

MEDIA RELEASE

**April 23, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MR15-022**

NIC Nursing Student Elected National President

An NIC nursing student is changing the face of nursing education across Canada, becoming the first NIC student elected to lead a national organization.

Dawn Tisdale is the new president of the Canadian Nursing Student Association, the voice of nearly 30,000 student nurses across Canada.



NIC nursing student Dawn Tisdale leads nearly 30,000 registered nursing students across Canada as the elected president of the Canadian Nursing Student Association this year. She hopes to raise awareness of Aboriginal health issues across Canada.

“It’s still registering with me,” said Tisdale. “Across Canada many nursing students don’t know where we’re located, but they know about our focus on Aboriginal health.”

One of her first goals is to act on a resolution to ensure registered nursing students understand Aboriginal health perspectives before they graduate. The resolution would see nursing students work with the Aboriginal Nursing Association of Canada to lobby for curriculum changes.

“It’s kind of shocking to hear how little students learn about Aboriginal health,” she said. “All some students get is a few hours in one course but at NIC listening, learning and respecting other cultures is built in. I’m honoured they’re talking about NIC’s curriculum as something all Canadian nurses should have.”

Students in NIC’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree learn about diverse peoples and communities from day one. By the end of their third year, they can opt to attend field schools in remote Aboriginal communities with the Wuikinuxv Nation of Rivers Inlet or Dzawada’enuxw Nation in Kingcome Inlet on BC’s Central Coast.

“North Island College is way ahead of any other school of nursing,” said Dr. Evelyn Voyageur one of four Elders in Residence at NIC and former president of the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada.

As a student, Voyageur dreamed of building cultural inclusivity into nurse education. She turned that passion into a career redeveloping nursing curriculum at universities across BC and found her home at North Island College.

“For a long time First Nations traditional values and ways were not included in the education system – it still isn’t – but North Island College is doing that. You can hear about the nurses coming out of here... and I’m glad to be a part of it.”

The BSN programs’ goal is to get student nurses to know themselves so they can work anywhere - with any nationality.

Tisdale is doing that. After being laid off from two closed group homes for adults with disabilities she came back to college – determined to upgrade her education and explore new careers.

She didn’t consider nursing until a friend insisted she give it a try.

“I had some pretty old ideas of what nurses do and I didn’t think it would be challenging enough,” Tisdale said. “I thought it was about taking doctor’s orders, not advocating for patients. Meanwhile, here I am now in the most rewarding and challenging degree ever.”

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How does she balance her full-time studies, leading a national student nursing association, and being the mom of a five year old?

"I almost didn't," Tisdale said. "I didn't know if I could do the job well but my instructors are super supportive. They let me use my role as president in my Nursing Practice courses, which focus on community health promotion and nursing leadership."

NIC instructors encourage all students to tailor their course work and practice experiences into meaningful and relevant learning.

"It never ceases to amaze me what people can do when they are passionate about something and supported to explore their potential," says instructor Joanna Fraser. "Dawn is an excellent example of the amazing students we have who are having an impact in nursing in the Comox Valley, in Kingcome Inlet, Nepal, or on a national stage. I am very proud of our students and what we do at North Island College.

Tisdale took over as CNSA in March. This October, NIC's Canadian Nursing Student Association chapter will host nursing students from Manitoba west at a regional conference in the Comox Valley.

For more information on NIC's nursing programs visit www.nic.bc.ca/health. To contact the Canadian Nursing Students' Association, visit www.cnsa.ca.

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