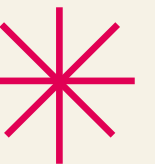


AI-WIL AT OC: SCALING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IN WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING WITH OC WORKS

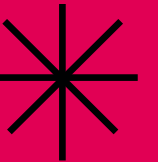
Learning to work | Working to learn

Presentation at the ACE-WIL CACEE Joint Conference, TRU, May 26, 2026.

By Alison Gibson, Okanagan College



INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT



SESSION OVERVIEW

Challenges in Scaling Employer Engagement

Fragmented outreach, unclear value propositions, and institutional complexity hinder expansion of WIL employer engagement.

AI-WIL@OC Project

A strategic initiative at Okanagan College (OC) designed to enhance employer engagement in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) through innovative, AI-enabled solutions.

OC Works Platform Features

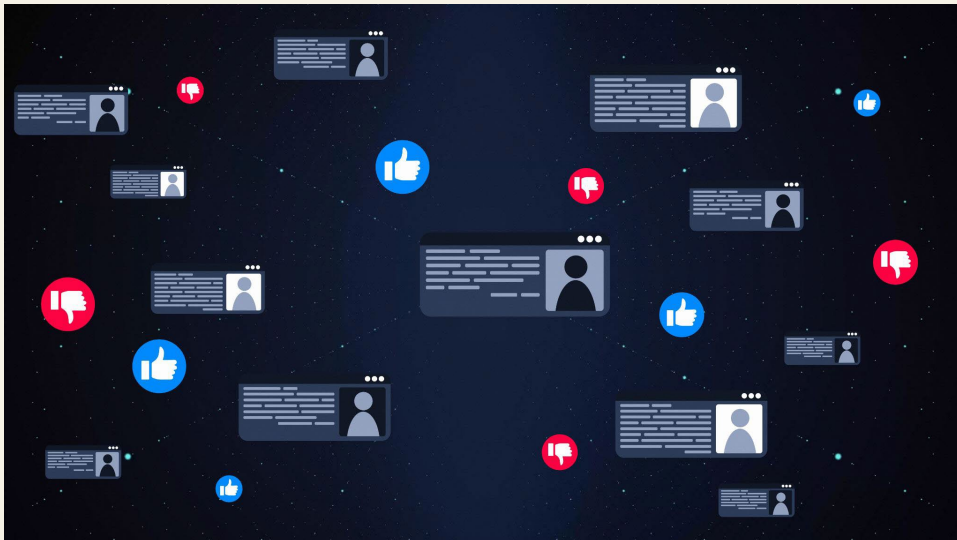
AI-assisted, self-service platform integrated with institutional supports streamlines WIL employer engagement.

Measurable Outcomes Achieved

Increased employer participation, expanded WIL opportunities, and improved student outcomes demonstrate platform success.

Lessons Learned for Adoption

Change management, stakeholder alignment, and iterative design are critical for effective implementation.



OC WORKS: SCALING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IN WIL

Addressing WIL Challenges

OC Works tackles systemic barriers in scaling employer engagement to enhance student experiential learning opportunities.

Leveraging Technology and Partnerships

The initiative uses AI, centralized access, and ecosystem partnerships to streamline employer participation in WIL.

Human-Centered Platform Design

A digital platform with human-centered design reduces complexity and aligns institutional and employer needs effectively.

Strategic Impact and Outcomes

OC Works fosters sustainable workforce pipelines by improving employer engagement and student access to WIL.



THE CHALLENGE

Employer Barriers

Employers face challenges like limited awareness, unclear expectations, and administrative burdens in engaging with WIL.

Institutional Fragmentation

WIL responsibilities are fragmented across departments causing inconsistent communication and duplicated efforts.

Sustainability Issues

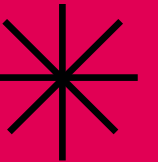
Traditional faculty-employer relationships are hard to replicate and limit scalability of WIL programs.

Focus on Employer Experience

Improving employer engagement by simplifying processes can increase participation and scalability in WIL.



OC WORKS DESIGN AND CAMPAIGN



OUR APPROACH

Employer-First Design

The approach prioritizes simplifying the employer experience to enhance engagement and scale WIL participation effectively.

