

Kiuna College,  
Québec



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First Nations Post-Secondary Education:  
A Costing Analysis on the Establishment  
and Advancement of First Nations  
Institutions.

Full summary report available at [www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca)





## Kiuna College, Québec

Kiuna College, founded in 2011 by the First Nations Education Council, was designed by First Nations to provide Indigenous students with a high-quality learning environment that prepares students to take on challenges at the individual, community, or national level. Programs, teaching methods and materials, educational and psychosocial support services, and human resources are grounded in Indigenous culture and traditions. Kiuna is the only First Nations post-secondary institution in Quebec and is a college within the context of the Québec education system, providing both pre-university and technical education.<sup>1</sup>

### Mission

L'Institution Kiuna a pour objectif de former des citoyens des Premières Nations compétents dans leur domaine respectif, fiers héritiers de leur patrimoine culturel, socialement responsables, soucieux du bien-être de leur communauté et ouverts sur le monde. De manière plus générale, sa mission est de valoriser la culture et l'identité des Autochtones et de prôner les valeurs qui leur sont propres. La sensibilisation des allochtones aux réalités des Premières Nations est aussi un aspect important de son action. C'est pourquoi Kiuna est ouverte à tous les étudiants qui souhaitent en apprendre davantage sur les Premières Nations et leurs cultures.

The goal of Kiuna Institution is to shape competent First Nations citizens in their respective fields, proud inheritors of their culture, socially responsible, open to the world and concerned for the well-being of their communities. Its overall mission is to reinforce Aboriginal culture, identity and values. Raising awareness among non-Aboriginals to the realities of First Nations is also an important aspect of Kiuna's engagement, and for this reason, Kiuna is open to any non-Indigenous student who wants to learn more about First Nations and their unique cultures.

The institute's campus is situated in the Abenaki community of Odanak, where it maintains its main teaching, administration, and student services facilities as well as an outdoor site that provides traditional facilities for teaching and cultural purposes. Programming is also delivered within First Nations communities. Kiuna has welcomed students from all 11 First Nations (including Inuit) in Québec as well as First Nations from other provinces and even the US (i.e., American Abenakis). Most students have French or English as their second language, and approximately 75% study in French and 25% study in English. A third of students have family responsibilities, and about 70% of students are female. Many students at Kiuna are seeking to reorient their lives and careers.

In 2020, Kiuna celebrated the graduation of thirteen students, for a total of 130 graduates since 2013. More than 90% of graduates join the workforce or continue their education, with many graduates pursuing further post-secondary education at universities across Canada.

All Kiuna employees are bilingual, and 64% of administrative, support and non-teaching professional staff are Indigenous.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Québec education system, colleges and Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CÉGEP) institutions offer pre-university programs or terminal degree-granting programs. A college diploma (DEC) is required for Québec secondary school graduates to enter university.



## Programming

Kiuna College embodies First Nations control of First Nations education. First Nations culture is integrated into all aspects of programming, combining traditional and modern First Nations concepts and Western knowledge. Students are exposed to First Nations perspectives and visions of the world and to the cultural contributions that First Nations have made globally.

The institute's programming responds to the needs expressed by its First Nations communities for a qualified workforce and opportunities for further education. Kiuna College offers programs in French, English, and four ancestral languages. Most instructors have master's or doctoral degrees, and about half of the instructors are First Nations.

Table 1. Kiuna College Programs

Type	Programs (2021-22) (French and English)
Springboard to a DCS / Tremplin DEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Nations Springboard to a DCS Pathway / Cheminement Tremplin DEC (prepares students for further study at the college level)</li></ul>
Diploma of College Studies (DEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Nations Social Science / Sciences humaines —Premières Nations</li><li>• First Nations Arts, Literature and Communication / Arts, lettres et communication<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ First Nations Languages Option / Option Langues des Premières Nations</li><li>◦ Indigenous Cinema Option / Option Cinéma autochtone</li></ul></li></ul>
Trades & Industrial (Diploma and Apprenticeship Level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Event Planning / Coordination d'événements</li><li>• Special Care Counselling and Indigenous Contexts / Éducation spécialisée et contextes autochtones</li><li>• Travail Administratif pour les Premières Nations et les Inuit</li></ul>

Programs are developed using a team-based approach to ensure that course content and teaching methods reflect Indigenous realities, theories, and concepts. The programs have a strong focus on experiential learning through activities outside the classroom where students learn by doing, seeing, and touching.

