

**Assembly of First Nations
Education, Jurisdiction, and Governance**



**Supporting First Nations Learners
Transitioning to Post-Secondary**

**Final Report
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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the factors affecting the success of First Nations learners in education in Canada and the types of initiatives required to support the successful transition of First Nations learners to post-secondary. A description of First Nations peoples and a brief overview of the historical context of education for First Nations in Canada will assist the reader in understanding the reality of First Nations communities and schools, and the impacts on First Nation learners. It is these experiences that prompt the design, development and delivery of specialized programs and services required to assist First Nations students with their transitions to post-secondary education.

A literature review reveals a multitude of supports that are currently available in Canada to assist First Nations learners with transitions and success in post-secondary education. The supports that exist begin “at home” and entail focussed efforts by First Nations communities, Indigenous institutions, mainstream post-secondary institutions and governments. The report reveals the extent of the needs and the types of supports that are required to foster learner success.

The examination of these factors reveal the need for a significant increased financial investment and continued concentrated efforts from educators, community, education institutions and government to ensure First Nations learners acquire the supports they need to successfully transition and succeed in post-secondary education.



“Indian children will continue to be strangers in Canadian classrooms until the curriculum recognizes Indian customs and values, Indian languages, and the contributions which the Indian people have made to Canadian history”
National Indian Brotherhood (1972)

A Portrait of First Nations in Canada

First Nations peoples are culturally and linguistically very diverse and geographically, they occupy every province and territory in Canada. There are six hundred and thirty three First Nation communities across Canada with almost sixty language families and dialects that tend to be specific to local communities. The estimated population of persons with Aboriginal ancestry is 1,172,785 (Statistics Canada 2006). Of these, 698,025 identify as First Nations. Aboriginal youth is Canada’s fastest growing demographic: the First Nations population grew 3.5 times faster than the non-Aboriginal population in 2006.¹

Some First Nations’ communities have licensed early learning and care programs for children under the age of six. At the present time, many First Nations children do not have access to early childhood programs. Not unlike mainstream communities, children can be wait-listed for a long time trying to access quality early learning and care programs.

Today there are more than 520 First Nations elementary and secondary schools serving 60% of the approximately 119,000 First Nations students resident on reserve lands. About 60% (or 70,000) of these students attended 520 on-reserve schools operated by First Nations – the majority (75%) were enrolled in either kindergarten or an elementary school, while 25% were enrolled in an on-reserve secondary school. Approximately 37% (or 44,000) of First Nations students attended off-reserve provincial schools, while the remaining students (3%) attended either a private or federal school. Secondary school graduation data provided by INAC for 2004-2009 identifies the rate of First Nation graduation at 36% for 2004-05, 30% for 2005-06, 32% for 2006-07, 34% for 2007-08 and 36% for 2008-09.²

There are sixty (60) First Nations owned and controlled post-secondary institutions which deliver a wide range of programs to approximately 100,000 learners, including preparatory programs, adult upgrading, trades and apprenticeship, certificate, diploma, degree and advanced degree programs.³

With respect to the education and career aspirations of Aboriginal peoples, Merrill et al (2010) found, “While literature on the career aspirations of Aboriginal people and their demonstrated ability to achieve those aspirations is scarce, a study of Aboriginal youth in

¹ Cited in *Diagnostic Report on First Nation and Inuit Post-Secondary Education*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, 2

² Assembly of First Nations, *First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education, A Discussion Guide*, October 2011, 5

³ Assembly of First Nations, *Fact Sheet Post-Secondary Education*



high school found that only 70% of Aboriginal people aspire to pursue postsecondary education, compared to 90% of their non-Aboriginal peers.”⁴

First Nations people living on-reserve have the lowest labour force participation rate (52%) of any Aboriginal group, compared to 67% for non-Aboriginal Canadians. In 2006, the unemployment rate for First Nations living on-reserve 25%, approximately three times the rate for non-Aboriginal Canadians. The average household income in 2006 was \$15,958, compared to \$36,000 (before taxes) for non-Aboriginal Canadians. Sixty-one percent (61%) of First Nation young adults (20-24) had not completed high school, compared with 13% of non-Aboriginal Canadians.⁵

