



News Release

For immediate release

The Verna J. Kirkness Science and Engineering Education Program to be offered at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Wednesday, February 6, 2019 – New educational opportunities are opening up for Indigenous high school students thanks to a partnership between the Verna J. Kirkness Education Foundation and Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU).

Starting at KPU in 2019, the Verna J. Kirkness Science and Engineering Education Program will support educational opportunities and activities outside of the classroom through research mentorship.

“Expanding the program to KPU will help the foundation to meet the goal of increasing the number of First Nation, Metis and Inuit students graduating in science, medicine, and engineering by offering a unique enrichment experience for FNMI students in the Lower Mainland,” says Tony Williams, chair of the foundation’s board of directors.

KPU’s Faculty of Science and Horticulture will host the program at the university’s Langley campus from April 29 through May 3, 2019.

“I was very impressed by the Langley campus. It is so warm and inviting, as are all the people we met,” says Dr. Verna Kirkness, honorary chair of the foundation and a member of the Fisher River Cree Nation.

“I see this as the start of a great partnership,” says Dr. Elizabeth Worobec, dean of the Faculty of Science and Horticulture at KPU. “We welcome the Kirkness program to KPU and have arranged very exciting research projects for the Kirkness students.”

Among the activities planned for the students are:

- university level experience in computer-aided design and drafting
- participation in insect collection and curation activities
- laboratory research on insects that prey on greenhouse and agricultural crops
- assisting with re-indigenizing the Logan Creek floodplain with native plants
- learning skills to be successful in turf management

“We are very pleased and honoured to be partnering with the Verna J. Kirkness Education Foundation,” says Dr. Steve Cardwell, KPU’s associate vice president, academic. “This will be a wonderful opportunity for Indigenous youth. We look forward to building the program with the foundation.”

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About the Verna J. Kirkness Education Foundation

The foundation was established in 2008 with the primary goals to increase the number of First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students graduating in science and engineering and to develop young role models who will influence other students to complete Grade 12 and pursue post-secondary studies. It achieves these goals by bringing Grade 11 FNMI students to a university campus for one week where they meet with Elders at Aboriginal student centres and do independent research with faculty mentors and their research groups. The program is called the Verna J. Kirkness Science and Engineering Education Program.

The foundation's namesake, Dr. Verna J. Kirkness, has been a leader in the field of Indigenous education since the 1950s. Her active involvement in the program has been a major factor in its growth and success. To date, 512 Indigenous students have completed the Verna J. Kirkness Science and Engineering Education Program and are proud to be recognized as Kirkness scholars.

The program started at the University of Manitoba in 2008 and expanded to include six universities in 2018. In 2019, in addition to KPU, new programs will be added at the University of Alberta, and the University of Victoria. A total of 150 students will be accepted into the program in 2019 at nine universities across Canada.

For further information about the Kirkness Foundation please visit:

<http://www.vernakirkness.org/>

About Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Kwantlen Polytechnic University has served the Metro Vancouver region since 1981, and has opened doors to success for more than 200,000 learners. Based at five campuses across Richmond, Surrey and Langley, KPU offers a comprehensive range of sought-after programs in business, arts, design, health, science and horticulture, trades and technology, and academic and career advancement. Around 20,000 students annually choose one of our wide selection of programs that blend thought with action, including bachelor's degrees, diplomas, certificates, apprenticeships and graduate diplomas. Learn more at kpu.ca.

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