



## CHANGES, CHALLENGES & CHOICES IN THE NORTH

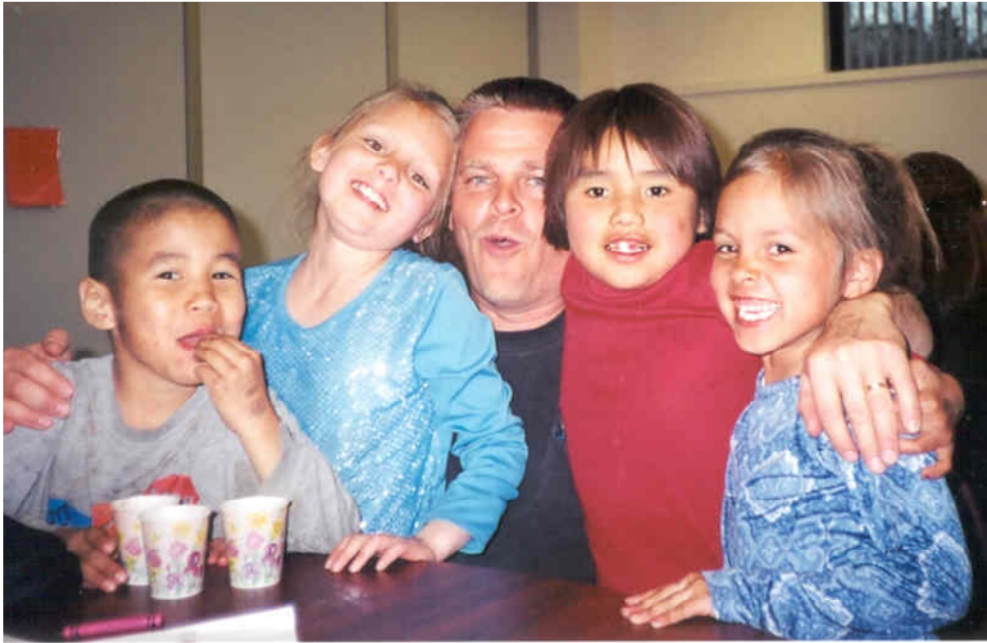
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## Document summary



*Possible members of CNC's Class of 2020*

The College of New Caledonia is a vital partner in helping north-central BC prepare for the challenges of the coming years. The college is focussing its efforts on supporting a diversifying economy, helping fill the projected skills gap, collaborating with First Nations, industry and communities, and tailoring education to the needs of our students both at home and abroad. This document has two main sections:

- “The CNC Region Today” describes the region and how CNC currently helps meet its economic and social needs.
- “Projecting the World of 2020” attempts to answer the questions, "How will the CNC college region of 2020 be different than today?" and "How can CNC help prepare its students for the economic and social priorities of 2020?"

If CNC succeeds with the goals outlined in this document, with the support of our partners and the provincial government, the college will be well situated to meet the needs of today's five-year-olds—the students of 2020.

## Recommendations

1. CNC will remain a comprehensive community college. Given the geographic and demographic challenges for access in the North and the remoteness of Aboriginal communities, greater specialization or differentiation is not appropriate for the large region that CNC serves.
2. CNC will increase Aboriginal access to and success in post-secondary education.
3. CNC will remain affordable and will seek opportunities to keep students in the North.
4. CNC will continue to meet the needs of industry, business and community organizations, through ongoing dialogue, partnerships, and responsive programs and services.
5. CNC will respond to the specific challenges of the pine beetle infestation, including supporting the diversification of the regional economy.
6. CNC will remain a multi-community institution that is responsive to local social and economic issues within our rural and remote communities.
7. CNC will expand offerings in selected areas through the appropriate use of educational technology.
8. CNC will work closely with other post-secondary institutions and specifically with the northern institutions to create a highly integrated system of college and university programming.

