

# Addressing the costs to pursue an education

It's easy to take for granted some of our opportunities when we don't know any better.

If you live in Kelowna and own a vehicle you can just about go anywhere within 30 minutes.

Living in the Central Okanagan you have access to shops, schools, a community college, a university and the airport to name a few destinations.

Now consider not



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having these opportunities.

What if you can't afford to own or operate a vehicle?

A decent car will probably cost about \$5,000 or more.

Maintaining, fueling, and insuring the car would probably cost you a minimum of \$250 per month depending on how much you drive.

Now consider housing. Usually if you are on a limited budget the farther you move from a major city centre the cheaper it is to live.

My friend's dad bought an old farm house in rural Saskatchewan—he paid \$9,000 for the lot and house.

This house is about 200 kilometres from a small town. I know people who live in rural Enderby (about 20 kms to town) and rent a three-bedroom house and only pay \$450 per month.

That same house in Kelowna would probably rent for about \$1,500, but they can't afford \$1,500 a month so they choose to live away from the urban bustle.

People who can't afford a car and who live far from a city centre because of cost, pay a price in terms of opportunities.

I'm always surprised when I meet someone and their biggest barrier to getting an education is

transportation.

These people usually live in a community that has limited (if any) public transit. Moving to town to access educational services doesn't happen because they can't afford to move.

National statistics tell us that aboriginal adult learners and aboriginal high school students who are considering more education are the most likely to encounter this problem because some of these students live in isolated communities on band land.

Once, when I was talking to our aboriginal mentor at the Salmon Arm campus of Okanagan College, she told me that the best thing for aboriginal students would be a bus that traveled from Sicamous to Salmon Arm

and from the Adams Lake Band reserve to Salmon Arm.

In her opinion, transportation was the biggest barrier for these students.

If only they had the ability to get to school...

If transportation is such an issue what can we do about it?

The first thing I see as an option is distance learning.

While this might not work for all students, I would recommend that if you really want to learn and transportation is an issue, it's an avenue worth exploring.

If you have an Internet connection you might be surprised at how online learning has improved distance education.

The second solution is to lobby for change, where education administrators try and find innovative ways to bring education to you.

Through partnerships and institutional initiatives, over the past years Okanagan College has managed to bring a number of residential construction programs out into the community in remote areas and in some cases onto band land.

In a perfect world, transportation would never stop someone from getting an education.

Until we achieve Nirvana, though, we can work together to make it less of a barrier.

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