

Our History

A brief history of KPU indicates a transition from a community college to a university in a short span of almost 40 years. Our history began in 1972 when we were known as Douglas College. Kwantlen College split from Douglas College in 1981 and became a self-standing college. By 1995, Kwantlen was established as a university college with degree-granting status. In 2008, Kwantlen University College was re-designated as a regional university with a bicameral governance structure. Premier Gordon Campbell announced the new name, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, KPU.

Today KPU serves not only regional communities, but is also committed to enhancing its reputation across Canada and internationally. The University actively recruits Canadian as well as international students and prepares them to live and work in an increasingly global context. KPU is comprised of four distinct campuses in the Vancouver metro area. The two governing bodies of the University — the Senate and the Board of Governors — provide leadership for this process, for which principles of academic freedom, transparency and collegiality are foundational.

OUR UNIQUE HERITAGE

KPU serves a South Fraser River Region of vast size and diversity, and is located in the shared traditional territories of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Tsawwassen First Nations.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University is named after the Kwantlen First Nation of the Coast Salish People, who are based in Fort Langley. Over their history, the Kwantlen People have been respected throughout the Lower Fraser River Region as Ancient Messengers—Tireless Runners. The ethos of the Kwantlen People is reflected in the motto of Kwantlen Polytechnic University: "through tireless effort, knowledge, and understanding." Additionally, the representation of the wolf and the salmon, which comprise the art work in the centre of KPU's Coat of Arms, was created by Brandon Gabriel, former Fine Arts student at KPU and nephew of the hereditary Chief of the Kwantlen People, Chief Marilyn Gabriel.

The image represents the cycle of life for all the inhabitants of the Lower Fraser River Region. As a further indication of the mutual respect between the University and the First Nation whose name we share, the Chief of the Kwantlen First Nation has conferred the title and responsibility of Sí:yá:m (Leader) on the Chancellor and President & Vice Chancellor of Kwantlen Polytechnic University.