

MEDIA RELEASE

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NIC Changes Lives Through Education – One Student, One Program at a Time

New Thunderbird Mall campus makes NIC programs more accessible

NIC celebrated the opening of its new \$1.4 million campus on Thursday, January 18 with an open house that brought together students, faculty and community partners from across the North Island.

“I know how important advanced education and training is to the local community,” said NIC President John Bowman. “It opens doors to employment and is critical to the health, social well-being and economic development of the North Island.”

Port Hardy resident Janet Hanuse has seen firsthand the difference local education makes – in her own life and in her community.

“The whole reason I was able to go as far as I did was because NIC offered education close to home,” she said. “It was the gateway to where I am today.”

She began her education at NIC 20 years ago when Early Childhood Education courses were offered on-site at the Gwa'sala -'Nakwakda'xw Nations in Port Hardy.

The experience was a stepping stone to upgrading and university transfer courses, which she took at NIC before transferring to a psychology degree at UVic. She spent five years balancing school and family commitments, but it was worth the effort.

Minutes after Hanuse completed her last undergrad exam, she was offered a job as executive director of the Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre in Port Hardy. Since starting at the centre in January 2011, she has cultivated a comfortable, supportive space where community members have access to the resources and services they need to succeed.

One of the ways she does this is by collaborating with organizations such as NIC. She has partnered with the college many times over the years, offering specialized programs where NIC faculty have taught English, math and Kwak'wala upgrading courses on site.

“Our goal was to reduce as many barriers as we could,” said Hanuse. “We wanted to make ABE and the institution of education itself a safe place. Many of these students would never have gone to NIC if the college hadn't come to them.”

Now, with NIC next door, it is easy for these students to continue their upgrading or transfer into a university-level program.

“Having NIC at Thunderbird Mall removes a huge transportation barrier,” said Hanuse. “NIC's previous location was a long walk for a mother of four who just raced home to make dinner and now has to get to night courses.”

Access to post-secondary education on the North Island is a key priority for NIC. In fall 2017, the college piloted its first ever first-ever Awi'nakola Land-Based Learning program, teaching Kwak'wala, English and math upgrading with support from local elders. NIC also piloted an entry-level tourism program where local students gained industry certifications and prepared for NIC's Tourism and Hospitality Management certificate, which starts January 29, 2018.



Access to education locally was the gateway for Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre Executive Director Janet Hanuse to achieve her goals. With the opening of a new campus at Thunderbird Mall, NIC will continue provide accessible education for future generations.

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This spring, 16 students will receive their Education Assistant/Community Support certificates, the first students to celebrate graduation at NIC's new campus. This is great news for Hanuse, who sees a need for community support workers on the North Island.

"There are many agencies struggling to find staff qualified to fill positions," she said. "When NIC offers these programs close to home it adds huge capacity to our community."

For a full list of NIC courses and programs visit www.nic.bc.ca.ca/programs or call 250-949-7912.

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