



**PORTAGE
COLLEGE**



**Report to the
Community**

2024-2025



Welcome Message

Established in 1968 by the federal government to create a rural learning centre for adults, Portage College continues to work from those foundations. From our origins as Alberta NewStart in Lac La Biche to the multi-campus college we are today, we continue to proudly serve that original mandate to empower small communities. While our footprint and focus have grown, we never lose sight of the unique populations and communities that make up our rural Alberta region. We pride ourselves on being part of the communities we serve.

At Portage College, we guide and support students on their unique journeys in a caring environment. We believe that every person deserves the opportunity to grow through education.



Dr. Stephen Price

Portage College President and CEO
(2025-Present)

Nancy Broadbent

Portage College President and CEO
(2018-2025)

Randolph Benson

Board Chair and Public Member
(2008-2011 & 2017-Present)



About Us

A Learning Legacy Continues

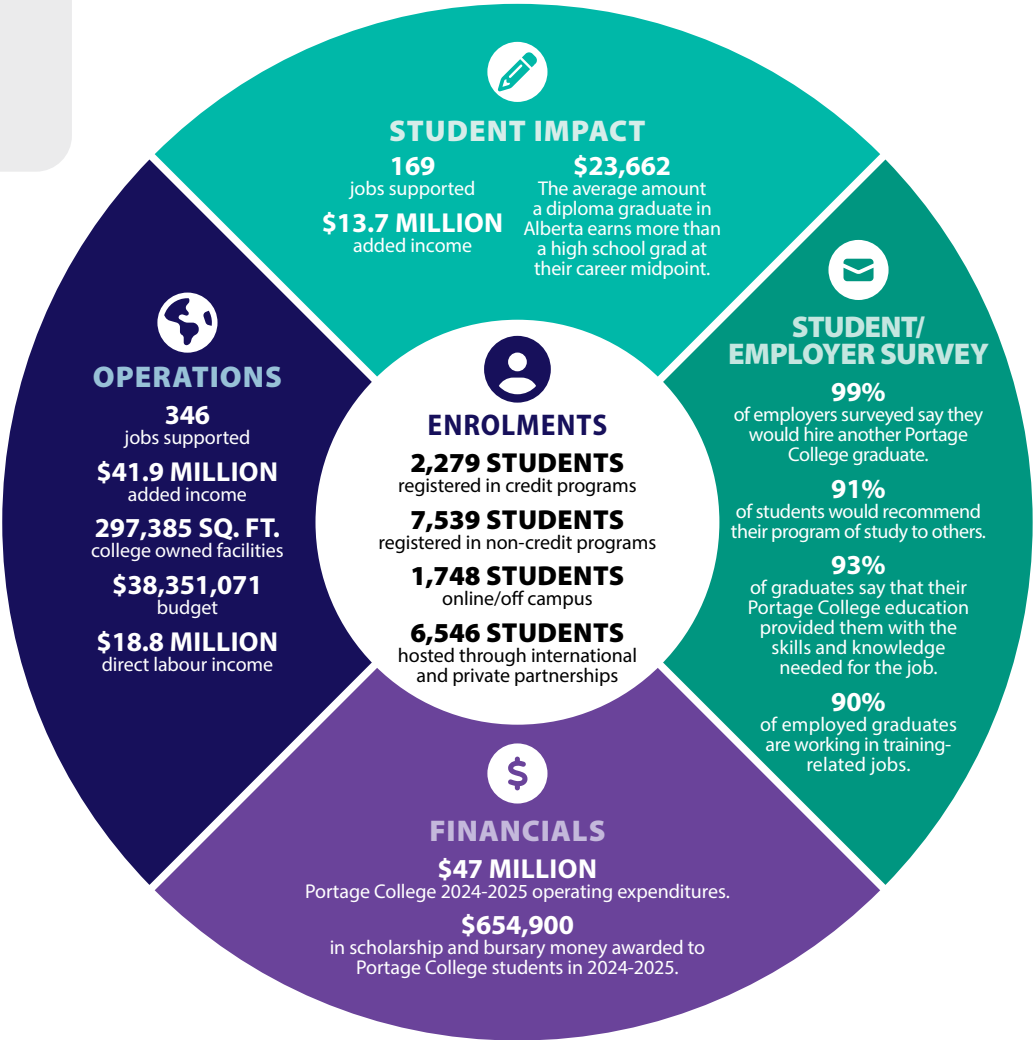
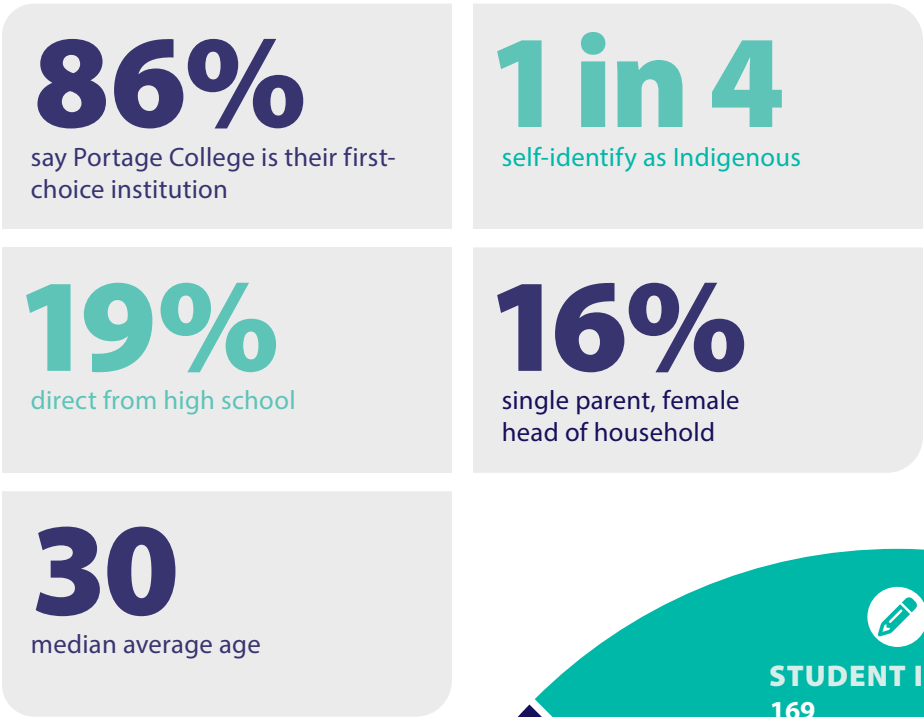