One in four children in First Nations’ communities lives in poverty. The secondary school graduation rate of First Nations youth is 37%. Suicide rates among First Nations youth are five to seven times higher than other young non-Aboriginal Canadians. A First Nation youth is more likely to end up in jail than to graduate high school.⁶

The Canadian Centre for the Study of Living Standards, reports:

- The Aboriginal population is much younger than the Canadian population average, with a median age in 2006 of only 26.5 years, compared to 39.5 years for all Canadians.
- Aboriginal Canadians aged 15 and over have a much lower educational attainment than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, with 43.7 percent not holding any certificate, diploma or degree in 2006, compared to 23.1 percent for other Canadians.
- As a result, the labour market outcomes for Aboriginal Canadians are significantly inferior to the Canadian average. In 2006, Aboriginal Canadians had lower incomes, a higher unemployment rate, a lower participation rate, and a lower employment rate.
- Aboriginal people with a high school diploma or higher had significantly better labour market outcomes, both in absolute terms and relative to non-Aboriginal Canadians, than those who did not have a high school diploma.
- In 2026, using the medium growth projection for the Aboriginal and general populations, the Aboriginal population is projected to make up 4.6 percent of the Canadian population.
- If Aboriginal participation and employment rates reach 2006 non-Aboriginal levels by 2026, it is projected that the Aboriginal population will account for 19.9 percent of labour force growth and 22.1 percent of employment growth over the 2006–2026 period.⁷

⁴ Merrill, S., Bruce, D and Marlin, A. *Considerations for Successful Transitions Post-Secondary Education and the Labour Market for Aboriginal Youth in Canada, Final Report*, Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, May 12, 2010

⁵ Assembly of First Nations, *Fact Sheet – Quality of Life of First Nations*, June 2011

⁶ Assembly of First Nations, *Fact Sheet – Quality of Life of First Nations*, June 2011

⁷ Centre for the Study of Living Standards, *Investing in Aboriginal Education in Canada: An Economic Perspective*, February 2010



The Aboriginal population is expected to make up 12.7% of the labour force growth between 2006 and 2026.⁸ Immediate and affirmative action along with significant financial investments will be required to realize the full potential and economic impacts of Aboriginal youth, particularly given Canada's labour shortages and increasing need for a highly skilled and competitive workforce.

Historical Overview of First Nations Education

The history of education for First Nations peoples has seen drastic transformations over time. This short description will attempt to demonstrate the changes that have occurred over time and how those changes have impacted First Nations peoples. It begins with the important role of family, elders and community, and culminates in the role of present day educational institutions.

Long before Europeans arrived in North America, Indians had evolved their own form of education. It was an education in which the community was the classroom, its members were the teachers, and each adult was responsible to ensure that each child learned how to live a good life (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973).⁹

The Anglican Church of Canada acknowledges that, "Family and elders have always been the first teachers. Traditional knowledge based on First Nations worldview, values, cultures, tradition and ceremonies has been passed down from generation to generation. Community reinforces those teachings through ceremonies and life's daily experiences.

This was expressed in their daily living, in relationship of one to another, in humility, in sharing, in cooperating, in relationship to nature --- the land, the animals, in recognition of the Great Spirit, in the way our people thought, felt and perceived their world...a viable living culture."¹⁰

As Europeans settled among First Nations in North America, they focused on "helping" the First Nations peoples by educating First Nations peoples to the European way of living and thinking. This seemed to be the right thing to do as they did not understand First Nations culture, values, beliefs, practices, customs and traditions.



