

Partnering for Future Generations

CASE STUDIES OF ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
AT CANADIAN COLLEGES AND INSTITUTES



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Case Studies of Aboriginal Programs and Services at Canadian Colleges and Institutes

Throughout our history, Aboriginal peoples – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – have been marginalized and underrepresented in Canadian society.

They now constitute the fastest growing and youngest segment of Canada's population. Over the next decade, 400,000 Aboriginal young people will reach working age. Canada must provide them the same prospects for success and prosperity available to any citizen. We must therefore improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal peoples – youth and adults alike.

Aboriginal peoples rely significantly on Canada's colleges and institutes to access post-secondary education. Colleges and institutes have enormous success in attracting, nurturing, and graduating Aboriginal learners. Recent high school graduates can access a wide range of certificate, diploma, degree and university transfer programs, including Aboriginal-specific programs. For adult learners, colleges provide ladder opportunities from adult upgrading and essential skills development, to career-oriented education programs and transitions to university.

The ACCC 2009-2010 survey of Aboriginal programs and services demonstrated that most colleges and institutes across the country offer targeted programs and services for Aboriginal learners. Many are expanding their reach and working with Aboriginal communities to deliver tailored post-secondary programs.

The following case studies, collected in 2011-2012, show that colleges and institutes are creating partnerships for future generations by reaching out to Aboriginal youth through innovative recruitment activities and by supporting adults' access to learning and employment opportunities. Based on a commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal learners, colleges and institutes operate as institutions of inclusion, and provide the support services needed for student success. Programs delivered in partnership with Aboriginal institutions ensure the specific needs of Aboriginal communities are met. The promotion of Aboriginal culture, art and knowledge is achieved through awareness activities on campuses and specialized programs that teach and celebrate Aboriginal worldviews. Programs in Aboriginal governance prepare the leaders of tomorrow.

A number of case studies describe employment-oriented programs that meet the skills requirements of key sectors including healthcare, aviation, environmental technology, oil and gas, and mining. A well-prepared cohort of Aboriginal learners will be positioned to capitalize on the skills shortages Canadian employers are already facing, and to contribute to the well-being and success of their communities.

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Partnering for Future Generations

Case Studies of Aboriginal Programs and Services at Canadian Colleges and Institutes

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College of the North Atlantic Aboriginal Bridging Program at Happy Valley, Goose Bay

The Happy Valley-Goose Bay campus of the College of the North Atlantic has a long history of providing programming to the Aboriginal populations in Labrador. The campus has built on its core programming to provide for Aboriginal access to programs that range from post-secondary access to university-level.

The Aboriginal Bridging Program, developed in consultation with the Aboriginal groups of Labrador, is a one-year program designed to ensure that students have the necessary skills to enter college programs. The focus is on both academic and personal skills development. Funding was received from the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative and the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs Secretariat Inc. to develop the program in 2009 and to offer it as a pilot in 2009-2010.

This program has many benefits. It instils confidence, provides a culturally relevant learning experience, strengthens academic skills, and bridges the gap to make post-secondary programs more accessible.



There were 11 graduates from the first year and all 11 entered other college programs the following year. The second offering had eight graduates, and the third offering has a current enrolment of nine students.

One of the first graduates was a young lady named Chelsea Sheppard. Chelsea graduated from high school with a general diploma. She encountered some academic challenges through her school years, but she had a goal and was determined to work hard.

She completed the Aboriginal Bridging Program and was accepted into the Comprehensive Arts & Science College Transition program. This year-long program strengthened her academics and further prepared her for the fast-paced environment of the Licensed Practical Nursing program that she entered in September 2011. She is thoroughly enjoying this program and will graduate in December 2012, virtually guaranteeing a job in her field.

Chelsea exemplifies of how the Aboriginal Bridging Program is a much-needed rung in the ladder to success and fulfilment.

New Brunswick College of Craft & Design – Visual Arts Program for Aboriginal People Revived in Institutional Renewal Process

The new Aboriginal Visual Arts program at the New Brunswick College of Craft & Design not only represents an opportunity for students but also a new beginning for the institution.

A full-time program in Native Visual Arts was offered from 1988 to 2006, when it was suspended because of declining enrolment. As part of an institutional renewal process, a new Aboriginal advisory council – with membership from several local First Nations – was convened to plan a redesigned curriculum. Aboriginal staff was hired to lead curriculum development and recruit students.

Aboriginal Visual Arts was launched in 2010. In attendance was New Brunswick Lieutenant Governor Graydon Nicholas, born and raised on Tobique First Nation. Unique in Canada, the program provides students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, with an introduction to art theory and applied learning in traditional crafts related to New Brunswick's Maliseet, Mi'kmaq and Passamaquoddy cultures.



Students can earn a one-year certificate or two-year diploma. Curriculum has been designed to provide an overview of Aboriginal history and culture as well as skill development in the making of traditional Aboriginal crafts.

There is a dedicated space in the main building of the college's downtown Fredericton campus. Course delivery includes a rich combination of lectures, tutorials, case studies and field trips.

An Aboriginal academic advisor is available to assist students and provide information on college resources. In addition, a dedicated Aboriginal recruiter informs potential applicants of program options and helps enrolled students with financial issues. The program currently has an enrolment of 12 students, eight in the first year, four in the second.

Morgan Brooks, a 24-year-old member of the St. Mary's First Nation, New Brunswick, and the mother of two sets of twins, was a member of the graduating class in the first year of the program. She is enthusiastic about her experience. "The Aboriginal Visual Arts program offered at the New Brunswick College of Craft & Design has everything I love and want to learn about," she says.

Morgan plans to continue her education to pursue a teaching degree to share what she has learned with others.



Support Services for Aboriginal Student Success at New Brunswick Community College

The New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) has appointed a Provincial Aboriginal Coordinator to oversee Aboriginal initiatives at its six campuses. The extensive mandate of the Coordinator includes leadership in the recruitment, retention and success of NBCC's Aboriginal learners. This position is also responsible for cultivating and nurturing partnership opportunities with Aboriginal communities and organizations within the province.

The Provincial Aboriginal Coordinator also increases awareness of the Aboriginal culture to staff at NBCC. Additional initiatives have been undertaken by the Coordinator, including lunch-and-learn sessions, professional development workshops and the development of a recognized course for new faculty.

Under the guidance of the Coordinator, a team of four Aboriginal Student Advisors provides support to Aboriginal students at each of NBCC's campuses. As a member of the regional student development unit, each Advisor is vital to supporting the needs of Aboriginal learners and in promoting cultural awareness to the entire campus population.



NBCC has established Aboriginal gathering centres, which are peaceful meeting places. Located centrally on campus, they are open to all as a resource centre so that students can learn more about Aboriginal people, culture and lifestyle.

Here is a big success story that might have ended very differently had it not been for an Aboriginal Student Advisor:

By the end of the first academic term, one student had received a letter with his first-term marks. The student read only the first sentence and decided not to read the entire letter because he assumed he had failed his courses.

The student stopped coming to campus and avoided his classmates. The Aboriginal Student Advisor was instructed to use whatever means necessary to find this student. The Advisor drove to the student's First Nation to find him and arrange a meeting back at campus. Once the Advisor retrieved the letter and carefully read through it, she discovered the student had not read all of it.

The letter contained important information about a missing assignment that would improve his final grade. Once this was explained to the student, the assignment was completed and he rejoined his classmates to work hard and catch up on what he had missed.

The student is doing well and will graduate in spring 2012.

Nova Scotia Community College – Utility Line Worker – Construction and Maintenance Program

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) is committed to building Nova Scotia's economy and quality of life through education and innovation. The Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office's training arm was looking for valuable education that would lead to employment and economic participation for Aboriginal peoples. Emera Utility Services (EUS) and Nova Scotia Power (NSP) were looking for skilled workers. NSCC was looking for ways to engage and serve First Nations communities with relevant, advanced skills training that responded to the immediate labour force needs of Nova Scotia employers. NSCC saw an opportunity to serve all of these needs.

The ultimate goal of the 'training to employment' programs offered under three dimensional partnerships like this one, is to train participants who are underrepresented in fields where opportunities exist. The Utility Line Worker – Construction and Maintenance program (ULW) follows this innovative program development and delivery model. A cohort of twelve Aboriginal learners at the Marconi Campus began the 30-week program in August 2011, with an April 2012 completion date. The ULW pre-apprenticeship certificate program not only leads to apprenticeship and Red Seal certification, but creates the opportunity for First Nations students to begin rewarding careers directly tied to industry needs.

In addition to their successes in the classroom, students are measuring the effects of the program by their improved quality of life. Several learners shared their individual triumphs and declared that the support of their faculty, other NSCC staff, and fellow learners helped them to personal transformation. As Dan Christmas, a member of the community and a valued member of NSCC's Board of Governors says, "The ULW program is by far the most community-changing program I've been involved with. It's not just about the training and the jobs, although that's very important; it's also about creating hope for a community that has been left behind far too often."

The success of the ULW program is built on the unique contributions and extraordinary level of support from each of the partners prior to, during and after the program. The learners are funded by the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, which also provides ongoing support in the classroom and workplace. EUS and NSP provide the equipment (e.g. power poles, vehicles, wire cable, etc.) and maintain a staff presence throughout the program.

"The decision to take this program meant a great deal of change for me. I would be away from my home, my daughters and was the only woman in a class of twelve. But the support system at Marconi Campus, especially Sandra Gloade, the First Nations Student Support Advisor, has really helped me to settle into my new environment, and focus on succeeding."

– Doris Googoo, ULW Student

"Our first climb up that utility pole was almost overwhelming. But I knew I had the support of George, our instructor, and all of my classmates. I made it to the top without stopping or looking back. I feel capable of dealing with any other challenges life sends my way."

– Brett Joe, ULW Student

"This is a physically demanding course and I was not in great condition at the beginning of the program. But the support from my instructors and classmates, through humour and kindness, encouraged me to keep going. I've lost 20 pounds and feel physically fit."

