

College of New Caledonia



NEWS RELEASE

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Media invited to talk with Métis elders about significance of new course

The media is invited to talk with Métis elders Friday about the importance of a new Aboriginal Studies course to be offered in January at CNC.

The media can talk with Métis elders and the course instructor starting at noon on Friday, August 26 in Room 1-112 at the College of New Caledonia.

Métis Studies II, is the second half of a new Aboriginal Studies course that will provide a unique perspective of the Métis culture that is relevant to Prince George and the surrounding region. The course will be offered online through CNC beginning in January, 2012. It will help students explore and understand past and present perspective in all areas of life through the study and reproduction of traditional artwork. Métis beadwork and clothing design appeared on personal items but soon migrated to commercial products during the fur trade.

“Métis women were the Fashionistas in Canada during the mid to late 1800s dressing their families as well as early Canadian leaders,” said CNC Métis studies instructor Kim Stewart.

The course curriculum was developed by Stewart, who is Métis, as well as Marlene Erickson, CNC’s Senior Policy Advisor, Aboriginal Education.

“There are other Métis courses in the province, but we felt the best way to understand someone else’s history and world view is to hear it directly from the source themselves and that is what we have done with these courses,” said Stewart.

“Marlene and I agreed that the most compelling way to teach the history and epistemology (world view) of a culture is to have the people themselves speak about it.”

With their co-operation, Stewart and Erickson invited seven Métis Elders from Prince George to talk about the things that mattered in their lives; what it was like for them as children, the joy and difficulty of growing up in a mixed culture and their first-hand experiences in the history that is normally only read about in books. Interviews

were organized into topics such as hidden identity, disenfranchisement, local history, Elder protocol, cultural values, medicines, stories and renewal.

“During the fur trade the men were out hunting and trapping, yet the women held such an economic role in all of this. They were supporting their families by making pemmican and outfitting important people in Canada.”

The course is broken down into three different modules focusing on history, adaptation and respect and revitalization. It took Stewart more than a year to put the course together, including the video footage.

Aboriginal Studies 110 and 111 are part of the new Associate degree in Aboriginal Studies that gives students better transfer credit to pursue a degree.

When students take the course, they will learn from two textbooks written by Métis authors based in British Columbia, along with the DVD compilation that features the seven local Elders whom Stewart interviewed.

By offering it online, people in smaller communities can access it.

“It’s pretty ambitious for us to provide it online,” said Stewart. “We wanted students to feel they were learning directly from the Elders.”

ABST 110 will begin this semester and ABST 111 will be offered in January with Stewart instructing it. As the person who interviewed the elders and developed the curriculum, Stewart is thrilled to now be able to teach the courses.

“There is a huge Métis population in B.C. who have very interesting stories about why they’re here,” said Stewart. “They helped build the fabric on how Prince George was built and they’re contributing to preserving and documenting Metis culture. The Elders have a lot of wisdom to bring forward.”

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