

News Release

Five Post-Secondaries in Northern Alberta Pen Historic Memorandum of Understanding

March 14, 2025, Fort McMurray, Alberta –Education in northern Alberta is now more connected than ever thanks to a collaborative agreement between five post-secondary institutions.

Keyano College, Lakeland College, Northern Lakes College, Northwestern Polytechnic (NWP), and Portage College today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to broaden educational pathways for students in Alberta's northernmost communities.

The agreement fosters strategic collaboration between the colleges and polytechnic to ensure enhanced student access, mobility, and learner outcomes.

This marks the first official post-secondary partnership of its kind in northern Alberta and will deliver a strengthened skills and training approach that will stretch 700kms east to west from Lloydminster to Grande Prairie, roughly 560km north to south from Fort McMurray to Vermillion, and everywhere in between.

The MoU is the first step in formalizing transfer agreements and credential recognition between the institutions, which collectively have 34 distinctive campuses across the region. At its core, the partnership aims to ensure that post-secondary education in northern Alberta remains accessible, relevant, and sustainable. This initiative will enable students to stay in the region throughout their educational journey and support graduate retention for career success in the North.

The collaboration between institutions, industry, and government is welcome news. Along with creating a more cohesive and connected post-secondary network, existing and future students will benefit from greater choice and flexibility in their educational journey. In turn, this will strengthen northern Alberta's employment pipeline with in-demand programs that will help attract and retain local talent.

QUOTES:

"Alberta's government is committed to ensuring students in every part of the province have the opportunities and resources they need to succeed. This MOU between Keyano College, Lakeland College, Northern Lakes College, Northwestern Polytechnic, and Portage College marks a significant step towards greater possibilities for students in Northern Alberta." Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Advanced Education

"We are excited to join this transformative partnership, establishing a connected and flexible educational network in northern Alberta. This collaboration guarantees our students access to top-tier resources and opportunities, allowing them to stay in the region and thrive," stated Dr. Sandra Efu, president and CEO of Keyano College.

"Ensuring post-secondary education is accessible and sustainable is a priority that we know we share with our colleagues across northern Alberta," says Dr. Alice Wainwright-Stewart, president and CEO of Lakeland College. "This Memorandum of Understanding formalizes what we have always known – that collaboration is the key to ensuring our students have access to a world-class post-secondary education, right here in northern Alberta. We are pleased to enter into this agreement and look forward to strengthening our partnerships."

"This collaboration will increase accessibility to educational opportunities for our students and communities," said Dr. Glenn Mitchell, NLC President & CEO. "By working together, we can create seamless pathways that empower learners to pursue their goals without leaving their home communities. Northern Lakes College looks forward to expanding programming and strengthening community connections that will support student success and regional workforce development."

"NWP is immensely proud to be part of a collaborative, and learner-centred approach that will proactively address student and community needs in the North," said Vanessa Sheane, NWP President and CEO. "Strengthening the ties between our institutions is a natural solution that will boost regional competitiveness and help mitigate current and future workforce challenges."

"Portage College has always had a corporate value reflecting the importance of partnership. This initiative will formalize the collaboration with our Northern Alberta partners and strengthen us all as institutions," said Nancy Broadbent, Portage College President and CEO. "The signing of an agreement will ensure the spirit of partnership, which is alive now, will last for many years to come. I am excited to see how students and communities will benefit, and I want to thank the leaders of our partner institutions for their dedication to promoting rural prosperity for individuals and communities."

About Keyano College - Keyano College, located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, serves students through its Clearwater Campus and Suncor Energy Industrial Centre in Fort McMurray, Alta. The college meets industry training needs and community enrichment by offering certificates, diplomas, trades qualifications, and degrees. Programs span energy, construction, business, health, arts, sciences, education, and more. Dedicated to lifelong learning, Keyano College increases access to post-secondary education, professional development, corporate training, Indigenous education, and Regional Stewardship programs in northeastern Alberta. For more information, visit keyano.ca.

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About Lakeland College - Established in 1913, Lakeland College is a place of possibility that serves more than 6,000 students every year at its campuses in Vermilion, Alta., and Lloydminster, Alta./Sask., and through online and off-site programs and courses. Lakeland offers programming in the areas of agricultural sciences, business, energy, environmental sciences, fire and emergency services, health and wellness, human services, interior design technology, trades and technology, university transfer and foundational learning.

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About Northern Lakes College - Northern Lakes College (NLC) provides flexible educational opportunities through innovative delivery. With accessibility as a cornerstone value, we provide quality educational programs and services.

NLC's innovative Supported Distance Learning (SDL) and Supported Distance Teaching (SDT) models include unique online delivery options such as NLC LIVE Online™ and NLC Anytime, Anywhere. SDL provides learners with the flexibility to balance work, home, and education, so that they can continue their education, improve their employment opportunities, and enhance their quality of life. Committed to its communities in northern Alberta and to its students, wherever they may be, NLC collaborates with business, industry, and other post-secondary institutions to benefit students and communities. Explore at www.northernlakescollege.ca.

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About Northwestern Polytechnic - Northwestern Polytechnic is transforming post-secondary education in northern Alberta through polytechnic programs, research, and partnerships. Established as a college more than five decades ago, the institution received its polytechnic designation in 2021. With campuses in Grande Prairie and Fairview, the institution serves students from across Alberta, Canada and the world. Students pursue a wide variety of academic programs in certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, and degrees. For more information visit us at nwpolytech.ca.

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About Portage College - Portage College has been empowering learners and communities for over 55 years with one simple promise—"It's about you." With seven campuses across northeastern Alberta, we offer 40+ certificate and diploma programs, including online options in business, health care, trades, university studies and more. Our transfer agreements make it easy to continue your education and earn a degree. Committed to collaboration, inclusion, and accountability, Portage College puts learners first by connecting them with the knowledge and skills to create meaningful change.

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