Prior to Confederation in 1867, Anglican missions in remote British North America had three primary objectives– to evangelize local native populations, to administer to the sick and to provide basic schooling for the young. Many young Indians were thus baptized, confirmed by the Church, and educated in the European and

⁸ Cited in *Diagnostic Report on First Nation and Inuit Post-Secondary Education*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, 4

⁹ Cited in Kirkness, *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Retrospective and a Prospective*, 1999

¹⁰ Kirkness, Verna. J., *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Retrospective and a Prospective*, *Journal of American Indian Education*, Vol. 39 No. 1, Special Issue 2, Fall 1999



Church traditions. On returning to their home communities, native adherents were expected to promote the appeal of Christian teachings and values. At the time, Church and colonial officials gave little thought to their assimilation [of Aboriginal peoples] into Canadian society at large.¹¹ This type of education not only instilled a different way of thinking about the world, it resulted in a total disregard for the distinct values, beliefs, culture, language, customs and traditions of First Nations peoples.

As the European settlers moved to acquire lands and began to develop their settler communities in North America, they required more and more of the First Nations traditional lands. Conflicts over lands and resources became more and more prevalent resulting in increased efforts by the dominant society to implement measures of control over First Nations peoples, for the sake of progress. The Indian Act of 1876 included provisions for the removal of Indians “to assure that Whites could improve the amenities of their communities”.

The Constitution Act of 1867 solidified the government of Canada’s involvement in the education of First Nations children by supporting provincial authorities over First Nations education (Section 93). This further entrenched the teachings of the European worldview upon First Nations peoples and the practise of removing of First Nations children from their families and communities to attend residential schools continued.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports that, “Indian residential schools date back to the 1870’s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools, often against their parents’ wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. It is estimated that more than 80,000 former students are living today. The ongoing impact of residential schools has been felt throughout generations.”¹²



The impacts of the residential school era are described by Kirkness as, “Having generations of Indian children removed from their parents, denying them a normal childhood and the teachings of their people, resulted in the loss of their cultural traditions including their native languages. It is a dark period in the history of Indian education, the repercussions of which continue to be felt today. The weakening of Indian society as a whole can be attributed to boarding schools. Cultural conflict, alienation, poor self-concept, lack of preparation for jobs and for life in general derive from this deplorable experience. It is evident that not only are those who actually attended these schools affected but so are their children and their communities.”¹³

¹¹ Anglican Church of Canada website, <http://www.anglican.ca/relationships/trc/schools/>

¹² Truth and Reconciliation Commission, <http://www.trc-cvr.ca/>

¹³ Kirkness, Verna. J., *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Retrospective and a Prospective*, Journal of American Indian Education, Vol. 39 No. 1, Special Issue 2, Fall 1999



The history of church run schools and federally supported residential schools, have left First Nations with scepticism and distrust of publically run education systems.

“The imposition of residential the school system, the loss of lands, reduced access to resources and prohibitions regarding the practice of traditional ceremonies and Aboriginal languages, all took their toll on the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Metis.”¹⁴

The following sections: Legislation and First Nations Education and The Funding Facts describe how schools and education funding have developed the after residential schools era.

Legislation and First Nations Education

Legislative provisions that currently guide the federal government’s provision of education for First Nations are found in Sections 114 to 122 of the Indian Act of 1985. These provisions lay the foundation for a “basic” education for Indian children aged six to sixteen and, regulation 115 is the only regulation that addresses schools. It states,

The Minister may

- (a) provide for and make regulations with respect to standards for buildings, equipment, teaching, education, inspection and discipline in connection with schools;
- (b) provide for the transportation of children to and from school;
- (c) enter into agreements with religious organizations for the support and maintenance of children who are being educated in schools operated by those organizations; and
- (d) apply the whole or any part of moneys that would otherwise be payable to or on behalf of a child who is attending a residential school to the maintenance of that child at that school.¹⁵

In Canada, there is a two-tier education system: one for First Nations students, and the other for everyone else.

While segregation and apartheid has been eliminated in the rest of the developed world, Canada is the only nation that retains this separate, but unequal system that is based on two factors: race (First Nation), and residency (on reserve).
Chiefs of Ontario, 2011

While current legislation supports children in schools, there is no provision to address the type of education to be provided and supported, no provision for education systems for First Nations students, no provision to support educators, no provision to provide culturally relevant education, no provision for First Nations languages in education and no provision to involve First Nations in defining or designing “quality” education.

