

2017/2018

# Outreach **within reach.**



*Smokey, Kainai High School*

## Outreach Centres: **Guide to Getting Started** **FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

**ADLC** | Alberta Distance  
Learning Centre

# Opportunity **within reach.**

Alberta Distance Learning Centre | ADLC exists to put additional educational opportunities for all learners within reach, allowing them to complete requirements on their own terms, regardless of age, circumstance, or location.

Our goal is to help our partner schools—and their students—in their efforts to increase learning opportunities. We do this by collaborating with educators across the province.

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# Introduction

## WHAT IS AN OUTREACH CENTRE?

An outreach centre (OC) is a dedicated space in a community where high school and adult students can access flexible individual learning through existing courses (online and/or in print). This allows students to finish high school (with ADLC, for example) and/or get started on college and university courses (with other providers) without leaving their communities. Learning is self-directed, which means that students, along with their mentors and service providers, can choose individual courses at the appropriate academic level and set their own pace for completion.

OCs aren't a new idea, but some previous models haven't been as successful as hoped. The model described in this publication has been tried and tested, and for many students, it has provided a better learning experience than structured schools have. The key to the success of OC's that use this model is a full-time mentor. Staffing an OC with a full-time teacher or education facilitator gives students a learning mentor who provides coaching and accountability.

○ An outreach centre (OC) is a way for Indigenous communities to **address their educational needs in their own communities** without compromising culture or flexibility for students.



## HOW DO MENTORS SUPPORT LEARNING?

Here are a few examples of what mentors do to support learning:

- › Assess academic readiness
- › Help identify career goals
- › Assess learning needs and options
- › Develop a personalized plan of learning
- › Help access the appropriate learning providers and resources
- › Provide support, such as calling service providers like ADLC when help is needed
- › Check in with students at least twice a day to monitor progress
- › Answer questions about the learning materials

Mentors also ensure attendance by phoning students who haven't arrived on time and by helping students plan for times they need to be away from school. Some mentors even go beyond this, by providing rides when students require them, arranging for nutrition needs, or stepping into the role of life coach by helping students set up daily routines.

The structured learning environment of this OC model encourages steady progress while maintaining the flexibility required to allow students to participate in community and family events and projects.

Normally, students are expected to attend daily from 9 am to mid-afternoon, with two fifteen-minute breaks and an hour for lunch (provided), but this can be adjusted according to students' needs. Flexible scheduling can also allow students to access tutoring a few nights a week in cases where the community can provide staff. (ADLC also offers evening helpline assistance. Please check with other providers for availability of this benefit.)

While students typically work alone in an OC, there's also the possibility of conducting group learning or activities in the afternoons.



## HOW CAN AN OUTREACH CENTRE SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY?

Some members of Indigenous and isolated communities have difficulty thriving in formal learning environments located in faraway cities or towns, which may discourage them from completing high school or going to a university or technical school.

By providing the support of one-on-one mentorship and the freedom of self-directed learning in your community, an OC offers a learning option very different from that found in typical high school and university environments.

The goal is for the OC learning option to entice members of your community to continue their education, which opens up new possibilities for their futures while also strengthening your community.

An OC could allow your community to be in charge of your own solutions for educational needs. OCs are unique, and they appeal to Indigenous communities because they can place priority on the study of Indigenous languages and cultures, as well as other specialized courses, where available. Within an OC, traditional skills can be learned from a local teacher and translated into credits.

Students might, for example, participate in an accredited sewing class in which they make traditional Indigenous clothing for a community cultural event.

It's relatively easy to set up an OC in your community, and the costs are a lot lower (as described in the Step-by-Step that follows) than setting up a high school or college program.



# Step-by-Step

## ***Step 1: Create an Advisory Group***

To start and maintain an OC in your community, you'll need a small group of people to carry out the steps outlined below and to oversee the operation. This will likely also require finding someone to undertake some of the administrative tasks (though this could be done by the mentor in smaller population settings). Members of the group might include community leaders and the potential OC mentor.