– Phillip Johnson, ULW Student



Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue and First Nations – Programs Designed For and By First Nations People

Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue is helping to improve the delivery of health services and early childhood education in First Nations communities and is leading research to improve Aboriginal students' post-secondary education pathways.

Community Health Representative (CHR)

The Community Health Representative Attestation of Collegial Studies (ACS) program was designed jointly by the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay. The support of Cree Human Resources Development (CHRD) and of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) has also been instrumental in the success of this project.

Commonly referred to as CHRs, community health representatives not only work as coaches, instructors, trainers and facilitators in their community, but also play a key role as liaison specialists who ease communications among health professionals.

With the third cohort now through the program, the college has graduated 11 women and one man (10 Cree and two Algonquin) since 2010, two of whom are the first women to graduate as college trained CHRs.

First Nations Child Educator (2010-2011) and Special Educators in First Nations Settings (2007-2008)



These ACSs were launched thanks to partnerships with First Nations organizations including the Lac Simon Anishinabe Nation, the First Nations Human Resources Development Service and the Commission on Human Resources Development for Algonquins in the Abitibi Region. A total of 22 students have graduated from these two programs (11 as special educators and 11 as child educators).

Innovative Research through Projet Synergie

Projet Synergie is a research initiative designed jointly by the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue and the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) in 2009. On the strength of data collected from professors and First Nations students at both institutions, we hope to identify teaching-support strategies and to learn more about First Nations students' learning strengths, challenges and needs.

The project's second phase involves creating bridges to connect college and university programs so that students can more readily transfer between each of these levels. That means we have to identify the programs that hold the most interest for this clientele while meeting the needs of the labour market in their communities. As a result, First Nations students will be able to make their way through an educational continuum that opens the door to the work place or to more education.

With the Creation of Kiuna Institution – A Dream is Realized for First Nations in Quebec

First Nations for many years have sought control of their education system. The necessity of a First Nations post-secondary institution is central to this dream, and now the dream has come true.

Kiuna Institution, which means 'ours' in the Abenaki language, offers a quality college education that respects the history and cultural heritage of First Nations – a winning formula for success of its students. It is an ideal place for all First Nations students who want to continue their studies in an environment that belongs to them and reflects their culture and values.

Kiuna is the result of several years of work by the employees and partners of the First Nations Education Council, in collaboration with Dawson College, for the Anglophone program, and the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, for the Francophone program.

Located in the Abenaki community of Odanak, the Kiuna Institution offers a unique college program that focuses on contemporary issues relating to First Nations of Quebec, Canada and North America, promoting employment in Aboriginal communities.

The First Nations Social Science program 300.B0 is recognized by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and meets all ministry requirements in terms of the validity of the training, and the diploma granted.

The First Nations Social Science program combines courses from the general education program, social sciences and complementary studies. However, the addition of an Aboriginal aspect to each course strengthens students' level of knowledge.

Courses are primarily focused on personal and collective development and are grouped under three themes: identity, community and society. This gives the students the opportunity to be introduced to different fields of study: communications, administration and management, economic development, political science, psychology, history and anthropology.

The program was developed to respond to both First Nations students and their communities looking for an adequately trained workforce to respond to their current and future needs.



John Abbott College – Aboriginal Student Resource Centre Serves Wide Range of Academic and Social Needs

Since the fall of 1989, the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre of John Abbott College has been charged with the mission of offering support services to Aboriginal students.

The Centre offers a wide range of academic and professional services to Aboriginal students from diverse nations such as Cree, Mohawk, Algonquin, Inuit, Ojibwa, Micmac, and Métis. Aboriginal students represent only about one percent of the total population at the Montreal college. Nevertheless they are an important cohort and are entitled to services that cater to their academic and social needs.



Students can access services such as a library, computers and printers, a lunch and lounge area, and support from two resource people. It is open five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and it offers much more.

Many come to see the Centre as a home away from home. The three most important services offered are academic tutoring, mentoring, and the resource centre itself. It is a space where all Aboriginal students can visit, hang out, study, receive guidance, and attend communal events such as workshops, potlucks, pizza lunches, breakfasts and listen to guest speakers.

The Centre strives to help its Aboriginal clientele succeed in their studies. Every year students graduate in business, adult and youth correctional, nursing, as well as in general education programs. Many graduates then directly enter the workforce in their chosen field

or go on to university. It has been the Centre's experience that most students will succeed at their studies given the high quality of support provided on a daily basis.

Since many of the students are from remote northern communities, their needs are different from those of local students. The culture is different for them in a city such as Montreal with its sheer size and pace. Not surprisingly, many students become homesick, feel alienated, and are discouraged enough to want to drop out. The Centre assists them to overcome these obstacles. For example, Pathways for Aboriginal Students allows a student to ease into college life while simultaneously coping with culture shock and homesickness. The student takes a lighter load in the first year, including a few sheltered courses, such as English and career exploration/study skills.

With a reduced load and much mentoring and academic help, the student is more likely to succeed, especially in his/her second year. Without such a program, many would likely return home after their first semester, disheartened and resigned to limited future prospects.

One example of how the Centre can help such a student is the case of a young man from an Algonquin reserve who entered the Adult and Youth Correction Program four years ago. He had serious academic and social difficulties in his first year and probably would have not finished his program if staff hadn't intervened to help him. The student was able to graduate and land good job in his field before convocation.

Many similar success stories are attributable to the Centre.

Algonquin College Partners with Tim Hortons to Give Aboriginal Youth Work Experience

Employment experience is hard to come by for Aboriginal young people, and that puts them at a disadvantage as post-secondary students. Algonquin College, in partnership with Tim Hortons Canada, is doing something about it.

In the past year, Algonquin has successfully offered the Aboriginal Youth Education to Experience Program, a holistic workplace learning and development initiative focused on Aboriginal youth in full-time studies at the college. The program was designed to extend well beyond what is normally offered in a typical college work placement. The goal is to enable Aboriginal youth to gain life and employment skills in a supportive workplace setting while attending classes. The students are paid as part-time employees. They are also coached by a mentor as well as an understanding and supportive employer.

So far, more than 20 Aboriginal students have registered to take part in the initiative.

The mentor provides support, guidance and knowledge to build and strengthen the student's employability skills. The Algonquin Aboriginal Community Liaison office and the mentor work with Tim Hortons franchise owners to ensure success through strong support and sensitivity to the needs of the student.

Tim Hortons provides the students with invaluable workplace learning experience, whereby the students advance and grow from the experience and from the strong support of their managers and colleagues.

"This model is unique and highly innovative. It represents an approach that empowers the student to achieve their full potential in a workplace setting,"

– Denyce Diakun, Director, Workforce and Personal Development at Algonquin

Consider the experiences realized by Sean, a 20 year old Algonquin student, who was one of the first to participate in the program. Karyn Steer, an Employment Mentor with the college, worked with Sean throughout the program to provide workplace knowledge and practical skills. Tim Hortons provided Sean with a workplace learning experience.

From Sean's perspective, a factor in the success of the program was the strong communications and ongoing support provided by his manager and his mentor. Sean has grown and matured through this experience and will be more than amply equipped to seek and gain quality employment when he graduates.

All participating students have attested to the personal growth they attained from this experience. All parties agree that the students are better equipped to apply their skills to their future work and personal lives.

Algonquin plans to continue the program with the support and commitment of employers such as Tim Hortons.



An Innovative Portal to Support Canadore College's Partnerships with First Nations Institutes and Communities

Canadore College has been working in partnership with First Nations since the 1990s to provide access to education through flexible delivery. More than 280 learners have graduated because of these successful programs.

Canadore's goal is to increase the number of Aboriginal post-secondary education graduates. To do that, Canadore has sought and created opportunities to increase access to quality programming in Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal institutes owned and controlled by First Nations have dramatically increased access to post-secondary education and training for Aboriginal learners. As a result, Canadore has partnerships with First Nations Technical Institute, Anishinabek Educational Institute and Seven Generations Education Institute along with many other First Nations communities throughout Ontario.



In 2004, Canadore signed an innovative partnership with Seven Generations Education Institute. The Institute chooses programs that meet Aboriginal peoples' needs. It promotes, recruits students, and delivers programs in its area. So far Seven Generations has delivered 18 certificate and diploma programs in partnership with Canadore throughout the Treaty Three First Nations territory in Northwestern Ontario.

As a result, students gained the opportunity to earn college credentials in their home communities. This year Canadore is delivering 10 more programs with 80 more students expected to graduate in spring 2012.

To support partnerships and increase delivery capacity, Canadore has developed a prototype portal – the iALU, launched in May 2010 after consultations with Aboriginal partners. The portal provides access to information and web-based forms in real time, allowing users to facilitate work processes and create efficiencies. Accountability mechanisms ensure that Canadore is responsive to client needs. While still in its infancy, the iALU has proven to be an effective tool to facilitate Canadore's evolving partnerships with Aboriginal institutes and communities.

The Benefits of the iALU include:

- Increased partnerships: automated processes create efficiencies, the College has more time to devote to responding to and dialoguing with First Nations, Aboriginal institutes and organizations;
- Increased access to post-secondary education and training for Aboriginal learners: increased partnerships and expanded programming, alternative delivery formats responsive to the needs of Aboriginal learners;
- Improved capacity: iALU provides student information and document management capabilities, automated workflow processes improving our business intelligence;
- Improved communications and efficiencies: access to information in real time; staff training development to the college and our Aboriginal partners; universal application of credit transfer; Aboriginal student self-identification and enrolment reporting; green records management; transparency and building our partnership capacity.

“Working with Canadore College over the past several years has been an empowering experience,” says Laura Horton, Director of Post-secondary Programs, Seven Generations Education Institute. “Program coordinators, the registrar and instructors share with one another best practices and ideas.”

Just as Seven Generations has brought students to the college, Canadore has attended all of the institute’s graduation ceremonies.

“Recently, Canadore attended the birthing of our drum, Saagathiwe, and the sunrise ceremony that was a part of this event,” adds Ms Horton. “For Seven Generations Education Institute and the people we serve, the birthing of a drum is a very important event. For Canadore College to be present at this event shows their respect for our culture, the communities we serve and our partnership.”