Integration of Technology and Relationships

Combines AI-assisted systems with relationship-based engagement to overcome informational and relational barriers.

Flexibility in WIL Models

Offers adaptable WIL participation options tailored to various business needs, timelines, and capacities.

User-Centered System Design

Shifts from institution-centered to employer-driven system design focusing on user needs and behaviors.



WHAT IS OC WORKS?

Centralized WIL Information

OC Works consolidates WIL models, timelines, onboarding requirements, and supports into one accessible platform.

AI-Assisted Employer Support

Artificial intelligence enables real-time responses to employer inquiries, improving efficiency and availability.

Seamless System Integration

OC Works integrates with institutional systems like Career Services for smooth transitions to WIL participation.

Enhanced Employer Engagement

The platform simplifies engagement and encourages businesses of all sizes to participate in WIL programs.



PLATFORM CAPABILITIES

Comprehensive WIL Model Info

The platform provides detailed information on co-op, internships, service learning, practicums, work experience, applied research, and other WIL opportunities.

Resource Access

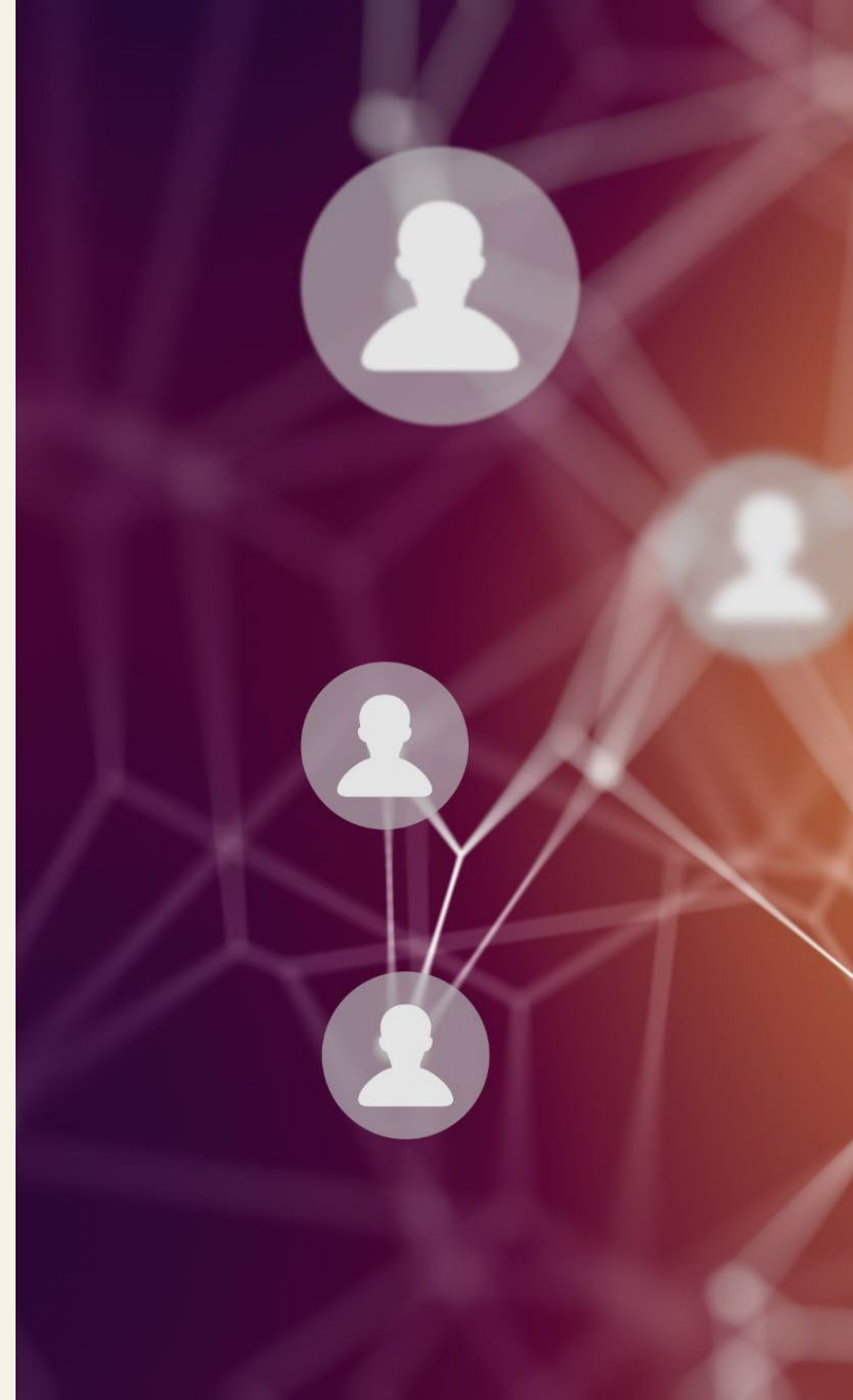
Employers get onboarding guides, best practices, and evaluation tools to support student hosting.