Did You Know ...

In 1972, the provincial government acquired the facilities and operations of NewStart/Pe-Ta-Pun for \$1.

Our Student Demographics are Unique



Portage’s Investment Management Agreement

Investment Management Agreements help publicly funded post-secondary institutions collectively work towards the goals of the provincial government’s Alberta 2030 Strategy. The agreements are contracts between the institutions and Alberta’s Minister of Advanced Education showing our accountability within a performance-based funding model. The agreements are a requirement under the Post Secondary Learning Act.

**2024-2025 IMA results were not available prior to design and printing of this document.*

Performance Metric	2023-24 Target	Tolerance Threshold	Minimum Threshold	2023-24 Result	2024-25 Target
Work-Integrated Learning	83%	5%	78%	92%	88%
Domestic Enrolment	1,000	60	940	1,520	1050
Administration Expense Ratio	11%	3%	14%	11%	11%



A Voyageur's Map to 2035: Portage's Strategy and Culture Framework

Culture and Strategy Decision Foundations

Our Purpose

Empowering generations to grow thriving futures.

Our Mission

To partner in forging unique pathways that connect people to opportunities that enrich lives, careers, communities and futures.

Our (10 year) Vision

Leaders in creating education-fueled pathways to rural prosperity.

Our Core Values

1. **Holistic Interconnection:** We think and act on behalf of the whole.
2. **Intentional Collaboration:** We build belonging to amplify impact.
3. **Responsive Innovation:** We respond to and evolve with the needs of our partners.
4. **Whole Person Development:** We support balanced individual growth.

Our Strategic Strengths

1. **Organizational Agility:** We build an agile, resilient, and forward-thinking organization.
2. **Innovative Community-Driven Approach:** We partner and innovate to grow synergy and success in the communities we serve.
3. **Student-Focused Success:** We ensure every student is provided the support to succeed.
4. **Extra-Mile Attitude:** We jump in to lend a helping hand.

