

For Immediate Release – **Thursday, July 2, 2015**

ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP COURSE AIMS TO CLOSE EDUCATION GAP

Aboriginals are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population, according to statistics from [Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada](#). This trend is most pronounced in major cities where, in some cases, the Aboriginal population has more than doubled over the past 25 years.

In 2006, 28% of the urban Aboriginal population was under 15 years old compared to 17% of the Non- Aboriginal population.

Though an increasing number of Aboriginal people are completing post-secondary education in Canada, a report finds that not enough members of those communities are taking charge of their lives.

The [Aboriginal Economic Progress Report](#) released this month by the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board states: “Since 2006, Aboriginal people in Canada have made some gains, but significant gaps remain between the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal population.”

According to Statistics Canada, 27.9 per cent of the Aboriginal population had some form of college completion in 2011, compared to 29.1 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.

This summer, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), a school built to serve BC’s growing Aboriginal population, is offering a unique professional development opportunity to help develop community leaders and close the education gap. The courses will focus on leadership skills to help train and spark excitement in emerging leaders in Aboriginal communities.

“People think that if they don’t have the title of Chief and they are not a member of Council, they aren’t a leader,” said NVIT Dean John Chenoweth. “Everyone truly is a leader and everyone has a voice.”

Chenoweth said the goal of the [two intensive week-long courses](#) is to initiate dialogue about leadership, with the goal of inspiring young Aboriginals to take ownership of their lives.

“The leadership style that we’re taught through our stories is that we lead through self-sacrifice and service,” said Chenoweth, a member of the Okanagan Nation.

NVIT is an accredited educational institution that was founded in 1983 by five First Nations Bands of the Nicola Valley. The school provides a supportive aboriginal environment in a setting where diversity is valued.

NVIT's programs include more than 300 transferable courses. While NVIT is founded on Indigenous Knowledge and culture, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners enjoy an accredited, relevant learning experience. As with all programming at NVIT, the Leadership Intensive is open to learners of all cultures who are prepared to share knowledge and actively participate in a transformational learning experience.

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