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“The tuition was much lower, I got the same level of education, and I could stay at home and really discover what I wanted to do.” – *Broek, CNC university transfer graduate*

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“Re-entering College as a mature older student is a tough choice to make, but the teachers and staff at CNC make the transition easy and accommodating.” – *Lori, CNC student (College and Career Preparation)*

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# 1. The CNC region today

## Economy

The College of New Caledonia (CNC) is located in north-central BC, with its main campus in Prince George.<sup>1</sup> CNC also has campuses or learning centres in the following communities: Prince George, Quesnel, Mackenzie, Burns Lake, Vanderhoof, Valemount, Southside, Granisle, and Fort. St. James. In 2005/06, CNC had approximately 2246 full-time equivalent students<sup>2</sup>. Since its establishment in 1969, CNC has served approximately 90,000 students.

The CNC region is large and sparsely populated, spanning 117,500 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of approximately 154,000. The distance from east to west is about 700 kilometres.

Sixty per cent of BC's total export base comes from areas outside the Lower Mainland, as does 72% of the value of BC's international economic goods exports.<sup>3</sup> The CNC region makes up a large part of this area, and as such, produces a significant part of the province's economic resources

Forestry is the CNC region's primary resource sector, accounting for 36% of income dependency in 2000.<sup>4</sup> As well, forestry has been identified as one of the 12 basic driving sectors of the BC economy.<sup>5</sup> The pine beetle impact is just beginning to be felt and understood in the region and the broader provincial sphere; the decisions of today by government, industry and communities will define the future of forestry in British Columbia.

## Population

The CNC region is distinct in terms of its high percentage of Aboriginal peoples: 11.2% as compared to provincial average of 4.4%. Some smaller communities served by CNC have an even greater proportion of Aboriginal residents. For example, 60% of the residents of Burns Lake, home of CNC's Lakes District campus, are Aboriginal.

The annual population growth rate for the region has been stable at less than 1% for last 10 years. However, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada predicts annual growth rates for Canadian aboriginal populations as high as 4.4% per year through 2010 for on-reserve populations.

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<sup>1</sup> Note to readers -- Campus 2020 uses the word "main" in this sense in its own documents

<sup>2</sup> Note to readers -- These statistics are from Campus 2020's own documents

<sup>3</sup> [www.bcprogressboard.com/2002Report/RestoreBCEH.pdf](http://www.bcprogressboard.com/2002Report/RestoreBCEH.pdf), page i

<sup>4</sup> BC Stats (2005). *College Region 9- New Caledonia: Statistical Profile 2005*. Downloaded October 2006 from [http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/col/college\\_9.pdf](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/col/college_9.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/releases/info2004/in0408.pdf](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/releases/info2004/in0408.pdf)

While the overall regional population is aging (consistent with the rest of BC), the Aboriginal population remains relatively youthful, with 52% of the Aboriginal population in the region being under 24 years old in the 2001 census. In contrast, only 35% of the non-Aboriginal population in the region was under 24 in 2001. BC Stats predicts that by 2015, less than 29% of the total regional population will be under 24. Clearly, Aboriginal youth will make up a significant segment of this group.

Over 50% of CNC's region's population lives outside Prince George and is considered rural. Many communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, are remote and relatively inaccessible.

Although 2005 unemployment rates in the region are higher than the BC average (about 8.2%, as compared to 5.9%), the region's average employment income is very close to the BC average. The recent settlements of the land claims in the region (L'heidli Tenneh Band – October 2006; Yekooche Nation – in final negotiations) are likely to have a positive impact on Aboriginal employment.

Social and health indicators are less robust in this region than in the rest of the province. Average family annual income in 2000 was less in this region than the BC average, although lower housing costs compensated somewhat. Life expectancy at birth (2001-2005) was 2.5 years less than the BC average and infant mortality was higher, as were the potential years of life lost due both to accidents and natural causes. As well, the health status of First Nations people is generally lower than for the population as a whole.