2035 Goals

1

Strengthen
Organizational
Agility

2

Expand
Community-Driven
Innovation & Impact

3

Fortify Student-
Focused Success
Strategies

4

Amplify
Extra Mile
Approach

Thank you! In November of 2024, the Board of Governors and Executive Committee held a retreat to vision new pathways and to amend the mission, values and top priorities for the College over the next 10 years. In addition, two sessions were held with students and two "Calling the Curious" meetings were held with all employees. The Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) spent countless hours over six meetings to find the right words to carry the sentiment of our culture and plans. The resulting Framework was created and approved by the Board on May 15, 2025. The College would like to thank everyone who has helped us articulate this plan for our future success. We acknowledge the excellent efforts of all those who worked with Andrea Jacques and her team at Kyosei Consulting on the important work of Culture and Strategy.

PHOTO: DONNA FELEDICHUK

Organizational Agility

Every Little Bit ...

Students at Portage College benefit from contributions made by the region's business sector, municipalities, private donors and local fundraisers. From equipment donated by St. Paul's White Cloud Auto Repair for Air Brake Endorsement classes, apparatus donated by Flowserve to our Power Engineering program, \$1,000 from Lakeland Chiropractic to the Kinesiology program, and support from many community-linked fundraising events, every dollar helps. Some recent donations include:

- Donated materials from Lac La Biche Transport and in-kind donations for Portage truck driver training courses.
- St. Paul Lions Club donated \$1,500 to a Culinary Arts field trip.
- Canadian Natural donates funding support to several projects, including the Project of Heart that educates participants about reconciliation, and annual community barbecue events in all First Nation and Métis communities.



Project of Heart unveiling ceremony at the Portage College St. Paul campus featuring the art installation and plaque.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Investment Project

Long Term Goals for the ERP Project

- **Enterprise Integration & Efficiency:** The ERP unifies core business functions (Finance, HR, Operations) into a single platform, enabling standardized processes, improved data integrity, and real-time decision-making across the organization.
- **Foundation for Strategic Growth:** The planned replacement of aging systems to enhance scalable growth, operational agility and improved service delivery.
- **Enterprise-Wide Transformation:** More than a technology upgrade, this is a cross-functional change initiative that requires broad engagement, leadership alignment, and a sustained focus on user adoption and cultural change.

Ingredients of Student Success



GERALDINE HAGEN

Learning Facilitator, Portage College Student Learning Services

"We meet the student where they are, we work on building a relationship that shares their strengths, determination, and possibilities. We work together to find what works best for them ...The beauty of this process lies in its collaborative nature, where the students themselves, peers, instructors, and support staff play a vital role in their journey."



LYLA ALLAN

Coordinator, Community Social Work Program, King Charles III Coronation Medal recipient

"In order for our students to be active members of the communities around them, they need to be involved, which means I get involved. If we want to grow good communities, it's important that people are there to show others how to do it."



JACKIE LUBEMSKY

Instructor and Alumni, Practical Nurse Diploma Program (2010), 2025 Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculties Association (ACIFA) Distinguished Instructor Award winner

"Our students come from many diverse backgrounds. Some students are single parents or have kids at home or work multiple jobs while going to school. I respect them and try to work and support them in their journey the best I can. I want every student to be successful, so I do what I can to make that happen."



NICOLE MCINTOSH

Student, 4th Year Bachelor of Business Administration Home community: Cold Lake

"I'm grateful to be part of such a strong and inspiring school."

Bachelor of Business Admin 4th year student Nicole McIntosh holds the frame along with fellow Portage College Business students and coaches. The students won first place at the 2025 Alberta Deans Business Case Competition.

Alumni Feature

Behind the Numbers

LANA GAL (FLETT), ALUMNI

2022-2024 Indigenous Arts Diploma

Home communities: Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton

Numbers show that 90 per cent of Portage College graduates are working in a training-related job eight months after they completed their program. Lana Gal is one of those graduates — but the numbers don't tell her whole story.