AI-Powered Virtual Assistant

An AI assistant provides instant answers, improving accessibility and reducing staff intervention.

Direct Career Services Connection

Employers can directly connect with Career Services for personalized support and engagement.



OC-WORKS.CA





Grow your business with OC Work-Integrated Learning

Tap into skilled student talent ready to contribute to your team.
Strengthen your future workforce with OC work-ready students.

Discover the benefits of students in your workplace through
work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities.

[Connect with Us →](#)

1200+

employers connected

3000+

students in WIL

150+

WIL opportunities

Why partner with us?

Six reasons employers choose OC WIL

WIL isn't just good for students, it's a smart business strategy that helps you find, train and retain top talent.

Cost-effective hiring

Access grants and subsidies that reduce hiring costs. Many WIL programs offer wage subsidies up to 70 per cent.

Fresh perspectives

Students bring new ideas, current industry knowledge and digital skills that can drive innovation in your business.

Try before you hire

Evaluate students' work ethic and skills firsthand before making a full-time commitment.

Flexible arrangements

Choose from WIL opportunities like co-op, internships, practicums, placements or projects that fit your business needs and schedule.

Build your talent pipeline

Develop relationships with OC students early and secure the best talent for your future workforce needs.

Increase productivity

Students can take on projects and tasks, freeing up your team to focus on strategic priorities.

Simple process

How WIL works for you

Getting started with WIL is easier than you think. We guide you through every step of the process.

01

Tell us your needs

Fill out our simple Connect Form to tell us about your talent needs and preferences.

02

Get matched

Our team connects you to WIL opportunities with work-ready OC students whose skills align with your needs.

03

Prepare and onboard

Prepare your workplace, select the best fit and welcome students to your team with our supported onboarding process.

04

Grow together

Mentor your students, complete meaningful projects and potentially hire them as permanent team members.

WIL in practice

How employers bring WIL into their teams

Common models, each flexible enough to fit your organization and deliver real value from the start.

Co-op / Internship

Students alternate between academic terms and paid work terms, typically 4-6 months and full-time, bringing current skills and fresh perspectives directly into your workplace. Work terms are structured around your operational needs and the student's field of study, with the option to stack multiple terms for continuity. These WIL types are paid and coordinated by OC Careers team.

Outcome: Build a pipeline of job-ready talent with the option to rehire or transition into longer-term roles.

Practicum / Field Placement

Applied Project / Service-Learning

Ready to find the WIL model that fits your team? Let's chat.
Connect with us

Get Started

Resources to help you move forward.

Resources to help you understand WIL, access funding and partner with confidence.

Funding Guide

A clear breakdown of available wage subsidies, eligibility, how to apply and how our team helps you navigate each step.

[View Guide](#)

Employer Partnership Guide

Explore all the ways to engage with OC students, from WIL pathways and the Careers Hub App to on-campus recruitment.

[View Guide](#)

OC Employer Partner Resources

Once you have decided to hire, FAQs about WIL, a guide to preparing your workplace and tools to set students up for success from the first week.

[Access in Careers Hub](#)

WIL News & Stories

What people are saying about WIL

er fair at Okanagan
ave always had a
ents and staff. We've
th students from the
gram."



