To prepare students for employability success, Native Education College’s (NEC), health care assistant (HCA) certificate program takes a holistic approach that includes a First Nations perspective.

“We have embedded an Aboriginal lens into the rigorous curriculum, which follows the Provincial Health Care Assistant Program Curriculum with the same learning outcomes offered at public colleges in B.C.,” says Pooran Qasimi, NEC’s health sciences program manager. “We invite elders from the community to speak, we have medicine and cultural workshops, and students learn about who they are as First Nations and how to identify with others’ cultures as well.”

While the 10-month program, which equips students with the knowledge and skills to function as HCAs in both private and public settings, is geared toward Aboriginal learners, Qasimi insists NEC has an open door policy that is inclusive of all learners.

“While preference is given to First Nations, it’s open to anyone who wants to make a change in people’s lives because as an HCA you become an important part of a health care team and you are a nurse’s eyes and ears because you spend so much time with clients,” she says. “It’s also a flexible entryway into other areas of health care, with students eventually returning to school to upgrade their skills or move into programs such as nursing.”

NEC’s HCA students spend the first six months of the program undergoing training that includes a balance between theory and lab work in an environment that Qasimi says fosters a close-knit community.

They are evaluated every step of the way and must maintain a 65 per cent average to participate in the program’s three field placement opportunities during its last four months.

The first placement is at a complex care residential facility, the second is in a community setting and during the last field placement, each student shadows an HCA at a complex care residential facility.

“We are always trying to get our students into the best facilities,” says Qasimi, “and many of them get hired after practicum because employers notice the way they present themselves and give care in a compassionate and holistic manner.”

**START YOUR EDUCATIONAL PATH at NATIVE EDUCATION COLLEGE**

**WHY CHOOSE NEC?**

- Elder-in-residence
- Cultural activities
- Peer mentoring
- Small class sizes

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