Educational attainment tends to be lower in the CNC region than for BC on average. While the percentage of the population over age 20 with a post-secondary certificate or diploma is essentially the same as the rest of the province, the proportion with a university degree is significantly lower. This is perhaps due to the dependency of the local economy on the natural resources sector and associated trades occupations.

General statistics on education are more troubling: in 2001, over 24% of people in the CNC region aged 25-54 had not completed high school (compared to the BC average of 17%) and 53% had not completed any post-secondary education, well above the BC average of 42%.

Of still greater concern, nearly 55% of the region's Aboriginal population aged 25-64 had not completed high school, and 73% had not completed any post-secondary education (2001 figures). Given that Aboriginal youth make up the fastest-growing segment of this region's demographic, this poor educational attainment is significant.

## CNC's contributions to the region

### Comprehensive program offerings

To meet the needs of its far-flung and diverse population, CNC offers a wide range of programs—currently more than 100 distinct programs at all the communities it serves. Subject areas include trades, college foundations (adult basic education), technologies, health sciences, social services, business, community and continuing education, and university credit arts and science.

One benefit of this broad range of programs and courses is enhanced student mobility. Students can easily bridge the gap between upgrading / vocational / academic training, and can easily change programs without having to move to another institution.

As well as preparing students for the workforce, it's also important to provide opportunities for a broad-based education so that people can become well-informed and contributing members of society. The latter role is crucial in the CNC region, especially in the smaller communities where there are often few educational opportunities other than CNC.

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“CNC is a gateway – it opens the doors to higher learning.” – *Catherine, CNC University Transfer graduate, now at UNBC*

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### Accessibility

As early as 1945, the Cameron Commission identified equality of access as one of the key goals of BC's education system. In a very large region such as CNC's (it accounts for 16% of the province's land mass), equality of access is both particularly important and particularly difficult to achieve. CNC has addressed this challenge in a number of ways:

- *Multi-community:* CNC delivers its programs in campuses and learning centres in communities throughout its region, thus giving access to as many students as possible. Programs are tailored to the needs of each community.
- *Personalized instruction:*  
The average age of CNC students is 29, which usually means they have been away from the learning environment for some time. Therefore, their priorities are the same as those that helped shape the concept of community colleges decades ago: small classrooms, personal contact, and individualized, hands-on assistance.

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“As a mature student, returning to school was nerve-wracking, but the staff and counsellors at CNC were great.” – *Continuing Education student*

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- *Affordability:*  
CNC serves many low- and middle-income students, a group for whom

affordability is extremely important. At approximately \$2155 for an academic year<sup>\*</sup>, CNC's current tuition is about 45% of the average for BC universities, thus making it possible for many students from this group to obtain post-secondary education.

- *Educational technology*: Electronic enhancement is being used successfully at CNC to enrich students' experience in the conventional classroom environment. As well, for students in remote communities, online delivery is often the only means of attending a post-secondary institution. However, online courses and programs cannot replace the benefits of the face-to-face learning experience, nor can they serve the needs of the majority of CNC's students, since many of CNC's programs are developmental in the broadest sense of the term. Fundamentally, CNC believes in using technology as a tool, but not being driven by it. CNC has successfully developed and delivered online programs and courses and will expand online deliveries in selected areas. Technology continues to be an enhancement of traditional methods of delivery, and the primary mode of delivering courses at CNC is currently through face-to-face instruction.

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“The instructors are very approachable and really there for you.” –  
*Carolyn, CNC Marketing and Management student*

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### **Serving Aboriginal students**

When compared to the provincial average, the CNC college region has almost three times the percentage of Aboriginal residents. As well, Aboriginal youth are the fastest-growing segment of the region's demographic<sup>6</sup> and are also more likely to stay in the North than non-Aboriginals.

CNC provides many supports for Aboriginal students, including the First Nations Education Support Services centre at the Prince George campus. The centre has spaces for quiet study, computer access, meetings, and activities. Other services include peer tutoring and one-on-one support from the staff. As well, CNC offers a variety of specialized programs in communities such as Burns Lake and Southside, where about 60% of the residents are Aboriginal.

