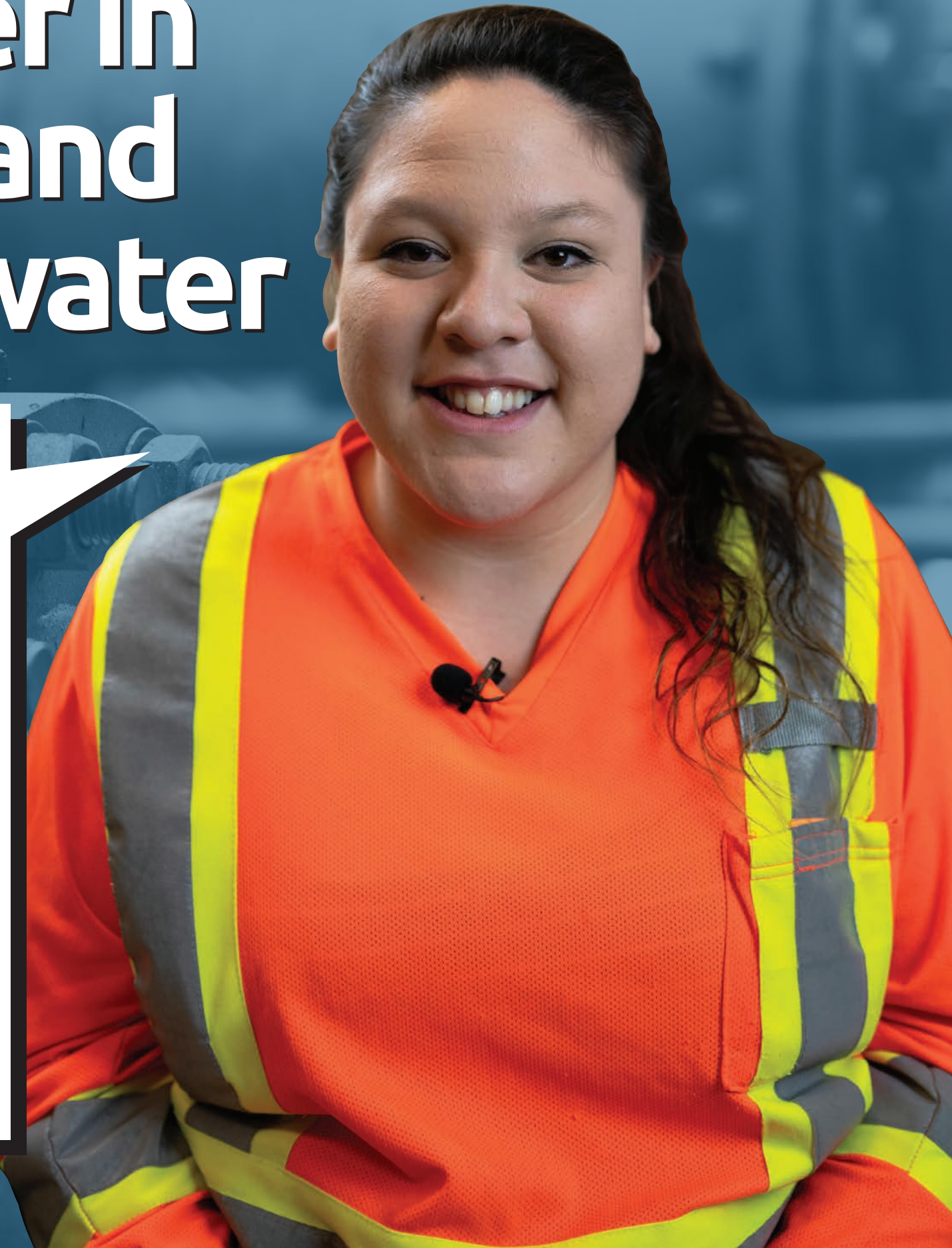
AGE: 25

COMMUNITY:
Whitefish River First Nation

OCCUPATION:
Water Quality Analyst

EMPLOYER:
Whitefish River First Nation Water
Treatment Plant

EDUCATION:
Water Quality Analyst License



Growing up in Whitefish River First Nation, Amy was always surrounded by water and enjoyed spending time outside. Naturally she found her way to a career working with water.

As a Water Quality Analyst, Amy’s job is to ensure that her community’s water supply is of the highest possible quality. On being asked what is the most rewarding part of her job, Amy said, “Definitely just being a part of ensuring that my community doesn’t have to think twice about having safe, clean drinking water.”

“First Nations people are and will always have a connection to the land and water,” said Amy. “[We] will understand both aspects [of] traditional and Western science of the water and land.”

Amy’s connection to the earth and her people are a large driving force in her life, and though she’s at an amazing place in her career right now, she admits that it wasn’t easy to get there. “I myself have had many failures where I wanted to quit, but that was all the more motivation not to,” said Amy. “I needed to be a role model for my son, [to] not give up, keep on keeping on.”

Amy knows the value of hard work and has experienced the benefits of pushing herself to the limits. “My advice to the students who are considering school, [is to] make the first initial step,” said Amy. “Once you take the first step, everything flows for you after... You will flourish in making the first step, I promise.”

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