In contrast, given the development of provincial and territorial education systems over time, education systems and services that are commonly available to the general public include a vast array of early

¹⁴ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Vol. 3. Ottawa, 1996

¹⁵ Department of Justice, *Indian Act*, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/l-5/page-33.html#h-42>



learning programs, elementary and secondary schools with designated services for special needs students, literacy programs, adult education and trades programs and college and university programs, complete with student and faculty supports. This not the case for First Nation's schools and First Nation's communities!

The education provisions of the Indian Act, specifies the provision of education of children from the ages of six to sixteen. However, the federal department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada supports post-secondary education for First Nations learners and has done so for several decades. The real issue here is that the federal government interprets its role in providing support for post-secondary education as an issue of "social policy" rather than as a legal obligation. The lack of adequate funding for post-secondary education leaves First Nations at a disadvantage when competing for jobs in today's society.

The role of the federal government in post-secondary education for First Nations learners has had long-lasting impacts on First Nations identity and self-sufficiency. Until 1951, First Nations peoples were forced to give up their identity in law if they wanted to acquire a post-secondary education in Canada.

The first reference to enfranchising Indians (which meant giving up Indian status) who obtained a university degree, a reflection of official beliefs that possessing higher education gave one a type of independence such that he need no longer remain an Indian, appeared in Canadian legislation in section 86(1) of the 1876 Indian Act:

Any Indian who may be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Medicine, or to any other degree by any University of Learning, or who may be admitted in any Province of the Dominion to practice law either as an Advocate or as a Barrister or Counselor or Solicitor or Attorney or to be a Notary Public, or who may enter Holy Orders or who may be licensed by any denomination of Christians as a Minister of the Gospel, shall ipso facto become and be enfranchised under this Act.

This clause reappeared as section 99(1) in the 1880 Indian Act, section 86 in the 1886 Indian Act and section 111 in the 1906 Indian Act. The clause remained until the 1927 Indian Act when it was replaced by another clause that, although it did not specifically refer to universities, was actually broader in scope. That clause allowed the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to appoint a board "to make enquiry and report as to the fitness of any Indian or Indians to be enfranchised, and such report shall have the same force and effect and shall be dealt with in the same manner as if the same had been made upon the application of an Indian or Indians under this section. The above clause confirmed the continuing agenda of Indian Affairs to coerce Indians to enfranchise."¹⁶

By 1969, in the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, [also referred to as the White Paper], the Government of Canada admitted, "Indians today are the subject of legal discrimination; they have grievances because of past undertaking that

¹⁶Excerpt from: Stonechild, Blair: *The New Buffalo - the Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, University of Manitoba Press, 2006, 21



have been broken or misunderstood... The legal and administrative discrimination in the treatment of Indian people has not given them an equal chance of success...It has exposed them to discrimination that has profoundly affected their confidence that success can be theirs. Discrimination breeds discrimination by example, and the separateness of Indian people has affected the attitudes of other Canadians towards them.” First Nations have yet to see the government of Canada address the scope of this issue in a systemic way.

The White Paper also made reference to “the fundamental right of Indian people to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada.”¹⁷ After the release of the White Paper, First Nations mobilized in unity to release, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972). First Nations envision education as a means to ensure continued support of their cultural identity, languages, customs, traditions and beliefs as unique and distinct Nations within Canada, rather than to meld into the cultural mosaic of Canada.

By the mid 1970`s, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada created the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program to promote access to post-secondary education for First Nations and Inuit learners. The program, which was renamed in 1988 to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), supports Status Indian and Inuit students eligible to enroll in eligible post-secondary programs in approved post-secondary institutions. The program has three components:

1. Student support which includes:
 - Tuition support for part-time and full-time students that may include fees for registration, tuition and the cost of books and supplies required for courses.
 - Travel support for full-time students who must leave their permanent place of residence to attend college or university. Students may qualify for funding to return home twice per academic year.
 - Living expenses for full-time students to help cover the costs such as food, shelter, and transportation.¹⁸
2. University College Entrance Preparation Program, and
3. Indian Studies Support Program – supports the delivery of post-secondary programs, services and research.