Confederation College Partners to Train Interpreters to Support First Nations Health Care

About six years ago, Josias Fiddler, a Sandy Lake First Nation Elder, and Bob Bruyere, Executive Coordinator of the Sioux Lookout Area Aboriginal Management Board, saw a critical need for trained interpreters and decided to do something so that their people could get the best medical treatment possible.

The result was a memorandum of understanding in 2008 between Confederation College, whose nine campuses serve 60 First Nation communities over 56 per cent of Ontario's landmass, and the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre, which serves 28 First Nation communities – 24 of them remote – for a training program designed and delivered locally.

After numerous consultation meetings in 2009 and 2010, the Medical Interpreter Program was operational. It was developed in collaboration with the Sioux Lookout Area Aboriginal Management Board, the Meno Ya Win Health Centre, their Elders council and board, and Confederation College. Funding for this pilot project is provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada through the Aboriginal Skills & Training Strategic Investment Fund.

A medical interpreter is the vital link between patient and health care provider when there is a language barrier. Language barriers can ultimately result in a wrong diagnosis and treatment.

Graduates of this program will demonstrate ethical and culturally appropriate behaviour while performing their role as medical interpreters. They will have three distinct roles – interpreter, navigator and advocate.

The interpreter must provide faithful interpretation so that health centre staff can communicate with First Nation clients and vice versa. The interpreter must also help clients to navigate their way through the system by minimizing cultural and language barriers and by providing clients with required information. As advocate, the interpreter helps to assure clients that their needs are respected and understood by health care professionals.



Elders played a significant role in the development and delivery of the program in everything from candidate selection to coaching and encouragement. They communicate with students in the Anishinabe languages and sit in on most classes to assist.

In addition, they assist with teachings of regional history, medicines, family, health and wellness while providing encouragement and support.

Of the 23 original students, 16 completed the program and all are employed as medical interpreters. Their knowledge, skills and abilities are being recognized across the region and they are making a positive contribution in the health care setting.

Graduates who continue their education and enroll in the Personal Support Worker program will receive credit for four of their Medical Interpreter courses.

The services of the medical interpreters from the Meno Ya Win Health Centre have been requested by institutions in Thunder Bay, Toronto and Timmins. Says graduate Norah J. McKay: "I perfected my Oji-Cree language skills and therefore I am better equipped to help our clients. There is no room for mistakes. I love my language, and I am a better speaker because I took this course and I will keep on learning."

Georgian College Has a Longstanding Relationship with Aboriginal Communities

Georgian College recognized in the 1990s that the Aboriginal presence on its seven campuses had to increase. So Georgian did something about it.

As an important first step, Georgian, in consultation with the local First Nations, Métis and Inuit, embarked upon an extensive Native Way Training (NWT) initiative. The training encompassed 12 days of traditional teachings and discussion about how the Aboriginal community and college could work together effectively.

The NWT brought together management, faculty and staff from the college along with leaders in education and training from the Aboriginal community. The training embodied the sharing of creation stories, the local history, historical experiences with the education system and the Aboriginal way of being.

It provided background on the Aboriginal worldview from a variety of perspectives. The outcome reaffirmed that the Aboriginal community wanted to see themselves and their cultures reflected in the curriculum, physical space, staff, faculty and administration at Georgian College.

NWT sessions laid the foundation for the establishment of ongoing partnerships between the college and the Aboriginal community. It was also the catalyst for the future development of holistic programs and services that would ultimately lead to greater attraction, retention and graduation of students of Aboriginal ancestry from Georgian.

The Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities provided financial support for programs and services through the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy. Georgian also provided financial support when there was a shortfall.

With the ongoing support of senior management, many activities and initiatives have been implemented over time. These include two Aboriginal-specific diploma programs, a Pre-Health Sciences program with an Aboriginal stream, Aboriginal faculty members and the Elders Advisory Circle.



Aboriginal student enrolment has increased steadily. In 1992, there were an estimated 30 Aboriginal students enrolled. In 2012, the Aboriginal student body was in the range of 400. Enrolment continues to increase at a steady pace with a 53 percent growth in Aboriginal student enrolment at Georgian since tracking began via the Ontario College Application Service in 2006. Over the past 20 years there have been countless student success stories.

“I was a high school dropout, never once thinking I would be a graduate. Georgian College offered to me the confidence that created determination. My success was because of the staff of the Aboriginal Resource Centre and the fact I wanted more in my life. I graduated from the Native Community and Social Development program (NCSD) as an honours student and have continued on my journey into the Law and Justice program through Laurentian@Georgian. NCSD offered cultural relevance and many skills that I have continued to use in the Aboriginal community, life and at Georgian College.”

– Kim Newby, Mi'kmaq: Eskasoni First Nation

First Nations Technical Institute – Aboriginal Aviation Program is the Only One of its Kind in Canada

Aside from being the only Aboriginal post-secondary course of its kind in Canada, the Aviation Diploma Program at the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) turns out qualified pilots in a unique way.

In addition to providing the means for students to acquire a pilot licence, the program is designed to provide a general education program while fulfilling industry expectations. The program is offered in partnership with Canadore College and the curriculum meets the requirements of the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges, and Universities and Transport Canada's regulations and standards for flight training.



This full-time day study program consists of six semesters, presented over three calendar years. Semesters are scheduled to run from September through the end of June. Funding is provided yearly through Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to offset the cost of tuition for Aboriginal students.

A joint FNTI/Canadore Diploma is issued upon successful completion of the program. Instructors are from First Nations, and there is a lot of one-on-one instruction. Upon graduation, students can work in a growing number of First Nation-owned airlines in Canada. In addition, the graduates are qualified to work for small and large non-Aboriginal carriers.

First Nations Technical Institute is an internationally recognized Aboriginal-controlled college that provides holistic, culturally relevant and accredited programming to address needs, partnerships and pathways to excellence, and contribute to society and future generations. FNTI's mission is to provide respectful, holistic learning opportunities and experiences that enhance the capacity of First Nations people to regain control over their social, political, cultural and economic future.

"I've always wanted to be a pilot. I'm very goal-oriented and I want to help First Nations communities. I have a plan to help many people and one way to do that is to fly to many communities. I want to share the opportunities I have had. FNTI was very appealing to me because it is First Nations owned and operated. The instructors are from First Nations. The safety record of the school and the quality of the instruction were also highly recommended. There's one-on-one instruction and everyone wants everyone else to succeed. It's really great. For First Nations people, there are many, smaller First Nations airlines with job opportunities and opportunities with larger airlines committed to being equal opportunity employers. It's very challenging. Everyday is different. I'm never going to get bored [in this career.]"

– Gerry Roque, 2007 graduate of the Aboriginal Fixed Wing Pilot Program

Loyalist College Supports Students with Aboriginal Resource Centre

A new Aboriginal Resource Centre was established at Loyalist College in 2010 to provide support for Aboriginal students on campus and to act as a liaison between the administration, Aboriginal communities and government agencies. Working directly with the Aboriginal Education Circle, the College created the Centre as a friendly space where students can study, socialize and receive support.

The goal of the Centre is to maximize opportunities for Aboriginal students to realize their full academic and personal potential. With several staff members, including a full-time math tutor, an academic liaison and an outreach officer, the Centre offers students easy access to academic and individual counseling. Together, they reach more than 300 students. Their services, as well as the friendship provided by the Centre, help students to overcome barriers such as poor academic preparation, an absence of role models with post-secondary education, or a lack of self-confidence and motivation.

For many Aboriginal learners, the biggest challenge to post-secondary education is the initial transition process. Inadequate financial resources and low awareness of Aboriginal culture on campus are deterrents. The Centre addresses potential concerns through pre-admission counseling on funding, admission, transcripts and program planning. It also provides new students with orientation to the college and welcomes them through activities and events. Even before enrolment, many students have had exposure to the Centre through high school visits and events.



The Centre opened in November 2010 to advance the goals of the Aboriginal Education Strategy with support provided as part of the five-year Open Ontario plan. Designed to accommodate 150 students in approximately 1,160 square feet, the airy second-floor Centre boasts comfortable study spaces with computers, printers, and Internet access. In addition, there is a library with current Aboriginal newsletters and papers. While the Centre had existed previously in another location on campus, the new location provides more resources and meets student needs more effectively.

“The Aboriginal Resource Centre had everything I needed to help me succeed,” says Markus Bardy, who was hired by the Ontario Provincial Police after graduating from the Loyalist College Police Foundations program in 2011. To pursue a career with the OPP, Markus left his job with GT Machining and Fabricating in Napanee, Ontario and returned to Loyalist where he had previously graduated from the Mechanical Techniques program.

“It was like coming home,” he says of returning to the Centre that helped him to realize that he was capable of achieving his goals. “No matter what situation you were in, the Centre could help in some way, from offering a meal and sharing a laugh to offering valuable suggestions.”

Centre staff have noticed an increasing number of self-identifying students enrolling at Loyalist. They have found that Aboriginal students are also more likely to participate and complete their college program now than in the past.

Overall, the Centre is helping to prepare graduates to achieve rewarding jobs, through targeted support systems and services. It helps individuals develop the fundamental academic, teamwork and personal management skills necessary to succeed in the changing world of work.

Mohawk College and Six Nations Polytechnic – Practical Partnership Improves Nursing Services for Aboriginal Communities

Increasing the number of Aboriginal nurses with practical knowledge of their communities will go a long way in addressing First Nations healthcare needs. The Practical Nursing with Aboriginal Communities (PNAC) program was born out of those needs.

PNAC began in November 2006 in partnership between Mohawk College and Six Nations Polytechnic. It is the only program of its kind and has since been recognized as Ontario's Aboriginal nursing hub of excellence by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.

The program was developed in response to present day health education and training needs of Aboriginal communities. Delivery is unique in that it takes place within the territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River and at the Mohawk-McMaster Institute of Applied Health and Technology in Hamilton, Ontario.

Operational costs are shared by the partners. The program is similar to the practical nursing course at Mohawk but includes specialized curriculum for Aboriginal communities. Clinical placements are provided by healthcare agencies in various communities as far north as Moose Cree First Nation. Other placements can be found in local healthcare facilities in Hamilton, Brantford, and Halton.

