

Indigenous Access to Postsecondary Project

City School by Mohawk, Mohawk College

March 14th, 2018

ONCAT Final Report – Executive Summary (#2017-26)

Executive Summary

Mohawk is pleased to submit this final report that details the development of the Indigenous Access to Postsecondary project, funded by the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) Pathway Development Projects.

Since launching the Community Access Strategy in 2010, Mohawk continues to lead the community and the province in mobilizing resources to significantly increase the postsecondary participation levels of underrepresented and vulnerable individuals residing in priority neighbourhoods. The Community Access Strategy has the following strategic objectives:

- To raise awareness of opportunities for and pathways to learning beyond high school;
- To support greater accessibility to postsecondary for marginalized communities, including low income, Indigenous, and underemployed populations, through diversified learning opportunities;
- To bring the college to the community through the establishment of community-based learning hubs;
- To enhance the early college experience through mentorships, reach-ahead activities, and dual credit opportunities.

In October 2015, Mohawk launched an intentional strategy to deliver accessible postsecondary education using a community-based methodology at the neighbourhood level through the *City School by Mohawk* initiative. The first *City School* site opened at the Eva Rothwell Centre, located in the Keith neighbourhood, one of eleven priority neighbourhoods in Hamilton, areas identified by Hamilton's

Neighbourhood Action Strategy has having lower health and educational outcomes compared to the city as a whole (Wingard, 2014). This Indigenous Access to Postsecondary project was delivered at a *City School* pop-up location, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC), which is located in the priority neighbourhood of Crown Point.

The goal of *City School by Mohawk's* Indigenous Access to Postsecondary project was to create a welcoming, culturally relevant space for learning, community engagement, student collaboration, and experiential learning. This was accomplished through strengthening partnerships with Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP) and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC), and through the development and delivery of an Indigenized *City School* course at a community hub. The aim of this project was to build a pathway to postsecondary, with a focus on expanding opportunities for Indigenous groups in Hamilton's urban core.

Indigenous voices were at the forefront throughout all stages of the project, including proposal development, partnership building, community outreach, curriculum design, recruitment, communication, course delivery, debriefing, and follow-up. Indigenous education experts led the Indigenizing process and the result was an effective, culturally responsive transitional pathway to postsecondary education for Indigenous learners.

Mohawk College is sincerely appreciative to the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer for its support of this project.

James L. Vanderveken
Dean
Centre for Community Partnerships & Experiential Learning