

Create Your Possibilities

Youth Initiatives Strategy
2026 - 2030

CNC

Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory

The College of New Caledonia is honoured to work with Indigenous communities in this region, inclusive of the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples. We acknowledge the graciousness of the First Nations peoples in welcoming those seeking knowledge on their traditional territories.



A special thank you
to Lheidli T'enneh Elder Darlene McIntosh for her welcome as we gathered to launch this strategy on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh.



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Message from Leadership



Stephanie Deol
Director of Marketing &
Future Student Experience

As Director of Marketing and Future Student Experience at CNC, I am incredibly proud - and genuinely thrilled - to launch the Youth Strategy, Create Your Possibilities. This work represents a bold and exciting step forward for our institution and our region. It speaks directly to the hopes, realities, and potential of young people across the North, and it is energizing to see this vision become real.

I am deeply grateful to the youth participants and community members who shared their voices through consultation. Your honesty, insight, and lived experience shaped this strategy in powerful ways. Thank you as well to the project team, whose dedication, creativity, and care brought this work to life. I am especially thankful for the exceptional

mentorship and leadership of CNC Vice President of Student Affairs, Shelley Carter-Rose, whose vision and guidance shaped this strategy with intention, integrity, and heart.

This strategy matters because it is about more than access to education. It is about opening doors, building confidence, and creating pathways that allow learners to imagine futures that are meaningful, achievable, and rooted in who they are. There is something powerful about launching work that invites young people to dream bigger—and then backs those dreams with action.

I come to this work as someone from the North, shaped by its communities, landscapes, and resilience. I believe deeply in the power of access and possibilities without having to leave home. Our youth should not feel that opportunity only exists elsewhere. With the right support and environments, possibility can thrive right here.

My vision for the future of our communities is one where learners belong, where they thrive, where they are empowered to lead, and where they are supported to create their own unique dreams. Create Your Possibilities is about fueling that future: one where learners give back, build locally, and help shape the places we love. Launching this work is exciting because it is not just a strategy - it is a promise of what's possible.



Why this Strategy Matters

CNC's Youth Strategy supports the College's commitment to providing accessible learning opportunities across the region by strengthening early and ongoing connections with youth. Through this work, students are better able to understand their options, feel a sense of belonging, and explore post-secondary pathways with confidence.

Early engagement plays a critical role in shaping how youth understand their future possibilities and their place within post-secondary education. For many youth, decisions about their future begin well before formal applications or course selection.

Without early exposure to pathways and programs, students may limit their options due to uncertainty, lack of awareness, or low confidence.

Engaging youth earlier, particularly in the elementary and middle school years, helps build awareness, curiosity, and a sense of belonging. It creates opportunities to explore interests, connect learning to real-world possibilities, and begin to see post-secondary education as accessible and relevant, including opportunities to learn, live, and work in the North while staying connected to home communities.

Through engagement, we heard that youth often make decisions that narrow their future options earlier than expected, sometimes without fully understanding the implications. By Grades 10 to 12, some pathways may already feel out of reach. Early engagement supports more informed decision-making by helping youth understand the range of pathways available.

It also plays an important role in building relationships with youth, families, schools, and communities. Consistent and approachable interactions with CNC help foster familiarity and trust, particularly for youth who may not otherwise see themselves reflected in post-secondary spaces. Creating experiences where youth, especially Indigenous youth, can see their identities, communities, and futures reflected in post-secondary pathways is critical to ensuring these opportunities feel accessible and attainable.

By strengthening early and ongoing engagement, CNC can expand awareness, build confidence, and support youth in

exploring a broader range of possibilities for their future. This includes improving how youth and families understand key pathways, such as dual credit and other transition opportunities into post-secondary education.

The Youth Strategy positions CNC not only as a provider of youth engagement opportunities, but as a connector that strengthens and aligns efforts already underway across the region.

