In response to growth in the technology sector, Native Education College (NEC) has teamed up with Professional Quality Assurance (PQA) Testing Ltd. and PLATO Testing to offer a six-month software tester training program for Aboriginal learners.

“There isn’t a lot of traditional software programs to begin with so the fact that this now exists is pretty unique,” says Christin Wiedemann, co-CEO of PQA Testing, which designed and developed the curriculum for the offering and will also have its experts teaching classes in addition to NEC teachers. “The program is capped at 15 students and is very much focused on engaging the students and providing one-on-one time with the instructors.”

Sandy Moore is the business program manager at NEC. She says this undertaking is the perfect opportunity for those who are interested in learning the practical skills and knowledge needed to enter the IT industry but lack experience.

“The software tester training program only requires applicants to have completed Grade 10 and be able to type 25 words-per-minute,” she says. “There is also a literacy assessment. Young people or someone who is interested in technology but has never worked in the field and wants a career would benefit from the program, which has a paid internship that may lead to employment.”

Of the program’s six months, two are spent at PLATO Testing, an organization dedicated to providing Aboriginal people with education and information technology employment opportunities across Canada in the software testing industry. Keith McIntosh, who founded PQA in 1997, also founded PLATO Testing.

“The fact that the company trains students initially and then continues to train them while they are on the job leads to more opportunities,” Moore says.

Once they complete the program, students are eligible to take an exam to become internationally certified as a software tester through the International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB).

“I would say it is really the only certification in software testing that is recognized and it gives them leverage in the field,” says Wiedemann.

Registration for the program, which starts on Jan. 30, is still open. For more, visit necvancouver.org.