



NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN
2022-2026

Journeying Together Annual Report

YEAR 3 REPORT

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE



VANCOUVER ISLAND, CANADA





*Rural Pathway Indigenous Field School to Maui, in collaboration with VIU and Nuu-chah-nutth Tribal Council.
17 students plus 34 family and community members (January 2025)*

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS NETWORK

Keen to sustain the work we have started around Indigenizing international education, NIC has responded to a request from the Asia Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE), Education New Zealand and the BC Council for International Education to consider supporting the development of a broad, Asia-Pacific regional, international Indigenous network.

The OIE and OGE submitted a few introductory points – built on work of NIC’s Indigenous Education team and IEC members – to form the foundation supporting an international network:

- Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving, which includes:
 - Respect for Indigenous rights, governance and leadership – perhaps under an umbrella guide like UNDRIP
 - Support for IEC members and Indigenous Nations at NIC in building international networks with other Indigenous communities and learners to share best practices, opportunities and pathways for collaboration
- Actively build reciprocal people-to-people networks to foster meaningful relationships

- Not based on research or transaction, but grounded in Indigenous knowledge-sharing
- Consider venues that support the development of Indigenous-to-Indigenous educational partnerships within a safe cultural environment
- Share responses to decolonization in education to reflect the needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples, considering Indigenous-centered learning and knowledge-sharing systems
- Celebrate and honour Indigenous languages and cultures
 - Recognize language revitalization as a core component of educational sovereignty

As we consider broadening global Indigenous-led education networks, it is critical that they are built on principles of self-determination, respect for Indigenous governance and reciprocal relationships, rather than extractive or transactional approaches.

Country Contexts

Like many countries, Canada has multiple Indigenous groups and languages. Subject to interpretation, this country comprises 50+ distinct Nations and Indigenous language groups – all under threat, close to extinct or extinct – as well as strong, active Inuit and Métis populations. NIC alone serves 35 First Nations, representing three language groups. The creation of an Indigenous-led network is based on reflecting and respecting this diversity – not only across countries, but also within them.

As Sharon Stein (2017) from Hunt (2016) notes:

We cannot read one piece and think we have understood the complexities of decolonization; we cannot collapse thousands of different heterogeneous Indigenous voices, genealogies of critique, and place-based knowledge systems into one 'Indigenous voice.'

International Education Context

It could be said that international education and the concept of 'Internationalization' are both extensions of colonial systems and have become increasingly transactional. From our first *Journeying Together* annual report:

It would be quite easy for an international Indigenous network to become overwhelmed by revenue objectives if it is not firmly rooted in Indigenous principles. That is not to say there may not be opportunities for exchange programs, education abroad, or other initiatives that involve financial considerations—but for the last 30 years, the concept of internationalization has increasingly transitioned toward commodification and marketization of education. Without intentional Indigenous leadership, international education can serve as a tool of power rather than a means of reciprocal knowledge-sharing and relationship-building.

IEC members and Indigenous leaders at NIC have expressed a clear interest in engaging in global Indigenous education in a way that is aligned with Indigenous sovereignty, community priorities and long-term relationship building.



ECCE Indigenous Field School group from NIC, NLC, CMNT and Aurora College at Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi, Whakatane in Aotearoa, New Zealand, February 2025.

We see this as an opportunity to re-imagine international education from where we are – our place – in ways that serve Indigenous learners and communities first and foremost.

Beyond 2025/26

In Fall 2025, together with OIE, OGE will begin the journey with its international education associations and organizations to bring a strong Indigenous voice to the development of the international Indigenous network. In particular, active participation from OIE and local First Nations at the November 2025 World Indigenous People's Conference on Education in Auckland, New Zealand is expected to spark dialogue on expanding international Indigenous

connections. This will increase the depth of discussion and gain traction for the network.

