



## President's Newsletter

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SEPTEMBER 2017

Dear NIC Colleagues,

I want to wish you all a very happy and successful 2017/18 college year! Hopefully, the past summer allowed you time to enjoy some rest and relaxation as well as the amazing Vancouver Island weather.

I also want to express appreciation for all the work done by many people across the College during the summer to get ready for the fall term. It is a pleasure to welcome more than 20 new faculty and staff employees for the beginning of the fall term.

September is an exciting time, with the start of a new academic year, recommencement of full educational programming, student services and college operations. It is a great time to update you on recent events and some of the major new developments ahead for your college.

### Sabbatical Leave

On a personal note, I am happy to be back to my regular work duties following completion of my sabbatical leave (May 1 to August 31, 2017). I look forward to sharing in the coming weeks more about what I did and learned through my project work. In summary, it was a very positive and beneficial experience for me and I believe for the College!

I am very grateful to Lisa Domae, for serving as Acting President, during my leave. It was a busy four months for her and I know she did an excellent job taking care of business and advancing college progress on many fronts.

During the leave, I met with 81 individual community leaders and organizational partners. Through these interviews, I received many positive comments about the work NIC people do and the value our communities attach to their relationships with us. I also heard many suggestions about ways we can strengthen our connections and increase the impacts we have, working in collaboration with current and new partners. I learned a great

deal about the many issues and challenges facing our region and local communities. Clearly, the educational programs and services we provide are critically important to the people of Northern Vancouver Island, and to supporting community and economic development in many ways.

I will be formally presenting details and my follow-up action plans stemming from the project (within the framework of NIC Plan 2020 Priorities and Goals) at presentations on each campus in October and November.

### New BC Provincial Government

The new provincial government was sworn into office on July 18. The Honourable Melanie Mark was appointed Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST). The Minister's [biography](#) and [Mandate Letter](#) are available on the government website. It is wonderful to note that many of the priorities identified in the Minister's mandate letter relate to access, student supports and programming, which align well with NIC plans and priorities.

The government has moved quickly to act on two of its election platform promises relevant to the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training:

- The first [announcement](#) on August 8 was to announce the elimination of tuition fees for Adult Basic Education and English language learning programs in the K-12 and public post-secondary education systems. The Ministry will complete a consultation process with institutions this fall to determine how funding will be provided to offset costs.

- The second [announcement](#) on September 1 was to expand the provincial tuition waiver program for former youth in care to all 25 public post-secondary institutions.

The government tabled its Provincial Budget 2017/18 Update on September 11, 2017. The province's [media release](#) provides an overview of the highlights. There were no major surprises for the post-secondary education system.

### Minister Visits NIC Comox Valley Campus

On August 14, the College welcomed the Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training and MLA for Vancouver – Mount Pleasant, on her first visit to NIC. Her visit formed part of a two-week, 25-stop tour of BC's public post-secondary institutions.

Minister Mark was traditionally welcomed by K'ómoks First Nations Council Member Sharlene Frank and Elders, Fran Prince and Fernanda Pare. After hearing our delegation's perspectives of NIC's role in the community and meeting with students, Minister Mark and her staff left with a strong impression of the learning environment of which we at NIC are so proud.

We hope to have Minister Mark return to visit other NIC campuses in the coming year. Members of the College Board and administration will also be meeting with the Minister and other government members to brief them on our priorities and plans as soon as possible.

### College Services and Programs

Building on the work and success of the past year, 2017/18 will see a number of new and enhanced program initiatives and services:

- the [Joy of Lifelong Learning](#) program for students 55+;
- first-year business courses offered at Campbell River campus;
- the first intake of the Community Mental Health Worker program in Port Alberni in partnership with the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council (NTC);
- the Awi'nakola land-based upgrading program in Mount Waddington;
- Film and TV Crew Training;
- LPN bridging to Bachelor of Science in Nursing;
- introduction of the McDonald's to NIC business degree pathway; and
- ITV courses, offered at increased locations and in increased numbers.

### Campbell River Campus Expansion and Renovations

Work on the Campbell River campus facilities project is progressing well. On September 18, a Town Hall and Information Night was held at the campus to provide community members, college students and employees with information regarding the project, an overview of its progress to date, as well as the future phases on construction and renovations. NIC's Campbell River campus [project website](#) will be updated regularly.

### Mount Waddington Campus Relocation

The Mount Waddington regional campus in Port Hardy is moving to a new location closer to the downtown centre of community activity and will be in close proximity to important partner organizations. The renovations to the new campus location at the Thunderbird Mall in Port Hardy will be completed later this fall. College operations at the new campus will begin in January 2018. For more information on this exciting development go [here](#).

## Comox Valley Student Housing

This fall, we will be establishing a Comox Valley Student Housing Planning Committee which will include participation from faculty, staff, administration and students to consider key issues as well as college and community impacts with respect to the planning, construction and operations of student housing on campus. The committee will review and refresh the 2015 Student Housing Feasibility Study, identify implications and make recommendations with respect to existing college policies and services and future requirements.

The new NDP provincial government has committed to:

*Create new student housing by removing unnecessary rules that prevent universities and colleges from building affordable student housing. (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mandate Letter, July 18, 2017)*

We are hopeful the provincial government will move quickly to fulfill this commitment and we will therefore be able to proceed expeditiously in 2018/19 to complete planning and begin construction of a student residence on the Comox Valley campus.

## Diversity Matters

In support of the NIC Plan 2020 goal to "Foster an open organizational culture that supports and celebrates diversity and learning," we have established the Diversity Matters Working Group (DMWG). This fall and winter the initiative will focus on engaging college employees and students in campus-based conversations about:

- *What would a truly diverse and inclusive college and campus environment look like?*
- *What is NIC doing well in order to foster a diverse and inclusive community?*
- *What areas can we improve upon?*

I hope you will be able to participate in one of these discussions, to share your experiences and suggestions and to help make NIC an even more positive learning and work environment for

everyone. More information about Diversity Matters @NIC will be available soon on the myNIC portal.

## Communication, Feedback and Involvement

In the spring, the results of NIC Employee Engagement Survey (conducted in November 2016) were published and discussed at campus-based forums and other meetings in April 2017.

The survey results and our discussions about them, pointed to:

- a widely held desire and need to see improvements to information flows;
- increased opportunities to provide feedback and input on decision-making, as well as foster stronger connections and enhanced relationships across departmental boundaries; and
- more frequent interactions between college senior leadership and college employees and students generally.

As a result, we will be undertaking several new formal and informal activities in the coming year, to address these concerns. Please watch for new communication tools, avenues for feedback, input and participation in college affairs as well as opportunities for dialogue across the College.

I look forward to providing you with more regular written reports (in October, February, May, August) regarding topics that are of interest and significance, as well as to hosting more frequent get-togethers on each of the campuses to enable conversation and feedback.

I welcome your comments, suggestions and questions. Please don't hesitate to contact me via email, telephone or in-person



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