Aligned with CNC's broader institutional priorities, this work reinforces the College's commitment to providing accessible learning opportunities that support the needs of communities across the region. Youth engagement plays a key role in supporting CNC's long-term enrolment and strengthening the future student pipeline into post-secondary, while ensuring learners can see viable futures for themselves within their communities and across the region. By strengthening early connections and pathways, CNC contributes to building stronger, more resilient communities and a skilled regional workforce.



Overview of the Youth Strategy Development Process

Development of the Youth Strategy began in October 2025, when a dedicated project team was established to lead the work. This work began with an initial phase of research and review, including an examination of existing CNC initiatives, institutional plans, and exemplary practices from other post-secondary institutions. This established a foundation for understanding current efforts and identifying areas of opportunity.

To support the development of the strategy, an advisory group was established with representatives from CNC and regional school districts (SD57, SD28, and SD91). The group provided ongoing guidance, shared perspectives, and helped ensure alignment throughout the process.

Building on this foundation, the project moved into a comprehensive consultation and engagement phase to gather input from youth, families, school districts, youth-serving community organizations, and CNC employees. Engagement activities focused on understanding experiences, identifying barriers, and exploring opportunities to strengthen youth pathways across the region.

Project Schedule



A key insight that emerged across all engagement groups was that youth engagement must be understood as a journey that unfolds over time. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of early exposure, ongoing engagement, and clear support during transition points. In response, the strategy is organized to reflect key stages in a young person's pathway, recognizing that needs, influences, and supports evolve as youth move from early awareness to post-secondary transition.

This staged approach helps ensure that engagement efforts are intentional, age-appropriate, and aligned to the moments where they can have the greatest impact.



Guided by this staged understanding of youth pathways, engagement activities were designed to gather perspectives across different age groups and experiences.

The table below provides a summary of who was engaged, how engagement was conducted, and the level of participation across each group.

Engagement Summary

Audience	Engagement Method	Participation
Students (Grades 10-12)	Classroom visits and interactive polling	150+ youth
School Districts 28, 57 & 91	Focus groups with leadership and in person consultation with educators and coordinators	75 school district representatives
Youth-Serving Community Organizations	In-person focus groups held in Prince George, Quesnel, and Vanderhoof	22 youth-serving community organization representatives
Parents & Guardians	Survey distributed digitally through schools and community networks	885 responses
Internal CNC Staff and Leaders	Targeted meetings and advisory discussions	50 employees

This engagement process provided a strong foundation for the Youth Strategy, grounded in the voices and experiences of those it is intended to support. The breadth of participation highlights the importance of a coordinated, community-informed approach that reflects regional realities and builds existing strengths and partnerships opportunities. These insights directly inform the focus areas and strategic objectives outlined in this strategy.

Key Themes Emerging from Consultation

Engagement across youth, families, school districts, youth-serving organizations, and CNC employees revealed several consistent themes shaping how youth experience and navigate post-secondary pathways:



Early exposure shapes future pathways



Relationships and belonging matter



Hands-on experiences drive engagement



Families play a key role in decision-making



Pathways are not always clear



Partnerships need stronger alignment

Supporting Youth at Every Stage

Young people's needs, interests, and influences change over time, and the support they require evolve with them.

The Youth Strategy recognizes that building a strong connection to post-secondary education happens through a series of intentional, age-appropriate experiences across a young person's journey. From early awareness and hands-on exploration in the elementary and middle years, through continued exploration in secondary school, to support during the transition to post-secondary, each stage plays a critical role.

By showing up at key moments along this journey, CNC can help youth explore their interests, build confidence, and better understand their options. These experiences also support families, youth-serving organizations, and care givers in navigating pathways and making informed decisions.

Organizing engagement across key stages allows CNC to provide more coordinated, meaningful, and connected experiences that support youth in moving forward with confidence. This approach can be understood across three key phases of a young person's journey, where engagement builds over time through increasing awareness, exploration, and transition support.

