



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

December 13, 2016 (Slave Lake, Alberta)

NLC Celebrating 35 Years of Program Excellence

Northern Lakes College's Practical Nurse program is celebrating a milestone anniversary: 35 years of providing expert healthcare education in northern Alberta.

Originally offered in 1982 as the Registered Nurse Assistant certificate program, Northern Lakes College was then known as the Alberta Vocational Centre - Grouard. Graduates of the one-year program usually went on to work at hospitals temporarily before relocating to urban centers to earn a four-year degree in registered nursing. By 1995, both the College and the program had evolved and the Registered Nursing Assistant program developed into the Practical Nurse certificate program. By 2005, the role of the licensed practical nurse had expanded so greatly in Alberta that another program evolution was vital: the program transformed into the in-depth two-year Practical Nurse diploma program that Northern Lakes College offers today. With the increase in taught skill, community need, and professional duties, licensed practical nurses are no longer considered assistants, but now play a unique and important role in the medical community in their own right. "Years ago the Registered Nursing Assistant typically went on to become a Registered Nurse, but now the options open to LPN's are far greater" Chair of Practical Nurse and Community Health Joanne Hunter states, "They can stay in the licensed practical nurse role, or they can pursue education in Health Sciences, Registered Nursing, or in a variety of other health-based fields."

As the program has changed, so have its students. "While we used to cater to mostly northern Albertan students, we're now seeing an increase in students moving to northern Alberta from urban centers to take advantage of NLC's programs. We are also seeing more diversity in student ages. We have students right out of high school and students in their twenties, thirties, and forties, choosing to advance their education after spending part of their lives raising children or in another industry. The age range truly is great: our oldest graduate was in her sixties and went on to successfully nurse locally" says Hunter.

Another change the program has witnessed in the last three and half decades is found in its delivery. While more traditional approaches to classroom education were necessary in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the program now utilizes various online and interactive mediums to

support student learning - students can attend post-secondary and remain in their home community. Employers in small rural communities can hire local students who already live there and are committed to careers in northern Alberta.

“It is so exciting to celebrate this important anniversary, and reflect on the countless ways in which NLC’s Practical Nurse graduates have contributed to their communities and our province at large,” says Northern Lakes College President and CEO Ann Everatt. “The 35 year evolution of this program is an excellent reflection of NLC’s commitment to deliver programs to meet community needs, incorporating new technology and learning methods to best facilitate adult education and promote student success.”

-30-



Northern Lakes College is a Comprehensive Community Institution offering certificate and diploma programs in Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Technology, Trades, University Studies and Academic Upgrading. The College collaborates with Campus Alberta partners to offer degree completion opportunities throughout its service region, including a Bachelor of Education. Northern Lakes College also provides a wide variety of certificate programs through its Continuing Education and Corporate Training Department.

For more information on NLC, please visit: northernlakescollege.ca | [twitter](#) | [facebook](#) | [instagram](#)

For additional information contact:

Valerie Tradewell
Senior Director, College Advancement
Northern Lakes College
780-849-8621