Employer Testimonial

"We value our partnership with Okanagan College. We have subsequently hired a number of our co-op students based on their performance, work ethic and quality education and will continue to do so in the future."

Stephen Banmen, RDNO's General Manager of Finance

[Visit site →](#)

Connect with us

Ready to connect with OC student talent?

Fill out the form and our team will reach out to discuss how OC WIL opportunities can support your talent needs. No obligation, just a conversation.

Questions? Ask about WIL

Not sure where to start with WIL? Our 24/7 virtual assistant can help you:

1. Quickly understand WIL in plain business terms
2. Find the right option based on your needs and capacity
3. See when students are available and what skills they bring
4. Learn what's required (and what support is provided)
5. Get a clear next step: post an opportunity or connect with our team

[Chat with us](#)

First Name *

Your first name

Last Name

Your last name

Company Name *

Your Company Name

Email *

you@company.com

Phone

(250) 555 0123

Tell us about your talent needs

What roles are you looking to fill? Any specific skills or timeframes?

- I would like to receive the Funding Guide
- I would like to receive the Employer Partnership Guide
- I would like to receive the OC Employer Partner Resources

I'm not a robot



This question is for testing whether or not you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.

[Submit](#)

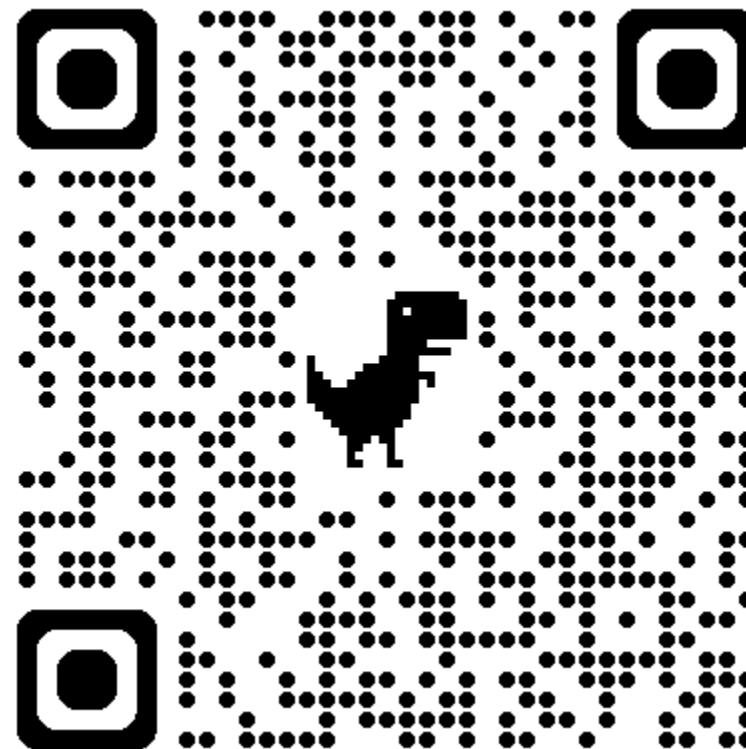
Welcome to OC Works! How can I help you today?

Just now

Input your message



En ⬇️ ↻



<https://oc-works.ca>



SOCIAL ADVERTISING

 Meta

 LinkedIn®

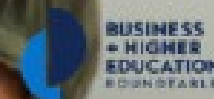

Google Ads




Okanagan
COLLEGE

OC Works

Today's learners.
Tomorrow's teammates.



Canada



Want work-ready talent?
Start with OC Students.



BUSINESS
+ HIGHER
EDUCATION
ROUNDTABLE

Canada



Okanagan
COLLEGE

OC Works



Build your future workforce.

Discover the 5 benefits of work-integrated learning.



1

Access emerging talent

Connect with motivated students ready to contribute to your business.



2

Reduce Hiring Risk

Evaluate talent in real work settings before making long-term decisions.



3

Save Time on Recruitment

Get support connecting with pre-screened, program-aligned students.



4

Build Your Talent Pipeline

Develop future employees aligned with your industry and culture.



