



BC Government Post-Secondary Funding Review July 2022



Nuu-chah-nulth

Kwak'wala

Liq'wala

Island Comox

The above words mean ‘welcome’ in the four languages of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka’wakw, Liḡwítḡdaḡw, and Coast Salish people.

North Island College is honoured to acknowledge the traditional territories of the combined 35 First Nations of the Nuuchahnulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional and unceded territories the College's campuses are situated.



1. NIC's most important contributions to the economic, social, and environmental health of British Columbia

NIC's most important contribution to the economic, social, and environmental health of British Columbians is our accessible, flexible, and responsive approaches to learning that increase the participation of North Islanders in the province's skilled economies. As an active member of BC's post-secondary system, we fully embrace our purpose as a [college](#) and our role as an [anchor institution](#) in the over 50 rural and remote communities, inclusive of [35 First Nations](#), that we have the privilege of serving.

We are a community college that is passionate about our [mandate](#) to provide comprehensive education and training to the people of the North Island and Central Coast. Our broad range of year-round, high-quality is a gateway to business, industry and [further post-secondary education](#). Embedded in community, we bring our resources and knowledge to civic tables that work together to grow the overall well-being of the people and localities we serve. Our holistic approach to building community well-being weaves economic, social, and environmental contributions to the province into our student-centred education and training. We collaborate with First Nations, local governments, businesses, industry, and the community to create education and training that is culturally relevant, environmentally sustainable and based on regional labour market needs. This practical and relationship-based approach to education and training is essential to the economic health of the region's people. Our partners identify prospective programming and prospective students, ensuring that more North Islanders have access to education and training, leading to careers in high-demand and high-income fields.

Our accessible and comprehensive programming contributes to a skilled labour force that keeps rural and remote economies running. NIC graduates keep daycares, social service agencies, hospitals, and schools open. Our graduates in accounting, office administration, trades, culinary, technology, arts, web design and marketing serve the small businesses, trades, forestry operations, mines, tourism sector, and aquaculture farms that ground North Island economies. Our community capacity building extends beyond meeting core labour market needs. Rural and remote North Islanders are facing major technological, economic, environmental, and regulatory changes in key industries like forestry, mining, and aquaculture. NIC supports these transitions with programming that blends social and environmental awareness with the skills that technologization requires. For example, developed at local industry tables, NIC's [Coastal Forest Worker certificate](#) integrates teachings about Indigenous lands and culture and leading environmental practices with hands-on skills acquisition and employability outcomes. The certificate includes the technical, math, engineering, applied technology and data management skills that careers in today's forestry industry require. Our [Regenerative Farming](#) micro-credential supports female entrepreneurship and community resiliency through students' local acquisition of sustainable farming knowledge and skills.

Given the profound changes in many of the North Island's key industries, our labour market programming is increasingly oriented towards regional economic diversification. For example, BC's Film industry has set new rural production records and is experiencing severe skilled labour shortages. NIC's suite of [motion picture](#) micro-credentials, developed with [INFilm](#) and offered in partnership with [Martini Film Studios](#), sees students from across rural BC learning theory online and gathering together for short, applied learning experiences. We also harness the College's [expertise](#) to advance clean economic diversification through localized innovation activities that improve the province's social and environmental health. Our students' learning extends beyond the classroom to solve real-world challenges, which embed experiential learning opportunities within social innovation projects. For

example, by partnering with small companies like [Cascadia Seaweed](#) and local First Nations, [NIC's student researchers](#) are increasing the viability of the environmentally sustainable [seaweed industry](#). Economic development and diversification initiatives like [these](#) have the revenue potential to provide high-wage jobs in small communities while being sustainable and culturally appropriate.

NIC is at our best when we partner to access to the economic and social prosperity that post-secondary education and training affords. These innovations in access are how we fulfill our responsibility to increase the labour market participation of those impacted by COVID-19 and underrepresented and vulnerable groups, advancing the fulfillment of our [mandate](#).

Our 50 years of experience demonstrates that training people in place allows them to live and prosper in those places. In addition to offerings at [four permanent campuses and a learning centre](#), NIC offers approximately 15% of our programming in-community, primarily in Indigenous communities. Yet providing education and training as close to home as possible is only one of the elements of NIC's access platform. We employ a multi-faceted approach to encouraging participation. Eliminating barriers is core to improving access to education for the region's residents. Open admission requirements, reserved seats for under-represented groups, year-round programming, very low tuition, generous financial aid, priority on-campus childcare, academic and support services and on-campus student employment all enable student success. Students who complete the first two years of their [university studies](#) at NIC have guaranteed admission to Vancouver Island's universities.

Innovations in self-directed, flexible learning, such as stackable short-term credentials, are how we increase student attainment of the post-secondary education and training that labour market participation requires. Flexible learning with integrated student services offered year-round facilitates student participation across time and space. For example, our open admission, online, 12-week [Medical Terminology Skills Micro-credential](#) meets Island Health's requirements and provides full credit toward an [Office Administration](#) certificate which ladders into [NIC's Bachelor of Business Administration](#).

These innovations in access allow more students to be successful. This success enables their labour market participation and leads to the social contributions that higher incomes generate and the growth of place-based economies. Our success in widening access to post-secondary education and training is reflected in the diversity of the NIC student body. Over 7,000, mostly regional, mostly part-time, students attend NIC each year. 20% of our students are Indigenous, 20% have a documented disability and well over a third are the first in their family to attend post-secondary education. Just under 20% of the region's secondary school students do not graduate high school, ranging up to 34% in rural and remote areas.

