

BC WORK CAMP SURVIVAL GUIDE

Family Resource



family support



Developed by the **Metlakatla Development Corporation**



Welcome From Chief Harold Leighton, Metlakatla First Nation

First Nations. While we look forward to the economic opportunities, we also recognize this will mean great sacrifices by our community. Many of these jobs require our people to live and work in camp settings. While the camp conditions have improved since the old fish and logging camps, it still means a lot of time away from family, community, and home.

To support our people, we created these materials to help build an understanding of what camp life is like. To be away from home for weeks on end, you and your family need to be prepared.

With input from First Nations people, workers, industry, and training providers, the BC Work Camp Survival Guide will give you and your family a look at camp life. Learn from experienced camp workers and their families on how to prepare for and live the camp lifestyle.

Opportunity Awaits

Welcome

These days, many work opportunities on large scale construction projects require you to live in a camp setting. The good news is, the camps are more like lodges, with good food, warm beds, and clean sheets. However, living and working in a camp is a big disruption for you and your family.

The BC Work Camp Survival Guide is a set of tools to help you learn more about what life is like inside a camp.

These tools can help you and your family if:

- you are thinking about a job on an industrial construction site, building a pipeline, working in a mine, or in the oil and gas industry;
- you are looking at employment as a carpenter, a janitor, a pipefitter, a cook, a heavy equipment operator, a driver, a labourer, or employment in another capacity or trade.
- These tools will show you what life is like for others, but they ask you to think about how life will be for you and your family.

Ultimately, the decision to work in a camp is yours, if you decide that is what you want to do, these tools will provide some good information and good questions to help you prepare for life in camp.

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Challenges

my STORY

“I knew his
absence would be
challenging for
all of us.”



When my husband first started his remote job we were nervous but excited. He was offered a great wage and the money would help us get out of debt and finally start saving for a future. I knew his absence would be challenging for all of us, but nothing really prepared me for the isolation once he left.

In the beginning I thought I could do it all. In addition to my fulltime job, I was now responsible for taking care of the kids and the house on my own. The chores, the kid’s activities, homework and even car maintenance issues consumed my days. But without my husband to help out or even just listen to my days events, I began to feel lonely. That was the hardest part. After a few cycles of his schedule we finally found a routine that worked for us.

— Worker’s Wife, 34



Maintaining ties is one of the most important routines in a family's life

MAINTAIN FAMILY TIES



The most obvious effect of remote work is that it requires a family member to be away from home for several weeks at a time. This results in a significant lifestyle transformation for everyone from the worker, spouses and children, and friends. Irregular communication, incompatible schedules and fatigue all become barriers to meaningful connection with families while away at camp.



Maintaining ties is one of the most important routines in a family's life. Speaking with family members through telephones, FaceTime or even Skypeing, helps in staying in touch and feeling connected while workers are away. It may be helpful to set a regular schedule for making calls at a time that is convenient to both the worker and family members at home. Family is the worker's biggest supporter and because they are not physically available, maintaining that connection becomes very important.



SUPPORT FAMILY MEMBERS

checklist

STAY CONNECTED:

- ▣ Create a communication routine together.
- ▣ Establish a break schedule for yourself and the worker.
- ▣ Arrange for 1-1 time with your spouse or partner.
- ▣ Plan activities with the children.
- ▣ Schedule time for missed events such as birthdays.
- ▣ Support family routines despite the irregular lifestyle.

The remote work lifestyle has a particularly large impact on family members left back at home. Housework and childcare duties can become intensified without the worker there to help and distance within a marriage or partnership can create an emotional strain. When your partner leaves for camp, you are left with household chores that were once shared. Shoveling the driveway, cooking and cleaning, maintaining the house, all of these once shared duties become the responsibility of one person. Remote work requires the 'home' partner to be more self-sufficient on all fronts.

Just as busy as it gets at home, the worker experiences their own pressures. While you try to adjust to a new way of life, the missing family member is also experiencing an adjustment phase. Starting a new job, experiencing pressures to fit in and finding time to stay connected with family back home each contribute to a worker's level of stress.

But when workers know their home is taken care of, much of their stress is relieved.



check it out!

