

University College of the North

Because of their harsh climate and sparse population, among other factors, many remote communities in northern Manitoba face unique challenges connected with educational and training opportunities.

Potential students have less access to post-secondary educational opportunities near their home, and even if they do access these opportunities, they may not be carried out in a culturally appropriate manner.

The University College of the North (UCN) was created to address some of these barriers facing northern and Aboriginal learners. While Universities are not usually considered CED initiatives, UCN is being included in this series of profiles in part to demonstrate how an educational institution can incorporate the “CED Principles” into its geographic location and educational focus, and in part because UCN has gone beyond this to incorporate a strong local, Aboriginal governance model that is rooted in the northern communities.

Established on July 1, 2004, UCN continued the

certificate/diploma programs and services of the previously created Keewatin Community College, with the added authority to grant post-secondary degrees. UCN is devoted to community and northern development, and seeks to reflect the Aboriginal reality and cultural diversity of northern Manitoba.

Their network of campuses and regional centres throughout Manitoba’s north allowed students to access programs and services that were closer to their home communities. This institution is rooted in the sacred teachings of Aboriginal peoples; truth, wisdom, honesty, humility, courage, love and respect. UCN prepares lifelong learners and grad- ➔



→ uates as positive and effective leaders through the creation of knowledge, and the development and delivery of innovative and ethical programming. Their mission is to ensure that northern communities and people will have opportunities, knowledge and skills to contribute to an economically, environmentally, and culturally healthy society inclusive and respectful of diverse Northern and Aboriginal values and beliefs.

Over 400 faculty, staff, and Elders instruct and support UCN's students. The main campuses are located in The Pas and Thompson, but other programs and services are offered at regional centres in 12 different communities, nine of which are First Nations communities. These services include an Elders program that incorporates traditional teachings and information on Aboriginal issues, a role model program, circle meetings, and substance abuse, family and general counseling.

UCN offers a Bachelor of Science in Health program, designed to provide students with the first two years of pre-professional health study. A four-year Joint Baccalaureate Nursing program is also offered in partnership with the University of Manitoba. Here, students focus on community-based approaches to health care, and are able to complete all four years of the program at UCN's The Pas or Thompson campus. Strategically selecting health education is not beneficial for the student, but also for local communities who gain healthcare professionals.

UCN also recognizes the existence of non-traditional students, such as Aboriginal learners, single parents, and adult learners. The Health Access Program (HAP) and the Health Transition Certificate Pro-

gram are both designed for these students. HAP students learn about different health fields, and build personal skills for academic success. The Health Transition Certificate Program helps students take the first step towards professional health careers requiring post secondary education in two ways. First, it helps build students' skills in math, science and writing. Second, it helps students transition to university culture, including study skills and structured study time. In addition to healthcare training, UCN also hosts Arts, Science, Business, Education, Trades, and Technology faculties. Moreover, UCN is the only institution in Manitoba that offers all four levels of apprenticeship in Industrial Mechanics.

UCN has a tri-cameral system of governance. The governing body is called the Governing Council, which has two advisory bodies: the Learning Council, which advises on academic issues, and the Council of Elders, which provides

overall guidance and wisdom for UCN operations and programming. Both councils have representation on the Governing Council.

UCN's governance structure, lifestyle-tailored programming, regional centres, incorporation of Aboriginal and northern perspectives, and its unique student services, all work together to improve access to education for northern students. The result is jobs created throughout the north, educational opportunities brought to people who would otherwise not be able to access them, employability and labour market skills enhanced, and a model by which the communities benefiting from UCN's presence are including in the decision making.

UCN is devoted to community and northern development, and seeks to reflect the Aboriginal reality and cultural diversity of northern Manitoba.