Still, NIC continues to serve an under-served regional population with some of BC's lowest levels of post-secondary education and most significant barriers to participation. [Labour market projections](#) indicate that enabling the workforce participation of all people will be necessary for British Columbia's future economic health. NIC's innovations in access increase this participation. Changes to the funding model that align with these successful approaches, the specific needs of the people we serve, our collaborative models of education, and the [Vancouver Island/Coast](#) labour market, would increase NIC's ability to grow the skilled labour force. Improvements that target the real costs of educating students where they are, both geographically and in terms of educational preparedness and personal readiness, would enhance NIC's ability to increase our collegial contribution to BC's widely respected post-secondary system and the real and pressing needs of the region we serve.

2. Promoting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

NIC is an [Indigenous-led](#) college which recognizes the authority and direction of the combined [35 First Nations](#) of the Nuuchahnulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish traditions on whose traditional and unceded territories the College's campuses are situated. NIC also acknowledges the 4 Métis Chartered Communities throughout the region. Under their leadership, we promote reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through our actions and commitments. NIC's commitment to reconciliation is enshrined in our governance model, [strategic plan](#), [Indigenization plan](#), and operations.

In this work, we are accountable to the NIC [Indigenous Education Council](#) (IEC) composed of members from each of the 35 First Nations, 4 Métis Chartered Communities, and local Indigenous organizations. A [leading practice in BC](#), the IEC gives voice to the educational goals of Indigenous people in the region and provides advice and direction in all matters relating to NIC's vision, mission, and strategic direction. Three regional advisory committees identify local education and training priorities and advise on community and economic development plans.

In 2021, the IEC launched [Working Together: Making Space for the Great Things to Come](#), the College's first Indigenization plan. The plan adopts [BC's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#) as its reconciliation framework and actions Colleges and Institutes Canada [Indigenous Education Protocol](#) to bring this framework to life.

Working Together commits NIC to:

1. Action - Making Indigenous education a priority.
2. Governance - Ensuring governance structures recognize and respect Indigenous peoples.
3. Teaching and Learning - Including intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples in curriculum and learning approaches
4. Understanding and Reciprocity - Increasing understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
5. Employee Recruitment - Increasing the number of Indigenous employees, including Indigenous senior administrators
6. The Learning Environment - Establishing Indigenous-centre holistic services and learning environments.
7. Building relationships - Being accountable in Indigenous communities in support of self-determination.

NIC works to fulfill each of these commitments to reconciliation through specific goals and actions that aim to restore balance, address the social divide, and eliminate racism and socio-economic inequity. In its first year, [Working Together](#) has advanced key initiatives and operational changes in accordance with these commitments.

We are working to restore balance in NIC's governance structures by increasing the representation of Indigenous peoples on NIC boards, councils, and committees. The NIC Board of Governors and IEC are committed to exploring decolonized and Indigenized decision-making processes. We are currently reviewing policies and operational practices to ensure they recognize Indigenous people's human rights and the equity and inclusion of Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and community members. A strategy to increase the number of Indigenous employees, including in senior leadership positions, will achieve personnel balance in the organization. We will balance our programming through curriculum development in all disciplinary areas. Our goal is to ensure all academic programs include at least one course which explores Indigenous histories and identifies how Indigenous issues intersect with that field

of study. The program areas named in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) have committed to implementing the Calls to Action for education.

Through the Indigenization plan, we are taking steps to address the social divide between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. To advance understanding and reciprocity, NIC is developing multi-tiered core competency education on local territory and cultural training experiences for employees and students. We currently offer programming in [Indigenous Languages](#), [land-based developmental education](#), and [Indigenous leadership](#) that are strongly enrolled by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We have committed to partnering with Indigenous communities to develop more accredited, decolonized post-secondary programs in the next five years. To meet critical health and childcare needs in Indigenous communities, the College [prioritizes admission](#) for Indigenous students in the [Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree](#), [Practical Nursing](#), [Health Care Assistant](#), [Early Child Care and Education programs](#) and [Human Services diploma](#). We are also finalizing what we expect will be Canada's first Indigenizing International Education Plan. This plan weaves international and Indigenous goals together so that visiting students and those who hope to become citizens understand the colonial history of Canada, its legacy and continued impacts here and across international borders.

NIC works directly with First Nations and Indigenous students to challenge racism and the socio-economic inequity by developing culturally appropriate programming and services that eliminate barriers to success. NIC has partnered with Indigenous communities to grow in-community programming to approximately 15% of its overall offerings. An estimated 80% of NIC's students in off-campus, in-community programs are Indigenous, four times higher than the percent of Indigenous students on campus. At the request of the IEC, we have expanded digital and blended learning opportunities that support Indigenous students' access to education and training while staying in their home communities. We continue to expand [Elder](#) and [Navigator](#)-guided in-person and digital [Indigenous student supports](#). For example, the soon-to-be-constructed [Student Housing Commons](#) will have priority entry for Indigenous students. With the support of the [NIC Foundation](#), NIC has also established an [Aboriginal Scholars](#) program. Aboriginal scholars work with a Navigator to create an achievement plan based on individual goals. The goals can be academic, spiritual, emotional and/or physical, to support students and provide life skills to help them during their educational journey and beyond. Students work with their Navigator throughout the term to keep on track and access services and support that will help them achieve their goals. At the end of each term, students earn a scholarship based on the successes of their individual achievement plans.

NIC is committed to reconciliation through amplifying and affirming the voices of Nations and Indigenous community members. Still, we have a very long way to go in undertaking this complex process. While we have an ambitious, Indigenous-led, Indigenization plan, we have very little capacity within our current funding models to advance *Working Together*. In its fifth year, the cumulative costs of implementing *Working Together* will require an annual budget of \$1-1.5 million, 19% of our current base operating grant. Government support for the regional and institution-transforming goals that reconciliation requires is necessary to get this good work done.

