



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Nuxalk First Nation 4<sup>th</sup>-year carpentry students celebrate success with Camosun College**

*Victoria, B.C.* – Twelve Camosun College carpentry students from the Nuxalk First Nation will celebrate the completion of their fourth-year apprenticeship level, at a special celebration in their home territory this evening in Bella Coola, B.C. All students who completed all elements of their apprenticeship requirements are being acknowledged tonight, five of whom have passed their Interprovincial Carpentry Red Seal exam.

Over the last five years, Camosun College's School of Trades and Technology, the Industry Training Authority (ITA) and the Nuxalk First Nation have been working together to develop and deliver an innovative on-site four-year carpentry training program to Indigenous learners in Bella Coola.

"Congratulations to the women and men from Bella Coola who've worked hard to pass their fourth-year apprenticeship levels and those receiving their Red Seals. We need your skills to continue building the best B.C.," said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. "Our government is proud to see Indigenous communities like the Nuxalk Nation, working together with Camosun College and the Industry Training Authority to improve access to in-community training that supports economic prosperity. Strong partnerships that provide access to education closer to home are true examples of reconciliation in action."

In 2015, the Nuxalk First Nation identified a challenge in accessing skilled trades training in the region. They were seeking ways to utilize their own resources and people to build capacity to redefine homebuilding in their own territory. Sending community members away for skills training was expensive and meant time away from families. The Nuxalk First Nation soon partnered with the ITA and Camosun College to bring instructors to the Community's school instead.

"I'm grateful to Camosun College, ITA, Nuxalk Education Authority, the Nuxalk First Nation and, most importantly, the Nuxalk journeymen carpenters who have shared their knowledge and made apprenticeship within Nuxalk Territory accessible and achievable," says student Tommy Walkus. "Stutwiniitsap!"

"It is a great honour for Camosun College to work with the Nuxalk First Nation and the ITA on this unique educational partnership," says Camosun College President Sherri Bell. "Building a relationship and a successful on-site skills training program takes years of collaboration, relationship, trust and dedication. We are also extremely proud of these apprentices who have worked incredibly hard both in the classroom and on the job to complete all levels of the carpentry apprenticeship in their Community."

By the time learners reach their level four in carpentry, they have demonstrated skills and experience in performing site layouts, using survey instruments, building concrete forms, framing residential housing, building roof systems and applying finishing materials.

“To be able to bring the technical trades training to the Community, and for the Community to be able to provide the opportunity for their apprentices to cover the scope of trade and work experience in all levels of their apprenticeship, is truly remarkable” says Michael Cameron, Director of Indigenous Initiatives at ITA. “The collaborative effort of the Nuxalk First Nation, Camosun College, and the ITA demonstrates a true commitment to reconciliation and the innovation in removing barriers to Indigenous peoples success in trades training.”

“Camosun inspired me to further my education in carpentry and allowed me to remain in my hometown to build for the Community,” adds student Dustin Newcombe.

To date, the Nuxalk First Nation’s new carpenter apprentices have completed several much needed buildings for the Community including a new restaurant, expanded hotel facilities, a youth centre, a day care centre, two multiplex units, as well as several mini-houses and residential renovation projects.

“Community-based training not only brings new opportunities for learning and growth to apprentices, it can also support and grow local economies, and creates a legacy of projects and programs that provide ongoing sustainability,” says Paulette Higgins, Director of Training Investment at ITA.

Looking ahead, the Nuxalk First Nation plans to build up to 50 – 60 homes over the next five years along with a Big House, a cultural centre and a museum.

“The impact has been amazing,” say Camosun College Indigenous Peoples Trades Training Coordinators Susan Wilson and Larry Underwood who have been working on the project since the beginning. “To see so much growth and success in each learner. This program has not only benefitted Community, it has positively impacted each students’ health, their way of life and their personal pride in themselves.”

*Camosun College is one of the largest public colleges in British Columbia, established in 1971, with campuses located on the traditional territories of the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples. The college serves 19,000 learners each year in over 160 certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, post-degree diploma and continuing education programs. More than 1,100 Indigenous students are enrolled at Camosun in a wide variety of programming. The college also delivers specific trades training programs on campus for Indigenous learners including: [Trades Skills Foundation Program](#) and a Trades Sampler Course – in partnership with Vancouver Island University.*

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