5

Strengthen Your Workforce

Partner with Okanagan College through Work-Integrated Learning.



Home

» Future of Work 2026 » Work to Learn, Learn to Work: Fueling Business with Student Talent

FUTURE OF WORK

Work to Learn, Learn to Work: Fueling Business with Student Talent



ONLINE EDITORIAL

Innovating Canada

Mediaplanet Content Hub

NATIONAL POST

In partnership with:



Students learning in the workplace gain real-world skills while contributing meaningful results to help your business grow and become future-ready.

REVELSTOKE.
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

EST. 1895



CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Promotional Services

- Cross-Sharing
- Social Media
- Newsletters
- Webpages

Events

- Info Sessions
- Networking Events
- Sponsorship

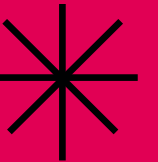


REACH TO DATE (FEB26-MAY26)

Approximately...

- 600,000 online impressions (saw an ad or story)
- 6000 employer connections (online, direct email, in-person events)
- 39 new employer contacts
- 1 WIL hire

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



WIL GROWTH AND RESULTS

Exceeding WIL Targets

- 415 WIL experiences, surpassing the original target of 335 by 80 opportunities.
- 353 Employers engaged with 83 new to WIL, surpassing the original targets of 150 employers with 50 new by 203 employers and 33 new.

Diverse WIL Opportunities

WIL included a variety of industry-paid and curricular opportunities benefiting students across disciplines.

Stronger Employer and Academic Alignment

Improved opportunities for employers to achieve more relevant WIL opportunities and alignment to academic programs.

Enhanced Student Experience and Outcomes

Increased WIL experiences provided students with real-world experience and improved career-readiness.



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND REACH

Exceeded Employer Engagement Goals

The initiative engaged 325 employers, surpassing the 150 target and including 53 first-time participants (Sep25-Mar26).

Effective Digital Outreach

Digital marketing generated over 559,000 impressions and reached more than 5,800 confirmed employer contacts (Feb25-Mar26).

Broad Sector Engagement

Employers from food, tourism, technology, and construction sectors actively participated in the initiative.

Increased Accessibility for Employers

Lower barriers attracted new businesses to participate, expanding sustainable talent pipelines.



STUDENT AND EMPLOYER IMPACT

Student Skill Development

WIL participation boosts students' confidence, technical skills, career skills, and understanding of workplace expectations.