3. Promoting equitable access for people from disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances

Accessibility is at the heart of our institutional mission and our role in BC's post-secondary education (PSE) system. The North Island College region includes a higher portion of students with barriers to education than the BC average. Twenty percent of secondary school students in the region we serve do not graduate from high school, ranging up to 34% in rural areas. Forty-three percent of 25- to 64-year-olds in the region have no post-secondary credential, ranging up to 52% in rural areas. Twenty percent of NIC students are Indigenous and 63% are female. With an average student age of 30, many NIC students are retraining for second and third careers. These older students illustrate the part-time nature of the learning journey for many NIC students – a clear 80% of NIC students study part time, in addition to the hours spent at work or with their families. We are innovative in the delivery of our resources in support of students and their communities in order to provide the greatest.

NIC has Vancouver Island's lowest post-secondary tuition fees. Our tuition profile provides opportunities for thousands of students across the region who tell us that rising tuition, housing, transportation, and food costs affect their ability to earn a credential and that they cannot afford increased costs. We offer several expanding forms of student financial assistance. The [North Island College Foundation \(NICF\)](#) offers at least \$500,000 in student support each year, the majority going to students with the highest financial need. Emergency funds are available to students throughout the year through Student Services. On-campus employment provides paid work experience. Many one-time, customized programs are tuition-free, supported by provincial Community Workforce Response Grants and other targeted programs that embed tuition-free upgrading and cultural supports. Financial need is particularly strong for students who regularly commute from more remote areas of the region, or whose median household income is already below the BC average.

NIC's approach to providing education and training, as close to home as possible is a core tenet of providing equitable access for disadvantaged British Columbians. An estimated 80% of NIC's students in off-campus, in-community programs are Indigenous, four times higher than the percent of Indigenous students on campus. By bringing programs to students, more students can work, support families, and advance their skills and careers without leaving their communities. Digital and blended course deliveries have also become a key feature of NIC's "closer to home" strategy for student and community success. In recent student satisfaction surveys, many students reported that they would not have been able to start or continue their studies if we had not offered courses via digital delivery. Approximately 1/3 of all NIC university transfer courses across academic and professional disciplines are available online. Some of NIC's most successful programs during the pandemic included incredibly popular Kwak'waka, Nuuchahnulth and Liqwid Language courses that connected Elders, language keepers and community members living in and outside of traditional territories. These courses, in addition to Indigenous Language Fluency and Indigenous Leadership programs, will continue to be offered digitally and in person, as determined by Elders and students.

NIC's developmental education offerings, combined with individualized academic and personal services, increase the participation of students from disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances. These students are more likely to live in rural and remote areas of the College region where the selection of high school courses can be limited. Students from disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances are also less likely to have completed high school. NIC's suite of adult basic education programming facilitates high school graduation equivalency, a requirement of many of the major employers in the region.

Fourteen percent of students in credentialled programming began their studies by upgrading in NIC's Adult Basic Education program.

NIC's institution-defining culture of care supports students through services that make educational success more accessible for more students. This culture is perhaps best expressed in our recent signing of the [Okanagan Charter](#) and the resulting student mental health and well-being plan [Care²](#). NIC offers a full suite of free academic, counselling and employment services which are available to all students (either in-person or online). Our [Early Assist](#) service is a one-stop link to academic and support services for all NIC students. Individualized learning plans that integrate needed supports ensure that disadvantaged students access the services they need to complete their studies. For example, during the pandemic, NIC moved quickly to make laptops available to students without access to critical digital technologies through a library lending service and offered extended library hours to provide additional learning spaces.

In order to support the success of some of our most vulnerable students, NIC also provides targeted services and advocacy for those who self-identify with specific needs. For example, NIC strongly advocates on behalf of former youth in care. We support appeals regarding the tuition waiver program when appropriate. We connect community supports, share best practices, and implement internal training to provide financial aid, advising and support. NIC served an estimated 965 students with a documented disability in the 2019/20 year and 14% of all Adult Special Education students attending a college or teaching university in BC during that period. This statistic indicates the quality and support for employment transition students and those with different learning abilities offered at NIC. Students with disabilities is one of the fastest growing student populations at NIC.

Affordable housing while pursuing their education is a key concern for the majority of NIC students. Work is underway to ensure that NIC's first [Student Housing Commons](#) on our Comox Valley campus will meet a variety of students' housing needs from single student to family housing and with a variety of lease lengths to facilitate secure housing for students across all NIC programs from weeks-long apprenticeship training to four-year degrees. Equally important agreements with independently owned childcare centres on campuses in Campbell River and the Comox Valley require centres to prioritize entry for students with families. Students have identified accessible and affordable housing and childcare as their top two barriers to enrolment.

With domestic enrolment up 9% from before the COVID-19 pandemic (2019/20), we know that our flexible course and program deliveries and our robust in-person and online student supports are meeting the needs of students in our region. However, while our efforts to increase equitable access for people from disadvantaged circumstances are proving very successful, the cost of provision is undermining our reach. NIC's tuition profile also presents an operational challenge, especially for programs where the cost of delivery is not met by the revenue generated through tuition and other funding sources. This is the case with skilled programs that require small student cohorts and high equipment costs, such as health and trades. NIC, like other colleges and institutions, needs the opportunity to recalibrate tuition costs and secure funding that matches delivery costs, especially for those students from disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances enrolled in programs that provide in-demand skilled workers to B.C.'s economic growth. An adjustment to the funding formula that accounted for individual students (rather than full-time-equivalents) and considered the service profile required to meet students' local learning needs would support NIC's responsibilities for equitable educational opportunities as outlined in our recent mandate letters.