Lana is a 2024 graduate of Portage College's Indigenous Arts Diploma program. She is also a descendant of a 60s Scoop survivor, as well as a survivor of her own battle with a debilitating genetic disorder. She is a wife and a mom who has learned many lessons from her autistic child. She is a business owner, and a woman who until recently had no idea of her full heritage ... or her full potential.

"When I came to Portage, I came as a blank slate," says the proud Métis woman who has facilitated a variety of Indigenous workshops and education sessions across the province. The latest projects include a pop-up beadwork class for travelers at the Edmonton International Airport, and a recurring Indigenous art workshop for school-aged children.

Lana was born in Winnipeg and grew up in Calgary and Ontario. She returned to Alberta in 1996. She was drawn to the Portage College Indigenous Arts Diploma program as she was discovering more details about her Indigenous background.

"I was finding my Indigenous spirit," she says.

After enrolling in the Indigenous Arts Diploma program in 2022, that spirit merged with her creativity as she not only learned many forms of Indigenous art but also learned the importance of continuing to share knowledge with others.

Continuing her knowledge path, Lana was recently welcomed to the faculty at Portage College as an instructor in the Indigenous Arts and Culture program.

Portage College alumni Lana Gal enjoys facilitating Indigenous arts workshops for a local K-12 students. She is also a new faculty member in the College's Indigenous Arts and Culture program.



Lana and fellow Portage College alum Tralynn Ganter at YEG pop-up beadwork class and cultural workshop.

"At Portage, they saw me. They saw each of us. They were able to identify each student and see their talents, putting us in a place to succeed ... in larger colleges and universities you are a number, and you can get lost. They found me at Portage."

— Lana Gal

Paramedicine Program Grads Earn Perfect Pass-rate Scores

Students say it's one of the best-delivered programs in Western Canada, and industry leaders agree. Underlining this fact, every student in the most recent Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) program at Portage College passed the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators exam, each with an overall score well above the national average. The 100 per cent pass rate is a noteworthy accomplishment.

"This accomplishment is a testament to our students' skills and the outstanding support and instructional expertise provided by our faculty. We are incredibly proud of our students and faculty," said Shelley Franchuk, the Curriculum Lead Coordinator of the Portage College Paramedicine program.

"The program has such a good reputation, compared to other schools. So, it wasn't a hard decision that way. I work in the ER and get lots of paramedic students coming in, and you know what school they come from just based off their skillset and the way they are organized,"

— **Taylor Resendes**, ER nurse and student of the Primary Care Paramedic program.



Portage College Advanced Care Paramedic program students Cory Christopherson and his stepdaughter, Taylor Resendes are from Sylvan Lake. The pair came to Portage College because of the program's strong reputation.

Labour Force Development

Did You Know ...

90%

of employers say our students are equally or better prepared than graduates of other post-secondary institutions.

90%

of employed Portage College graduates are working in training-related jobs.

60%

of Portage College grads have remained in their rural community.

99%

of employers say they would hire another Portage College graduate.

Local Entrepreneur

Lac La Biche-born **David Schultz** started a regional window cleaning company from the ground up while he was completing his Business Administration Diploma program at Portage College. Now a proud College alumni, Schultz employs half a dozen local workers and has plans to expand even further.



"The Business program at Portage College was incredible and definitely shaped my journey as an entrepreneur," he said.

Powering Up a Career

Portage College Power Engineering program grad **Cole Rawson** says the good relationship between the College and the region's industrial sector was a big part for him finding full-time work. Rawson, who grew up in the Athabasca area, is now a Control Room Operator at Canadian Natural, working in the Conklin area and living in the Lac La Biche region.

"A thing I noticed with doing the Lac La Biche program is that they have good relationships with the companies in that area. It made it a lot easier to find practicums for the students,"

— Cole Rawson



Community Partnerships

The College and Saddle Lake Cree Nation signed a memorandum of understanding in 2025, continuing and renewing the collaborative partnership between the Nation and the College to enhance educational opportunities and community needs.

The Career Exploration and Job Readiness (CEJR) grad ceremony was held at the St. Paul Portage College campus and included presentations, photos and a special balloon release to recognize two students who passed away at the beginning of the program.

Portage College President and CEO Nancy Broadbent, members of the Saddle Lake and St. Paul communities, along with family and friends of the grads, were all part of the event.