## ***Step 2: Determine Your Community's Needs***

In consultation with Elders and skilled community members, Chiefs and Councils should determine the needs of your community. Consider how many people in your community may wish to study at an OC, and consider whether those people have access to a laptop or computer and a good internet connection. Keep this information in mind when making choices about providers. Some providers will have the ability to provide print options, instead of online ones.

## ***Step 3: Find a Location***

Once you've determined your community's needs, you'll need to find an appropriate location for your OC. This doesn't have to be a stand-alone building; all that's required is a secure, insulated room with high-speed Internet access and, of course, easy access to washrooms.

### **TIP**

**Locating the OC near a kitchen can be very helpful.** Beyond producing meals, the kitchen can also be used for nutrition and cooking classes, classes in traditional Indigenous cooking, and training in healthy eating. Providing lunches allows students to continue focusing on their studies during their time at the OC, prevents the need to locate your OC near food vendors, and ensures adequate nutrition for students' learning needs.





Mrs. Halfe, Ashmont School



Caroline, Kainai High School

#### **Step 4: Find a Mentor**

Each OC should have at least one full-time staff member capable of providing one-on-one mentorship and tutoring. For most OCs, one mentor will be enough. However, if you have students with special needs, or a large number of students to accommodate, a second mentor is a good idea.

Ideally, one mentor in your OC would be a certificated high school teacher with a math and/or science background. Any other certificated teacher would also work well. If you can't find a teacher or someone with a B.Ed., another good option is to find someone with enough academic training (again, ideally in math and/or science—someone with a B.Sc., for example) to complete the learning assessments and tutoring required. When coaching subjects mentors aren't familiar with, they would ideally complete the coursework before tutoring students.

○ Ideally, **one mentor in your OC would be a certificated high school teacher** with a math and/or science background.

## **TIP**

**Finding a certificated math/science teacher as a mentor is helpful to the success of your OC.** Other certificated teachers who can connect students to more qualified teachers (such as those at ADLC) in online or phone conversations can also be very successful.

### Step 5: Determine the Cost

Starting an OC doesn't have to be expensive. Below are examples of a typical annual budget for 10 full-time high school or upgrading students and a typical start-up budget.

### Projected Annual Budget for 10 Students<sup>1</sup>

EXPENDITURE TYPE	COST FOR 10 STUDENTS
Office Supplies	\$780
Mentor Salary	\$90,000 <sup>2</sup>
Tuition (average based on 18 credits per student)	\$18,800
Resource Material	\$500
Groceries	\$12,000
Incentive Trips and Cultural Programs	\$12,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$134,080<sup>1</sup></b>

### TIP

Some outreach centres choose to purchase print (instead of online) resources so that they then own those resources, though this does not prevent the need to repurchase updated materials. All print resources published by ADLC are also available in a download-and-print-yourself format. Please check for availability with other providers.



## Typical Start-Up Budget for 10 Students<sup>1</sup>

ITEM	COST FOR 10 STUDENTS
Fridge	\$700
Desks	\$2,500
Printer	\$800
Table	\$500
Chairs	\$2,000
Bookshelves	\$300
Filing Cabinet	\$500
Television	\$500
Mentor Station	\$1,500
Computers	\$12,000 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,300</b>

*NOTE 1: The more students you have in your OC, the lower the total cost per student will be. The budgets presented are examples only, and are based on an average OC in an Indigenous community. Costs for a new OC will vary.*

*NOTE 2: By far the biggest and most important expense is the mentor's salary. This salary is based on the mentor being a qualified math/science teacher. The mentor can generally support more than 10 students (up to 15 is reasonable, depending on the individual needs of each student). The estimated cost provided does*

*not include employer contributions to benefits or pension plans that may be available in your community.*

*NOTE 3: Start-up costs, which include a good computer for each student, are one-time only costs. Some of the items listed may already be available in your community, which would reduce the total of your start-up budget. Expect to replace computers every two to four years, depending on treatment.*