4. Major challenges in enhancing NIC's contribution to BC's economic, social, and environmental health

NIC's fundamental challenge in enhancing our contribution to BC's economic, social, and environmental health is the diverse and rapidly shifting needs of the region's economies and peoples. We serve 20% of the Vancouver Island/Central Coast region's population who reside across over 80% of its geography. We have the honour and privilege of working with the combined 35 First Nations of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish traditions, on whose traditional and unceded territories the College's campuses are situated. There is an incredible diversity in the population across the College region with a wide scope of education and training needs.

The North Island and Central Coast have some of the province's highest levels of need for post-secondary education and training. There is an alarming gap between forecasted labour market requirements for post-secondary education on Vancouver Island/Central Coast and the levels and areas of preparation in the NIC region's population. Approximately 80% of the province's jobs will require post-secondary education and training yet only 57% of the region's working-age population have post-secondary education (compared to 63% provincially). Significant variation exists across the NIC region with the highest attainment of post-secondary education in the Comox Valley and the lowest in the rural and remote areas which constitute 40% of the NIC service population. Over a third of the NIC rural and remote population have not completed high school (compared to 10% provincially).

The rural and remote areas of the NIC service region are also experiencing some of the greatest economic upheavals in the province. The COVID-19 pandemic created an economic downturn across the North Island, particularly in its tourism economies. Economic recovery, slowed by significant labour force challenges, has been exacerbated by specific labour disruptions in the forestry industry and the planned [deferment](#) of old-growth logging. Federal regulatory changes to licensing in finfish aquaculture is also projected to eliminate thousands of high-paying jobs in rural and remote communities. Forty-five percent of BC's finfish licenses are on northern Vancouver Island and their planned elimination by 2023 threatens the economic stability of the entire NIC region, particularly that of Indigenous communities.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, communities have increasingly called for NIC to be front and center in the execution of regional economic diversification strategies and labour force development plans. We have widened and grown our program offerings in response and delivered the highest number of trades, health, human services, and technology enrolments in the College's history. To do so, we have worked with the 35 First Nations and community partners to access over \$7.6 million in one-time funding to develop and deliver over 36 programs in rural and remote communities. These programs, designed in collaboration with Indigenous and small communities, meet regional just-in-time labour market needs. These programs are often offered with low or no tuition, embedded essential skills or upgrading courses, Indigenous supports, and schedules that meet the needs of students in remote communities.

Eighty percent of students in these resource-intensive, in-community programs are Indigenous (compared to 20% on-campus). This programming is one of the major sources of NIC's 9% growth in domestic FTE (full-time-equivalent) enrolment over pre-pandemic numbers. However, the success rate of students in these programs lags behind that of on-campus students, often due to the College's inability to facilitate needed teaching, income, health, and support services on a one-time basis.

In its nearly 50-year history, NIC's operating model has evolved from a solely distance-education delivery model to the operation of 24 learning centres to consolidation into four campuses and one centre. This regional model envisioned one college with programming spread across three relatively equivalently sized sites, with health programming at one campus, trades at another and university programming at the third. Over time, the viability of this model has been diminished by uneven growth in each community and the distances between each campus. As communities have changed, they have needed comprehensive programming at each of the campuses as well as in in-community, in rural and remote locations. NIC has supplemented its base operating grant with other revenue sources to begin to provide it. As a result, we now offer a comprehensive array of programming at our three largest campuses and rotate labour market-oriented programming in the two smaller locations and in-community. There are few economies of scale in providing this needed diversity of programming across a large geographic area to the region's residents.

NIC's current operating model, based on the historical funding model, does not align with the region's gap in post-secondary education and training. Our reliance on one-time funding as well as international education revenue does not allow for the sustained programming that Indigenous and small communities request. In 2021/22 one-time funding constituted \$6.3M of the College's \$52.4M budget – nearly 20% of NIC's domestic FTE production was one-time funded. This requires multiple geographically dispersed communities across the region to jointly apply and offer critically needed programming. The capacity of these small First Nations and community organizations to come together and to source these funds is very limited. Increasingly communities and First Nations are requesting that NIC aggregate these needs and resource the application, monitoring, and reporting requirements of these one-time funds. Grant funding for this programming usually does not cover the cost of delivery which, in many cases, is double that of on-campus delivery. Financing these regional needs is exacerbating NIC's already strained operating grant, which was based on a distance delivery operation and has not since been substantively changed. Yet, without post-secondary education to access higher paying jobs, the disparity between more affluent regions and remote areas of BC will continue to grow.

Our operating model, which is providing access to high quality, relevant post-secondary education and training for the benefit of students and communities, requires creation of the most vulnerable programming for the most vulnerable student. A funding model that recognizes the additional and real costs of providing access across geography and student preparedness levels and that funds the role the College plays in aggregating community and industry needs would enable NIC to assist smaller communities and First Nations in the economic diversification and labour force development critical to the region's economic viability.

5. NIC's most significant contributions in collaboration with BC's PSE system

Collaboration is a necessary part of our core operations at NIC. Collaboration is a principle mechanism through which we expand learning opportunities for NIC students. We are proud of our commitment to rural and remote students and communities and our pathway programming and other sector partnerships enhance affordability and access throughout the BC post-secondary system. These initiatives are made possible by the high level of sector and professional organization participation by NIC faculty, staff and administrators. These partnerships and collaborations provide NIC students with learning opportunities that cross the public and private sectors, connecting them with learning institutions across the province and globe.