The CEJR program is a 17-week course that includes training in life management, career planning, workplace safety and personal wellness. The program also includes practicum hours in local businesses that partner with the program.



Portage College President and CEO Nancy Broadbent (r) with Saddle Lake Cree Nation Chief Jason Whiskeyjack (c) and Saddle Lake Cree Nation Education Board member Ruby Stone (l).



Students in the Career Exploration and Job Readiness (CEJR) program offered at the Saddle Lake campus held their graduation ceremony on July 14.

Unique Learning for Unique Communities

We say that Portage College students excel in a learning environment that is 'not a traditional education setting.' But what does that mean? It means our students thrive by learning in a familiar community environment, where social supports are nearby. That familiarity continues through access to one-on-one learning provided by highly-trained faculty and staff familiar with the area, the demographics and the socio-economic realities of our rural region.

We are as unique as the communities, the history and the individuals we represent.

Did You Know?

Portage College offers facilities that otherwise wouldn't exist within the communities we serve. Our unique spaces such as the waniskah room (pictured), our theatre, conference rooms, cultural areas and gymnasiums are used by community groups. We have always been part of the communities we serve.



Partnerships Within Our Region

Portage College is innovative and constantly responding to meet the needs of our service region. Through the efforts of our students, staff, faculty and administration, Portage College continues to build close relationships within the communities we serve. Here are some examples:

- After hearing about the growing challenges to hire teachers in rural Alberta schools, Portage College partnered with the Council of Alberta Superintendents of Schools to create a bridging opportunity for those already working in schools to develop their teaching skills. The “Essentials in Teaching” program was visioned to immediately address any skill gaps. The program will be recognized once we have met the requirements of Campus Alberta Quality Council and obtain approval to launch a degree in Elementary Education.
- In April 2024 Portage College and Lakeland College partnered in a research initiative to ensure our trades training is aligned with the emerging careers and the shifting attrition rates of skilled trades workers in the region. The Analysis of Projected Trades Jobs study found that new projects in the region would create more than 53,000 jobs in the next six years. Given the retirement rate in many of these fields, the analysis was also undertaken to meet new needs and respond with increased programming.
- With Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake in our service area, we are proud of the significant and unique responsibility to provide training for those looking to a military career and to those looking for new careers after their military service. An example of that commitment is the new Aircraft Structures Technician Certificate at our Cold Lake campus.
- To match the growing demand in several employment sectors within the region, we have significantly expanded our suite of program offerings without a corresponding increase in funding. In the past two years, the College has expanded its trades offerings, including Pre-Apprenticeship Carpentry and Welding, all four periods of Apprenticeship Steamfitter-Pipefitter, and added new programs such as a Computer Sciences Certificate. Portage has also increased the number of Community Social Work, Practical Nurse, Primary Care Paramedic and Advanced Care Paramedic intakes.

New programming in place for 2025-2026 to match community needs include Addictions Counselling, Apprenticeship Carpentry, Apprenticeship Heavy Equipment Technician (Periods 1 & 2), Computer Sciences Diploma, Kinesiology, and Pre-Health Sciences Certificate in Lac La Biche. Furthermore, we are currently working through the Campus Alberta Quality Council process to become a degree-granting institution, with plans to offer a Bachelor of Education with a rural focus by 2026-27.

MADDIE MCMILLAN, STUDENT-ATHLETE

Emergency Medical Responder Program
Home community: Cold Lake

“When I got out of high school, I wanted to be a nurse, to be in the medical field ... so I took the program to have a better understanding of more areas in that field. I’m happy it was here for me to take.”



Did You Know ...

Portage College Community Social Work students in Lac La Biche and Cold Lake raised \$4,490 in recent fundraisers, bringing awareness to suicide prevention, food insecurity and family violence prevention in the region.

We currently offer more than 40 certificate and diploma programs as well as 42 micro-credentials that can unfold into more than 180 individual, personalized classes. University Transfer is also available through in-class and virtual learning on a full-time and part-time basis, offering a wide range of additional courses.

More than 150 high school students across the service region enrolled in the Portage College Trades 131 course that offers students credits towards their high school completion and future college enrollment.

Community Connections

Whether your community is a school classroom a few blocks from a Portage College campus or a town on the other side of the world, Portage College helps you connect.

