

## NEWS RELEASE

March 22, 2021

For Immediate Release

### **92% Spike in Course Registrations During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

***Contact North | Contact Nord generates and supports 120,000+ student registrations in programs and courses from Ontario's colleges, universities, Indigenous institutes and other training providers, and fulfills close to 1 million requests for services***

Thunder Bay, ON – Contact North | Contact Nord, Ontario's community-based bilingual distance education and training network, helped a record number of underserved residents in rural and remote Ontario get education and training without having to leave their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced the temporary shutdown of its 116 online learning centres supporting 800 small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities across Ontario in March 2020, Contact North | Contact Nord pivoted online to keep up with a surge in demand and responded to 930,000+ requests for services during the past 12 months.

Local staff worked from their homes, using phones, social media, Zoom and online resources to inform students of their study options, help them register in online programs and courses offered by Ontario's colleges, universities, Indigenous institutes and other training providers, and offer information on financial aid options. This virtual support resulted in 120,038 student registrations – a 92% spike compared to its 2020-2021 target of 62,400 registrations.

Now, as COVID-19 restrictions ease in parts of Ontario, Contact North | Contact Nord is reopening its physical locations to provide in-person support services for students in rural and remote communities throughout the province. It has comprehensive COVID-19 health and safety protocols in place to protect students and staff using its locations.

Students have free use of computer workstations and high-speed Internet access for students to complete their online courses, free use of web conferencing and videoconferencing distance learning platforms, as well as supervision of written and online exams and tests.

Contact North | Contact Nord partners with Ontario's 24 public colleges, 22 public universities, 9 Indigenous institutes, 76 district school boards, and 250 public literacy and basic skills and training providers to provide local access to online education and training opportunities to underserved residents in 800 small, rural, remote, Indigenous and Francophone communities.

Contact North | Contact Nord works closely with Ontario Works and Employment Ontario to help their clients acquire skills to get jobs. A direct contribution to Ontario's economic recovery.

- 30 -

**For more information:**

Louise Gaudrault

Coordinator, Marketing & Digital Media

☎ 1-855-993-7383

☎ 519-573-6510

✉ [louise@contactnorth.ca](mailto:louise@contactnorth.ca)

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Contact North | Contact Nord

1139 Alloy Drive, Suite 104

Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6M8

807-346-1616

[newsletter@contactnorth.ca](mailto:newsletter@contactnorth.ca)