The program is a four-semester Ontario college diploma with cohorts beginning consecutively. Learning objectives have been developed with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in consultation with employers and educators who are experts in the program field.

In order to ensure the outcomes remain current and in line with industry needs, employers, graduates working in the field, and current students are invited to participate in ongoing program review focus groups.

Informal partnerships with First Nations funding agencies support students attending Mohawk College programs. In order for students to achieve funding support from their home community, all programming must meet Ontario post-secondary credentialing requirements.

In addition, the Grand River Post Secondary Education Office, the closest and largest funding agency of Mohawk College First Nation students, requires programming to be relevant and current in terms of career opportunities.

The Aboriginal Education Council of Mohawk College has been directly involved with programming decisions and proposal recommendations and has worked closely with Mohawk College and Six Nations Polytechnic to ensure community needs are met.

Northern College – Strong Community Connections to Support Disadvantaged Learners

In 2010, parents in Moose Factory investigated the feasibility of building a day program for their developmentally-challenged adult children. Moose Cree First Nation Education Authority partnered with these parents and they secured funding to operate a program during the summer of 2011.

A coordinator and two workers were hired. The program was delivered at the Delores D. Echum Composite School facility. Every morning for two months, the clients participated in physical, mental, emotional, and cultural exercises – activities many participants had never experienced.

Parents witnessed positive changes and transformations of behaviour: children with big smiles expressing their excitement when the bus arrived in the morning, a child sleeping at night without medication, and happy spirits engaged in affirmative experiences.

This rewarding summer experience in Moose Factory became known as The Billy Bayou Project in memory of someone well liked in the area. Billy Echum was a developmentally-challenged and much liked man who lived in Moose Factory. His nickname was Billy Bayou.

When possible, Billy would attend a day program in nearby Moosonee for developmentally-challenged adults where he became interested in collecting and recycling bottles and cans. Billy considered this his job and local people admired him for it. Sadly, Billy died in a boating accident on James Bay in 1999 on his way to his family's traditional hunting camp.



The Billy Bayou Project came to a standstill when the summer of 2011 ended, but the positive outcomes of the summer program encouraged the parent group to engineer a full-time program in an accessible and permanent location within the community. The parents and the Moose Cree Education Authority secured a building that met their adult children's needs. But it did not meet the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.

The work and equipment required for Code compliance was going to be expensive and funding that had been received was already budgeted for accessibility renovations and operations.

That's where Northern College comes in. In November 2011, Northern and its Pre-Electrical students at the Moose Factory site and Moosonee Campus were asked if they could help. The two instructors and six students assessed the site and agreed to partner on the project of upgrading the existing electrical system to Code standards.

The team worked many hours to complete all of the necessary work as they practised their new skills and training. "Throughout the project, we did our best to teach our students not only electrical installations but also how to conduct themselves in a real work environment. We were proud to be a part of this worthwhile community project," Larry Verner, Northern College Instructor.

The Billy Bayou Project is back on track, serving the community, and it exemplifies Northern's connection to the community. Billy would have approved.

Teachings of the Medicine Wheel – Guide to Career in Trades at Sault College

Sault College is addressing the gaps in education and skills that are preventing Aboriginal peoples from entering post-secondary institutions and pursuing careers in the trades. The Upgrade for the Trades program incorporates the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth, and encourages the adoption of a healthy, balanced lifestyle through the strength and guidance of the Medicine Wheel.

With funding provided through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Skills Link program, this 12-week program was held on-campus at Sault College from June to August. 2011 course offerings focused on literacy and numeracy, employment readiness, and pre-employment certification.

By building a learning community that included students, teachers, support staff, families and the Aboriginal community at large, the college was able to create a truly Aboriginal learning experience accepted by all. It demonstrated the understanding, patience and respect necessary for student success.

The program was promoted as a summer campus experience in a secure environment where students could explore and enjoy campus life free from the hectic pace of regular semester activity. For many students this was their first time in a post-secondary institution. The quiet setting contributed to their comfort level and feeling of confidence.

Throughout the day, students had unlimited access to members of our learning community which included faculty, a project coordinator, employment counsellors, administrative staff and representatives from the campus-based Aboriginal Apprenticeship Centre.

To make the program a success, it was critical to identify the training needs of local Aboriginal communities. Members of the project development team met with community leaders to listen and understand the role education and training must play in supporting and enhancing present initiatives in economic, community and social development. The result of these discussions was unanimous – academic upgrading was essential to meet post-secondary entrance requirements and the target was trades.

Another key factor in the success of our program was the practice of conducting candidate interviews in the communities wishing to take advantage of the program. It was essential to go to the students living in those communities to develop meaningful relationships that were enhanced during the program.

Twenty candidates were initially interviewed for the program with 14 being eligible for HRSDC's Skills Link funding and officially registered. Of the 14 eligible to register, 12 completed the program. These 12 students went on to take the Canadian Adult Achievement Test. Eleven were successful. Of these 11 now eligible to enter post-secondary education, six chose to enrol at Sault College for the 2011 fall semester and two students enrolled in the 2012 winter semester.

One student secured employment after withdrawing from the program, two students secured employment upon completion of the program and one student returned to a previous employer and obtained a promotion to full-time employment. In all cases, the trade certifications were the key factors in the employers' decisions to hire and promote.

As the Medicine Wheel teaches, we all need to assess ourselves on how we can reach our potential.

“ Before taking this course, I had nothing on my résumé. Now, I feel job ready and ready for my future. I am currently taking General Arts and Science and am exploring my post-secondary options for September 2012.”

– Ken Solomon, General Arts and Science



St. Lawrence College Partners with First Nations to Deliver Community-based Employability Programs for Youth

The goal of the St. Lawrence College Centre for Corporate Learning and Performance Improvement is to partner with local First Nations St. Lawrence College to help them meet the training needs of their youth. Innovative delivery methods allow youth to remain in their communities while learning new skills and acquiring the needed certifications to make them more employable. Programs lengths range from eight to 16 weeks and are tailored for each of the First Nation communities.

In 2008, the Centre first partnered with the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI), Ohahase Education Centre and the Mohawks of Bay of Quinte to develop and deliver a program aimed at youth aged 15 to 30, an Aboriginal demographic group facing great barriers to the labour market.

The program was carefully designed, with input from the Quinte Mohawks, to ensure that a holistic approach was taken to help youth make the transition to employment or return to school.

It was agreed that where possible, all instructors, trainers and program supervisors for these programs would be First Nations people chosen in partnership with FNTI and St. Lawrence College.

Volunteers working with the youth in the program included Elders from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, who were willing to share years of experience and knowledge of Mohawk customs. They shared this experience and knowledge with the program participants and were able to instill a belief, understanding and acceptance of a way of life that has endured and flourished for hundreds of years.



Since delivering this successful program, St. Lawrence has continued to partner with the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and has delivered six programs on a yearly basis.

In the spring of 2009, the college presented an overview of these successful programs to KagitaMikam member nations, consisting of Curve Lake First Nation, Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn, Hiawatha First Nation, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and the Mohawks of Wahta First Nation.

KagitaMikam provides employment and training services to all eligible First Nations peoples within their catchment area, between Oshawa and Ottawa. They are funded under a regional Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

There was much interest in the innovative partnership approach and the use of First Nation peoples as instructors and program supervisors. This led to two programs in Youth in Pre-Construction with the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquin First Nation in 2009-10. Both of these programs resulted in a number of the Algonquin and Métis youth finding jobs in the construction field, and in the summer of 2010 the college again presented this program to the Akwesasne First Nation.

In January 2010, St. Lawrence travelled to James Bay to form partnerships with the Cree of the Kashechewan First Nation and Fort Albany First Nation, for the delivery of the Youth in Pre-Construction program.

As a result of these partnerships in 2011, St. Lawrence College delivered two Youth in Pre-Construction programs to the Attawapiskat First Nation, an Aboriginal Arts program to the M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island and the Kashechewan First Nation, and a Clerical Support program in the Kashechewan First Nation.

St. Lawrence College will be presenting youth programs to the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn and to the Weenusk First Nation in Peawanuck, Hudson Bay. Plans are underway to meet with the Wahsaho Cree Nation in Fort Severn, Hudson Bay, to form a partnership and deliver programs in 2012.

The impact and benefits to the youth in these First Nations communities are demonstrated by the high percentage of First Nation youth completing the programs. On average St. Lawrence graduates 85 per cent of those who start the programs. They find jobs in their local economy or return to school.

Students receive a training allowance while in the program, as well as travel and child care support so that they are free to concentrate on learning new skills and acquiring certifications that will make them more employable.

Partnerships with local First Nations educational institutes, such as the Ohahase Education Centre in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, allow the youth to receive up to two high school co-op credits, and through St. Lawrence College, they attain college levels credits in computer and employability skills.



During the last program delivered in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory in the summer of 2011, of the nine who completed the program, seven gathered enough credits from their co-op and through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition not only to graduate from the program but also graduate with their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.



DANIEL WESLEY, "EAGLES, WOLF, WARRIOR"
YOUNG ARTISTS OF KASHECHEWAN

Nunavut Arctic College – Bringing Environmental Technology Training to Northeastern Baffin Island

In September 2010, the Nunavut Arctic College piloted the first community-based delivery of the Environmental Technology Program (ETP) in Pond Inlet, a small community of approximately 2,000 on the northeastern tip of Baffin Island.

As a result of student success and an outpouring of community support, the second diploma year of the ETP is being delivered there in 2012.

There are vast challenges to delivering any college program in the Arctic, compounded by staggeringly high levels of school dropouts and huge costs of transporting people and resources. The ETP not only requires instructors with content specialization but students with an aptitude for – and interest in – environmental science.

Unemployment among the Inuit residents of Pond Inlet is high. But, increasingly, there is skilled work available. The federal and territorial governments have decentralized a number of offices to the community, situated on the Northwest Passage shipping route. Pond Inlet is also adjacent to four national and territorial parks and a marine mammal sanctuary. The community is also the staging area for Canada's largest iron-ore development project at Mary River and a number of seismic oil and mineral exploration proposals.