For example, the Family Centred Program at Burns Lake provides numerous parenting classes and group sessions that help to provide a more stable environment for the entire

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<sup>\*</sup> Based on 10 academic arts courses

<sup>6</sup> BC Stats (1996). *Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Peoples 1996 - College Region 9*. Retrieved October 10, 2006 from <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen96/abor/CR09.pdf> and BC Stats (2001). *Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Peoples 2001 - College Region 9*. Retrieved October 10, 2006 from <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/abor/CR09.pdf>



community, and one in which learning can flourish. The Family Centred Program works closely with other programs such as Children's Centre, Kids' Edge, Early Intervention Services/Community Therapy Services, and Healthier Babies, Brighter Futures.

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“This course is an invaluable tool to help better our community as a whole.” – CNC student, Psychosocial Rehabilitation II

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It is also important to note that when learning electronically, Aboriginal students sometimes need extra supports such as tutoring, face-to-face support, on-site libraries, and assistance with time management. For this group in particular, technology should be an *enhancement* of traditional methods of delivery.

### **Working with partners**

Working in partnership with other organizations – locally, regionally, and provincially – helps CNC provide better service to its students. Some highlights of CNC's current partnerships:

- CNC and Thompson Rivers University have signed an agreement that will expand access to university degree completion and other post-secondary studies for residents across the CNC region.
- CNC and UNBC jointly offer a bachelor's degree in Nursing, the Northern Collaborative Baccalaureate Nursing Program.
- CNC recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Northwest Community College and Northern Lights College to identify areas of programming in which each college would take a lead role. CNC believes this agreement will maximize the resources and opportunities the college can provide to northern communities.
- CNC's Trades Division has a formal partnership with the Prince George Construction Association.
- CNC works closely with School District 57. One example is CNC's Career Technical Centre, a program which encourages high school completion by allowing youth to combine first-year trades/technology training at CNC with Grade 12 graduation.
- CNC's university credit program has over 2400 course agreements in place with BC universities, university-colleges, colleges and institutes.
- CNC's Business Division has transfer agreements with many professional institutes, including the Certified Management Accountants of BC, the Certified General Accountants of BC, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of BC, the Purchasing Management Association of Canada, the Canadian Institute of Bookkeepers, and the Institute of Canadian Bankers.

## **2. Projecting the world of 2020**

### **How will the CNC college region of 2020 be different than today?**

#### **Economy**

In 2020, the major determinant of the economy will probably be how the region handled the pine beetle epidemic, which by then should be abating.

Thus far (2006), the infestation has been both a boon and a challenge. Increases in the Annual Allowable Cut have increased employment and incomes, but the Ministry of Forest and Range predicts that by 2020, 96% of mature pine in the region will be dead or harvested, and harvest levels will be reduced by 50%. By 2015, the region may see mill closures and growing unemployment.

In contrast to the pine beetle, the recent resolution of the softwood lumber dispute may have a positive impact on the region's forestry sector. New opportunities being explored include pellet plants, cogeneration, underwater logging of reservoirs, OSB and fiberboard production, and projects to take advantage of greenhouse gas credits.

In 2020, events outside the region will also affect the local economy. The recent Northern BC Container Terminal Opportunity Study suggests that an inland port tied to the Prince Rupert port development could provide increased employment in Prince George and the north.

Other major new initiatives impacting the region and its planning processes:

- The Northern Development Initiative Trust
- The Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition, Omineca Beetle Action Coalition, and the Aboriginal Beetle Action Coalition
- The 16-97 Economic Alliance for the development and implementation of a multi-year strategic economic development plan across the region
- Several pipelines are in the planning stages

#### **Population**

The CNC college region currently has a population (2006) of 155,484. The projected population for 2031 is 167,969. By 2026 the Northern college region is projected to have one of the two largest populations of 18-29 year-olds in BC (13%, identical to the Lower Mainland).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Campus 2020: *Thinking Ahead*. Regional Profile: Northern Region (2006)

The CNC region currently has the third largest Aboriginal population in BC, and since Aboriginal youth are the fastest-growing segment of the region's demographic,<sup>8</sup> this segment is projected to increase.

