



PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Expanding Postsecondary Pathways for SNP STEAM Academy Students

Type: Pathway development

Project Number: 2020-25 or P2025

Project Lead: Six Nations Polytechnic

Collaborators: Mohawk College

Project Summary

The STEAM Academy represents a uniquely effective approach to building pathways to postsecondary education for Indigenous and non-Indigenous high school students, where learners can begin to braid diploma level courses into their studies – the “Early College Model.” Currently, this allows students to build toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) while simultaneously receiving credits toward a Software Engineering Technician Diploma. Mohawk College and SNP have shown consistent commitment to supporting students through new and innovative pathways that address both established and anticipated community needs. To this end, ONCAT Project P2025 aimed to build out a new program of study for students, that would take elements of the existing Early College Model at STEAM. These pre-built elements include an accrued, fine-grained understanding of dual credit programming that presents students with innovative transfer opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable.

More specifically, this project supported Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP) and Mohawk College to develop curriculum and transfer pathways that link STEAM Academy outcomes with further postsecondary opportunities. It laid the foundations of an additional stream within SNP’s innovative SNP STEAM Academy program: Art and Design Foundations. Arts-based learning is culturally appropriate in terms of both content and method; moreover, Six Nations Polytechnic is committed to designing, developing, and delivering arts based programming that is firmly embedded in the Hodinohso:ni’ values of Ga’nigohi:yo:/Kanikorio (Respectand the Good Mind).

This new pathway would support learners at SNP STEAM Academy in earning a 1-year Ontario College Certificate credential, awarded by Mohawk College, which would then open up a range of additional educational opportunities. It would utilize destination programs at both a

primary/external partner institution (Mohawk College) and a secondary/internal partner institution (SNP College – Community Programs Unit) to leverage existing capacities and foundations. Collectively, these developments confer significant collateral benefits and increased post-secondary pathway flexibility for SNP STEAM Academy students. Despite unavoidable delays and pressures of the pandemic, this project was consistently a passion for SNP STEAM Academy staff and students. The yet-potential Arts and Design Foundations stream will encourage students to transfer smoothly from secondary school into a transitional program, and from there into either further postsecondary education or direct, skilled entry into the visual and practical arts industry.

Main Collaborators

Mohawk College
SNP – STEAM
SNP – College Unit (Community Programs)

Outcomes

In 2020, new teaching and learning methods were developed at Six Nations Polytechnic, in response to the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the trialed methodology was specifically in the digital arts; these successful experiments rendered the proposed pathway viable in new and exciting ways. In short: It was established that an Art and Design Foundations stream at SNP STEAM Academy, which would yield a 1- year Ontario College Certificate credential and open up further pathways for local learners, could be taken, in whole or in part, online. This means that the pathways would be accessible to far more than immediately local students, while enrolled learners would gain additional, highly desirable competencies in digital art and design tools and online modalities. This expands the existing range of receiving programs for learners who wish to continue beyond the Certificate level, as well as the employability of graduates who wish to enter the job market immediately. More broadly, prospective and future STEAM students will gain the choice of a non- P-TECH stream of study that still affords the benefits of a (now global, and globally recognized) education model. New conversations were initiated, particularly in the arts community at Six Nations of the Grand River, although these extended to other “nodes” in the broader Hodinohso:ni’ arts diaspora. Within SNP, modalities for student and faculty engagement were strengthened through re-engagement – this was particularly welcome as a cohesive element, maintaining the teaching and learning community during the pandemic. SNP’s unique, dual quality assurance processes were also further reinforced, as community consultation around the viability of the proposed pathway brought together multiple stakeholders and linked key actors within and beyond the institution. Finally, this project added to the growing body of data on Early College Models, that helps to smooth the secondary-to-postsecondary transition.

Pathways Created

STEAM Academy to Mohawk College (4 programs):

- Advertising & Marketing Communications Mgmt. (3-year Ontario College Advanced Diploma)
- Graphic Design (3-year Ontario College Advanced Diploma)
- Photography – Still & Motion (2-year Ontario College Diploma)
- Animation 3D (3-year Ontario College Advanced Diploma)

All pathways identified, above, were comprehensively mapped.

Incomplete Pathways

A number of additional pathways, beyond the five destination programs specified, were “parked” for later investigation.

STEAM Academy to SNP College – Community Programs Unit (1 program)
-Indigenous Artisan & Entrepreneur (2-year Ontario College Diploma)

The pathways to the SNP College – Community Programs Unit cannot be added to ONTransfer.ca until the Indigenous Artisan & Entrepreneur Program has been accredited. The typical timeline for accreditation of College-level programs is 18 months. The pathways to the four programs at Mohawk College still need review and approval by the partner. The timeline for this last stage cannot be accurately predicted, owing to the systemic and structural stresses of COVID-19.

Student Outcomes

This new pathway would support learners at SNP STEAM Academy in earning a 1-year Ontario College Certificate credential, awarded by Mohawk College, which would then open up a range of additional educational opportunities. It would utilize destination programs at both a primary/external partner institution (Mohawk College) and a secondary/internal partner institution (SNP College – Community Programs Unit) to leverage existing capacities and foundations. Collectively, these developments confer significant collateral benefits and increased post-secondary pathway flexibility for SNP STEAM Academy students. Despite unavoidable delays and pressures of the pandemic, this project was consistently a passion for SNP STEAM Academy staff and students. The yet-potential Arts and Design Foundations stream will encourage students to transfer smoothly from secondary school into a transitional program, and from there into either further postsecondary education or direct, skilled entry into the visual and practical arts industry.

Student Time Savings

The proposed pathways save students up to one full year of study.

Student Financial Savings

The proposed pathways save students up to one full year of tuition.

Institutional Outcomes

New conversations around SNP’s programming areas were initiated, particularly in the arts community at Six Nations of the Grand River, although these extended to other “nodes” in the broader Hodinohso:ni’ arts diaspora. Within SNP, modalities for student and faculty engagement were strengthened through reengagement – this was particularly welcome as a cohesive element, maintaining the teaching and learning community during the pandemic. Six Nations Polytechnic’s unique, dual quality assurance processes were also further reinforced, as community consultation around the viability of the proposed pathway brought together multiple stakeholders and linked key actors within and beyond the institution.

Sector or System Implications

Sustained, targeted attention to the full inclusion of Indigenous Institutes (IIs) in the current and ideal transfer environment is essential to achieving parity of educational outcomes for Indigenous learners. This should include primary research on the actual transfer experiences of those learners, in collaboration with Indigenous Institutes and/or through the Indigenous

Institutes Consortium. This data would confer benefits on both IIs and the general mobility landscape.

A prior project undertaken by SNP established the non-recognition of degrees conferred by Indigenous Institutes. Educational equality-supporting projects could, or even should, act on this funding by, for example, looking at measures to increase awareness and understanding of the quality assurance of programs and courses offered by Indigenous Institutes, especially among larger Ontario universities and colleges. More generally: Specific pathways and articulation agreements should not be necessary in an end-state system where mobility is assessed on criteria other than 1:1 matches between distinct syllabi (which is impossible to achieve in practice). In moving toward this end-state, targeted support for Indigenous Institutes will be necessary, in order to help “level the playing field.”