The college saw the ETP pilot project in Pond Inlet not only as a means to build employment skills in a rapidly expanding environmental field, but as motivation to develop in young Inuit adults the transferable critical reasoning, communications and analytical skills crucial to leadership, as well as higher-paid employment.



Pre-assessment in May 2010 determined 13 applicants met the academic requirements of the ETP and the pilot certificate year of the program was delivered between September 2010 and May 2011.

All 13 students succeeded in achieving the ETP Certificate and applied to earn a diploma. Without base funding, however, a community delivery of the second year was financially impossible for the college to deliver on its own.

Urged on by the students themselves (who collected 120 letters of support from community leaders, civil servants, scientists and institutions), the college worked to create new funding partnerships. With contributions from the Government of Nunavut's Department of Economic Development, Baffinland Iron Mines and Kakivak Association, the college started second year ETP classes in Pond Inlet in January 2012 with graduation planned for December 2012.

Enookie Inuarak is representative of many other Nunavut community college students. He dropped out of high school at the age of 16, citing disillusionment. "I didn't see why I should stay," he says. "I thought there are no jobs for Inuit except the ones I don't want to do."

But Enookie did have a passion for his environment. He had attended the ETP program at the Iqaluit campus but found the rigours of life away from his family and community too challenging. "I couldn't take it. I missed my parents. I missed going hunting. I was lonely and everything fell apart for me. So I quit."

Now at the age of 28, and the father of two boys, Enookie is working on the ETP Diploma in his home community. "It has opened my mind and my heart to possibilities," he says. Part way through first year, Enookie was elected as the youngest member on the Hamlet Council and spent the summer helping his father guide tourists and researchers in the Lancaster Sound.

What has the program given him?

"Confidence is number one. I thought there was nothing much for me and now there are so many possibilities. I can understand anything if I work at it. My goal is to preserve the wildlife and keep our Inuit land for the next generation. I want to do that not just for me but for my children."



Red River College – Head Start for Aboriginal Youth – Learning and Fun at the Same Time

At Red River College, preparing for a career doesn't have to be entirely serious.

The HAWK Camp (Hands on Activity Week for Kids) was developed for Aboriginal youth, aged 11 to 13, to highlight trades and technology programs offered at the college. This free and interactive camp was also created to encourage youth to consider post-secondary education – and plant the seed of interest in careers that currently have low participation by Aboriginal youth.

A goal of the camp is to offer a free week-long camp to youth who might not otherwise attend a summer camp and to expose Aboriginal youth to their potential and possibility of a future in a post-secondary environment. Another is to expose youth to post-secondary opportunities at a young age while giving them a chance to have fun while learning.

Camp programs include: carpentry, electrical and civil engineering, aviation, and mechanical and manufacturing technology. Woven into each day is a cultural component to help increase their comfort with and knowledge of Aboriginal heritage and pride.

A priority is to ensure all students are valued and involved by focusing on their sense of self and confidence. The teachings support identity, the significance of animals and the Medicine Wheel. The

Medicine Wheel is used on campus for teaching, assembling a tipi, storytelling, making a drum, and learning a drumming song – the Bear Song.



At the College's Community Forum in 2009, more than 200 participants cited the importance of working with youth to help increase the number of Aboriginal students in college.

The HAWK camp was seen as an innovative opportunity to unite Aboriginal youth while providing a comfortable, safe and engaging week of learning. The camp has been offered for the past two years in the last week of July. The five-day camp runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday for 16 campers.

For the first year of the camp in 2010, funding was provided by the Program Innovation Fund through

the college's School of Learning Innovation. The second year was offered through internal fundraising to support the operation of the camp so that it could be offered once again free of charge.

"HAWK has been a wonderful, enriching experience for my son Ryley," says the mother of one participant. "Our family loves the fact that although the program is only one week, we have an opportunity to gather for a meal and celebrate the journey that the group has gone through together."

To end the week in a good way, there is a barbecue that includes family members. It gives campers the opportunity to share their pride of the drum song they mastered and further appreciate everything they learned and accomplished throughout the fun-filled week.

Parkland College and Cote First Nation Team up to Train Personnel for Tourism

When Cote First Nation purchased several hospitality businesses at Duck Mountain Provincial Park to provide jobs for band members, there was just one problem. It needed trained personnel.

So in February 2011, the First Nation entered into a partnership with Parkland College to train band members for the tourism sector and for work at Duck Mountain, about 25 kilometres away from the Cote community.



Parkland College offered Tourism Essentials, an Emerit program through the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council. Successful completion provides credit hours towards certification in the tourism sector.

Parkland included safety training, life management, as well as computer and technology training as additional components. This project was 16 weeks in length and had 15 participants. Funding was secured through the federal government Labour Market Agreement.

The goal of the Aboriginal education program was to allow First Nations people to develop their skills while pursuing employment opportunities close to home. Cote First Nation provided training facilities, transportation from Cote to Duck Mountain, and assisted students with training allowances.

The courses consisted of transferring the classroom theory of the nine essential skills to hands-on experience in the various occupations. The Duck Mountain Lodge hotel and restaurant provided real life work experiences – front desk clerk, server, dishwasher, prep cook, cashier, housekeeping and maintenance.

The students held three hands-on community supper events, where each student took on different roles. In addition, the students opened a bank account for the project, planned menus, ordered supplies, paid bills, developed and sent out invitations, assisted with cooking the meals, served guests, acted as cashiers, and cleaned up after each event.

At the first event, hotel staff and program trainers were the guests. Guests were asked to fill in evaluations at the end of the evening, rating students on their skills, such as quality of the meal, organization, service and professionalism. The students also held supper events for First Nations Band leaders and employers from the town of Kamsack, Saskatchewan.

Of the 15 participants, 12 graduated. Eight participants passed the Emerit Tourism Essentials exam, enabling them to go on to further certifications in the tourism sector. Of the 12 graduates, seven are employed, while others have gone on to further their education.

One of the learners, a youth who suffered from low self-esteem and confidence, completed the program and obtained employment. Since then, he has continued his studies. Perhaps the greatest success for this person was the increase in essential skills. The learner went from low Level 1 literacy to Level 2 literacy in 16 weeks. Also, the learner's ability to converse with customers grew as his self-esteem increased. This learner continues to thrive and build skills that will allow him to improve his financial situation.

Combining the classroom theory on essential skills with hands-on work experience was critical. Students recognized what they learned in the classroom was relevant in the workplace. They appreciated that strong numeracy, reading and other essential skills are necessary for workplace success.

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Develops ASAP – a Game Plan for Aboriginal Success & Achievement

The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) has three core beliefs. Aboriginal students belong there. They will be successful at SIAST. And education and employment will create healthier and happier communities.

SIAST has long been active in introducing measures and services to improve access and success for post-secondary education for Aboriginal peoples. But First Nations and Métis learners continue to be under-represented in advanced education. They often begin from a position of disadvantage and confront multiple challenges at every stage of post-secondary education.

In the fall of 2008 SIAST embarked on an ambitious undertaking. A multi-disciplinary committee was created to review Aboriginal student success at SIAST.



The committee's structure and project design recognized that advancing Aboriginal student success does not rest with one area but is the responsibility of all members of the SIAST community. Through a series of consultations, best-practice research and a student survey, the committee identified barriers to SIAST Aboriginal student recruitment and program completion.

A final report, released in December 2009, presented the committee's findings and recommendations which collectively form a five-year action plan to increase Aboriginal student success at SIAST.

Enter the Aboriginal Student Achievement Plan – ASAP. The plan's 21 recommendations are proactive with a focus on early intervention, identifying and driving changes to policies and procedures, and creating links with Aboriginal communities to ensure SIAST is meeting the needs of Aboriginal students.

The ultimate goals of the initiative are to achieve a representative Aboriginal student population in all SIAST programs – and an Aboriginal student program completion rate matching that of other students.

Aboriginal students are the fastest-growing demographic in a province with a shrinking labour pool. Their advancement is essential to Saskatchewan's economic and social prosperity.

The strategy looks beyond the student to the structures and processes of the institution. It is holistic in nature and considers the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health of students as suggested by the Aboriginal Medicine Wheel.

Findings confirmed that SIAST had generous support and a number of excellent services for Aboriginal students. Overall, SIAST has impressive Aboriginal student enrolment and satisfaction rates. Ninety-one per cent of students surveyed as part of this study said they would recommend SIAST to other Aboriginal students.

Analysis of the findings, however, suggested that there are multiple systemic barriers for Aboriginal students to overcome. These included low awareness of training-related career paths at the prospective student stage, complex admission processes, difficulties in relocating to an urban environment, financial hardship, personal and family circumstances, academic preparedness and lack of support for English language learners.

Today six ASAP student advisors are in place providing services on three of the four campuses and the terms of reference have been developed for an ASAP external advisory committee to provide guidance and advice on current and planned initiatives.

Next steps include everything from a summer transition program to integrating Aboriginal ways into SIAST programs.



Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies – Better Serving Students by Developing Instruction Staff

The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) is meeting the learning needs of its students by strengthening the capacity of its faculty through specially designed professional development courses. Enhance the instructor, enhance the student.

SIIT decided instruction at its three campuses can be enhanced through increased faculty knowledge and training in such areas as differing learning styles, Aboriginal pedagogy, the integration of online learning approaches, and the role of the adult instructor. Faculty PD is designed in five modules –

Cultural Awareness, Introduction to Post-secondary Instruction, Authentic Assessment and Aboriginal Pedagogy, Course Design and Planning, and Teaching with Technology. Workshops started in August 2009.

The Faculty Development Certificate will benefit SIIT students by providing them with stronger and more knowledgeable instructors. This will in turn lead to stronger course and program design.

For example, Janice Linklater is a SIIT instructor in the first-year Addictions program at the downtown campus in Saskatoon. She has a degree in counselling but no formal training in classroom or online instruction.