## **How can CNC help prepare its students for the economic and social priorities of 2020?**

One of the most important things CNC can do during the next 10 to 15 years is to help the region diversify to protect against the potential economic downturn caused by the pine beetle.

To support that diversification, it is crucial to be able to train, attract, and keep a skilled labour force. It is also vital to continue to work with the region's Aboriginal populations, who will form an even larger part of the population in 2020.

As well, CNC believes preparing its students for the future also entails focusing on collaboration with First Nations, industry and communities. Educational technology could be used to reach out to the global community.

### **Supporting diversification**

The region is already actively pursuing diversification through inland container opportunities, tourism development, transportation, mining, and non-timber forest products. All of these industries will need additional trained workers. Because it offers such a comprehensive range of programs, including trades training and developmental education, CNC is well-positioned to help train these workers.

Resource sector diversification is a new reality for the region. The mining sector, in particular, is opening up and becoming a strong presence in north-central BC. During the next three years, community consultation, environmental, business and governmental assessments will determine the feasibility of full mine development in the region.

The oil and gas sector remains more distant to the region, though exploration is beginning. The proposed oil pipeline through Northern BC to connect Alberta's oil sands to the Kitimat and Prince Rupert ports will have a major effect on expanded awareness and opportunities, as will the natural gas pipeline proposed to run from the Mackenzie Delta to the Alberta boundary, and the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project proposed for Kitimat and Prince Rupert.

If the oil and gas sector and the mining sector are to help the region to diversify, CNC and other northern colleges must be able to train workers for these industries.

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<sup>8</sup> BC Stats (1996). *Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Peoples 1996 - College Region 9*. Retrieved October 10, 2006 from <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen96/abor/CR09.pdf> and BC Stats (2001). *Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Peoples 2001 - College Region 9*. Retrieved October 10, 2006 from <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/abor/CR09.pdf>

The technology sector currently has 130 high-tech companies operating in the region. Many of these companies serve the forest industry, and are looking at opportunities in the mining and oil and gas sectors. By 2020 BC's Central Interior could be internationally recognized for technology innovation related to resource sectors (for example, machining, mill and electrical equipment, and forest/biology). CNC could play an active part in training the technologists to spearhead these innovations.

### **Maintaining and attracting a skilled labour force**

The employment requirements of the sectors listed above will be challenging for existing communities to fill. Given the predicted numbers of baby boomers reaching retirement age, a focus on attracting newcomers to the region is crucial, as well as building internal capacity.

For individuals locating to more rural areas such as the CNC college region, accessible quality health care is a common consideration. CNC has traditionally focused on nursing-related and dental-related programming, with great success. To meet the need for other health care workers, the college is actively pursuing the Medical Laboratory Technology Diploma program. Strategies to attract immigrants and support their success are also being implemented in the region. One example of how CNC is responding to this need is its program (under development) to prepare internationally educated nurses to work in BC.

A number of social development issues continue to play a strong role in the formation of the region. The ground-breaking work on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, spearheaded for the past 15 years by the community of Burns Lake and CNC Lakes District, continues to increase awareness and responses to this devastating, preventable disorder. Prevention, diagnosis and early intervention for children with FASD, employment preparation for affected adults, and ongoing training for those working with FASD-affected individuals remain priorities to ensure stable and productive communities in the CNC college region.

### **Working with Aboriginal populations**

Throughout its region, CNC currently works closely with Aboriginal communities and organizations to support their engagement in educational and planning decisions, and this involvement is expected to continue into the future. The College is currently committing increased base resources to Aboriginal-directed programs and services, to support improved access and student success, as well as to ensure responsiveness to the future labour market needs of Aboriginal communities.