Portage College students bring many of their cultural aspects to the College communities where they learn. In return, the communities learn and grow from new cultures and traditions.

Welding Together a Strong Connection

Portage College students and faculty from programs like Welding often share time and expertise with students from local schools. The community connections can be found during field trips, hands-on learning opportunities, competitions and dual-credit programs giving students an early start on post-secondary training.



Portage College students enjoy the colourful and cultural Holi celebration.



Rural Economic Development

Portage Boosts Local Economies with “College Town” Impact

Tuition, accommodations and a student workforce aren’t the only ways that Portage College injects revenues into the communities it serves. Portage College sporting events, academic competitions, trade skills contests or a community night hosted at the local campus, also bring attention and potential revenues to northeastern Alberta communities.

The benefits of the relationship between the Lac La Biche County community and Portage College in particular, says Lac La Biche County spokesperson Alex Fuller, is part of an overall marketing plan for the region, connecting tourism, industry and the College.

The idea is to promote a “college town.”

“Our senior leadership has placed a lot of emphasis on building our community into both a resort area and college town,” says Fuller, explaining the goal will highlight the community as an “educational hub” for industry and others looking to invest and develop in the municipality.



For more than 20 years, Portage College’s Public Legal Education (PLE) Program has been a trusted resource for communities across northeastern Alberta. By providing accessible legal information, the program helps individuals better understand their rights and navigate the legal system.

Did You Know ...

Portage College is anticipating an almost 3X increase in available apprenticeship seats in the 2025-26 school year for trades programming. The College will now have 240 available seats, up from 84 in 2024. The increase is an indication of the continuing need for skilled tradespeople in rural northeastern Alberta.

Did You Know ...

In March of 2025, Portage College and four other post-secondary institutions signed a first-of-its-kind agreement that fosters strategic collaboration to ensure enhanced student access, mobility, and learner outcomes. The other institutions are Keyano College, Lakeland College, Northern Lakes College and Northwestern Polytechnic (NWP).



Partnering with K-12

High School to College Without Leaving Home, College to Work Without Leaving the Region

High school students in our region have access to start their post-secondary education and pursue trades training at Portage College. For example, we have more than 150 high school students taking our dual credit “Trades 131” and other dual credit programs.

Important initiatives like this help to equalize post-secondary experiences for our rural communities. The proximity of these learning pathways to the students — and to the busy northeastern Alberta energy and environmental sector — are driving up interest in the trades-related careers emerging in our region.

New Collegiate Institute Opens Career Pathways for Lakeland High School Students

Portage College is also collaborating with public, Catholic and Francophone school divisions across northern Alberta to offer specialized programming for Grade 11 and 12 students to build pathways to post-secondary education in Healthcare and Education. Made possible with a \$2.3 million grant from Alberta Education, the Northeast Alberta Collegiate Institute (NACI) allows students to train for future careers in their own communities.

“We’re excited to partner with Portage College and the surrounding school boards to create new opportunities for our students,” says Delorése Nolette, the superintendent of Conseil scolaire Centre-Est. “Collaborations like this allow us to expand access to hands-on, career-focused learning that helps prepare students for life after high school.”



Applied Research

Portage's newly launched office of Applied Research has access to a variety of funding sources that can support research projects. Our applied research is partner-focused and solution-driven. We want to use our unique and varied expertise to help clients make an impact as they launch new initiatives or expand existing projects.

Portage College is committed to applied research that fosters innovation, strengthens community ties, and enhances student learning. We invite businesses and investors to collaborate with us in developing solutions that enhance regional competitiveness, sustainability, and economic resilience.

- In 2022 the College received \$14,775 to fund two research projects.
- So far, in 2025, Portage has received \$519,959 to fund five projects.
- Currently \$598,238 to fund two projects is pending.
- Portage College currently has a faculty that includes 11 with Doctorate credentials, and three more who are in the process of receiving their Doctorates.

Did You Know ...

A current Applied Research study conducted by Portage College faculty is exploring how forest fungi can reduce wildfire risks.



Portage College is the research lead in new applied research to explore how certain fungi could reduce the risk and severity of forest fires. The research project that began in 2025 has drawn national attention.