NIC jump starts students' futures through compelling dual credit options for area high school students supported by MOUs with 8 school districts across our region. In 2021/22, these included school district-funded dual credit courses for 110 high school students, who took university studies, business, health, early childcare and education, and fine arts courses as well as courses across Trades disciplines. These courses reduce student costs and increase access to post-secondary across BC. Students tell us that the courses help them start degrees faster, relieve first-year post-secondary stress, and introduce them to the post-secondary experience.

We are incredibly proud of NIC's dual admission agreements, associate degrees and transfer agreements with the University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University and [many post-secondary-partnership agreements](#) in Canada and around the world. These partnerships allow NIC students to travel internationally while paying NIC tuition or to stay at home longer, earning NIC credentials and transfer credits before moving to more expensive institutions further from home. These arrangements benefit students and partner institutions. NIC students are able to enter the second or third year of degree programs more seamlessly, boosting enrolment in the latter years of undergraduate degree programs. Data show that NIC's transfer students perform as well or better than students directly entering university.

Our University of Victoria (UVic) agreement allows students to be admitted to UVic and take their first two years of study at NIC. During this dual admission period, students are eligible for scholarships and bursaries from both institutions. UVic is also our partner for an Engineering Transfer agreement which allows students to take their first-year courses at NIC and then transfer directly into the second year of UVic Engineering programs including biomedical engineering. Our agreement with VIU allows NIC students to take their first two years of study at NIC before completing their Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science at VIU. NIC Communication Design Diploma graduates can also transfer their full credits to the VIU Bachelor of Design in Graphic Design. These admission guarantees provide a secure pathway for students who wish to take advantage of the lower-cost, closer to home instruction that NIC provides.

NIC has expanded our partnerships and learning pathways beyond the post-secondary sector with learning partnerships with Canada's military (via the University of Manitoba) and McDonald's Corporation of Canada. The Supplementary Student Mobility agreement allows NIC to send three students/year who are military service members or former service members to the University of Manitoba for their degree programs in the faculty of Arts. Our [Credit for Rank program](#) allows advanced standing for military serviced members in a variety of in-demand NIC programs. This agreement formally recognizes members' on-the-job learning and allows them to continue their education throughout their postings. This enhances their readiness for post-service social and economic contributions. A similar

program with McDonald's Canada provides McDonald's employees who have completed management training with the restaurateur up to 28 credits in NIC's Bachelor of Applied Business Administration programs. This partnership acknowledges the value of workplace learning and facilitates students' ability to advance in their post-secondary studies while pursuing needed employment. Last year, work-integrated learning provided more than 916 students with an opportunity to participate in co-ops, practicums, and internships. These work-based learning opportunities are developed in partnership with the post-secondary system and regional employers.

NIC's commitment to diverse and life-changing learning opportunities for our students includes a robust (and growing) array of both outgoing and incoming student exchange opportunities. NIC students can study internationally in over 14 countries while paying NIC tuition. NIC also hosts students from 14 universities across continents whose presence enriches our learning environments across a variety of our university transfer programs.

NIC remains committed to supporting cross-government and stakeholder collaboration to achieve mandate priorities where education, innovation and equity play a role, and that build upon the government's strategy, including, climate action, anti-racism and Indigenization. Our sector collaborations extend from learning pathways and programming to policy and service areas. This includes a recent series of open education training resources, developed and delivered by NIC, Selkirk College and the College of the Rockies. For example, our Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence, Consent & Sexual Training, Supporting Survivors, Accountability and Repairing Relationships, Active Bystander Intervention, and the asynchronous Safer Campuses for Everyone. The open textbooks are available for adoption or adaptation by educators throughout the province. These resources have been well received by the BC post-secondary sector, and especially in small institutions where employees can find it challenging to allocate the time required to develop new resources.

The College has also adopted the EducationPlannerBC (EPBC) application and transcript exchange service and is working with the Ministry to enhance and streamline digital tools for all formats of learning, including online, in-person and hybrid learning, as well as participating in several BCNET initiatives to enhance and support cybersecurity efforts across the post-secondary network. This combined work and intelligence that invests in system wide responses, supports a stronger healthier, post-secondary system in BC.

We pride ourselves on being a reliable partner across the provincial and professional organizations that support our system. NIC staff, faculty and administrators are active participants in the BC Council on Transfer and Articulation (BCCAT), BC Registrars' Association (BCRA) and BCNET Shared Services for Higher Education and Research. We are often called upon to participate in sector working groups, committees and research initiatives. Along with the sector advancements these groups facilitate our ongoing involvement is critical to the dialogues that have launched many of the initiatives mentioned above. These collaborations are a critical piece of our current strategic plan [BUILD 2026](#). Our enrolment, equity and reconciliation targets are all premised on maintaining and enhancing our collaboration ethos.

Incentivizing collaboration, especially in support of equity-deserving groups, could richly enliven the BC post-secondary system and provide rural and sending institutions with much needed base funding to support student readiness. Such incentives might include an annual budget supplement tied to degree completion by transfer students or enhanced base funding for infrastructure and resourcing to support this wide range of collaborations.

6. Barriers to collaborating more with the rest of BC's PSE system

The differentiation and articulation of BC's PSE system is a leader within Canada and well-regarded internationally. The key mitigating characteristic of our system is our differentiation: research-intensive-universities, teaching universities, colleges and institutes. However, our ingrained disposition to collaboration and productive partnership may be less well-known. As discussed in the preceding responses, partnerships, collaborations, and innovative relationships and learning opportunities are alive and growing across BC's PSE system.