Positive Student Feedback

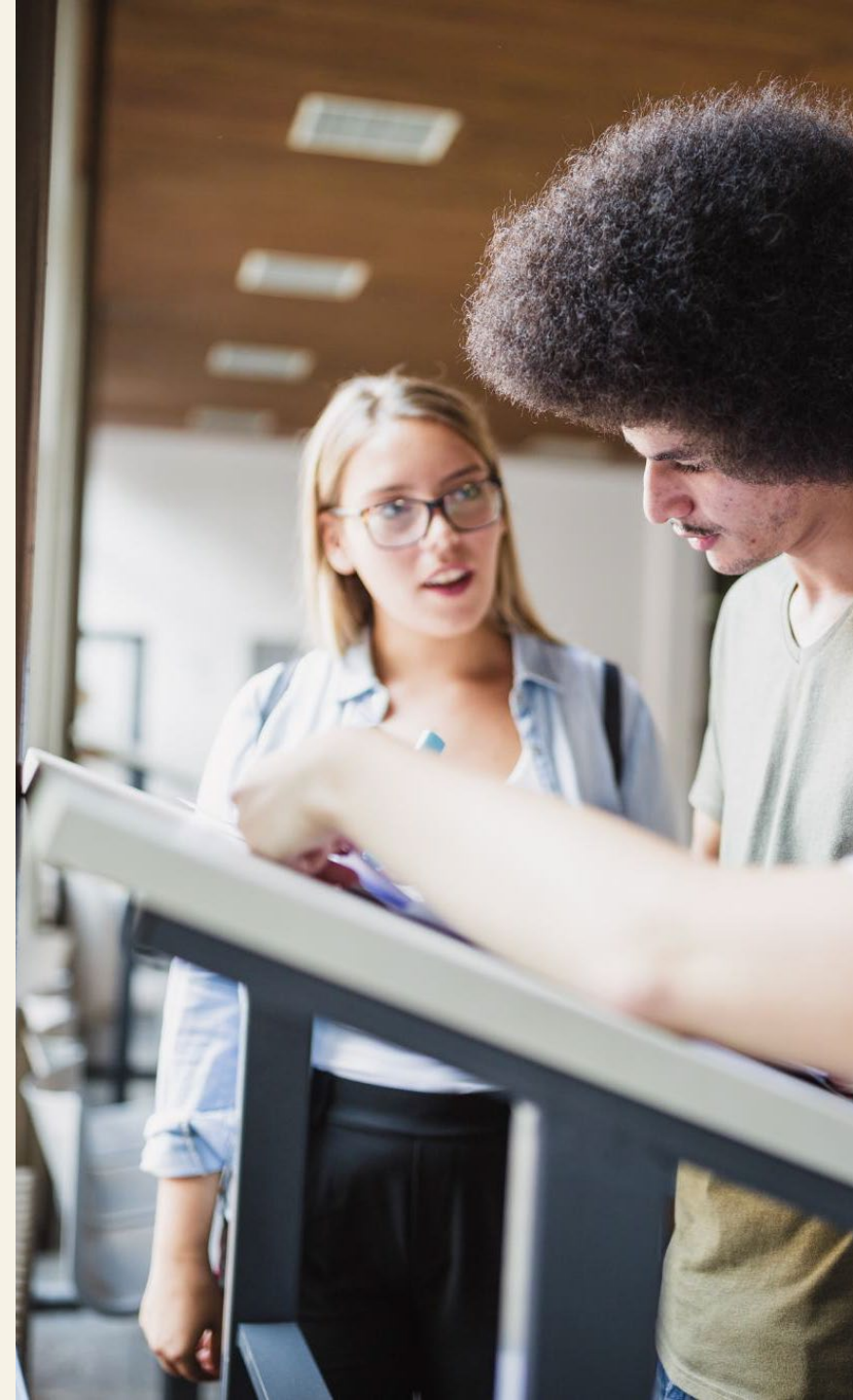
Over 75% of students report satisfaction with their WIL experience, especially in industry-paid placements.

Employer Benefits

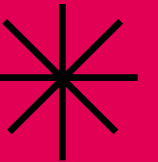
Employers experience clearer WIL processes, reduced administrative burden, and benefit from productive, well-prepared students.

Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

Enhanced student preparedness and employer supports lasting, sustainable WIL partnerships.



**LESSONS
LEARNED AND
FUTURE
IMPLICATIONS**



WHAT WORKED AND CHALLENGES

Success Factors

Employer-first design and a centralized platform reduced barriers and increased participation effectively.

Engagement Model

Blended engagement combining digital tools and relationship outreach enhanced stakeholder involvement.

Change Management Challenges

Introducing new systems required effort to align faculty, staff, and administrators with the new approach.

Data Integration Complexity

Integrating data systems and aligning evaluation metrics was more complex than initially planned.





LESSONS LEARNED

Simplify Employer Experience

Reducing complexity and providing clear information increases employer participation significantly in WIL programs.

Blended Approach

Combining digital tools with personal relationships creates trust and improves engagement effectively.

Internal Alignment

Coordination across departments like faculty, career services, and staff enhances WIL program effectiveness.

Early Investment in Data Systems

Implementing data systems and evaluation early supports better decisions and improves program efficiency.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



Scaling Work-Integrated Learning

Scaling WIL requires shifting from programs to integrated system-based solutions combining technology and partnerships.

Role of Artificial Intelligence

AI supports WIL by making information accessible and reducing administrative burdens for scalable delivery.

Sustainability and Institutional Alignment

Sustained WIL success depends on digital infrastructure investment and embedding WIL into institutional strategies.

Future Impact and Evolution

OC Works models evolving WIL to meet student, employer, and societal needs in a changing economy.



THANK-YOU

Questions, Comments to:

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Okanagan College

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Canada