FACILITATOR PACKAGE

Step-By-Step

POSTSECONDARY GUIDE

ONECA
Ontario Native Education Counselling Association

Please refer to the Step-By-Step Learner Package for instruction and program delivery

Welcome to the Step-By-Step Program

Dear Facilitator,

Thank you for taking on the important role of supporting Indigenous learners as they prepare for their postsecondary journey through the Step-By-Step Program. The Facilitator Guide was developed to help you confidently support the learners registered in the program while honouring diverse learning needs, cultural identity, and lived experience. The two main resources that you will need to successfully deliver the program are the Learner Package and the Learner Workbook.

The program was designed for Indigenous women and mature learners who may face barriers to accessing postsecondary education. The modules and lessons in the Learner Package address readiness, confidence-building, career exploration, and navigating systems. As a facilitator, you are not only an instructor but also a mentor, connector, and advocate. Your role is to create a supportive, inclusive learning space where learners feel seen, heard, and empowered.

Also, the program can also be easily delivered by community facilitators as a component of the postsecondary orientation programs provided by education counsellor to Indigenous learners in their communities.

We invite you to bring your own knowledge, community wisdom, and facilitation style to this work. Review this Guide and the two resources prior to program delivery. Your connection with the learners is key to helping them take meaningful steps toward their goals.

Miigwetch for walking alongside them!

ONECA

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Course Outline

Course Description

This preparatory course supports Indigenous women and adult learners as they prepare for postsecondary education. Through six modules and 19 lessons (30 hours total), registered learners will explore readiness, career pathways, application processes, funding, and strategies for academic and personal success. The program can be delivered by ONECA facilitators or education counsellors.

Course Outcomes

1. Increase access and support for Indigenous women and prepare them to apply for postsecondary while giving them resources to support their success.
2. Strengthen connections between the learner and education support services and resources or institutions.
3. Support learners in building confidence, networks, and peer connections.
4. Provide accessible materials online that exist on the ONECA website.
5. Provide practical tools and guidance for navigating applications and funding

Course Modules/Steps

Step 1
Connecting with Your First Nation Counsellor
4 Lessons / 5 Hours

Step 2
Getting Prepared
3 Lessons / 5 Hours

Step 3
Selecting a Career
3 Lessons / 5 Hours

Step 4
Ready to Apply
3 Lessons / 5 Hours

Step 5
Strategies for Success
3 Lessons / 5 Hours

Step 6
Resources to Support My Success
3 Lessons / 5 Hours

Class Participation & Engagement

- **For learners that are registered in the ONECA Step-By-Step program:** Class participation is encouraged, as it helps create a positive learning environment and offers a chance to connect with peers. Learners who need accommodations will be supported by the program facilitator to ensure their needs are supported.

- **For learners who are working independently and not registered/registering:** If a learner prefers to complete the Step-By-Step program on their own, that's okay too. Independent learners can still reach out to ONECA or their First Nation education counsellor for guidance and support along the way.

- **NOTE:** Facilitator/Instructor may be used interchangeably throughout the Step-By-Step Program package. The role of the facilitator is that of an instructor who is working for ONECA to deliver the program to those registered in the program.

Evaluation

- Learners will be provided an opportunity to provide feedback on course materials and experiences during the program.
- Learners will have opportunities to reflect on their progress and development, helping them build confidence in understanding the steps needed to apply to postsecondary education. There are tools in the program that learners can use to self-reflect, set goals, build out an education plan, and monitor progress.

- **For the ONECA Staff/Facilitator only:** Please refer to the Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) document for specific assessments and procedures (for Surveys/Focus Groups questions) for the short-term and long-term plan of the program. This includes enrolments tracking. The Facilitator is responsible for outreaching to the education counsellors to identify the number of learners accessing the program (through them or their educational institute/authority).

Course Resources Requirement

To participate in this online course, learners will need access to the following resources:

- Computer skills (navigating online resources and tools)
- Technology: A reliable device such as a desktop computer, laptop, or tablet.
- Software: Online meeting platform (e.g., Zoom) and a web browser (e.g., Chrome) for accessing online content.
- Internet: A stable high-speed internet connection to support video streaming and online learning activities.
- Audio: Functioning speakers or headphones for clear audio during online sessions and/or to access multimedia materials and resources.
- Course Materials: **Step-By-Step Learner Package** & the **Learner Workbook** (digital or print copy).