The path from high school graduation to professionalization and career success is not a straight one. Many of us need to gain new skills and knowledge throughout our working lives, and we often need to maintain our economic prosperity by reengaging with education repeatedly throughout our working lives. During the last year of COVID-19, NIC was one of four BC public post-secondary institutions in the college, institute and teaching intensive universities sectors that saw growth in domestic student enrolment despite dramatic and persistent declines in domestic student registrations.

NIC has a history of innovative program delivery and collaborations across the public and private sectors. Such diverse collaborations are often necessary to provide education and skills training opportunities to rural and remote communities across the North Island and Central Coast. As such, we were well positioned in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to offer innovative programming proposals in response to the Ministry's call for micro-credential learning to aid our province's economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

In the past two academic years, NIC has delivered 65 new micro-credentials to 435 domestic students. In our learner outcomes survey of students enrolled in micro-credentials (Winter 2022) 76% of respondents indicated that their micro-credential improved their employment options and of those pursuing further education, 71% said that their micro-credential improved their educational opportunities (NIC, IAPR, 2021-2022 Reporting Cycle). NIC looks forward to continuing to work with the Ministry and sector colleagues to ensure that the learning achieved through micro-credentials is stackable and transferable.

The partnerships, consultations and industry responsiveness that fueled the success of these new credential initiatives offer us new insight into the next phase of necessary collaborations for BC's PSE system. Specifically, there is a need for a collective response to persistent societal inequities, changing and acute labour market needs and demographic change across the province. The next stage of PSE sector collaboration is cross-sectorial. PSE institutions need Ministry, and often inter-Ministry, guidance and resourcing support to align and deliver place-based programming that meets employers' needs in timely and proactive ways.

NIC and other rural colleges are well-positioned to develop and deliver such programming. In partnership with other PSIs, local businesses, governments and organizations we offer tailored learning that supports individuals through smaller class sizes, flexible delivery modes and comprehensive student supports. These partnerships however often involve upgrading pathways for our regionally located students that, in order to support student success, must be delivered with access to a full suite of student services and supports. Approximately 14% of students registered in our credential programs have taken preparatory adult basic education courses. These programs do lead to robust post-secondary credentials including degrees, as was the case for 10 Kwak'waka Uvic Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization graduates in 2015.

Another hallmark of the BC PSE system collaboration that is of special importance to students at NIC, and all BC colleges, is the Associate Degree. The two-year Associate of Arts degree and Associate of Science degree are especially appealing to college students who are looking for a shorter-term credential that offers immediate employment gains while simultaneously providing guaranteed access to further post-secondary education at a later date (e.g. when childcare needs are lessened or when savings are sufficient). Associate degrees were reviewed through BCCAT in 2013. Since then, there has been minimal change to the degree structures and no expansion of degree disciplines. With the growing emphasis by students and by employers on short-term learning for employment skills and knowledge, a reconsideration of the role and scope of our Associate degrees is warranted. The BC PSE Associate Degrees' role within our credential landscape could benefit from collaborative revisioning so that they can play a larger role in our province's economic recovery, community resilience and responsibilities for meaningful reconciliation.

The pandemic showed us how vital just-in-time, short duration learning opportunities can be to community resiliency and economic recovery. The province's micro-credential pilot brought much needed resources to immediate learning and skill needs in ways that will have a long-lasting impact throughout the province. Small and medium sized businesses acutely needed the services of college programming to help owners and employees alike adjust and thrive within the suddenly digital economy. Small town lawyers need to understand basic accounting and bookkeeping as they build their practice ([Office Administration certificate](#)). Fine Arts graduates return to school for design credentials ([Digital Design and Development Communications diploma](#)).

A practical, centralized approach to funding institutional innovation is needed. Such an approach would respect the relationships in place for students and prioritize both student access and community need while comprehensively supporting institutional costs. Ministry funds to kickstart a shared model to risk management of short-term programming, such as providing a multi-year funding commitment, would support collaborative programming and cost-sharing, increase the range of programs available to remote coastal students, increase student participation and simplify enrolment reporting between institutions. Additionally, Ministry leadership and collaboration with other Ministries and relevant private sector interests, such as on broadband access for remote students, could positively impact the achievement of equity goals across the province.

7. Key economic, demographic, social and technological trends that will impact British Columbia's PSE system over the next 30 years

COVID-19 was a monumental disruption in post-secondary education systems around the globe that has precipitated lasting impacts. The ongoing pandemic and the resulting societal demands on education and learning systems accelerated the need for flexible, technology-enabled delivery and exposed those parts of the system that were unable to adapt. We anticipate many of these impacts will continue to transform the system as future students turn to, and return to, post-secondary education to meet their employment and career goals. As we all saw throughout these pandemic disruptions, without proactive and intentional resourcing these trends will exacerbate systemic gaps and biases leading to the further marginalization of our province's most vulnerable students.

Early in the pandemic NIC developed [*Widening our Doorways*](#), an academic plan and response to emerging trends. Developed through literature review, research and our own unfolding experience, these trends included:

- Increased fear of disease and resulting behaviours.
- Global economic decline and budgetary challenges to PSE.
- Uneven and long-lasting labour market impacts.
- Overall enrolment declines for many institutions and changing enrolment patterns due to a shift to demand-driven year-round programming.
- Overnight and uneven transition to digital and blended forms of learning.
- Destabilized lives and livelihoods resulting in the need for remote and expanded student supports.
- Uncertainty about the value of credentials and shift to skills and employability training.
- Need for PSE response to social injustices and climate change.

