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NorQuest College offers a made-in-Alberta program to help newcomers adapt to rural communities

Roots and Connections helps rural communities help newcomers

EDMONTON – The Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education at NorQuest College today launched *Roots and Connections: Rural ESL Enhancement*, a ready-to-use intercultural resource for teachers and volunteers in rural communities to help newcomers settle in a new country and a new community.

“*Roots and Connections* provides rural communities with a practical and useful resource to help newcomers develop their survival language skills, community knowledge and connections,” says Anna De Luca, dean of Language Training and Adult Literacy at NorQuest College. “This resource helps build stronger Alberta communities by increasing awareness of the cultural, social and linguistic isolation of newcomers and by promoting community engagement.”

Funded by Alberta Employment and Immigration, *Roots and Connections*, is a made-in-Alberta four-part resource that enables adult education providers, regardless of teaching experience, to act in three key facilitation roles: an ESL instructor, cultural bridge and community connector.

Newcomers to Canada benefit by improving their English language development and bridging cultural differences that may have prevented them from meaningfully connecting with people, organizations and services in their community.

“The Government of Alberta is a proud supporter of this innovative project to support new immigrants as they build roots in our beautiful province,” said Thomas Lukaszuk, Minister of Alberta Employment and Immigration. “Embracing newcomers makes our province a richer and more diverse place to live and helps to create strong communities for all Canadians.”

The resource was successfully piloted in adult education learning associations in four communities across Alberta. Pilot partners include the Willow Creek Community Adult Learning Society (Claresholm/Fort MacLeod), the Edson and District Community Learning Association, the Provost and District Adult Learning Council and the Peace River Association for Lifelong Learning.

“The Edson and District Community Learning Society participated in the *Roots and Connections* pilot in the fall of 2009,” explains Executive Director Vera Calvert. “The resources were very easy to use and to modify to fit the needs of our learners. This program is a great way to introduce our community to newcomers, and help them feel more at home.”

To download a free copy, visit http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural/proj_RESL2.asp

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