Course Overview: Modules/Steps & Lessons

Facilitators must use the Learner Package as the primary content guide for each lesson and direct learners to the Learner Workbook for all written reflections and planning tools.

Step 1

Connecting with Your First Nation Counsellor

Objective: Learners will gain a comprehensive understanding of the roles and importance of both secondary and postsecondary education counsellors, learn how to find, and access education counselling services, and explore the supports available for academic and personal success.

- **1.1. Role of the Counsellor -** Learners will learn about the roles of the First Nation education counsellor.
- **1.2 Finding a Counsellor -** Learners will explore the importance of connecting with an education counsellor, covering topics such as funding applications, deadlines, and grade reports.
- **1.3 Accessing a Counsellor -** Learners will receive information on locating and accessing an education counsellor within their First Nation.
- **1.4 Counsellor Support -** Learners will discover the services and assistance that an education counsellor can provide.

Step 2

Getting Prepared

Objective: Learners will develop a wholistic understanding of their readiness for postsecondary education by assessing their emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual preparedness, identifying community and institutional support resources, and establish connections with the Indigenous Education Office to enhance their academic success.

- **2.1 Holistic Preparation for Readiness -** Learners will use the medicine wheel to assess their readiness for postsecondary education by identifying strengths, support systems, opportunities, and areas needing assistance for their emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.
- **2.2 Identifying Support Resources for Success -** Learners will research the supports available at the institution and within the local community, such as daycares, housing offices, and friendship centers, to identify resources that will aid in their academic success.
- **2.3 First Nation Education Offices -** Learners will be provided a list of necessary information to collect from the First Nations Education Office, and to make connections that will enhance learner comfort.

Step 3

Selecting a Career

Objective: Learners will be able to identify their personal interests, understand various educational pathways and institutions, and select the most suitable program that align with their goals and values.

- 3.1 **Exploring Interests and Paths -** Learners will identify what their interests are and then research which programs or courses would best suit their interests.
- 3.2 **Navigating Educational Pathways -** Learners will explore universities, colleges, Indigenous institutes, trade schools, and apprenticeships.
- 3.3 **Choosing the Right Program -** Learners will learn how to research programs and Indigenous services at the postsecondary.

Step 4

Ready to Apply

Objectives: Learners will effectively navigate the application process for postsecondary education, create a financial plan and budget, and learn how to apply for funding (e.g. First Nation Education Nation Authority, OSAP).

- 4.1 **The Application Process -** Learners will participate in a webinar designed to guide them through the application process, with an instructor available to answer questions.
- 4.2 **Financial Planning -** Learners will explore postsecondary costs and create a budget using the budgeting resources available on the ONECA website.
- 4.3 **Applying for Funding -** Learners will learn how to apply for funding, download and complete applications from their First Nation or Métis organization, and explore OSAP as an option.

Step 5

Strategies for Success

Objective: Learners will identify and utilize academic resources, develop study and note taking strategies, and understand the importance of supportive study environments and goal setting to enhance their success in postsecondary education.

- **5.1 Academic Supports -** Learners will explore the academic resources available at their chosen institution, including peer support and counselling services.
- **5.2 Note Taking -** Learners will be introduced to strategies for taking effective notes and preparing for essays and exams.
- **5.3 Study Skills -** Learners will explore various study techniques, identify what works best for them, and understand the importance of study spaces and goal setting.

Step 6

Resources to Support My Success

Objective: Learners will develop practical strategies for maintaining mental well-being, understanding cultural safety, and building community connections, all of which are essential for achieving success in postsecondary education.

- **6.1 Mental Well-being -** Learners will develop skills to manage stress, balance academic and personal responsibilities, and identify practical strategies to thrive in postsecondary education (e.g. coping with stress, balancing home-school life, tips on navigating demands).
- **6.2 Cultural Awareness -** Learners will be introduced to the principles of cultural safety that respect and honour diverse cultural identities.
- **6.3 Community Engagement -** Learners will identify effective strategies for building relationships and fostering meaningful connections within their communities.

Program Materials & Resources for Learners

Learner Package and Learner Workbook

Learners are provided with two core documents to support their participation in the Step-By-Step program: the **Learner Package** and the **Learner Workbook**. Each document plays a distinct role in supporting learner readiness, confidence, and organization throughout the six modules (steps).

The **Learner Package** serves as the primary program document. It provides lesson content, learning activities, videos, and resources that guide learners through each step of the program and help them understand what they are learning and why it matters.