These trends all highlight the need for an expanded understanding of access to post-secondary education for all British Columbians. Our system was designed to facilitate post-secondary study and labour market success for all qualified students regardless of socio-economic background or regional locations. It has evolved to deliver an expanded mandate which additionally includes differences in learning needs, newcomers to Canada and recognition the need to redress historic and contemporary inequities through educational attainment and economic success. Changes to contemporary students' understanding of their gender experiences and identities, increased attention to students' mental health and wellness and the lived experiences and constraints that result in part-time and interrupted study all place demands for great inclusion within our system. BC's PSE system needs to be organized and funded on a student-equity basis that acknowledges the diversity of students' needs and lived experiences to better meet BC's economic, social and environmental needs.

Rural and remote students from communities fueled by British Columbia's resource-based industries will need access to post-secondary education through new and evolving pathways. These learning pathways will have to combine acquisition of traditional skills and technology training in order to adapt to the needs of technology-enabled forestry, mining, agriculture and aquaculture careers. These programs will require upgrading and supports for underserved students and those academically unprepared for post-secondary education as well as financial supports for those without the socio-economic means to afford reliable internet or computers.

In addition to the trends identified in our *Widening Our Doorways* analysis, we are mindful that British Columbians will live and work longer, requiring continual entry and re-entry in post-secondary as they

adapt their careers or re-certify to keep up with technological changes. Yet as technological change accelerates, institutions within the system will need to be more responsive with shorter applied training programs and supports that are developed and delivered faster. Rapidly changing technologies will require foundational knowledge and skills and simultaneously need to be industry specific. Providing students with quick access to this kind of targeted programming and the increasing demand for curriculum development in non-traditional markets will require flexible funding envelopes to accommodate robust and rapid education technologies, program development and recruitment.

Demographic change is another underlying national and provincial trend that will put increasing pressure on BC's post-secondary system. For example, according to [Statistics Canada](#), the Indigenous-identifying population in Canada is anticipated to grow from 1.8 million in 2016 to between 2.5 and 3.2 million in 2041. As outlined elsewhere in this submission (responses 4 and 6), providing the needed education and training to meet the needs and potential of this growing segment of BC's population is critical to our economic, social and environmental success.

We believe that the trends we first identified in *Widening Our Doorways* will persist, in one form or another, over the next 30 years. Key among them will be a labour market oriented, demand-driven post-secondary education and training system. Students will require flexible learning and delivery methods, with schedules and supports that are facilitated by advances in technology. More students will demand in person and digital learning including [hy-flex](#) learning (learning that allows students to select their learning mode for each class), customizable learning and supports and shorter, non-term based courses which are accessible year round to meet their educational needs and career goals.

The labour market will demand these improvements in access as a critical part of economic recovery and growth. Our communities will demand the same as part of a larger social and environmental justice movement that seeks to increase the participation of under-represented groups, including female parents and Indigenous students and to reduce post-secondary education's impact on the environment. BC's rural institutions serve 5.2 students per FTE in contrast with urban institution's 3.1 – a clear indication of the student need and associated cost. These trends indicate an increase in the number of future students with a primarily part-time enrolment profile.

Taken together, these trends point to the need for funding across BC's PSE system to more strongly support the needs of more mature, part-time students. By funding full-time equivalencies, the current funding model advantages institutions serving the full-time student; that is, an individual student that is supported by one set of advising, counselling, registration, etc. costs. As many sources indicate however, the overall trend shows a need to bring more part-time and life-long learners into our system.

8. The PSE system's response to those trends

As outlined in the previous response, with the needs of students and communities in focus, BC's post-secondary system will need to encourage even greater student participation in post-secondary education and training through expansion of our underlying mandate. In addition to well-developed and well-executed responses to the trends identified in question 7, a cohesive provincial response would focus institutions within the BC PSE system on the needs of under-represented, often rural and regional students. Such a response in the form of stable resourcing to support technological enhancement would allow institutions to develop further education program pathways and the comprehensive student services that support students in their communities.

The rapid transformation to digital learning and technologies triggered by COVID-19 was felt across the globe, with each institution in BC developing their own methodologies that aligned with their available technologies. While this rapid transformation represented a huge investment, very few of these technologies are easily available locally to rural and regional students without reliable access to the internet and learning technologies. An investment in a cohesive system-wide approach that increases students' ability to learn digitally in their own communities is required to better support rural and remote student learning. This support will be especially critical if waves of future pandemics intermittently keep faculty and students out of the classroom for periods of time. This investment could be facilitated through greater collaboration between institutions and the support of on the government operations, Ministries and contracted agencies who regularly support students and employers in region.

A coordinated system-supported approach is needed for all aspects of technology-enhanced and digital learning. This coordinated approach would facilitate technology access as well as the alignment of schedules would alleviate educational barriers for students as they apply for assistance or funding required to attend programs which may be delivered and available on very short notice in communities.

In-community learning opportunities are increasingly critical to regional economic success. A key requirement in the success of these new learning opportunities will be cohesive digital learning technologies and supports, accessible to students across all regions of BC.

By providing funding incentives to support digital learning in communities, just-in-time learning becomes more available and efficient across BC. The Ministry can further support this expanded access by ensuring that agencies and employers requesting new digital programs also provide technology access, living allowances or childcare supports, so the system better supports students in their paths to education.