Shadow and Angus, Nipisihkopahk Secondary



Renell, Ashmont School

### **Step 6: Explore Funding Options**

Funding for a project such as an OC in an Indigenous community rarely comes from one place. While that makes for a more complex funding model, it also ensures there are plenty of ways to rearrange and ensure continuity of operation when one funding source disappears. There are many potential sources of funding for your OC. Here are a few:

- › Corporate sponsorship
- › Federal funding (per-child education funding for students under 18)
- › Provincial funding
- › Tribal funding
- › Fundraising (including grants)
- › Canada Alberta Job Grant (for those who are employed or are newly hired)

○ “Amazing! Our students show improvement every term, and this next term will be even better.”

- Teacher at Nipisihkopahk Secondary School, Maskwacis



Kainai High School



Mrs. Halfe, Ashmont School



Andrea, Nipisihkopahk Secondary

### **Step 7: Select Resources and Contact Providers**

Your community's OC can and should use a combination of resources and course providers. No one provider is likely to suit the needs of all your students. Online research will be required to help select the appropriate providers and resources for each student.

Here are some possible course providers:

**Alberta Distance Learning Centre | ADLC** is a distance-learning provider for Grade 1–12 students across the province and around the world. With over 275 courses to choose from, you'll be given a choice of having ADLC teachers work with your students or obtaining materials for your own teachers to use (with support from ADLC). ADLC can assist in many ways:

- › By helping with on-site start-up
- › By answering many of your questions
- › By helping with the steps outlined above
- › By providing visits from ADLC teachers
- › By offering flexible, self-serve options with many courses available in both print and online formats

**Athabasca University** provides accredited online learning at a university level. Athabasca also has its own Learning Communities, similar to OCs, which can be valuable partners. For example, they have a Learning Opportunities list that community members use to find high school, vocational, post-secondary, career-development, and Aboriginal programs.

**NAIT** and **SAIT** offer online courses, including an Aboriginal Awareness course.

The **Native Resources Group (Indigenous Learning Centre)** provides assistance with a variety of vocational learning options.

The **University of Alberta** offers online courses, including a few from their Native Studies program.



### **Step 8: Start-Up**

Once you've completed the previous steps, you're ready to begin. Start-up typically occurs in September with a second semester starting in the new year. Don't be afraid to admit a few more students initially than the OC can handle—not everyone will stay in the program. Our partners report that, in September in particular, there are always a few students who find that an OC doesn't work for them. Some outreach centres find quarter systems more productive than semestered ones because they allow students the option of shorter, more focused course study. You'll want to determine what suits your students best.

### **Step 9: Monitor and Evaluate**

You'll want to determine what measures of success you think are applicable to your community. This may be credits earned, students helped, number of graduates, or anything else that represents the goals of your community. As you begin to track these numbers it will be important to realize that building relationships and learning what works for your students takes time. You may need several years to be able to truly evaluate the successes of your OC.

## **TIP**

Making contact with other OCs in Indigenous communities could be your road to success. You'll get the opportunity to learn from others' experience. ADLC can help you with this; please just ask! While there are no regulations governing the start-up of your OC, the service providers listed here do have their own accreditations.



### ***Step 10: Stay Connected and Committed***

Your OC can be a huge asset to your community, but it will require ongoing commitment from the community, mentors, and students. Others in outreach situations have noted that it's particularly important to have a commitment to facilitating better attendance by students.

Again, this is where drawing on the experience of others can help. Staying connected will allow you to consult with a professional community dealing with similar, if not the same, issues.

For additional resources, visit [adlc.ca/indigenous](http://adlc.ca/indigenous) or contact your Learning Network Liaison today (see page 12 for contact information).

○ Your OC can be a huge asset to your community, but it will require ongoing commitment from the community, mentors, and students.

# Your Learning Network Liason is always **within reach!**



Call your Learning Network Liaison today at  
1-866-774-5333 and use the extension listed below.

***Northwestern Alberta, Home Education,  
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For additional resources, visit [adlc.ca/indigenous](https://adlc.ca/indigenous) or contact your Learning Network Liaison today.

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