

College of The North Atlantic

CNA, Nunatsiavut Government celebrate graduates of indigenized program

Early Childhood Education program has successful outcome in Nain

NAIN, NUNATSIYAVUT – A group of Early Childhood Education (ECE) program students in Nain – a community of approximately 1,200 people on the north coast of Labrador – have paved the way for bolstering an inclusive environment when it comes to Indigenous culture and learning.

In June 2019, College of the North Atlantic's (CNA) first Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate program with indigenized aspects got underway and became a resounding success.

The ground-breaking initiative was funded by the federal government, under a post-secondary partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, and was fully supported by the long-standing partnership between CNA and the Nunatsiavut Government.

David Smith, Dean of Academics, Applied Arts & Tourism (AAAT), says CNA was excited to offer this ECE program as a specialized offering via the college's Customized and Continuous Learning (CCL) office. It is an innovative example of how positive partnerships between CNA and various levels of government, particularly Nunatsiavut, enable the college to provide unique opportunities for students, while at the same time, helping boost the local community's early learning and childcare needs.

Since the beginning stages, there was an invaluable team of people supporting this program and every decision made was with the students and their success at the forefront. Behind the scenes the groundwork to get this program off the ground was extensive and innovative.

Focus groups were formed and meetings were held with the community, including the elders, to explain the project and incorporate their vital feedback into the program. There was also extensive research conducted to learn about the culture and to enhance the curriculum. In addition, CNA worked with the provincial government to offer this as a special project. As part of the initial proposal, measures were put in place so that students would not only learn at the facility in Nain with the indigenized curriculum, but they would also experience first-hand CNA's demonstration childcare centre at its Happy Valley-Goose Bay campus.

Post-secondary quality standards were maintained, and Indigenous cultural aspects were incorporated into the curriculum. As a result, the class could apply these significant aspects to their own culture and enjoy meaningful creative experiences. The ECE graduates were also qualified to apply for their Level I Child Care Services provincial certification and apply to continue their training in Early Childhood education.

The traditional ECE program continues to be offered from CNA's Happy Valley-Goose Bay campus (as well as other campuses and via online: see here). The college plans to extend the opportunity for additional Indigenous-specific ECE offerings to other Labrador communities. As well, Smith says as each program in her school of study is reviewed, the aim is to ensure Indigenous components are included.

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