Extra Mile Approach

More Than 4,000 Volunteer Hours

The volunteer spirit of Portage College staff and students is shared at each of our campus locations across northeastern Alberta and beyond.

From dishing up pancakes and juice for a breakfast crowd at community events like rodeo weekends, music festivals and winter parades, to assisting minor sports teams as coaches and mentors, Portage College staff and students are passionate about their communities.

That passion can also be seen by clients of the John Howard Society in Cold Lake who benefit from fundraising and awareness campaigns organized by students and staff of the Portage College Community Social Work program.

When it comes to student-athletes at Portage College, that community spirit is simply an extension of their team spirit.

“We ask them in orientation to give back to the community,” says Portage College’s Manager of Athletics and Recreation Jim Knight, explaining that each athlete is asked to offer 30 hours of volunteer service each school year.

In the 2024-25 academic year, 69 student athletes on five College teams have logged more than 2,200 volunteer hours in communities served by Portage College. In addition, Athletics Department staff have put in more than 1,500 hours of volunteer time at community gatherings and minor sports events.

“The College is part of the community, and I’m part of the college, so it makes sense to work together.”

— Staff member and volunteer **Kyla Robb**



Portage College mascot Eddy Rocks greeting young fans at a Voyageurs men's hockey game.



Working With and Working for the Communities We Serve

Portage College staff and executive members are happy to visit the communities they serve to not only offer professional development sessions on collaborative projects, but also to chat and network with community members. That relationship is apparent in communities like the Whitefish Lake First Nation, where Portage has offered long-standing on-site post-secondary education programs as well as employment and training programs.

"Portage College is very responsive to what we want to see, and they are open to plans and partnerships with our Nation. They are sincere to our people, our Nation," says Rennie Houle, Whitefish Lake First Nation councillor and Program Manager of Whitefish Lake Employment and Training.

Military Mapping

In 2025, Portage College partnered with the Canadian Armed Forces to offer tailored support and services to Canada's military veterans furthering their education and transition into civilian life. The College's Business program is offering advanced credit to military members, recognizing their military-acquired skills in accounting, finance, communication and leadership. The collaboration underscores Portage College's commitment to providing meaningful educational opportunities and support to those who have served our country.

Did You Know ...

Portage College offered classroom space and resources to students, staff and administration from École Plamondon School in 2024 following a devastating flood that closed the K-12 school before the end of the school year.

Colourful Community Connections

Actual signs of the collaborative spirit between Portage College and the communities it serves were up for all to see through the summer months of 2025. The artwork of two Portage College Fine Arts students was part of a community revitalization project in downtown St. Paul this year that saw dozens of streetlight banners line the northeastern Alberta community's main street.

Abby St. Jean and Riley Gladue, recent graduates of the one-year Portage College Fine Arts Certificate program used bright acrylic latex paints, creativity, and their own inspiration to bring their tall canvas creations to life.

Gladue, who is from the Kikino Métis Settlement, spent her creative hours working bright colours of a northern Alberta late afternoon into a picturesque vista with Indigenous tones. A set of tipis and a Red River Cart dot the landscape in her banner, all standing proudly under a colourful sky featuring the swirls and shades of late summer sun.

"A lot of my art is from my Indigenous culture," says Gladue who returned to Portage College in the autumn of 2025 to enroll in the Indigenous Arts Certificate program.

St. Jean's pictorial, painted on each side of a six-foot-tall canvas banner features the Northern Lights dancing over a boreal forest and a northern lake as the sun sets on the horizon. Drawing her inspiration from starry nights above her family's Plamondon-area home, St. Jean hopes the imagery brought a feeling of peace, tranquility, and natural beauty.

"Those components, the trees, the Northern Lights and the water, they make for great colours," St. Jean said.

The banners lined the downtown street through the summer. The display is part of a community-driven campaign called Champions for Change that invites local artists to highlight the history, culture and natural beauty of the region through public art installations. Portage College artists have been part of the project since its inception a decade ago.

Community Adult Learning Programs

Providing Employability and Social Well-Being On Seven First Nation and Métis Communities

Portage operates 10 Community Adult Learning Programs (CALPs) located on seven First Nation and Métis communities.