Her previous experience with students was in her role as a workshop facilitator. Janice attended the one-day faculty PD in August 2010 and the two-day faculty PD in August 2011. She found the courses very helpful in providing teaching tips and tools for instruction. One tip she continues to use is to ensure she is the last person to leave the classroom. This allows students to ask her questions that they may have not asked in front of the classroom. Overall she has found the faculty PD very valuable.



Aboriginal Students Work in Health Care while Studying for a Certificate at Aurora College

Community Health Representatives participate in the delivery of health promotion programs in small, remote northern communities throughout the Northwest Territories. They work closely with health care providers, assisting in everything from surveillance programs to epidemics and emergencies.

It is important work, and that is why Aurora College offers a 10-course Community Health Representative Certificate program. All of the students are Aboriginal.

Since 2009, the college has been involved in a partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services of the Government of the Northwest Territories to deliver the program in modular format. Each year, three of the courses are offered over a seven-day period.

More than 25 students have participated in the courses to date. Because the program is spread over several years, the college has had one student complete the program, with several more close to completion. More than 90 per cent of the class participants are working as CHRs with the remaining 10 per cent in roles closely related to the field of health promotion.

In each course, the students work on specific community-related health promotion projects. They have been instrumental in the delivery of the swim-vest program, development of laminated nutrition guides, colon screening, a good-hand-hygiene campaign, health promotion activities in homes and schools and the development of health promotion newsletters and radio shows.

Jennifer Jonasson is the first graduate of this cohort of CHR students. She worked as the health centre janitor before entering the program but wanted to become more involved in the health of her home community. After maintaining a consistent A average, she calls the program her new beginning.



Bow Valley College Partners to Treat and Prevent Aboriginal Addictions

Bow Valley College and the Sunrise Native Addictions Services Society marked National Aboriginal Addictions Awareness Week in 2011 by doing something about the problem.

Since October 2011, Bow Valley has been delivering a pilot version of the Aboriginal Addictions Services Counselling Certificate Program at the Sunrise Native Addictions Services Society (SNASS). The program was formally launched with a contract-signing event on November 14, 2011, which coincided with Aboriginal Addictions Awareness Week.

The aim of the program is to give staff and students the tools and skills required to support individuals, families and communities in dealing with addictions, as well as identifying and managing addictions through prevention and treatment.

“A partnership with an established organization like SNASS will ensure graduates of this program can immediately begin helping individuals and their families recover from the destructive effects of addiction,” says Dr. Bill DuPerron, Dean responsible for the Health, Justice and Human Services programs at Bow Valley.



The ministries of Alberta Health and Wellness and Advanced Education and Technology partially funded the program as part of the Health Workforce Action Plan.

“This has been a goal of ours for some time – to create a facility to train Aboriginal people to work with Aboriginal people,” said Toby Racette, President and Chair of SNASS.

Course content focuses on a holistic approach to addressing the needs of Aboriginal individuals and communities. It also emphasizes western and northern Aboriginal history and culture.

As SNASS prepares to undergo accreditation by a national organization, the course will better prepare the organization to comply with specific staffing qualification standards.

SNASS graduates of this certificate program will provide their employer with enhanced counseling skills that would add to the competencies of the service providers. It will enable them to support addicted clients better in their journey of healing and recovery.

Graduates of the Aboriginal Addictions Services Counseling Certificate Program will have a variety of career opportunities in environments such as community Aboriginal services, the justice system and children and youth services organizations.

Aboriginal Success the Goal at Grant MacEwan University

First-year post-secondary students have transition challenges at the best of times. It was clear at Grant MacEwan University those challenges are especially daunting for Aboriginal first-year students.

Aboriginal first-year students face many challenges that include limited knowledge of the application process, uncertainty of student expectations, lack of knowledge and understanding of Grade Point Average (GPA) grading systems and their impact, limited study and time management skills at a post-secondary level and lack of awareness of student support services on campus.

Then there is the challenge of living in an urban centre far from home in a different culture.

MacEwan developed the Transition to Post Secondary Program (TPSP) in 2010 as a response to these challenges. The summer program was designed to assist Aboriginal students' transition into post-secondary studies and familiarize them with urban life.

Participants live in residence and attend orientation sessions during the day to get the full post-secondary experience. The week-long program, which can accommodate a maximum 30 students, is offered in the first week of July. Students are on site 24/7 for the entire week.

The program was developed in partnership with the Edmonton Catholic School Board and the Edmonton Public School Board. Partnerships have also been created with education counsellors from First Nations communities in Treaty areas 6, 7 and 8 and with the Métis Nation of Alberta employment centres.

Emphasis is placed on assisting students to develop skills for academic success through forging strong ties to the university's Aboriginal Education Centre, which provides students with a solid connection to their Aboriginal heritage throughout their studies.

The goals of the program are to increase retention rates of Aboriginal students and assist their communities in preparing them for post-secondary life by providing ongoing support services for high school students interested in post-secondary studies, whether at MacEwan or elsewhere.

Program numbers increased from 2010 to 2011 because of the partnerships with Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools. In 2010, there were eight participants, with seven completing the program. In 2011, of the 28 enrolled in the program, 28 completed.

Robyn is a First Nations student enrolled in MacEwan's Child and Youth Care Program since the fall of 2011. After participating in TPSP, Robyn says she felt much better-equipped to take on post-secondary studies. Specifically, she says the program's introduction to MacEwan services and resources has given her greater confidence and motivation. She has just started her second semester at MacEwan University, and her current GPA is 3.24 – a grade which she can be proud of.

Lakeland College heads to First Nation to Develop Workforce for Oilfields

The thriving oilfields of Saskatchewan and Alberta beckon and Lakeland College is taking extra measures so that Aboriginal students can share in the boom.

Each year 40 students are accepted into Lakeland College's popular Heavy Oil Operations Technician certificate program. However, because of limited oilfield knowledge and difficulties with academic prerequisites, Aboriginal students have had minimal success in the program.

As a result, Lakeland has set up a preparatory course to give Aboriginal students more options.

Recognizing the need for both trained entry-level operators in the oilfield (specifically on-reserve companies) and the need for certified power engineers, Lakeland has combined existing programming to create the Introduction to Heavy Oil and Gas program which prepares prospective Aboriginal students for two options: they can continue their education in the Heavy Oil Operations Technician certificate program, which leads to certification as a Fourth Class Power Engineer, or they can immediately enter the oilfield workforce with entry-level operator education.

The 21-week program is being offered this year in Onion Lake Cree Nation from March to July. Successful applicants needed a minimum of a Grade 12 diploma to qualify. Twelve qualified applicants were expected to be accepted. The program consists of academic upgrading and life skills to safety and gas process operations. When the students successfully complete all required courses, they will receive a Certificate of Completion from Lakeland College. Onion Lake Cree Nation is located in a thriving oilfield community.

Lakeland College is able to offer this training through on-reserve funding from Saskatchewan Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, which is committed to eliminating persistent gaps in the education and employment outcomes of First Nations and Métis people.

Lakeland College 2012 Winter Semester CIC Aboriginal Bursary Application Information

Also at Lakeland, the Crown Investments Corporation (CIC) of Saskatchewan has made a four-year partnership funding agreement with the college in support of the CIC Aboriginal Bursary. This bursary provides financial aid to undergraduate Aboriginal students.

The bursary will help them complete selected college programs, and prepare them for a career in Saskatchewan crown corporations. Selection is based 75 percent on financial need and 25 percent on experience in the areas of leadership, management, and community service, career goals, and potential to contribute to the Province of Saskatchewan.

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology Addresses Shortfall of Aboriginal Health Workers

It all began with one initial offering in Edmonton in 2007. Today, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) has completed seven offerings of the Health Sciences Transition (HST) Program in Peace River, Grande Prairie and Calgary, in addition to Edmonton.

In September 2006, NAIT responded to a request for proposal from the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Training to Employment program, now the responsibility of Rupertsland Institute, for a pre-health youth program to address the shortfall of Aboriginal health care workers in Alberta.

The purpose of the 37-week HST program is to provide the graduates with the necessary prerequisites to enter most post-secondary health-related programs. Most post-secondary health programs require English, Math, Biology, Chemistry, and/or Physics as well as Safety (First Aid/Advanced CPR, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) certification and inoculations necessary to tour and job-shadow in health facilities. The four program components are: personal development, academic upgrading, exposure through job shadowing and tours, and safety.

The program also provides life and employability skills to assist in eliminating possible barriers such as weaknesses in interview, communication and interpersonal skills that may affect the transition into post-secondary education or employment.

HST provides students with career exposure by touring a variety of healthcare facilities including acute care, rehabilitation, simulator labs and public health centres.

Students also get the opportunity to job-shadow a professional in their area of interest in collaboration with Alberta Health Services. The small class size has allowed for more individual support with learning and personal development.

A total of 60 students have registered in the programs with an 80 percent completion rate, or 48 graduates. Each offering has had a minimum of seven students and a maximum of 12 learners.

Rupertsland Institute provides full program funding through the Government of Canada Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. Alberta Health Services provides in-kind support to the programming by their participation in Steering Committee meetings, facilitation of the tours and job-shadow components, and providing the Mental Health First Aid course.

NAIT recently contacted 28 of the 48 graduates of the HST program. Nine have completed a post-secondary health program and are working in the field of healthcare, 11 are currently in their programs (five of which are four-year degree programs), three have applied to a post-secondary health program and are waiting for program acceptance, and five are working in a field other than health.

Northern Lakes College Partners to Respond to First Nations Request for Upgraded Health Skills

Northern Lakes College has responded to urgent Aboriginal needs for fully-trained medical receptionists.

The Medical Receptionist Program offered by Northern Lakes College is a Health Canada supported initiative through Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative. It is the result of expressed needs from Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal leaders, community members, health organizations and employers identified a need for educating medical receptionists who may be currently employed but under-prepared in First Nations communities.

With the support of Health Canada and Aboriginal communities, the college has been able to develop curriculum and deliver this training to indigenous learners throughout Alberta's Aboriginal health centres.