Our Vision

The Youth Strategy is grounded in a shared vision for how youth across the region experience and engage with CNC. This vision reflects what we aim to strengthen through more intentional, coordinated, and accessible approaches to youth engagement.

Through this work:



Youth see CNC as a place where they belong – welcoming, inclusive, and connected to their communities.



Youth and their families understand options earlier, including pathways, prerequisites, and opportunities available to them.



Youth feel confident and supported to explore, ask questions, and take steps toward post-secondary education.



Strategy Focus Areas

The following focus areas reflect what was heard through consultation and identify where CNC can have the greatest impact in strengthening youth engagement and pathways to post-secondary. Together, these areas provide a coordinated framework for action, aligned to key stages in the youth journey, from early awareness through to transition to post-secondary.

- 1. Early Awareness & Exploration**
- 2. Youth Engagement & Experiences**
- 3. Pathways & Transitions**
- 4. Partnerships & Community Connections**

Lens Across All Focus Areas

Access and belonging are foundational to how youth engagement efforts are designed and delivered across all focus areas. This lens reflects what we heard consistently through consultation, alongside CNC's commitment to ensuring opportunities are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of youth and communities across the region.

Through this lens, CNC will:



Reduce barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, cost, timing)



Foster welcoming, inclusive environments where youth feel supported and represented



Ensure youth can see themselves, their identities, and their communities reflected in post-secondary pathways



Strengthen approaches that build connection, confidence, and a sense of belonging across all stages of the youth journey



Implementation Approach

Delivering meaningful youth initiatives requires strong internal coordination and readiness. In addition to youth engagement activities and partnerships, CNC will continue to strengthen the conditions needed to support youth engagement safely, responsibly, and sustainably across campus and community settings.

This includes aligning youth initiatives with institutional priorities, strengthening consistent approaches to youth engagement, and ensuring appropriate policies, support, and resourcing are in place to enable coordinated and scalable delivery over time.

The focus areas and initiatives outlined in this strategy represent a starting point and will continue to evolve over time. As youth engagement grows and new opportunities emerge, CNC will adapt and refine activities to respond to changing needs, priorities, and community context.

Implementation will be collaborative and iterative, with initiatives developed and delivered in partnership with school districts, youth-serving organizations, and internal CNC teams to ensure relevance, responsiveness, and sustained impact.



Focus Area:

1. Early Awareness & Exploration

Objective

Strengthen early awareness of post-secondary pathways by engaging youth in accessible, applied learning experiences beginning in the elementary and middle school years

Year 1 Initiatives	Outcome
Deliver campus-based exploration and maker day experiences for youth	Youth build early familiarity with CNC campuses, programs, and learning environments
Pilot non-instructional day programming aligned with school calendars	Participation in youth programming increases through more flexible and accessible scheduling
Year 2 Initiatives	Outcome
Launch summer camp programming for youth	Youth build sustained interest in post-secondary pathways through extended, multi-day engagement experiences
Introduce spring break camp programming for youth	Participation in youth programming expands by providing additional engagement opportunities during key school breaks
Year 3 Initiatives	Outcome
Deliver classroom and mobile engagement activities across communities	Access to CNC programming and pathway awareness increases by reaching youth directly within schools and communities
Deliver “What is a College?” presentations in schools	Youth develop a clearer understanding of post-secondary at an earlier age



Focus Area:

2. Youth Engagement & Experiences

Objective

Expanding accessible, hands-on and pathway-connected opportunities for youth to connect with CNC through on-campus and community-based experiences that build interest, familiarity, and confidence

