

TESTIMONIALS

“Imperial Oil (Esso) uses TOWES as a screening tool for applicants to our Kearn Oil Sands Project who have little to no post-secondary education, which ensures that literacy and numeracy are not an issue at our site.”

- Adriana Chapra
Recruitment Advisor
Imperial Oil (ESSO)

“TOWES is a practical assessment of the literacy and essential skills required for safe and productive work in the trades. Using it to identify areas of strength and also where training is required assists the system to improve apprenticeship completion rates.”

- Doug MacLaren
Chief Executive Officer
Resource Training Organisation

“Since 1997, Bow Valley College has actively supported the development, use and distribution of TOWES through extensive direct and in-kind investment. TOWES has been, and continues to be, a very exciting and worthwhile project for the college. One which is close to the heart of Bow Valley where a focus on Literacy and Essential Skills and preparing work-ready graduates is a key aspect of our mandate as an access and comprehensive community college.

Reaching the milestone of 100,000 in our databank of test-taker results is a significant achievement and speaks to the excellent work of the TOWES team, the support of the college, and the degree to which TOWES has reached national recognition and use. Now that we are launching the new *TOWES web-based assessment battery* we look forward to the opportunity for even more colleges and workplaces to make this very effective suite of products a core component of their education, training and workplace practices.”

- Anna Kae Todd
Vice President, Learning
Bow Valley College

“The Association of Community Colleges congratulates Bow Valley College on delivering its 100,000th TOWES test. This significant accomplishment is a unique example of the College using its internal expertise in the area of literacy and essential skills to conduct applied research and then to successfully commercialize it to make it sustainable in the marketplace.

A unique feature of commercialization is the national distribution system that engages colleges across Canada to administer the test and also to provide preparatory instruction in their communities.”

- Terry Anne Boyle
Vice President, Public Policy and Canadian Partnerships
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

“TOWES stands out in the field of adult literacy assessment for two reasons. First, The TOWES assessment tasks are drawn directly from work-place contexts in which adults actually use literacy skills.

Second, the use of modern psychometric methods for the calculation of scores and the validation of instruments is virtually unique among publicly-available adult literacy assessments.”

- Fernando Cartwright
Chief Executive Officer
Polymetrika Inc.

“From my perspective as a program manager who has used TOWES since the early days...it has been an invaluable tool. I remember being initially attracted to TOWES because it was Canadian and focused on workplace, as opposed to academic skills. After using it for many years, these factors are still important, particularly the ability to compare TOWES scores to Canadian occupational profiles.

In addition, we have found TOWES to be a very reliable indicator of how well our students will perform at the workplace. Over and over again we see that those who have Level 3 and above skills make their career transition more quickly and successfully than those who don't. As a result, we now focus most of our pre-workplace programming on helping our participants build the best possible foundation of ES's they can in the time frame we have with them. In short, I would say TOWES has transformed how we deliver our programs.”

- Joan Patterson
Program Head and Continuing Education Consultant
Career Enhancement Programs and Services
SIAST Wascana Campus

"Essential skills are the silent hero in workplaces today. The Trucking Human Resource Sector Council Atlantic and in turn the Industry we represent, recognizes the need for these key skills to be evaluated and enhanced.

Having been a strong partner of Bow Valley College for more than 10 years, essential skills measurement is part of our entry level standard and the culture we are building among workplaces. The diverse tools BVC has developed, allows for cost-effective one stop shopping that serves our needs very well."

- Kelly Henderson
Executive Director
THRSC

“On behalf of the Employment and Social Development Canada I would like to congratulate Bow Valley College for the remarkable success it has realized with the TOWES suite of resources. Our department continues to be concerned about the mismatch of skills that seems to pervade the labour market and we are convinced that addressing these along with raising the skill levels of all Canadians is a critical contribution to our long term welfare. These objectives can’t be reached if we don’t understand where we are today and that is where TOWES has been so important.

Equally impressive has been Bow Valley College’s knack for developing and implementing TOWES in a manner so well suited to employers and finding a remarkable self-sustaining niche. If carpenters are fond of the maxim ‘measure twice; cut once’, then TOWES lets us say ‘measure once; train right’ – 100,000 times over. Congratulations to the entire team at Bow Valley College and we wish you all the best for your continued success.”