A crucial aspect in the program planning was to bring the training to the community rather than require learners to travel. Use of virtual classrooms provides real-time, online delivery allowing the training to remain community-based and accessible, while enabling personal contact between instructor and learners. This model also allows for materials and resources to be available to the learners 24-7,

enabling them to complete their studies at times most convenient to them and their employers.

A second key component was to provide Aboriginal learners access without the traditional academic barriers to post-secondary education. As a result, learners were accepted to the program of studies if employed as a medical receptionist by Health Canada.



The students learn medical terminology, study basic anatomy and physiology and common disease processes. They also gain an awareness of the implications of Aboriginal healthcare issues and provincial and federal guidelines as they apply to medical reception settings.

They study indigenous culture with the objective of understanding how the culture and traditions impact on the beliefs and practices then and now. They also gain knowledge and skills of a medical receptionist including using basic communication techniques to greet patients, make appointments and verify insurance information using a computer and other receptionist duties.

Since the learners in the program are already employed, education is the goal rather than gaining employment. The first cohort of learners resulted in a 65-per-cent graduation rate with the remaining 35 per cent of learners from the group continuing to work towards completion of their certificates.

Flexible program delivery has enabled the learners to balance their responsibilities for work, school, and family. Such was the case for Tamara Low Horn, who was working for Siksika Health Services for about one year before entering the program. Without the part-time schedule and access to courses and online sessions, she would not have been able to engage in this valuable opportunity, she says.



Portage College Responds to Skills Shortages Through Programs Delivered in Aboriginal Communities

There is a current and projected shortfall of 1,500 heavy-equipment operators in north-eastern Alberta while oil sands development continues to grow.

At the same time, the number of First Nations and Métis people entering the workforce gets bigger every year.

As a result, Portage College recognized the need to train a qualified pool of heavy-equipment operators. It has developed a unique teaching strategy by incorporating the use of simulators (excavators, dozers and graders) into the Heavy Equipment Operator Program curriculum. In 2011, Portage College offered three sessions of the Heavy Equipment Operator Program in Aboriginal communities – Frog Lake, Fishing Lake and Elizabeth Settlement, graduating roughly 30 students.



The goal is to utilize simulators to teach skills in a classroom setting that are then transferred into the real world. The mobile unit can go to remote locations, allowing individuals, who may not usually have the means or ability to try something new, the chance to try their hand at the operation of heavy equipment.



The program runs 16 weeks. Work practice, safety and classroom lessons are taught throughout that time. Students enrolled in the program spend a minimum of 40 hours practising and honing their skills on the simulators before moving onto real equipment. Twelve Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are instructed each session. There are three to four sessions a year with the overall target of graduating more than 70 students a year.

One benefit of this program structure is students gain confidence in a safe environment, making them better able to handle the real-world challenges found on a worksite. The heavy equipment simulator mobile unit also travels the province, making stops at Portage College events (e.g. trade fairs, skills exposure programs) as well as outside trade fairs. It is estimated that some 250 to 300 people sit down and test out the simulators on a yearly basis.

Aboriginal students graduating from the Heavy Equipment Operator Program currently have a 100 percent employment rate with many employment opportunities near their home community. Their newly-obtained knowledge also increases the skilled labour workforce in their home communities.

Heavy Equipment Operator is a for-credit program, allowing students the ability to receive tuition assistance through Alberta Works, or student loans through Advanced Education. Individuals using the simulators at one of the trade fairs or skills exposure programs run by Portage are often sponsored by their Aboriginal community, or by their employer. Program development was partially sponsored by Rural Development Initiative and Alberta Human Services. Industry partners also contributed to the growth of program infrastructure. Portage is also addressing the ever-growing need for skilled tradespersons.

Aboriginal communities throughout the area have sought out the college for program partnerships in multiple trades within their communities. The Try-On-A-Trade initiative gives students a chance to try their hand at a wide swath of different occupations.

The program is designed to help students make an informed decision on whether a future in the trades is for them, and if so, which one interests them the most. The fair is designed to be taken to different communities and remote locations. It offers multiple trades and technology exposure and allows for hands-on student involvement and experiential learning.



The first-ever Portage Try-On-A-Trade fair took place at Cold Lake First Nations for four days in November 2011, sponsored by the College and Cenovus Energy. Another is currently in its planning stages for two week-long programs in September 2012 at the Hobbema Samson Cree Nation. Buffalo Lake has also inquired about offering a similar type of program.

Yukon College Aboriginal Heritage and Governance

Heritage and Aboriginal culture are big parts of Yukon Territory's economic future. Yukon College is responding by signing partnerships to develop a trained workforce and develop First Nations management talent and governance.

Heritage and Culture Revitalization

In 2007, the Yukon First Nations Heritage Group conducted a heritage training needs assessment in the Yukon. The resulting report clearly demonstrated the capacity issues facing First Nations people, and identified specific skills that were lacking. It also illustrated the lack of accessible and relevant training programs.



Recommendations from this report led to the creation in 2010 of the Heritage and Culture Certificate Program at Yukon College, developed in partnership with the Government of Yukon, the Yukon First Nations Heritage Group and the Vuntut Gwitch'in Government.

The preservation, revitalization and promotion of Yukon First Nations cultures, languages, identity and traditional knowledge and associated practices are an important objective of the program. Another aim is to deliver training initiatives that address labour market gaps in First Nations heritage sectors and to produce graduates with the advanced skills needed to succeed and take advantage of developing opportunities.

The program pilot commenced in September 2010. It was offered as a full-time one-year certificate, which included a one-month field placement during the spring/summer semester. A second offering of the program is currently running.

Course offerings are accessible, accredited and culturally relevant. Combining theory and practice, the certificate program prepares students for work in the heritage and culture management field, with a specific focus on the Yukon First Nations legacy.

Students can access the program through distance-learning technologies so that they can participate without having to leave their communities or jobs.

One of the First Nations learners who benefitted from the program is a woman who manages a small cultural centre within her home community of Pelly Crossing. She has been managing the facility for several years without formal training in anything from proposal writing to collections management. Thanks to distance-learning technologies, the mother of a young family was able to participate and complete the program with a high grade point average.

She is applying to a southern university with the ultimate aim of one day managing the heritage department of her First Nation.

In addition, a highly successful pilot Heritage and Culture Essential Skills Program was conducted in 2009 in Mayo through a partnership among Nacho Nyak Dun, the Mayo campus of Yukon College, and the Yukon First Nations Heritage Group, which consists of representatives from all 14 Yukon First Nations.

The following year, the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture (DTC) provided financial support to Yukon College to conduct a territory-wide needs assessment at the community level. Based on the results of the needs assessment and the success of the Mayo pilot program, the Department of Tourism and Culture has twice utilized federal Northern Strategies funds to support the development of a permanent heritage and culture program through 2013 and the coordinated delivery of open-access training throughout Yukon.

Each program delivery is also supported by local funding. Most offerings consist of eight to 10 courses and are 12 to 15 weeks in duration. They attract eight to 12 students per course. All courses are delivered in-community, most face-to-face and some via video-conference. Students are welcome to attend individual courses or the entire program, with successful completers receiving appropriate Yukon College certificates.



Governance Program Develops First Nations Management Talent

The need for greater governance capacity has long been identified by all 14 Yukon First Nations.

As a result, a pilot Executive Development Program was created in a 2006 partnership among Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Yukon Territory and Yukon College to develop staff leadership and management skills in First Nations organizations.



The pilot program – open to Champagne and Aishihik elected leaders, executives and senior managers – opened for enrolment in 2007. Building on the experience with the pilot project, Yukon College, in partnership with the territorial government now has created the First Nations Governance and Public Administration program to boost governance capacity among all Yukon First Nations. This permanent program has been open to all Yukon First Nations students since the spring of 2010.

A primary goal is to create capacity to ensure comprehensive implementation of the Umbrella Final Agreement, a self-governance policy document between Ottawa, Yukon and Yukon First Nations. Currently, 11 Yukon First Nations have Final and Self-Government Agreements in effect.

The permanent program will provide executive leadership and management skills and knowledge needed to implement self-government agreements. Another aim is to provide a made-in-Yukon approach that incorporates local knowledge and experiences.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Helping First Nations to Bridge Obstacles to Trades

British Columbia is home to about 198 First Nation bands, most situated in rural areas within resource-rich regions. Yet Aboriginal communities are largely unable to participate within the greater economy because many of their members lack the necessary education and training.

Hampering this even more is a great lack of access to education and training within Aboriginal communities. A large proportion did not complete high school and often lack the confidence to approach their local post-secondary institution to seek education and training.



Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) saw an opportunity to assist through the Bridging to Trades Program that focused on upgrading academic skills needed for entrance tests as well as allowing students to work on their practical skills. Most of the courses in the program allow students to work hands-on in five different trades.

The goal of the Bridging to Trades Program is to increase the number of Aboriginal people becoming registered apprentices and certified tradespeople. NVIT, as well as having campuses in Merritt and Vancouver, serves a large number of Aboriginal communities delivering numerous programs throughout the province and across the country.

NVIT understands many students cannot leave their communities, so the NVIT Trades trailer – with instructors and equipment – goes to them.

Of course, partnerships are made to keep these types of programs going and this program is no different. Our primary source of funding is the Labour Market Agreement with the Government of Canada and the Industry Training Authority in B.C.

With all of these organizations working together to increase the number of Aboriginal people working in or towards trades, NVIT has delivered Bridging to Trades in 11 Aboriginal communities.

Bridging to Trades is a 12-week program providing students the courses required to have greater access to the trades training of their choice, and to the skills required to gain employment.

Students who enrol are predominantly unemployed Aboriginal high school dropouts. They range in age from 18 to 60. The major focus of the program is to increase the confidence of students and lessen their anxiety in an educational setting. NVIT does this through high expectations, and small celebrations to recognize successes.

A success story comes from a former Bridging to Trades student in northeastern B.C. She entered the program without a Grade 12 diploma and was unemployed. She is a single mom who was very interested in obtaining the welding certification to participate in the oil and gas industries in the region. She worked very hard in the program and upon completion was hired by a local private welding company as an apprentice welder. The company will sponsor her to obtain her certification through the local trades-training school. By taking the program in her community, she was able to realize her dream while remaining close to her family.

