

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Ontario's Contact North | Contact Nord Serves as the Model for Contact North BC *British Columbia pilot project is a reflection of Ontario's global leadership in providing access to education for rural and remote communities*

Thunder Bay, ON - Ontario's reputation as a global leader in online post-secondary education and training is receiving national recognition with the establishment of Contact North BC, a community-based distance education and training network modelled after Ontario's Contact North | Contact Nord.

[Announced on March 9, 2021, by the Honourable Anne Kang, British Columbia's Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training](#), this pilot project supports residents in rural and remote communities in northwest British Columbia to access online and distance education programming in their communities from all 25 of the province's public post-secondary institutions. Participating communities are across the traditional territories of the Haida, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, Tsimshian, Haisla and Tahltan Nations as well as School District 92 (Nass), School District 54 (Bulkley Valley) and the Métis Nation in Terrace. The project is funded by British Columbia's Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training.

As part of Contact North | Contact Nord's mandate to share its expertise, it is facilitating the implementation of Contact North BC via a special partnership with BC's Coast Mountain College. Ongoing guidance on the implementation is provided by Coast Mountain College's First Nation Council members and the local communities.

"I'm proud Contact North | Contact Nord is the model for the Contact North BC pilot project. It's exciting to share our expertise and experiences in making education and training accessible to residents in rural and remote areas for the past 35 years in Ontario," says Tina Reed, Director, Recruitment & Partnerships for Contact North | Contact Nord's Northwest Region and lead for the Contact North BC pilot project.

"Local access to education and training options and supports reduces barriers for residents to pursue higher education that leads to employment. For people who live in remote communities, providing access to education and training for the skills they need for the jobs of the future is key."

"When we heard about Contact North it immediately excited us because it is exactly what our communities have been requesting," said Coast Mountain College President Justin Kohlman.

“Students in our region can remain in their home communities and have more academic options and support than ever before.”

“Contact North BC is a win-win for all involved. The project connects students living in Indigenous communities with public post-secondary institutes. This new access provides endless opportunities for Indigenous students and communities to make educational goals a reality,” stated Bridie O’Brien, Executive Director, Indigenization, Coast Mountain College.

“We (Metis Nation British Columbia) are very excited to be part of the pilot project that is being delivered by Contact North (Contact North BC)”, said Brianna Gibson, program Coordinator, Metis Employment and Training. “With this project we have been able to provide access to laptops, Microsoft 365, and TutorMe Services to clients who otherwise would not have the means to access these tools or be able to connect with a knowledgeable guide. We are very grateful for this project and we look forward to seeing the success of many students over the years.”

“Having a Contact North BC Learning Centre in the community of Sik-E-Dakh is allowing us to reshape the educational possibilities of all community members, especially during these unprecedented times of COVID19,” stated Velma Sutherland, Band Manager, Sik-E-Dakh. “We look forward to many successes and will definitely be using the TutorMe services”.

“The Contact North BC facility will be a valuable addition to the educational services in Houston, BC. Our community is underserved, and we have a population that needs help navigating educational opportunities,” noted Jaksun Grice, Principal, School District 54. “The Contact North BC facility will provide a hub for local people to access educational opportunities and get the assistance they need to find success! This is really all about access and eliminating barriers to education for people living in small remote communities.”

The implementation of a made-in-Ontario solution to inequities in education and training in rural and remote communities illustrates how Contact North | Contact Nord is a collaborative success story that can be modelled in other parts of Canada and the world

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