A GREAT KIDS BOOK



[MY DAD IS A FIFO DAD](#)

KEEP KIDS CONNECTED

Leaving children to work on camp is the hardest part of the job and a recurring event that never seems to get easier.

Remote work affects kids too and preparing them for these changes can present a delicate challenge. It is important to give your children all the information before the worker leaves for camp. Answer their questions and explain the benefits of the job such as financial security which allows for vacations, a new house, or even presents!

Children may want to know about the worksite so take the time to explain details like what the worker will do, where they will sleep, and who they will be with. Create a communication schedule with your kids and when the worker comes home, plan activities you can do together. Remember, it may take your kids a little longer to adjust to your absence than you anticipate, so be patient and understanding.



my STORY

“I realized
if I don’t take
care of myself,
I can’t take care of
everything else.”



During my husband’s second rotation as a pipe fitter, his three-week shift got extended by ten days. I was already so tired from managing the house on my own and to add to the stress, the extension meant he would miss our daughter’s birthday. Even though I knew it was out of his control, I was still disappointed. I kept it all bottled up inside because I knew he was already feeling the stress of the job and now missing our daughter’s birthday was going to be hard on him. So I just tried to stay positive until I finally broke down. I realized then I needed to ask for help. I have a great family and lots of support but didn’t want to trouble anyone. After a few rotations, we finally found a routine that worked for us. My family would come babysit so I could take a break, during my husband’s time off he would take the kids out for the day giving me time to unwind and we even created plans to celebrate big events when he was home.

My daughter ended up with two birthday parties! I realized if I don’t take care of myself, I can’t take care of everything else.

— Workers Wife, 32



checklist

SELF CARE TIPS:

- Take time for yourself.
- Read, watch a movie or go for a walk.
- Eat a balanced and healthy meal.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Maintain an exercise routine.
- Socialize with others.
- Connect with family and friends often.
- Write in a journal.

MAINTAIN YOUR WELL BEING

For many families, remote work means making personal sacrifices. While the worker adjusts to the camp lifestyle, family members are left with all the responsibilities at home. Finding time to relax and unwind or keeping a consistent exercise routine can help to support your well being. Creating opportunities to socialize with friends and families and making calls to loved ones can help combat feelings of isolation. Families who have adjusted to the camp way of life stress the importance of self-care as a baseline requirement for the camp lifestyle.

The key to maintaining your well being is prevention. Don't wait until stress sets in before you take care of yourself. Getting plenty of rest and eating a well balanced diet and finding ways to ask for help can all help to maintain your well being. Remember, if you don't take care of your needs, it's impossible to take care of your family's needs.



checklist

MANAGE STRESS:

- ▣ Talk to a someone you trust.
- ▣ Find a balance between personal, work and family needs.
- ▣ Reach out to a counselor or advisor.
- ▣ Try relaxation techniques.
- ▣ Avoid caffeine.
- ▣ Get more sleep.
- ▣ Go for a walk or exercise.
- ▣ Write in a journal.

OVERCOME STRESS

We all experience some stress but too much stress or being under stress for too long is not good for you. You may feel the pressure to ‘do it all’ when you are at home and balancing these priorities may be a difficult task. Stress comes in many different forms and affects your mind and body in different ways but constant stress can make you more likely to get sick more often (HealthLink, 2016). You may get headaches or even have trouble sleeping.

Be aware of the signs of stress and don’t ignore them – as ignoring them may make them worse. You may feel tired, lack concentration, and seem irritable or unmotivated to do even the simplest of tasks. If you start to experience any of these symptoms it is important you get the help you need. Talk to your loved ones or a friend/family member you trust, to help create strategies to reduce stress in your life.



Community Health Representative

The purpose of a Community Health Representative (CHR) is to provide community health promotion services to members of a community.

Contact your local CHR to access the many support services available in your hometown.

ACCESS YOUR SUPPORTS

Having the right supports in your life can help you manage your stress. Family and friends or counselors can impact how you perceive and cope with stressful situations. Being away from a loved one and carrying the burden of home responsibilities can be very challenging but accessing the right supports is critical to maintaining the camp lifestyle.

Many employers and Unions provide free confidential counselling services. Whether you wish for support with mental health needs, combating addictions or guidance on adjusting to the camp lifestyle, the support is there for you. Connect with the employer to learn more about the services they offer and use them when you need them.