Audrey is part of the approximately 85 per cent of students who have moved on to other opportunities after completion of the program. Opportunities include further trades-training, employment and further upgrading of math and English. The impact this program in Aboriginal communities, as Audrey's case demonstrates, can be life-changing.



Treasured Cultural Heritage Resources in B.C. Protected by North Island College Partnership

According to local lore, the territory of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation on the western side of Vancouver Island is a place where you walk on a pebble beach watching the whales and waves, and, if you listen closely, hear the voices of the elders and the spirits.

It is also known for the story of Luna, the beloved killer whale that died in March 2006 after being hit by a large boat, and for the site where Europeans and West Coast First Nations met for the first time.

So it should be no surprise that First Nations culture and rich heritage are treasures here. And it is why North Island College and Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation have co-developed a Cultural Heritage Resource Management Program and Partnership.

On completion, students will have acquired entry-level employment skills and knowledge for opportunities in the Aboriginal cultural tourism industry or at interpretive centres and museums.

Skills and knowledge are also transferable to employment opportunities within treaty area, resource management, community research, and other programs related to cultural heritage resource management.

The program has come after many community initiatives. They include construction of a cultural heritage centre at Tsaxana, redesignation of Yuquot as a national historic site in 1999 by the Government of Canada to commemorate first contact between First Nations and the Europeans and various cultural tourism initiatives in different stages of development and implementation, including construction of a new big house, Hisumt maatmaas, which opened in June 2011.

The Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation had two priorities for the program: graduates would complete the equivalent of Grade 11 and Grade 12 English; and they would develop skills and knowledge necessary for employment or post-secondary study.

Northern Island College has had a long-standing relationship with this First Nation and has been providing Adult Basic Education Instruction on-site for many years. Shifting into another form of programming based on community needs was made possible largely by establishing trust and respect, and developing common goals over a decade-long relationship.

Development funding was provided by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education's Aboriginal Special Project Funds. The program was piloted in the 2010/2011 academic year at the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation near Gold River, B.C.

A cohort of nine Mowachaht/Muchalaht members began in September and seven graduated in June. Four of the graduates secured employment immediately on completion, and three chose to continue on to post-secondary study in the fall of 2011. One of the students gave birth to a beautiful daughter last year and has returned this year to complete the program.

Instructional facilities are provided by the Mowachaht/Muchalaht in the adult learning centre, and the instructional schedule accommodates student work schedules, family and community responsibilities. Flexibility provided by on-site programming tailored to student needs is essential to the First Nation in the planning and implementation stages of any programming.

North Island College is very fortunate that Margarita James, a Mowachaht/Muchalaht member, joined the instructional team in the year-one pilot to share her extensive knowledge of Aboriginal administration.

Since tourists usually arrive in May through August, year-round employment in a region with such a small population remains a challenge. However, cultural heritage management activities take place year-round and graduates of the pilot program have been able to continue working in various positions.



Northwest Community College – Commitment to First Nations Spans Fine Art to Exploration and Mining

Commitment to First Nations learners has been longstanding at Northwest Community College with two well-established programs – one in fine arts, the other in exploration and mining.

The Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art at the college was created to honour the legacy of Haida artist and carver, Freda Diesing (1925-2002).



The First Nations Fine Arts program is unique because art is so intrinsically tied to the cultures that invented it. “We teach northern style Northwest Coast Art which is where most of our students are from,” says master carver and program coordinator and instructor, Stan Bevan. The program provides a full set of skills to create a thriving career. The curriculum includes lectures by premier gallery owners, museum curators, dignitaries, cultural advocates and First Nations master artists.

“All those opportunities allowed me to grow as an artist,” says Latham Mack, who is self-employed as a fine artist in Terrace, B.C.

Students can opt for a one-year certificate or a two-year diploma. Those who complete the First Nations Fine Arts Diploma with a GPA of B or better are eligible for acceptance into third year of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Visual or General Fine Arts major) degree program at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Since 2006 there have been 61 graduates – 12 with award-winning accomplishments. Graduates have won YVR Art Foundation Scholarships, earned totem pole and canoe carving commissions, community commissions in Terrace and Kitselas, and exhibited in Northwest Coast Art centres in Vancouver and Seattle.

The program is funded by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education.

In the other major venture for First Nations, students at Northwest’s School of Exploration & Mining (SEM) enrolled in last summer’s Workforce Exploration Skills Training (WEST) program experienced something very different at Ganokwa Camp, north of Smithers.

“This program is life-altering,” says Cody Joseph, a 25-year-old graduate of the WEST program. “I haven’t graduated from anything in my life, and here I am today, graduating.” Cody echoes the sentiment of many of the WEST and SEM graduates.

WEST, a first-of-its-kind in northern BC, is a seven-week training program delivered in the remote bush camp. It features hands-on, experiential employment skills training for careers in exploration, mining and other natural resource industries. The program ran twice in 2011 between June and October 2011. Eligible students received the training at no cost thanks to the support of the Canada-BC Labour Market agreement. WEST is the most recent of a number of innovative programs offered by SEM, and future offerings are planned for 2012.

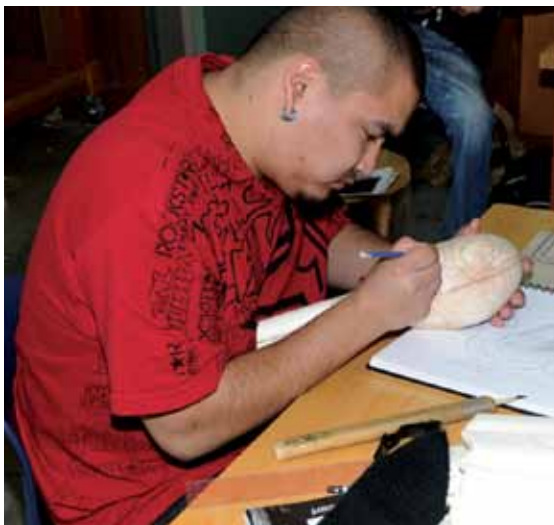
Over the past eight years, more than 850 students have graduated from SEM programs which range in length from one week to two months. Graduates represent more than 70 First Nations groups. Overall, 83 per cent of graduates either found work or chose to continue their studies. Since 2009, 75 per cent of SEM students have been Aboriginal.



Elders in Residence program Supports Aboriginal learners

Northwest Community College has the highest number of Aboriginal students in all of B.C. It is centrally located among 27 First Nations in Northwest B.C. with a geographical range of 103,072 square kilometres.

With 67 per cent of the student population being Aboriginal, there was a need for change in the way Northwest welcomed them.



Enter the Elders in Residence program. It serves to support Aboriginal students and educate faculty, staff, and management. It is offered throughout the academic year at most campuses.

Elders in Residence fosters inter-generational communication, promotes Indigenous ways of knowing and being, creates a welcoming and warm environment for all, and provides emotional support to students.

Aboriginal Mentorship, Kinship at Vancouver Island University

Mentorship and belonging are the prime ingredients in Vancouver Island University's (VIU) Aboriginal development program.

VIU has approximately 2,000 Aboriginal students attending various programs at four campuses – Nanaimo, Cowichan, Parksville and Powell River. While many of these campuses are geographically accessible to many students, Aboriginal learners expressed a need for a sense of belonging to support their participation in educational opportunities.

Community Cousins: VIU's Aboriginal Mentorship Program has been developed as a program intended to support students through direct contact with elders, increased exposure to indigenous knowledge, and most importantly by fostering a sense of community on campus among Aboriginal students.

Initially this program was supported by the Ministry of Advanced Education's Aboriginal Service Plan funding. Two cohorts of Aboriginal mentors received training and provided peer mentorship to students within VIU. In 2011, VIU received further funding from the Counselling Foundation of Canada to enhance

this program further and extend mentorship to Aboriginal community-based programs.



The goals of Community Cousins are to provide students with respect and recognition for who they are and the unique qualities they possess. Intrinsic worth is further supported through training and skill development that focuses on a path to self-empowerment through outreach to others.

From here, Aboriginal mentors are encouraged to engage in various types of leadership activities and become involved in the VIU community and beyond. The mentors share their university experiences with current and prospective Aboriginal students. They also assist students with the challenges and opportunities related to university life.

An elder assists in the facilitation of the Community Cousins training and provides guidance and support for the mentors as they uncover their skills as peer leaders. Thus far, there have been more than 20 students participating in Community Cousins. These students represent many of the local First Nations on the Island and throughout the province such as Snuneymuxw First Nation, Dzawadaenuxw First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Heiltsuk/Cree, Mowachaht, Nuuchah-nulth, and also from the Métis nation.

One student recalls what it felt like wandering around VIU without seeing another Aboriginal person. While students eventually discover support services for Aboriginal learners on campus, they express a desire to have known sooner. "I felt really isolated and alone," recalls one student on his early days. "It is my goal not to have other students feel that way."

A mentor from the first cohort adds: "The Aboriginal mentorship program was one of the highlights of completing my undergraduate degrees at VIU. Being part of the Aboriginal Mentorship program connected me with a network of amazing individuals."



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Douglas College
Collège Éducentre
Justice Institute of British Columbia
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langara College
College of New Caledonia
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
North Island College
Northern Lights College
Northwest Community College
Okanagan College
College of the Rockies
Selkirk College
University of the Fraser Valley
Vancouver Community College (VCC)
Vancouver Island University

Yukon

Yukon College

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Grant MacEwan University
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Saskatchewan

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Cumberland Regional College
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Mohawk College
Niagara College
Northern College
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Sault College
Seneca College
Sheridan College Institute of Technology
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University of Guelph, Kemptville Campus
Université de Guelph, Campus d'Alfred

Quebec

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Collège Ahuntsic
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Cégep de Chicoutimi
Dawson College

Collège Édouard-Montpetit
Collège François-Xavier-Garneau
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Collège Gérald-Godin
Heritage College
Institut de technologie agroalimentaire
Cégep John Abbott College
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Association of Canadian Community Colleges

1 Rideau Street, Suite 701, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 8S7 Tel. 613-746-2222

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