Year 1 Initiatives	Outcome
Co-develop and deliver a youth conference for local youth leaders	Youth build confidence, leadership skills, and increased interest in post-secondary pathways through participation in a collaborative conference experience
Enhance the dual credit experience through improved coordination and communication	School District staff develop a clearer understanding of dual credit pathways and feel more supported in navigating the experience with high school learners
Establish partnerships and planning for the reintroduction of skills competitions	A defined and coordinated approach in place to support future delivery of skills competitions
Year 2 Initiatives	Outcome
Expand dual credit opportunities and participation across regions	Participation in dual credit pathways increases through improved access and strengthened partnerships
Deliver applied learning opportunities connected to career pathways	Youth build awareness of career pathways and strengthen their ability to connect learning to future opportunities
Year 3 Initiative	Outcome
Deliver after-school and weekend skill-building clubs	Youth demonstrate sustained engagement and develop practical skills aligned with post-secondary and career pathways



Focus Area:

3. Pathways & Transitions

Objective

Improve how youth and families understand and navigate pathways into post-secondary by providing clearer information, building readiness, and supporting key transition points

Year 1 Initiatives

Improve and simplify communication related to application, registration, and key timelines

Enhance the dual credit onboarding and communication experience

Outcome

Students and families develop a clearer understanding of post-secondary processes and feel more confident navigating next steps

Students develop a clearer understanding of dual credit expectations and feel more prepared to transition into post-secondary learning

Year 2 Initiative

Deliver a “College 101” learning experience for youth in later secondary years

Outcome

Increased youth confidence and preparedness to navigate the transition to post-secondary education

Year 3 Initiative

Deliver parent and caregiver-focused sessions and resources

Outcome

Parents and caregivers build confidence in supporting youth to explore pathways and make informed post-secondary decisions



Focus Area:

4. Partnerships & Community Connections

Objective

Strengthen collaboration with schools and community partners to align efforts, build on existing programs, and expand access to youth engagement opportunities

Year 1 Initiatives	Outcome
Establish regular coordination and planning touchpoints with school districts	CNC and school districts strengthen alignment and coordination, resulting in more connected youth engagement efforts
Co-develop and deliver youth engagement activities with school districts	Access to youth engagement opportunities expands by delivering programming in partnership with school districts
Year 2 Initiatives	Outcome
Co-develop and deliver youth engagement and outreach activities with First Nations	Access to youth engagement opportunities expands to by delivering programming in partnership with First Nations
Co-develop and deliver youth engagement and outreach activities with youth-serving organizations	Access to youth engagement opportunities expands by delivering programming in partnership with youth-serving organizations
Year 3 Initiative	Outcome
Establish coordinated and sustained partnership models with school districts and community partners	Partnerships are sustained over time, supporting consistent and scalable youth engagement across regions



A Message from the President of CNC

At the College of New Caledonia, we believe education has the power to transform lives, communities, and futures. Create Your Possibilities represents a defining step in how we intentionally live that belief, moving beyond traditional outreach to fundamentally reshape how young people experience opportunity, belonging, and choice across the North.

This Youth Strategy invites CNC to move upstream, to engage earlier, and to partner more deeply so that possibility is not discovered by chance but cultivated with care. By strengthening connections with youth long before key decisions are made, we are helping to shift the conditions that shape educational outcomes, confidence, and access.

For our communities, Create Your Possibilities represents a long-term investment in people and place. When young people understand their options, feel a sense of belonging, and can imagine viable futures within their home regions, communities become stronger and more resilient. This strategy supports the development of local talent, strengthens the regional workforce, and contributes to intergenerational well-being. It affirms that opportunity does not have to mean leaving, and that thriving futures can be built right here.

This work is grounded in youth voice. Young people have told us that pathways are not always clear, that confidence grows through experience, and that relationships

matter. Create Your Possibilities reflects our commitment to honouring those voices and translating them into action.

This strategy marks the beginning of an ongoing commitment to collaboration, learning, and shared leadership. As we move forward, CNC will continue to work alongside schools, Indigenous partners, families, community agencies supporting youth, and youth themselves to evolve this work in ways that remain responsive and impactful. I am confident that Create Your Possibilities will help reshape how young people experience education in the North. We are creating conditions for lasting impact, for stronger communities, and for a future where every young person can imagine what is possible and know they have a place in achieving it.



