

MEBO, MK, NSCC Partner with IBM Canada to Launch the Unama'ki P-TECH School Model for Indigenous Youth

Cape Breton (NS), October 12, 2021: Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office (MEBO), Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) and Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), along with IBM (NYSE:[IBM](#)) today announced they are partnering to deliver the Unama'ki P-TECH School Model (Pathways in Technology, Early College High School) to the Indigenous youth in Nova Scotia. This event will mark the opening of the first ever Mi'kmaw P-TECH school. The school program will be based in Eskasoni with the first cohort of students being from three Unama'ki communities.

The Unama'ki P-TECH model offers integrated high school and college curriculum focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). It will enable the Unama'ki students to graduate with a high school diploma, and a tuition-free, industry aligned, two-year college diploma, with workplace experiences within six years or less. Hallmarks of the program include industry one-on-one mentoring, workplace visits, paid summer internships, and be considered as first-in-line for interviews regarding IBM open positions. The Unama'ki P-TECH program will incorporate technical proficiency such as programming, while fostering professional skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, communication and adaptability for new-collar jobs. In addition, aspects of Mi'kmaq culture, language and other Indigenous teaching such as their guiding principles of "two-eyed seeing" will be part of this school's P-TECH model.

"I am very excited that our students are able to take part in the P-TECH program. The field of technology is growing exponentially with each passing year. This program is able to provide our students with the type of programming and experience that gives them the advantage to move right into the field after graduation. We are very happy that we are able to host this program right here in Eskasoni for high school students from around Unama'ki," said Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni First Nation/Chair for Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK).

"The digital economy of the future is in need of new types of workforce skills and both public and private sector partners must work together to address this skills challenge," said Claude Guay, President and General Manager, IBM Canada. "The P-TECH model has reinvented the approach to education, training, re-skilling and recruiting and is a great example of how we can come together to prepare our youth for jobs of tomorrow. We are proud to partner with the Unama'ki community and NSCC to build a competitive and diverse workforce for the future."

The Indigenous population is Canada's fastest growing demographic and there is a need to prepare the Indigenous youth with the digital and technological skills required for the changing workforce. This model will prepare Indigenous youth to fill the skills gap and to find employment in the Cape Breton and Nova Scotia's growing sectors of technology, healthcare and applied sciences.

"The Mi'kmaq leadership in Unama'ki see this initiative about preparing the next generation for new technology and a new business future. This is about a private-public partnership that is outcome based and results-driven," states Alex Paul, Executive Director for MEBO. "We look forward to providing this unique model for our Unama'ki youth interested in STEM careers and working in partnership with industry to fill the gaps in the local workforce," he added.

Andrew Lafford, NSCC Dean, Technology and Environment said, "As Nova Scotia's community college, we are

always looking for ways to connect students to industry and cultivate events, activities and pathways that will augment their educational pursuits. This is a perfect example of one of those important partnerships. We're thrilled to work with IBM, MEBO and MK, supporting the P-TECH program participants from the Unama'ki First Nation communities as they continue on their journey towards success."

The P-TECH model provides participants with work experience with employers in the ICT sector that addresses industry's need to have new grads with experience along with well-developed professional workplace habits. For the Indigenous participants having mentors, and connections to employment built into this program addresses the need for real opportunities. This program allows participants not just to dream about opportunity but more importantly they are able to realize those dreams.

"P-TECH is like a bridge to opportunity. It gives me a chance to show what I can do, and to grow and prosper. I love P-TECH because it gives people who are unfortunate (money wise) to have a chance of being great, and show what they can really do", said Presley Bernard, Wagmatcookewey, Wagamatcook who enrolled for the PTECH pilot program.

"A way for me to get a degree and a decent job at age 19", said Zachariah Gloade, Eskasoni, another student who is enrolled in PTECH program.

About MEBO

The Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office (MEBO) is a not-for-profit organization established in 2007 and located in Membertou, Nova Scotia. MEBO has developed a strategic, results-driven approach to engagement, always focusing on the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace. Since 2008, MEBO has delivered a very successful series of training programs in Mi'kmaq communities and has worked with community members wishing to receive trades training with apprenticeship placements. This has resulted in the creation of hundreds of jobs for Indigenous peoples in Nova Scotia.

About MK

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey is a unified team of chiefs, staff, parents and educators who advocate on behalf of and represent the educational interests of Mi'kmaq communities and protect the educational and Mi'kmaw language rights of the Mi'kmaq people. Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) continues to work on improving the quality of education, while remaining vigilant in maintaining and revitalizing the Mi'kmaq language. Armed with inspiration from the youth, and the guidance and leadership from the Board of Directors, education directors, schools, staff, and partnerships, MK has forged ahead, exploring new opportunities for academic excellence, and re-visiting and enhancing existing operations and programs.

About NSCC

NSCC is committed to building Nova Scotia's economy and quality of life through education and innovation, transforming Nova Scotia one learner at a time. NSCC offers more than 140 career-oriented programs throughout the province at our 14 campuses, including our online eCampus. Programs are offered through five academic schools – Access, Education and Language; Business and Creative Industries; Health and Human Services, Technology and Environment; Trades and Transportation – and reflect the labour market needs and opportunities in Nova Scotia. NSCC's primary goal: student success. An annual survey of NSCC graduates shows that 82% are employed one year after graduation, most in their field of study, with 94% of those employed living and working in Nova Scotia.

About IBM / IBM Education

IBM's longstanding commitment to education has been core to the business since its founding years. 10 years ago, IBM launched its ground breaking program P-TECH, a revolutionary public education model launched to address the high-tech skills gap. Additionally, the company has created customizable upskilling and retraining programs for individuals in every stage of their learning journey. With online toolkits available for cybersecurity training, to resume building, marketing design, or cognitive AI modules, IBM offers a mix of hands-on and virtual programs to provide training tools globally.

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