The **Learner Workbook** is the learner's primary working document. It is where learners reflect, plan, track their progress, and make connections between their learning and their personal goals.

Facilitators can guide learners to the appropriate sections of the Learner Workbook throughout the program rather than reteaching content from the Learner Package. Keeping all learner work in the Workbook helps reduce overwhelm, stay organized, and clearly see progress over time. Use the Learner Workbook for check-ins and progress conversations. Facilitators will need to review the Learner Package hyperlinks to ensure that each is still active and working, alternatively find another link to content that is relatable to the lesson and activity.

What's Inside the Learner Workbook?

The Learner Workbook contains four key appendices that learners use throughout the program. These appendices align directly with the lesson structure and are revisited at different points across the six modules.

- **Appendix A: My Wholistic Learning Reflection** - This appendix includes lesson-specific reflection templates connected to each module lesson. Using a wholistic framework, learners are invited to reflect on their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being as they engage with the content. These reflections support self-awareness, readiness, and confidence-building and are embedded throughout the program rather than completed all at once. These reflections are not used for evaluation; they are intended to support personal growth and connection to learning. There are 19 templates in total (one per module lesson).
    - **Facilitator Guidance:**
        - Encourage learners to complete reflections throughout the program rather than all at once.
        - Use reflections to support strengths-based conversations during check-ins.
        - Allow learners to share only what they feel comfortable discussing.
        - Recognize that there are no right or wrong responses.

- **Appendix B: Success Criteria & Exit Cards** - This appendix contains the full set of lesson-by-lesson success criteria, written as clear "I can…" statements, along with space for exit card reflections. Learners use this tool to understand what success looks like for each lesson, track their progress, and reflect on what they found interesting, challenging, or what steps they may need to take next. Success criteria and exit cards help learners understand what they are working toward, reflect on their progress, and build confidence as they move through each module. These tools are not intended for grading. Their purpose is to support reflection, encourage accountability, and guide supportive conversations.

    - **Facilitator Guidance:**
        - Review the success criteria at the beginning of each lesson to clarify expectations.
        - Revisit them at the end of the lesson to guide reflection and discussion.
        - Use exit card responses to gauge understanding and identify where additional support may be helpful.
        - Look for patterns in learner confidence rather than focusing on individual performance.

- **Appendix C: Education Pathway Planning Tool** - This planning tool supports learners in organizing their postsecondary journey over time. It includes sections for connecting with education counsellors and supports, exploring interests and program options, tracking applications, planning for funding and budgeting, and identifying personal wellness and support strategies. This tool promotes independence while helping learners move forward with clarity.

    - **Facilitator Guidance:**
        - Encourage learners to revisit and update this tool as their plans change.
        - Use it to help learners prepare for conversations with education counsellors or support staff.
        - Support learners in identifying next actions rather than trying to solve every step for them.

- **Appendix D: Weekly Learning Schedule Template** - This simple scheduling tool helps learners plan their week, set realistic goals, and balance between school, work, family, and personal responsibilities. Small, consistent steps often lead to meaningful progress.

    - **Facilitator Guidance:**
        - Encourage learners to create a schedule that reflects their real-life commitments.
        - Remind learners that plans can be adjusted, and that flexibility is part of the process.
        - Use the schedule as a starting point for conversations about workload, time management, and self-care.

Step-By-Step Video Series

As part of the *Step by Step: Taking Steps to Increase my Success in Post-Secondary* program, these short videos provide additional guidance and encouragement for Indigenous women and adult learners who are considering college, university, trades, or other training opportunities.

The videos are designed to offer practical tips on career planning, applications, financial preparation, and personal wellness, while also sharing insights on community connections, supports, and learning strategies that build confidence and readiness for postsecondary education. Each video complements the Facilitator and Learner Guides and can be used in community sessions or accessed individually as learners explore their next steps. All videos can be accessed on the ONECA webpage: www.oneca.com/pse-gathering

Direct hyperlinks to the videos that were created for this program can be found here:

Advice and Encouragement [Video, 4 minutes, 18 seconds] - for Lesson 1.1
https://youtu.be/J4T_XbAquv0?si=pQs7oCig44wUDQ-0

Education Counselling Support Teams [Video, 2 minutes, 38 seconds] -for Lesson 1.1
https://youtu.be/F38rkZPQKQE?si=f_ybX4E3WfF4QPzK