Mature students who have experienced learning or social struggles in the formal school system can be reluctant to advance their education. Through varied teaching techniques, dedicated and qualified instruction, workshops and local referrals, our CALP team members can help. Located in offices throughout the Portage College service area, the CALP team provides convenient and accessible learning in an unhurried and welcoming atmosphere.

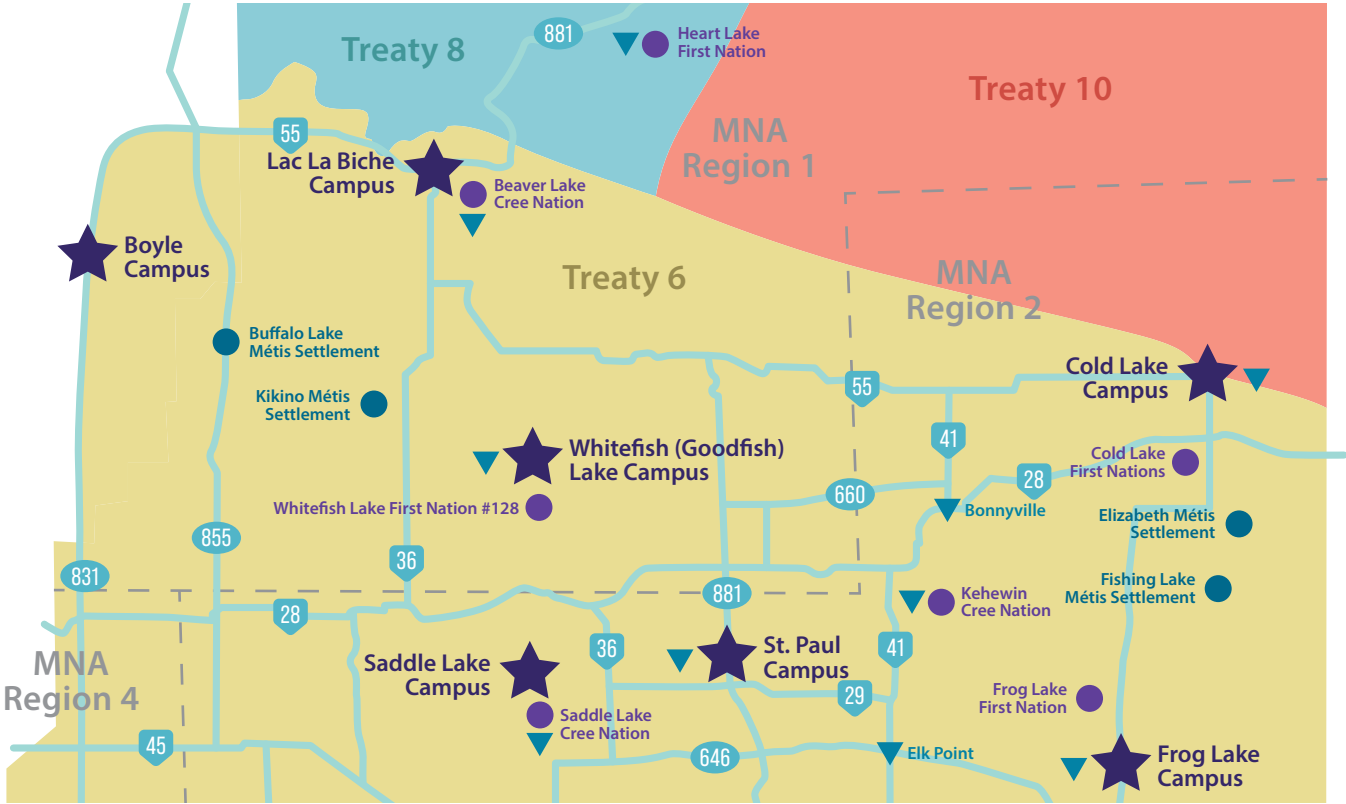
The Portage College CALP team is reporting a 35 percent increase in student-client demand across the region since the 2023-24 fiscal report. A Newcomer Support position has also been established in partnership with Portage and the Rural Renewal Stream to help with immigration-related challenges.



Portage College Service Region



- 1 Highway
- 1 Secondary Highway
- ★ Portage College Campus
- First Nation
- Métis Settlement
- ▼ Community Adult Learning Program





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