Cindy Heitman
President of CNC



Looking Ahead

The Youth Strategy represents an important step in strengthening how CNC connects with and supports youth across the region. Through continued collaboration with schools, communities, and partners, CNC will build on this foundation to expand opportunities, strengthen pathways, and support youth in exploring their future with confidence.

The Youth Strategy will be led through the Future Student Experience department in collaboration with the College. This will play a central role in coordinating implementation, monitoring progress, and supporting alignment across initiatives.

Successful delivery will require a shared and collaborative approach. Across CNC, academic areas, student support services, and operational teams will contribute to the design and delivery of youth engagement activities, pathway support, and transition experiences.

To support ongoing alignment and responsiveness, an advisory structure will be established to provide guidance, inform priorities, and help ensure the strategy remains connected to the needs of youth and communities across the region.

Partnerships are also central to implementation. School districts, Indigenous communities and partners, and youth-serving organizations will play a critical role in co-developing and delivering activities, supporting youth participation, and ensuring approaches are responsive to unique local needs and contexts.

As this work evolves, CNC remains committed to listening, learning, and adapting to meet the needs of youth and communities across the region.



List of Collaborative Partners

The Youth Strategy was shaped through a collaborative engagement process involving youth, families, school districts, community partners, and CNC employees. We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations who contributed their time, perspectives, and lived experiences to help inform and strengthen this work.

We would like to recognize the following individuals and organizations for their contributions:

School Districts No. 57, No. 28, and No. 91.

Parents and Guardians across the region

Youth-Serving Community Organizations

Lheidli T'enneh First Nation

Prince George YFC

Prince George Big Brothers, Big Sisters

UNBC Active Minds

Ness Lake Bible Camp

Two Rivers Gallery

Engage Sport North: Northern BC

Prince George Symphony Orchestra

Quesnel Youth Soccer Association

Lhtako Dene Nation

Quesnel Women's Resource Centre

14th Dragon Lake BPSA Scouting Group

Foundry Quesnel YMCA BC

YMCA

Foundry Vanderhoof

Project Team members

Executive Sponsor, Shelley Carter-Rose, VP Student Affairs

Project Manager, Kathleen Easton, Manager, Strategic Projects

Business Unit Lead, Stephanie Deol, Director Marketing & Future Student Experience

Project Coordinator, Miley Yang, Project Planner

Admin Support, Dylan Aldred, Administrative/Project Coordinator

Admin Support, Hailey Mathiscyk, Administrative Assistant, Marketing & Events Services

Advisory Group members

Shruti Mankad, Associate Registrar

Tannis James, Manager Continuing Education

Christine Hofmeier, Academic and Accessibility Advisor (Quesnel)

Stephanie Jack, Manager Indigenous Initiatives and Inclusion

Rebecca Reid, Manager of Policy, Projects and Planning

Jean Baptiste, Manager, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB)

Doug Borden, SD57, CTC Coordinator

Martin Runge, SD28, Work Experience Coordinator

Darren Carpenter, SD91, District Career & Trades Programs Coordinator

CNC's Institutional Research and Enrolment Management department

Appendix

This work is grounded within CNC's broader institutional priorities and contributes to a coordinated approach to supporting learners and communities across the region. Key areas of alignment include:

Strategic Plan: Advancing CNC's commitment to accessible, community-centered education and supporting learners to live, learn, and work across the region

Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM): Strengthening the future student pipeline and improving awareness of programs and pathways

Indigenous Education Plan: Supporting relationship-based, community-informed approaches and reducing barriers to access

Academic Plan: Supporting accessible and flexible pathways, helping learners understand program options earlier, and improving readiness for post-secondary learning

CNC's Institutional Research team prepared two supporting reports to inform the Youth Strategy: one highlighting school district youth population trends and projections, and the other summarizing regional labour market demand and workforce outlooks.

Additional details and the full reports can be accessed using the QR codes below.

School District
Enrolment
Projections



Top 10 Jobs
in Next
10 Years