Supports to Getting Prepared [Video, 4 minutes] - for Lesson 2.3
https://youtu.be/76Z3ZKH4lCU?si=bZy5_UnHHVhw945j

Exploring Career Options [Video, 7 minutes, 25 seconds] - for Lesson 3.1
https://youtu.be/CmqGPOrzbOM?si=S6SJWChcnpeOEFEO

Financial Preparation [Video, 3 minutes, 18 seconds] - for Lesson 4.2
https://youtu.be/4V14P9JjhvQ?si=VPNOO22EZv-GpXJg

Getting Ready to Apply [Video, 3 minutes, 4 seconds] - for Lesson 4.3
https://youtu.be/CMmQNc5ntlk?si=dlXYe--o7iHLe5wd

Learning Strategies [Video, 5 minutes, 19 seconds] - for Lesson 5.1
https://youtu.be/oFZPUnR5w9I?si=-fTA6cR5nZle7jsR

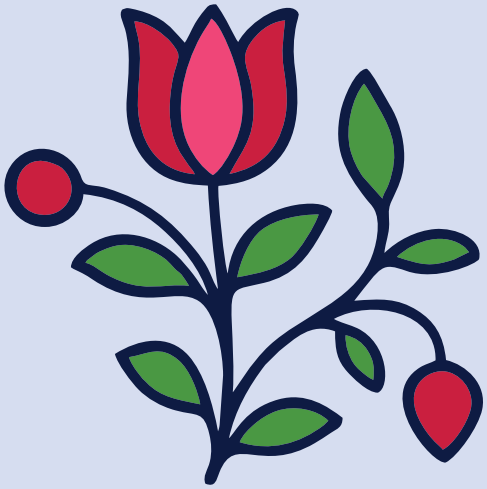
Community Connections [Video, 2 minutes, 39 seconds] - for Lesson 6.1
https://youtu.be/poh1TcTHznc?si=kl_sAlzbsoSTIT1U

Create a Wholistic Learning Environment

The Step-By-Step program is built around a wholistic approach that is reflected in the modules, lessons, and activities. This approach should also guide the role of the facilitator. The focus of this section is to outline key principles for supporting a positive and supportive learning environment, especially in an online setting.

Guiding Principles for Facilitation

- Make time to connect with learners.
- Building trust and creating a welcoming learning environment are essential to supporting learner success.
- Walk alongside learners throughout the program and provide opportunities for them to build confidence and strengthen their decision-making skills.
- Offer support while recognizing and celebrating small steps forward, helping learners acknowledge their achievements and stay motivated.
- Encourage learners to continue working toward their goals and to make personal connections to their learning through reflection activities.
- Learners often balance multiple responsibilities (including work, family, school, and supporting others) all of which require significant energy. Encourage learners to reflect on how they can balance their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.
- Be supportive and encouraging, recognizing that each learner enters the program with responsibilities beyond the learning environment.
- Strive to create a space that honours their wholistic well-being.
- Remind learners that asking for help is a sign of strength and encourage them to connect with education counsellors and other support personnel when needed.



Remote Learning Plan for Indigenous Adult Learners

When beginning the Step-By-Step program, facilitators can support learners in creating a simple plan to reduce overwhelm and build confidence. A solid plan provides direction, builds confidence, and encourages learners to seek support when needed. Whether participating through ONECA's facilitator-led program, independently, or with guidance from an education counsellor, having a plan in place supports successful completion of the 30-hour program.

Below is a process that learners can follow to begin and stay on track:

1. Getting started - Learners set up their learning space and become familiar with the program resources. Registered participants join facilitator-led sessions, while independent learners may connect with an education counsellor or contact ONECA as needed.
Learners will need access to:

- Internet and a suitable device (laptop or tablet)
- Web browser (Google Chrome, Safari)
- The ONECA website
- The Step-By-Step Learner Package
- The Step-By-Step Learner Workbook

2. Creating your weekly plan
Encourage learners to stay organized by building a weekly schedule. They should:

- Complete the Weekly Learning Schedule (Appendix D in the Learner Workbook)
- Plan to complete one module per week or every two weeks
- Schedule regular check-ins with their facilitator or education counsellor

3. Watching and reflecting program materials - Learners will engage with 1-2 short videos per module and reflect on what was useful. To stay engaged, they will:

- Review and complete the Success Criteria and Exit Cards (Appendix B in the Learner Workbook)
- Complete reflection activities in My Wholistic Learning Reflection (Appendix A in the Learner Workbook)

4. Staying connected (even if working independently) - To help learners feel supported and not isolated, encourage them to:

- Schedule weekly or biweekly check-ins
- Use email or text to share reflections and questions
- Join optional group sessions or virtual circles
- Reach out to education counsellors for help with transcripts, upgrading, or other supports

5. Building your education pathway - To move forward with confidence, learners will:

- Complete their Education Pathway Planning Tool (Appendix C in the Learner Workbook)
- Research schools, programs, and funding options
- Participate in a mock application when ready
- Connect with education support services and community resources

6. Program completion and next steps - To self-reflect on growth and next steps, the learners will:

- Review all completed reflections and tools
- Finalize their Education Pathway Planning Tool
- Schedule a final check-in to:
  - Share their education plan
  - Ask any last questions
  - Identify remaining supports needed
  - Reflect on and celebrate their progress

Facilitators should guide learners in using both the Learner Package and Learner Workbook and provide support as needed throughout the program.

Creating an Online Community

An online community can provide a supportive space where learners share knowledge, ask questions, and encourage one another. For adult learners preparing for postsecondary education, this can be especially helpful.

Here's how it can help:

1. Academic preparation

- Sharing study resources and notes
- Asking questions and receiving peer support
- Practicing assignments or reviewing sample materials

2. Skill development

- Learning time management and study strategies
- Getting help with writing and research
- Building comfort with technology and digital tools

3. Emotional & motivational support

- Staying accountable and encouraged
- Connecting with others managing similar responsibilities

4. College & career guidance

- Receiving support with applications and funding
- Learning about programs and pathways
- Connecting with mentors or professionals

Online Learning Tools

Before the course begins, facilitators may set up a shared online space (such as a Google Drive folder or similar platform) where learners can access resources and stay connected. Some learners may need support setting up an email account or navigating shared folders.

Many postsecondary programs use virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, or Zoom. Becoming familiar with these tools can help learners feel more prepared and confident for both this program and future studies. Facilitators can share simple instructional resources to help learners build comfort using these platforms.

Setting Up the Google Shared Folder

Facilitators may create a shared Google folder to organize course materials and allow learners to collaborate. It's important that facilitators are comfortable using these tools before introducing them. Within the folder, learners can access documents, upload files, and work together on shared materials. The platform used will depend on delivery preferences and organizational direction.

Web Browser for Online Searching

Learners will need access to the internet to complete research and navigate online content throughout the program. Common web browsers include Google Chrome and Safari. Facilitators can direct learners to introductory courses that teach the basics of browsing the internet, performing online searches, and using a computer. A helpful resource is:

- AT&T. (n.d.). *Courses: Technology Basics.* Retrieved from https://att.digitallearn.org

To access resources and communicate during the program, learners must have an active email account. Facilitators should provide instructions to those who need assistance to create a free email account. Recommended email service providers include:

- **Gmail** - Google. (2025). *Create a Gmail account.* Retrieved from https://support.google.com/mail/answer/56256?hl=en

- **Microsoft Outlook** (Rebranded from Hotmail) - Microsoft. (2025). *How to create a new Microsoft account.* Retrieved from https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/account-billing/how-to-create-a-new-microsoft-account-a84675c3-3e9e-17cf-2911-3d56b15c0aaf

Communication and Conferencing Platforms

In today's world, many education and businesses use digital communication platforms to meet virtually with others. These are the most common communication and conferencing platforms and include direct links to training resources.

- **Google Meet** - Google. (2025). *Google Meet training and help.* Retrieved from https://support.google.com/a/users/answer/9282720?sjid=13227448141569228344-NC

- **Microsoft Teams** - Microsoft. (n.d.). *Microsoft Teams video training.* Retrieved from https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7

- **Zoom Conferencing** - Zoom. (2025). *Zoom Learning Centre.* Retrieved from https://learn-zoom.us/show-me

How to Download and Save Files

As learners navigate the Step-By-Step program, they will need to access the Learner Package and Learner Workbook. A section in the Learner Package provides guidance on downloading and saving files. Facilitators should review this section with learners, as needed, to ensure they are comfortable accessing, saving, and retrieving program documents.