While industry targeted programs and one-time funded programs are often tuition-free to qualified students across BC, many disadvantaged students are faced with additional challenges, from the availability of immediate childcare and transportation costs, to ownership of contemporary computers and other learning technologies to underlying upgrading requirements. Ministry assistance is needed to generate industry and employer awareness about the prerequisites and other prior learning often needed for potential employees to take needed skills-based or applied learning programs. Funding for these collaborative, labour market responsive efforts must include targeted resources and program delivery time for preparatory learning.

Government can meaningfully further the needed mandate expansion toward an intersectional understanding of access through providing incentives and stabilizing funding for institutions that demonstrate program and service delivery innovations that support our province's equity and reconciliation goals. By incentivizing shared technologies within the post-secondary system, the

Ministry could increase access to education for British Columbians. A responsive post-secondary system that facilitates hy-flex learning to support on-demand education for students of all demographics across the region is necessary to meet this emerging economic, demographic, social and technological trends.

9. NIC's recommended response to those trends

NIC's [BUILD 2026](#) strategic plan and [Working Together](#) were developed to build resilience within the College in support of current students and communities and to lay the groundwork for a more inclusive college community. Together with the updated academic plan, [Widening Our Doorways 2026](#), we have positioned ourselves to expand individualized education and training to better prepare students to participate in shifting economies and to contribute to more diverse societies.

Even before the pandemic, the communities across the North Island/Central Coast were responding to an ever-changing and globalized world. Our planning ensures NIC is nimble, responsive, student-centred and aligned with the recommendations of the Indigenous communities.

The [plans and associated Year 1 Dashboards](#) are reliant on several integrated initiatives that are measured, reviewed and updated annually throughout the life of the five-year planning processes to ensure NIC continues to respond to the fast-changing educational, economic and social landscape.

These plans have been successful in ensuring NIC is one of very few post-secondary institutions across BC to see a rise in domestic enrolment throughout the pandemic. However, much of this important work takes place at a considerable cost.

Administrative and Support Costs

	FY 21/22 Cost (\$)	FY 21/22 Domestic Student FTEs	FY 21/22 All Student FTEs (Domestic + International)
Student Services	7,106,279		
College Operational Services	7,811,455		
Other Administration	6,421,499		
Total	21,339,233	2302.03	2581.95
Total Administrative and Support Costs per FTE		\$9,269.75	\$8,264.77

We are confident that our approach to comprehensively supported learning is right for our students and for our region. Our students live here, work here and want to be active contributors to their communities. One student's story was the highlight of this year's [Campbell River campus graduation ceremony](#).

These costs are vital to the ongoing success of programming that supports our diverse students. However, the expenditures leave key initiatives such as the development of a robust digital education and service strategy that prioritizes student access, the creation of a diversity and inclusion strategy, and ongoing support for in-community program delivery without core funding.

Many of these planning initiatives align with the access and educational goals established within post-secondary mandate letters across BC, yet remain largely unfunded in base budgets. By funding the Ministry mandate letter and post-secondary institutions' strategic plans to support them, the province could accelerate the desired outcomes and ensure post-secondary education is more responsive to the needs of all British Columbians.

10. Considering the above, what modifications to the funding formula would you recommend?

We at NIC are a product of John B. MacDonald's 1962 vision for a more diverse and equitable BC PSE system that extended across the province. Though the term equity itself had yet to come into common use, MacDonald's realized vision led to the creation of the infrastructure and collaboration necessary for high quality, economically relevant, place-based post-secondary learning throughout BC. As our system has flourished and adapted to BC's changing economic, social and environmental needs, NIC has similarly modified and expanded our scope.

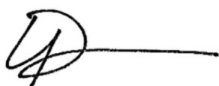
As we stated at the outset of this submission, NIC is at our best when we work as a partner to widen local doorways to the economic and social prosperity that post-secondary education and training affords. These innovations in access are how we fulfill our responsibility to increase the labour market participation of those impacted by COVID-19 and underrepresented and vulnerable groups, advancing the fulfillment of our [mandate](#).

Each of our responses to the assigned questions (1 through 9) made recommendations for changes to the funding formula that could facilitate forward looking changes in system resources. In addition, it is important to provide summarized feedback specifically about the funding formula itself. NIC believes the funding formula needs to be adjusted to recognize:

- That the base operating grant has not been recently adjusted to recognize the costs associated with operating multiple campuses that offer a diverse suite of programs over a large, geographically dispersed region;
- That one-time funding for short duration programming requires a multi-year funding model that funds both direct costs and student supports; and
- Relief from low tuition levels needs to account for institutional, regional and program variation.

These recommended adjustments will enhance the contemporary roles of all system partners. Our system works because it is designed to support collaboration across and through differentiation. NIC would like to see our understanding of differentiation embodied across the BC PSE system. At NIC, and other rural colleges, it is our students, not our programs or credential level differentiates us from our colleague institutions. Our students are distinct in the constraints on their learning that are inherent to their place and their preparedness. While their learning needs are distinct, their individual and collective potential is boundless. We submit that it is the needs and goals of our students and their communities, not the credential type or credential level, that must build the collaborations and connectedness needed for our system to increase the readiness of all British Columbians to participate in its skilled economies.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this information.



Lisa Domae, PhD, RPP
President and CEO
North Island College

NIC Resources

Strategic Plans

[BUILD 2026](#)

[BUILD 2026 Year 1 Plan and Dashboard](#)

[Working Together: North Island College Indigenization Plan](#)

[Working Together: Dashboard](#)

Institutional Plans

[Widening Our Doorways 2026: an 8-Point Plan to Reshape and Renew Learning at NIC](#)

[CARE² Plan: Student Mental Health & Well-Being at NIC](#)

Web Resources

thisis.nic.bc.ca

www.nic.bc.ca

www.engage.nic.bc.ca

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