Challenges

my STORY

“If the money is the big draw, you owe it to family to be responsible with your spending and savings.”



Money is the biggest draw of the job, no question. But you're kidding yourself if you think you're going to get rich right away. A lot of new workers I see come in thinking the money is better than it is--they want to buy the truck and the flat screen and the trip to Mexico, all with their first paycheque!

You can have all those things, but not all at once. We learned this the hard way. Six months into my first job we got ourselves into debt. We were spending the paycheque on trivial things because we knew another one was coming in a month's time. We had never had money like this before. The truth is, if the money is the big draw, you owe it to family to be responsible with your spending and savings. This means working out a financial plan, sticking to a budget and making sure the bills get paid before buying the new flat screen.

— Male Welder, 46



checklist

BEFORE LEAVING FOR CAMP:

- ▣ Speak with a financial planner.
- ▣ Develop a strategy for bill payments.
- ▣ Set up internet banking.
- ▣ Create a budget as a family.
- ▣ Create a payment calendar for bills.
- ▣ Set money aside for emergencies.

BE FINANCIALLY AWARE

High wages and secure employment is by far the largest advantage to remote work. Many families found that taking on the remote lifestyle allowed them to save money for houses, vehicles, vacations and their children's education.

Workers and family members need to collectively establish plans for financial goals, budgeting and access to funds. Both the worker and the worker's partner need to agree on a set financial strategy, and spend within the agreed upon limits. New workers can make arrangements for automatic transactions that move a set amount of their pay cheque into a savings account, and limits the amount of money that could be spent in the interim. While it is a commonly held misconception that remote work leads to extreme wealth, setting and achieving financial goals give families a sense of purpose and reward, balancing the hard work and sacrifice of the lifestyle.



checklist

TRANSITION TIPS:

- ▣ Ensure all financial plans are established.
- ▣ Address pressing matters before departure.
- ▣ Make arrangements with friend/family member for dealing with unforeseen homecare issues (including a list of phone numbers for various trades and repair services).
- ▣ Be flexible and adaptable as schedules may change .

PREPARE FOR TRANSITIONS

The first step to preparing for remote work is to discuss it as a family. The best way to ensure a healthy camp/life balance is to involve the whole family in both the decision to go to camp and in decisions around how time off is spent. Be prepared for changes in schedules, as overtime may interrupt break times. Preparing family members for the transition requires communication, flexibility and compromise on all sides.

Although the camp lifestyle comes with its challenges, the opportunities to be successful are easily achieved with a great transition plan. Connect with seasoned workers and learn from their experiences, talk to companies and supervisors and meet with families who live a camp lifestyle. The more you know about what to expect, the better prepared you and your family will be.



Family Resources

Watch the Family Workcamp Video Here

workcampsurvivalguide.ca/videos-family

For additional resources visit the website at

workcampsurvivalguide.ca



Acknowledgements

The BC Workforce Mobilization Steering Committee would like to acknowledge Chief Harold Leighton and the Metlakatla First Nation for taking a province-wide leadership role by developing and managing this project, in response to a need in the community. They would also like to thank the Province of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, for funding the project through the Labour Market Partnership Program.

The team acknowledges and thanks the leadership of the BC Workforce Mobilization Steering Committee:

Melissa Case		<i>Manager, Sustainability and Community Relations</i>		Bechtel
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Roger Leclerc		<i>Co-Chair</i>		Harris Palmer
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Finally, the research team wishes to thank the other project team members for the free flow of information, and the willingness to overlap responsibilities in order to produce the best product possible:

Michael Izen		<i>Research</i>	Lovey Sidhu		<i>Curriculum Development</i>
April Butler		<i>Video Producer</i>	Robyn Huth		<i>Graphic Design</i>
Kal Jones		<i>Web Development</i>	Jordan Watters		<i>End-User Consultations</i>
Chris Sankey		<i>Community Expediter</i>			

Developed In Partnership



Metlakatla First Nation



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**



HORIZON NORTH



| **HL Pond Business Services** |



Life Flexibility
Balance
Mindfulness
Connection



Challenges +
Support