- Silvano Tocchi

*Director General, Workplace Partnerships Directorate
Employment and Social Development Canada*

“Our model of training at Confederation College involves a job centred approach that ensures that the graduates of our programs meet the requirements of employers from various employment sectors. The TOWES suite of products help us with ensuring that potential students have the required essentials skills to succeed in our training programs and ultimately in their career choice. We have also used the instrument in pre and post tests to ensure that our programs are delivering the identified learning outcomes.

The staff at Bow Valley assists us in choosing the correct TOWES product and are extremely helpful in supporting us as we apply the test in many of our proposals and initiatives with private sector companies, First Nations organizations and government agencies. The key characteristic of the TOWES test is its ability to link essential skills with jobs. We will continue to use this accurate assessment in order to serve our clients as they enter the workforce.”

- John Hatton

*Director
Confederation College, Training and Development*

“SkillPlan, as a former co-owner and development partner of TOWES, congratulates Bow Valley College achieving its 100,000th TOWES test record. SkillPlan continues to use this accurate tool for benchmarking skills in many workforce development programs. TOWES has been a valuable way to determine the Essential Skills levels of participants at the start of a program, allowing a workplace educator to develop individual learning plans to achieve program goals.

When administered at the end of a program, it is an effective method of determining if Essential Skill levels of participants have risen or remained the same. This data has been useful for follow up as additional learning support for participants can be offered if needed. Score reports can also be used to determine if participants have obtained the level of skill required for success in technical training or for a specific occupation.”

- Kyle Downie

*Chief Executive Officer
SkillPlan*

“Tradewinds to Success has been using TOWES since early 2010. Initially we used it as part of the career decision making component of training, but switched to using it to help us recruit candidates for our apprenticeship training in 2011. We experienced an immediate benefit as we were able to get an accurate assessment of candidates’ literacy skills and specifically their numeracy skills. Using TOWES has allowed us to recruit stronger candidates for training which has had a direct and positive impact on our overall outcomes. We noticed a significant increase in our students’ success rates in completing the program as well as with maintaining employment in the trades career. It has also assisted our learners to build confidence they needed to overcome their previous fears about being able to attend technical training and their ability to pass.

Initially, TOWES staff came out to our office to do a presentation on the variety of services that TOWES provides. We were impressed with their commitment to improving literacy. TOWES staff are always super helpful, pleasant and go over and above to answer all of our questions or inquiries in a prompt manner. We have promoted the use of TOWES as a critical tool for achieving success to other service providers and other Aboriginal organizations throughout Alberta.”

- Orest Zwozdesky
Program Lead
Trade Winds to Success

“There are several aspects of TOWES which are very appealing to Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM). The obvious appeal of the test is its direct relevance to the performance of tasks required in the workplace. It means that employers and industry can have a greater degree of confidence that the test will yield information which is directly useful to and supportive of their productivity needs. The rigour with which the test has been developed offers a psychometric legitimacy which can be very useful and relevant in certain scenarios. Bow Valley have been able to offer this to us through TOWES because of federal government participation in the development and also the volume of usage across Canada. A small province such as Manitoba would not be able to achieve this standard and economy of scale. Another very useful aspect of TOWES is that it can be fairly easily customized to a company or sector. Following an analysis of the occupational need(s), Bow Valley is able to add specific questions amongst a randomized selection of more general questions indicative of the workplace in general.

Over and above these key aspects, Bow Valley has been consistently efficient and highly responsive for the training of staff on administering the test, shipment of tests, marking of tests and being updated on new products has been. Finally, Bow Valley has a track record of developing products which are responding to user needs and changing demographics and workplace trends. This has been very helpful in remaining responsive in return to customer needs.”

- Sandi Howell
Provincial Coordinator
Workplace Education Manitoba

“To remain competitive on global markets Canada needs higher levels of key cognitive skills, including the speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.

Bow Valley College’s TOWES assessment tools have played a pivotal role in creating the needed skills. They have helped learners better understand their learning needs. They have given educators a way to adjust their instruction to better suit learner needs. And they have provided employers with a means to understand their workers need for skill upgrading. There are 100,000 reasons to congratulate them on their work.”

- T. Scott Murray
President
DataAngel Policy Research

“Standard Aero congratulates BVC for their continued success with the TOWES assessment instrument. Standard Aero has been using TOWES since its inception and continues to find value in this essential skills assessment approach. Standard Aero’s workplace requires very unique technical skill sets and as a result we have to invest heavily in training our technical workforce.

