

POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS IN CANADA'S NORTHERN TERRITORIES



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Qualifications: The Link Between Educational and Occupational Pathways and Labour Market Outcomes is a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The four-year project investigates the nature of pathways within postsecondary education, and between postsecondary education and the labour market. As part of this project, the *Provincial Pathways* profile series lays the groundwork for further inquiry contrasting and comparing educational and occupational pathways in Canadian provinces and territories.

Canada's Northern Territories: Overview

Canada's northern territories include the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon. The northern peoples are rich in cultural heritage and traditions, but the territories face challenges due to widespread and vast distances, low population, unemployment and educational achievement in areas such as literacy. Educators and policy-makers in the territories are seeking to provide culturally sensitive education that will lead to employment and enrichment of the people without sacrificing their cultural values. This can be difficult when resources are few and partnerships with universities in other provinces and countries can lead to education that is not entirely relevant to the northern contexts. However, the territories' governments and colleges are making progress as they seek to develop systems of education, articulation and transfer that enrich their cultures.

Post-Secondary System Descriptions

Each of Canada's northern territories hosts one central college with branch campuses or learning centres throughout the territory. The goal is to provide accessible and transferable education and training to as many people as possible and to provide programs with a distinct northern perspective. Each of the colleges partners with universities in other provinces to offer degree programs.

Postsecondary education in the northern territories is delivered through:

- **Northwest Territories:** [Aurora College](#), located on three campuses and 23 learning centres;
- **Nunavut:** [Nunavut Arctic College](#), located on three campuses and 25 Community Learning Centres;
- **Yukon:** [Yukon College](#), located on one central campus and 12 community campuses (CICIC, n.d.).

In conjunction with the Federal Government, Canada's northern territories are developing [The University of the Arctic](#) (UArctic). UArctic is not yet an accredited university but rather a cooperative network of the three territorial colleges with colleges and universities in Canada and other places in the world that are committed expanding higher education and research in Canada's North (ACCC, 2011, p. 37). The vision is to combine Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College and Yukon College into a unified, distributed university that serves all of the northern territories.

Pathways in the Territories

Pathways between the northern colleges and other higher educational institutions in Canada are essential because the student populations of the colleges are not large enough to sustain all the programs necessary for higher education in the territories (CMEC, 2012). The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC, 2012) would like to establish a pan-Canadian university-college credit transfer system that would benefit the northern territories. For students interested in transferring to Alberta colleges and universities, [Transfer Alberta](#) includes transfer information for the three territorial colleges. UArctic's [North2North](#) program links colleges in the northern territories with institutions in other parts of Canada as well as Denmark, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories' Aurora College is a member of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) and takes part in meetings of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (CMEC, 2012). It offers four-year bachelor's degrees in Education through the University of Saskatchewan and in Nursing through the University of Victoria. Other partnerships exist with the University of Alberta, Athabasca University, the University of Regina, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Lakehead University, the University of Northern British Columbia, and the University of Saskatchewan (CICIC, n.d.). These partnerships include articulation agreements in which diploma credits can be block transferred into university programs (ACCC, 2011; CICIC, n.d.).

Nunavut

Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) offers bachelors degrees in Education through the University of Regina's Nunavut Teacher Education Program and in Nursing through Dalhousie University's Arctic Nursing program (CICIC, n.d.). NAC also cooperates with other programs at the University

of Regina, Dalhousie University, Saint Francis Xavier University, University of Prince Edward Island, University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge, Athabasca University, and Royal Roads University and offers collaborative programs in Circumpolar Studies and North2North (CICIC, n.d.). Nunavut does not yet have its own credit-transfer agency (CMEC, 2012), but its Adult Learning Strategy seeks to improve program quality and facilitate credit transfer (ACCC, 2011).

Yukon

Yukon College is a member of the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) and the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT), which provide transfer agreements between Yukon College and institutions in BC, Alberta, and other places (CMEC, 2012). It offers bachelor's degrees in Education (Yukon Native Teacher Education Program) and in Social Work through the University of Regina and in Northern Environmental and Conservation Sciences through the University of Alberta. It also offers master's degrees in Public Administration and in Business Administration through the University of Alaska Southeast (CICIC, n.d.).

Trades

Trades programs in the northern territories vary in their extent of organization and development. The Northwest Territories and Yukon have more established apprenticeship and trades programs, while Nunavut is still developing in these areas. Each territory has the goal of providing trades training and skill development to as many people as possible and in as culturally sensitive a way as possible.

Northwest Territories

In the Northwest Territories, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment coordinate trades programs through the Northwest Territories Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification program (ATOC). The ATOC program seeks to

- Increase skills through relevant education and training;
- Bridge education and employment gaps through targeted supports;
- Grow the NWT workforce through partnerships; and
- Improve decision-making with relevant labour market information (Government of Northwest Territories, 2017, p. 5)

ATOC provides accountability and partnership for employers, training programs, mentors and workers in 27 occupations and 53 trades in the Northwest Territories (GNWT, n.d.). Thirty of the trades are certified with interprovincial [Red Seal](#) certification, which provides a Canada-wide standard of excellence for skilled trades through mutual recognition of trades credentials in Canada's provinces (GNWT, n.d.). The training period usually lasts three to four years, including 32 weeks of post-secondary education (GNWT, n.d.). Much of the training is provided through Aurora College, but some is also offered through institutions in Alberta (CICIC, n.d., GNWT, n.d.).

Nunavut

The Nunavut Department of Education is seeking to develop programs of quality and measures of accountability for vocational, apprenticeship and trades education in the territory (NDE,

n.d.). This is particularly crucial since almost three-quarters of Nunavut's working age population struggle with illiteracy, and unemployment levels are high (NDE, n.d.). For many years Nunavut had no emphasis on apprenticeship and trades training because the focus was on government and professional programs. The Government of Nunavut, in response to the need for a greater focus on these areas, approved the establishment of the Nunavut Trades Training Centre at NAC (NDE, n.d.). In the 2016-2017 academic year the NAC [Trades Training Centre](#) offered pre-apprenticeship courses for carpenters, housing maintainers, plumbing gas fitters, electricians and cooks, and courses for heavy equipment operators and trades access. The goal of those involved in vocational, apprenticeship and trades efforts in Nunavut is to provide greater literacy and employment opportunities to adults throughout the territory.

Yukon

Yukon offers [48 programs](#) for apprenticeship and certification, many of which provide the interprovincial [Red Seal](#) certification (CICIC, n.d.). Under the mentorship of a journeyperson, 80% of apprentices' training is on-the-job, with the remaining 20% of the training at a college or technical institute (Yukon Apprenticeship, n.d.). According to the Government of Yukon's Apprenticeship document, "apprentices earn from 50% to 95% of a journeyperson wage, depending on the trade and how much training the apprentice has completed. The wage increases as the apprentice moves from one period of apprenticeship to the next" (Yukon Apprenticeship, n.d., p. 2). The training and apprenticeship period is two to four years in duration (Yukon Apprenticeship, n.d.).

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) is not strongly developed in the northern territories, but the three colleges have some processes in place for assessing and recognizing students' prior learning and work experience (CICIC, n.d.). In particular, the government of Nunavut recognizes the need to further develop PLAR to extend opportunities for adult learners in the territory (CMEC, 2012; NDE, n.d.)

Summary

Pathways in Canada's northern territories are rich with possibilities for development. As the territories assess their needs and develop educational policies and programs, they are experiencing growth and widening opportunities to reach the people of their lands. Other provinces of Canada, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, are seeking to work with the northern territories to develop programs that meet the unique needs of the people there. Though there are many challenges, the opportunities are rich and promising.

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