Through the development process for CNC's 2006-10 Strategic Plan, Aboriginal partners strongly indicated the need for programs that include cultural relevance components, elder support for students, improved access supports, improved funding for education and living expenses while at College, improved communication with band education coordinators in the region, and improved learning and social spaces for students.

### **Collaborating with partners**

In the past few decades, it has become increasingly difficult for any organization to work in isolation. In the world of 2020, partnerships are likely to be even more important. Fortunately, CNC is well-versed in working creatively and constructively with other organizations, and therefore should be well-positioned to apply this skill in the future.

Here is a small sampling of the partnerships that CNC has initiated and been involved in (in addition to those listed on page 7):

- Initiated the concept and coordinated the Steering Committee (Northern Health Authority, UNBC, Northern Lights College, Northwest Community College, CNC) to develop and negotiate a joint proposal for Health Education Planning Labour Market Partnership, which has since been funded by the federal government.
- Developed the seven-month Pulp and Paper Operations Program jointly with Malaspina University College and industry, including Canfor, Abitibi Consolidated, Pope & Talbot and Cariboo Pulp & Paper.

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"Pulp and paper companies worked with CNC to develop the program, so we're confident it fits industry's needs." – *Ed Dylke, Canfor Corp.*

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- Offered the Career Development Practitioner Certificate program in partnership with Douglas College, and regularly offers Douglas College's Community Mental Health Certificate (or components of it).
- Offered Malaspina's seven-month Graduate Nurse Refresher Program three times in the past five years as a full partnership.
- Contracted with BCIT to provide Boiler Safety Awareness, Refrigeration Awareness and Millwright Laser Alignment training.
- Contracted with Northern Lights College to provide training in oil and gas.
- Collaborated with Vancouver Community College for the initial delivery in Prince George of the Practical Nurse Program, prior to receiving approval for CNC's own program.

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"Being able to come into the hospital and work with patients has been more important to me than anything else." – *Janet, CNC Practical Nursing student*

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- Partnered with the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design to offer First Nations art courses.
- Partnered in a BCcampus Trades preparation initiative with BCIT and Capilano College.
- Recently partnered with Northern Health, the Northern Medical Society and NAIT to develop a Medical Laboratory Technology program.

CNC also has many partnerships and connections to the larger world and to larger economic and social issues:

- Exchanges of health sciences students with Daegu Health College, Korea.
- CNC Natural Resource Field School and cultural exchange at Zhejiang Forestry University, China and a planned field school and cultural exchange with two regions in Chile.
- Strong ties to business and educational communities in the Russian Far East (Khabarovsk Krai), including training Russian instructors in the methodologies of CNC's successful entrepreneurial program "Business: The Next Generation" (BNG). The goal is to build capacity in training institutions in the area in order to enhance economic development. CNC has been involved in economic development in the Russian Far East since 1999. The current project grew from a collaborative effort between the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the McGregor Model Forest Association, CNC, and UNBC. The project has received praise and recognition from all levels of Russian government and from CIDA.

Possibilities for the future include developing and exporting innovative resource technology (for example, biofuels). It is also possible to contribute from our knowledge economy; in other words, to contribute training on trades, developmental programs, and other CNC strengths, in Russia, China, and elsewhere.

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“[The program] provides current information that is helpful in a changing world.” – CNC student, Management Skills for Supervisors

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### **Working with technology**

As discussed above, many CNC classrooms are currently benefiting from electronic enhancement. As well, online delivery can be the only opportunity for access for students in remote communities.

However, online courses and programs cannot replace the benefits of the face-to-face learning experience. Furthermore, many of CNC's students need additional supports, such as one-on-one time in person with an instructor. CNC believes in using technology as a tool, but not being driven by it. Technology is an enhancement of traditional methods of delivery, and the primary mode of delivering courses at CNC is currently through face-to-face instruction.