

A VISIT TO SIX NATIONS OF THE GRAND RIVER FIRST NATION

Even in the summer... and on a Friday... there was lots going on when two members of the ESPOINT™ team dropped by the GREAT facilities in Ohsweken, Ontario for coffee, conversation, and a tour of the facilities. We looked in on active welding and automotive shops, saw employment preparation and job search taking place, and admired the relaxed but serious atmosphere of the whole institution. And there was decent coffee!

Grand River Employment And Training takes its mission seriously:

- To eliminate barriers which limit individuals from achieving their full potential in the labour market;
- To link the employability of individuals to the needs of the employers;
- To support the coordination of extended training support services to meet individual needs;
- To support the design of strategies which stimulate the social and economic growth of the community;
- To promote human resource planning.

ESPOINT helps GREAT's clients explore their employment interests, job skills and the marketability of their skills in the current job market.

It was good listening to Erin Monture and Trina Henhawk as they talked about how they use ESPOINT as part of their program – what works with ESPOINT, how it works, who it works with, what people are accomplishing, and what conditions makes these accomplishments possible.



We asked them, **“How long does it take for one of your clients to go through the ESPOINT process?”** Their response was. “It depends.” Some clients manage the process in less than a day and develop useful information to review with their Program and Services Officer (PSO). On the other hand, other clients require a more in-depth review of what kinds of jobs will suite them and how they might suit these potential jobs – then the process may take two to four days. Client needs determine the time allocation.



Anything else that affects what clients get out of *ESPORT*? Well, yes. Answer: The facilitator. We asked, “**What qualities make a good *ESPORT* facilitator?**” and we got a basket of adjectives: compassionate, patient, spontaneous, creative, problem-solving. Surprisingly, formal teacher training doesn’t predict success. More important is a checkerboard of work experience in the facilitator’s past. Someone who has a varied employment background and can empathize. People who can think on their feet... by listening. Erin summed up: “Helping people understand themselves and their abilities is not a mechanical process.”

What size groups does *GREAT* have for *ESPORT*?

Erin, Trina and their teams pretty well always work with groups, but Trina said “the larger the group, the harder it is to be efficient”. Both Trina and Erin said they have worked with larger groups, but ten was about the highest number they feel they work with effectively. Ten or fewer allows facilitators to move between three or four pairs or groups, supporting and not leaving time for participants to get far off track.

Besides the Interest Inventory, the Skills Assessment, and the Portfolio Builder, “**What other features do clients use?**” The Authentic Materials aren’t available for all the skills, but where they are available, they serve as a ‘reality check’. Authentic Materials help clients see where they have to do skill building, and why.

Because the materials are direct from the workplace, there are no excuses.

And Trina is an enthusiastic fan of *PLATO*’s *Essential Skills Online* which many of their clients successfully use for *Essential Skills* upgrading or preparing for the mature student college entrance exam or their GED.

GREAT recognizes that every one of their clients is an individual. There is no “One size fits all”. But *ESPORT* is one of the tools they regularly use. The people who like it, really like it.



We hadn’t been to see *GREAT* for three years. But, coming back, we felt like we were visiting old friends. Thanks!