TOWES has helped us define and assess our essential skill requirements so that we have trainees at the right level to start this specialized training. One of the benefits of the TOWES assessment is that it is not simply a pass or fail outcome. TOWES provides assessment feedback to the test taker across multiple competencies. This is critical information for an individual’s essential skills training plan. In our opinion, TOWES is not a method to filter out candidates but it is an assessment approach which provides direction for an individuals continued development.”

- Robert Despins
Customer Program Manager
Standard Aero

“Manitoba Aerospace Human Resources Council (MAHRC) sends congratulations to TOWES and Bow Valley College for achieving this impressive milestone. Several aerospace companies in Manitoba have been using TOWES to insure that applicants are ready for jobs that require demonstrated skills in literacy, numeracy and document use in the workplace. In fact, over 10 years ago, MAHRC commissioned TOWES to develop 2 aerospace specific tests.

These Aerospace TOWES are used to test the skills of direct applicants as well as students that are enrolled in aerospace related programs in both secondary and post-secondary educational institutions. Aerospace companies in Manitoba see great value in using TOWES as an assessment tool. We look forward to continuing to work with TOWES and Bow Valley, especially on the roll out of the new web based version of TOWES. Kudos to the TOWES team!”

- Wendell C. Wiebe M.Ed
Executive Director & GM
Manitoba Aerospace

"I wish to acknowledge, with thanks, the service and support rendered us by the TOWES Team at Bow Valley College.

Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association, (PGNAETA), enjoys a long-standing relationship with your organization, both as user and Distributor of TOWES Assessment Booklets. The reports generated from those Assessments are used to craft Individual Education Plans for our clients as they navigate their way through their career path.

We will be carefully monitoring the launch of the online version of your products. I trust that we will continue our mutually beneficial relationship."

- William Phang
Aboriginal Gateway Training Centre (AGTC)
PGNAETA

"SRDC utilized a customized version of the TOWES as part of the national UPSKILL demonstration project to measure the effects of workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) training. UPSKILL was a large scale pan-Canadian research project implemented in eight provinces with more than 100 hotels and nearly 1,500 workers participating. We administered three waves of TOWES assessments, to provide measures of Essential Skills before training, immediately after training, and approximately a year later. This allowed us to establish baseline skill levels on both Document Use and Numeracy, which aided our workplace educators in customizing suitable training solutions for each learner. It also allowed us to effectively measure the effects of the training intervention on skills over time.

TOWES staff are a pleasure to work with, always helpful and professional. They worked with SRDC and our 20+ partners to ensure that testing flowed as smoothly as possible across eight provinces and that results were scored and delivered in a timely manner.

We are looking forward to the availability of the new online TOWES."

- David Gyarmati
Research Director
Social Research Demonstration Corporation

"TOWES has been instrumental in enabling the Carpenter Apprenticeship program at NAIT to fulfil its commitment to the apprentices. The genuine commitment to student success, sustained by solid curriculum delivery, professional instructional staff, and student support systems are the foundation for this achievement.

The introduction of TOWES, to identify essential skill deficiencies, allowed for the development of effective intervention strategies. Prior to the introduction in 2002, the average completion rate for the 1st year Carpenter apprentices was 68%. The completion rate jumped to 82%, a 21% improvement from the first year of implementation. Over the next two years, the rate improved consistently to a 92-94%. These results have prompted additional training programs within our program cluster to employ this model. Since 2010, 1st year Cabinetmaking students have also been included with the TOWES process. In addition, Millwork & Carpentry students participated in the TOWES essential skills exam in October 2013.

Over the past 11 years, these improvements can be attributed to the continual refinement of the preparatory program. During this period, over 1500 students that have written the TOWES test, providing validity and proof that the process is sustainable. The accuracy of the TOWES instrument focuses in essential skill shortfalls within the at-risk group. The participants demonstrated increased essential skills competencies during their training. Furthermore, they displayed improved confidence when returning to the workplace and during subsequent technical training sessions. NAIT's Carpenter Apprenticeship program continues to appreciate the working relationship with the TOWES department to be consistently timely and accurate. With this relationship, the future will be affirmative toward continued success for our apprentices, our program and NAIT's commitment."

- Paul Roberts
Program Chair
NAIT

- Alan Kabotoff
Project Manager
NAIT

- Dave Kulak
Instructor, TOWES Coordinator
NAIT