The First Nations Social Science Diploma is an example of how Kiuna's unique programming reclaims and revitalizes First Nations cultures. The program, developed collaboratively with First Nations, is centred on the culture, history, and traditions of First Nations in Quebec, Canada, and North America. It addresses Aboriginal policies, rights, and claims; economic development; and self-government.



Students explore their identities as First Nations citizens, explore methods of serving their community, and are empowered to take on social and civic responsibilities. Students develop the same skills as those enrolled in any other accredited college social science program in Quebec, and the program provides pathways to further study in an undergraduate program.

Kiuna's First Nations Arts, Literature and Communication program nurtures First Nations identity while creating pathways to degrees in liberal arts, languages, literature, educational studies, or communications. Students are introduced to First Nations perspectives on literature, cinema, contemporary art, history, culture, and traditions. In the Indigenous Cinema option, Indigenous cinema is examined as an extension of the First Nations oral tradition and as a means of cultural transfer. Students also learn the theoretical and practical aspects of filmmaking, work with state-of-the-art filmmaking technology, create their own documentary film, have work placements in the film industry, and explore industry marketing. In the First Nations Language option, students develop fluency in four ancestral languages at two language levels. Kiuna uses a successful binomial language teaching model that pairs a teacher with a language and knowledge keeper (often an Elder).

Kiuna has partnerships with Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Dawson College to provide certification of study for programs, meeting the Quebec Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (MES) standards. These partners are working together towards Kiuna's autonomy as a post-secondary institution, at which time it will offer its own programs. While the process towards its full autonomy is ongoing, Kiuna continues to develop new programs (Technique en sciences de la nature et Technique en éducation spécialisée) that will allow students to pursue university programs in the sciences and education fields.

## Student Services

Supporting students and meeting their needs with personalized supports are essential to Kiuna College. Each student's cultural context, background, experience, and interests are considered in a culturally safe environment where pedagogy, materials, and support services are grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Students have access to resources and services to support their success, including personalized pedagogical support, psychosocial and psychological support, language support and development centres (one in French and one in English), accommodations and supports for students with disabilities, cultural activities and sports, library/document services, technological supports, student housing, childcare, a food bank, employment services, and audio-visual production services.

Students are supported through their educational journey by an academic support agent who helps with post-secondary success strategies (e.g., attendance, planning, note-taking, studying), applications for funding, information on program and career opportunities, and navigating university admissions. Study sessions are offered twice a week in the evenings for students who would like extra support from staff in exam preparation, assignments, and academic resources; transportation is provided to and from these sessions. Language development services in French and English are provided by language coordinators and peer mentors. Kiuna has also established the Skamon Childhood Services, which provides professional services for the children of Kiuna's students, such as assessment and support for learning disorders, psychotherapy and counselling, and psychoeducation and special education counselling.



A student life facilitator organizes extracurricular activities that provide students and staff the opportunity to engage with one another and build a sense of belonging and identity within the community. Elders, artists, and craftsmen, and community members are invited to share their teachings with students. These cultural and intergenerational learning opportunities provide students with hands-on learning of traditional knowledge and practices. Students are also invited to lead activities, represent their individual nations, and share knowledge and traditional activities with students from fellow communities. These activities are linked to learning in the classroom environment.

## Growth and Development

Kiuna has been consulting with MES, partner colleges, and FNEC in order to become a fully accredited institution by 2022. As part of becoming an autonomous institution, Kiuna has developed plans to enhance its structural organization, human resources, educational development, student services, and capacity building for First Nations communities. Kiuna's primary goals are to have the autonomy to deliver its own programs, have its own governing board, and its own curriculum committee (2019-20 Annual Report). It is also planning to offer university-level instruction as part of its commitment to educational services provided by and for First Nations. Kiuna also intends to pursue a research agenda given its sought-after resident expertise and the strong need for research in First Nations languages and its impact on pedagogical approaches.

A detailed case study, prepared by Kiuna College, describing its model, programs, infrastructure, teaching staff, administration, financial status, projects and more is included in Appendix E: Kiuna College Case Study / Étude de cas – Kiuna, p. 164.



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