Native Education College links arms with community

Students serve as voice of Indigenous community through local partnerships

Fifty years ago when it was founded, Native Education College (NEC) began as a project to meet the educational needs of Indigenous people who relocated to Vancouver from their First Nation communities. It now offers more than 15 programs, has strong community ties and is continuing to expand.

“It’s been a long evolution,” says NEC’s president Dan Guinan. “The fact that we are continuing to grow reflects the need for an Aboriginal post-secondary institution. Here, people are living and learning their culture as they are completing their education.”

During the past 50 years, as its offerings and student population have increased, NEC has forged close ties with various organizations to ensure its students are receiving a well-rounded education. One example, says Guinan, is NEC’s transfer agreements and work with post-secondary institutions to attract more Indigenous learners.

“We work with Douglas College, for example, to encourage students to transition into the college system by having students in certain programs attend some classes at Douglas and others at NEC,” explains Guinan. “We also have transfer agreements with a wide range of schools including Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.”

Another example of NEC’s community ties, says Guinan, is the school’s partnerships with local employment training agencies and employers as well as its membership in the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, a coalition of urban Indigenous organizations that serves as the voice of the local Indigenous community.

“By becoming so involved in the community, we are meeting the needs of not only our students but also the community and, going forward, we are trying to bring the community up in terms of socioeconomic position,” says Guinan.

To commemorate its 50th anniversary, NEC will hold a celebration on Sept. 28 at which it will recognize alumni, reconnect with and celebrate some of NEC’s past leaders and look to the future, says Guinan.

“I am looking forward to connecting with all the people who have been involved in NEC and recognizing that we have made this happen and transformed a lot of lives,” he says.

APPLY TO NEC for CERTIFICATE and DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

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