



***Persons with
Developmental
Disabilities***

Northwest Alberta Community Board

News release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grande Prairie Regional College, in partnership with the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL), is offering a new program on its campus this year – the Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) Program.

IPSE offers a chance for people with developmental disabilities to be fully immersed in college life. The project started being explored two years ago as part of funding provided by the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Northwest Alberta Community Board, under the Community Capacity Initiatives Program, to a community member, who completed a feasibility study of the college's ability to support students with developmental disabilities.

Although offered through Grande Prairie Regional College, the IPSE Program is administered by the AACL. While the program is relatively new in Northern Alberta, there are several similar inclusive post-secondary programs offered at schools throughout the province.

According to Bruce Uditsky, Executive Director of the AACL, about 70 per cent of people with developmental disabilities are unemployed and rely on government supports. According to an article in the *Edmonton Journal*, the statistics are reversed among graduates of specialized post-secondary program, with 70 percent of 62 people tracked across Alberta as of this past January employed.

In September 2005 the IPSE Program at GPRC welcomed its first students. Sundeep (Sunny) Minhas is one of the two students admitted to the college through the program. He goes to school three mornings a week, taking two classes in the Business Administration & Commerce Department at the college. He hopes that the computer and marketing courses in which he is enrolled will give him more skills to assist his parents with the small business they own in Grande Prairie. Students in the IPSE program are considered to be auditing students, and it is not a requirement that their class work or exams be marked, however, Sunny's work is being evaluated by his instructor and that feedback will be part of a portfolio that is being developed for him to use in the future as part of his job search tools.

Sunny is developing his portfolio with support of the IPSE Coordinator, Jane Hunter-Uhryn. Hunter-Uhryn is employed by the AACL but is based directly at the college as part of the Student Services Department. In addition to providing support to students in the program and recruiting new students for the future, her responsibilities include creating awareness of the program among the college departments and faculty. She is particularly impressed with the support she is getting from the two departments that have the students from the IPSE program.

"The Business and Human Services Departments have been incredibly supportive in helping getting the students involved and the program rolling," says Hunter-Uhryn, " They have provided me with what I need to modify the course work for the students. They have also been models for the other departments that may be considering opening their doors to IPSE students in the future."

Hunter-Uhryn is also working on the development of an Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Advisory Committee for the region. This advisory committee will include parents of people with developmental disabilities, representation from GPRC, community members and others. People interested in sitting on this committee, or wanting to find out more about the IPSE Program being at Grande Prairie Regional College can contact Hunter-Uhryn, Coordinator at (780) 539-2216.

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