Fostering Indigenous identity in early childhood centres

To help meet the demand for Aboriginal early childhood educators, Native Education College (NEC) offers an 11-month Aboriginal early childhood education certificate that teaches students to plan and deliver programs for childcare centres that incorporate the Indigenous perspective.

“It is so important that Aboriginal kids are brought up by Aboriginal teachers who will help to foster a strong and proud identity,” says Inga Kossoroukova, manager for NEC’s Aboriginal early childhood education program. “So, when we developed our curriculum we looked at child development from traditional Aboriginal point of view, which considers spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional development.”

While in the program, students experience a combination of theory and practical application that includes hands-on activities such as case studies, reflective writing, research and class discussions, and observation opportunities at childcare settings.

“This program doesn’t feature teachers as dispensers of information,” says Kossoroukova. “Instead, teachers are facilitators of learning who are guiding the students and it becomes an amazing opportunity for students to learn from each other as well.”

The practical highlight of the program, says Kossoroukova, are three practicum opportunities occurring at various times during the program. Students start with a 35-hour practicum shortly after entering the program before completing a 140-hour practicum and concluding the offering with a 196-hour practicum.

“Students are placed in various centres because we want them to get as much experience as possible and by the end of the last practicum they are encouraged to take over leadership by planning and implementing activities,” she says. “The majority of students are hired during practicum.”

While a high number of students go on to secure employment and work towards becoming early childhood educators once they graduate, others further their education. NEC also offers Aboriginal infant and toddler and Aboriginal special needs diploma programs, and has agreements with Capilano University and the University of British Columbia that recognize credits earned at NEC.

“This program really works to give students the confidence they need for a career or more education through a well-rounded Aboriginal teaching methodology,” says Kossoroukova.

APPLY TO NEC for CERTIFICATE and DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

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August 25 at NEC - Longhouse
August 28 at YWCA Crabtree Corner

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