Central to our work along the journey will be support for storytelling. Our students, community members and international partners all have stories to tell, and we have heard many during individual interviews and group discussions at gatherings. With permission, we have recorded them through video, graphic recording, photos and testimonials. These stories show where we have come from and give us direction on where we are going. The journey continues.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

International recruitment, enrolment and student services

North Island College (NIC) enrolled 799 students (640 full-time equivalents [FTEs]) from 48 different countries in 2024/25 - up from 47 countries the previous academic year. This was NIC's highest-ever number of international students, and based on their responses to the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey, 86% agreed that - even with the high demand for services - NIC provides a supportive learning environment for international students.

The year was dominated by federal immigration restrictions, and lower new-student enrolments impacted our Fall 2024 and Winter 2025 intakes. In response, the Office of Global Engagement (OGE) Recruitment and Enrolment began identifying programs to match Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC's) new labour-market focus. With some program adjustments, we were able to support a 48% increase in enrolment in Health and Human Services programs over 2023/24. The college plans to continue providing IRCC-identified programs with high labour-market demand for international students at the Port Alberni, Comox Valley and Campbell River campuses in 2025/26. Despite this, the college anticipates an overall reduction in international student enrolment in 2025/26.

When considering the impacts of NIC's largest-ever international graduating class in 2025, we envision these graduates transitioning to the workforce in our own communities or in others across Canada.



Madelyn Waldhaus (left) and Junko Leclair (right) at ICEF Agent workshop with an agent (centre).

With the anticipated small intake of new students in the coming years, there will be increased pressure on local labour markets and possibly a softening in rental-housing markets - particularly in the Comox Valley and Campbell River. The labour adjustment will initially be in the part-time service sector but will eventually ripple into full- and part-time positions in a variety of sectors, as the decline in international students becomes more prevalent.

For communities considering retention strategies for international students, there is a benefit; as they increasingly graduate in health and human services and other in-demand programs, these students will help support the socio-economic objectives of the region.



Rabina Purja - NIC graduate completed Associate of Arts degree, from Kaski, Nepal.

International Projects, Partnerships and Global Education



Dace Harle, BBA Student – one-year Double Degree Program in Annecy, France, 2024/25.

NIC continued to develop opportunities for international projects, study abroad and partnerships to support diverse international experiences for students, faculty and administrators in 2024/25. NIC provided international learning opportunities for 34 students (26 Indigenous and eight non-Indigenous), nine faculty members, four Elders, three administrators and two staff. These experiences took place in New Zealand, Hawaii, Japan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Belgium, Jordan and France.

In addition to the many benefits provided by study-abroad opportunities, NIC has taken action on some participant suggestions: 1) the Office of Indigenous Education (OIE) introduced an elective credit course in Kwak'wala language; and 2) OIE has submitted a Reconcili-Action course to NIC's Education Council for approval.

OGE was also successful in receiving funding through the prestigious [Queen Elizabeth Scholarship](#) to support NIC students in long-term study/internships abroad in Commonwealth countries and Latin/South America. This began in May 2025 and amounts to \$300,000 of funding over three years for these activities.

Additionally, NIC participated in international capacity-building initiatives, including the Kenya Blue Economy Skills Development project and the South Africa Skills Training Enhancement Program. The latter is the first project in which NIC has taken the lead role; it is coordinating two Canadian and 15 South African partners to deliver our project goals over the next three years.

OGE also successfully secured \$500,000 in scholarships for international students through the Canadian International Development Scholarships (BCDI 2030) to support students from Cameroon, Africa to study in NIC's Electrical Foundation Program, starting in 2026.



Project Leads from 15 South African institutions plus NIC, Nova Scotia Community College and Suncrest College.

FRONT COVER CEREMONIAL PADDLES

The four cover photos are the ceremonial paddles created for convocation at NIC's four campus locations.

The Indigenous artists are:

William Henderson - Campbell River (top left)

Karver Everson -Comox Valley (bottom left)

Gord Dick - Port Alberni (top right)

Mervyn Child - Mixalakwila (bottom right)