Meeting Academic Needs

Each learner is different, and learning needs may require an educational institution to provide accommodations or modifications to ensure success. Mature learners may also bring diverse lived experiences and varying levels of formal education. Academic supports are available at all levels of education to help learners succeed. The information below can help learners identify what types of supports they may need based on their lived experiences, learning needs, work history, and education. Education counsellors and postsecondary student support services are available to provide more detailed and accurate information about available academic supports.
Be supportive and remind learners that not everyone learns in the same way. Different learning styles and approaches are normal and valuable. Facilitators may review this information with learners as needed and support referrals to appropriate services. If a learner is struggling, facilitators may adapt or modify activities within the Step-By-Step Learner Package or Learner Workbook, as appropriate.

What is an IEP?

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan that outlines the special programs, support, and services a learner will receive. If an individual applying to postsecondary has an IEP, or has a known need for academic accommodations, learners should research out to the institution(s) that they are interested in applying in, to learn about the services and supports that are available. The IEP is created after proper assessments have been done on the learner's strengths, challenges, and learning abilities. Some learners have learning needs that a regular classroom environment can't fully support, and this is where a special education plan can be developed for the learner. The plan can look at ways to provide learners:

- Accommodations to support learning
- Programs that adjust the level of difficulty of the course to fit the learners' needs
- Alternative goals to help learners gain knowledge & skills beyond the regular curriculum

What are Accommodations?

When an education plan has been developed for a learner, part of their plan will include specific examples of ways that a program/course can change to meet the needs of the learner. There are three types of accommodations:

- Instructional accommodations are changes in teaching methods, presentation styles, or technology use. For example, graphic organizers, photocopied notes, or assistive software.
- Environmental accommodations are changes in the classroom or school environment, like preferred seating or special lighting.
- Assessment accommodations are adjustments in how students are assessed, such as extra time for tests or allowing oral responses.

What are Modifications?

For learners with special education needs, modified expectations are like regular goals but adjusted to be more accessible or changed to meet the needs of the learner. These changes should be clear, realistic, measurable, and focus on skills or knowledge the learner can show knowledge and understanding on their own, with the right support. As an example, a reduced workload of assignment can build core skill development that matches the learner's ability and also creates alternative assessments and tests so learners can demonstrate their knowledge in other ways.

What is the AODA for peoples with a disability?

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is a law in Ontario that requires businesses and organizations, including schools, to make sure that their services, jobs, transportation, and information are accessible to people with disabilities. For example, the font size (or colour of font) might need to be changed to ensure that all learners have access to the text as some may be colour blind or will require larger font. Other examples could be accessible seating, quieter learning space, lighting, etc.

Need to upgrade or build up skills?

Adult education learning centres are places where adults can return to school in a way that works for their lives. They're often run by school boards or community organizations and offer a wide range of options so learners can work towards finishing their high school credits, upgrading on specific subjects, building literacy or math skills, or even learning computer basics. Many also provide flexible class times, online options, and supports like tutoring, academic advising, and help exploring career or postsecondary pathways.

For adults thinking about college or university, instructors play a big role in making that goal feel possible. This can mean getting to know each learner's goals, helping them strengthen skills they'll need for admission, and offering encouragement along the way. It's also about providing flexible learning options, breaking down the application and funding process, and connecting learners to the right resources or supports. Most importantly, it's about building the learners' confidence, so they see themselves as capable and ready to take the next step.

References

AODA. (2025). Enacting AODA Postsecondary Education Standards. Retrieved from https://aoda.ca

Ontario. (2025). Individual education plans. Retrieved from https://www.ontario.ca/page/individual-education-plans

Special Acknowledgement

This program was made stronger thanks to the voices and experiences of Education Support Personnel who walk alongside Indigenous learners every day. By highlighting the roles of counsellors and advisors, these individuals have helped ensure that Indigenous learners can be encouraged and supported while they're on their education journey.

Chi-miigwetch to the following people who have shared their wisdom and heart-work in these recorded interviews for the Step-By-Step program.

Breanne Yesno, *Indigenous Student Advisor*
Negahneewin Student Services, Confederation College, Thunder Bay, ON

Caroline Yesno, *Education Counsellor*
Eabametoong First Nation Education Authority, Thunder Bay, ON

Alyssa Maunula, *Post-Secondary Transition Coach*
Matawa Education, *Thunder Bay, ON*

P.O. Box 220, 37 A Reserve Rd, Naughton, ON, P0M 2M0 705.692.2999 oneca@oneca.com

WWW.ONECA.COM

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