

King's students taking learning outside classroom in trip to northern First Nations community
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On June 28, 11 students from King's University College will depart for the Fond Du Lac Denesuline First Nation located in the Athabasca region (1,275 km northwest of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan) to spend nearly two weeks meeting with and serving communities.

Accompanied by Father Michael Bechard (Director of Campus Ministry and Chaplain at King's), the group will complete work as part of course requirements but more importantly, will participate in community service and engagement – a major part of a liberal arts education. Students will engage with local youth providing activities designed to encourage thinking about faith, justice, and culture. Students will also complete a final paper, combining research and reflection on their experience. During the trip, students will also be given the opportunity to meet with local aboriginal leaders, Bishop Murray Chatlain and others who have committed their lives to living and working in this community.

In addition to the time on the Fond Du Lac Denesuline First Nation reservation, the group will also be spending a week on Pine Channel, a small island in Lake Athabasca with three different nations. With the goal to join the local communities in a spiritual retreat, the experience is sure to be an eye-opener for many. "It's all about building relationships and introducing our young people to a part of the country that few in Canada ever experience," explains Bechard. "It's also about challenging our young people to broaden their experience, putting their classroom knowledge at the service of others."

"Taking learning beyond the classroom is an essential part of what we do at King's and is a key component in a liberal arts education," says David Sylvester, Principal at King's. "Our students will have a life-changing experience engaging with these communities and will learn volumes. The best part however, is that they will be able to give something back to the people and communities they visit."

Bechard and Sr. Susan Glaab visited the community last year and were asked by community leaders to return this year and to bring other King's members. "We hope this will be the beginning of a long relationship with the north and will be part of a larger program which KUC wants to form with our First Nations Community," continues Bechard.

This trip is made possible through a \$5000 grant from the Sisters of St. Joseph. Students were also responsible for contributing to the program (tickets alone were in excess of \$1750.00/student).

The group will also include two recent seminary graduates and a recent graduate of the Faculty of Education.

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