Indigenous owned and controlled institutes of higher learning began to immerge in the 1970’s. The Government of Canada does not recognize and financially support Indigenous institutions in the same manner as they support Canada’s federally and provincially recognized colleges and universities. Financial grants to support Indigenous institutes of higher learning derive from the Indian Studies Support Program.

Canada endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on November 12, 2010. Article 14 of the Declaration affirms that:

¹⁷ Indian Policy, *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, 1969, 9-10

¹⁸ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033682>



1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Another important milestone in First Nations education was the passing of the NDP motion in support of Shannen`s Dream. All political parties in Canada voted unanimously in favour of the motion on February 27, 2012. The motion, calls for the government to declare that First Nations students have an equal right to quality education, and to work with First Nations leaders on an action plan that ensures students on reserves receive a properly funded, culturally sensitive education.¹⁹ The days and months ahead will tell how support will unfold.

First Nations governments have, for decades, called upon the federal government to uphold their fiduciary obligation in the provision of the entire range of education from early childhood to post-secondary. However, the issue of federal support for post-secondary continues not to be protected in legislation. In addition, there continues not to be secure, adequate funding to support First Nations success in post-secondary education. The federal government articulates its support for post-secondary is a matter of 'social policy'. **Federal support for First Nations post-secondary education is not protected in legislation.**

The Funding Facts

"The federal government established and sustains a two-tier system of education funding that has arbitrarily established the value of educating First Nations youth as being 25-50% below that of other Canadian youth."²⁰

There is no national approach to the provision of early learning and child care. Many First Nations communities do not have licensed early learning and care programs. The lack of quality early learning programs, denies First Nations children the preparation needed for elementary school.

Early learning and child care initiatives in First Nations communities are currently supported by initiatives funded by Health Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The very nature of this system of funding child care initiatives fosters a sectoral approach to service delivery in First Nations communities. Although efforts have been made to provide a single window approach to the delivery of early learning and child care, it

¹⁹ New Democratic Party, *Conservatives need to follow through on First Nations Education in upcoming Budget*, February 27, 2012, <http://www.ndp.ca/press/ndp-leads-way-to-historic-vote-on-shannen-s-dream>

²⁰ Assembly of First Nations, *Addressing the Education Crisis*, September 2010



remains unknown exactly how many children in First Nations communities have access to services.²¹

With respect to elementary and secondary education, the federal government provides core funding for elementary and secondary education programs and services based on historical allocations established in the 1980's. In addition to the core funding allocation to First Nations communities, First Nations are encouraged to enter a competition process for additional education grants. The kinds of proposals received by First Nations for grant funding is reflective of the shortage of funds which most would consider should be categorized as "essential" or "core" education costs. In light of this situation, the types of education programs and services available to First Nations community schools is often dictated by the annual funding made available by the federal government. This leaves no room for addressing increases in student population, no room for continuous quality improvement, no opportunity to address facilities maintenance issues, no room for emergencies and no funding security to plan for the future needs.

First Nations elementary and secondary education funding facts reveal that:

- since 1996, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's national funding formula has been capped at 2% per year, even with increasing enrolments
- a 6% annual increase is required to keep pace with the costs of education
- funding increases from provincial and territorial school systems averaged 4.1% per year, despite declining enrolment, warranting only a 3.2% average annual increase
- a funding shortfall for First Nations elementary and secondary education for 2009-2010 is \$1.56 billion
- a funding shortfall of \$620 million in 2009-2010, beyond the 2% cap, and
- a cumulative funding shortfall of over \$3 billion since 1996. (Assembly of First Nations)

The funding shortfall is impacted by the growing youth population, but is also attributed to the continued use of a 1980's school funding formula. Chronic underfunding:

- negatively impacts the "quality" of elementary and secondary education available to First Nations learners in First Nations communities
- results in a lack of funding for culturally and linguistically relevant education which negatively impacts the recruitment, retention and success of First Nations learners, and,
- often leaves First Nations learners ill-prepared for post-secondary education.

With respect to funding for post-secondary education, many Canadians people believe that First Nations people receive full funding from the federal government to attend post-secondary. On the contrary, the situation gets bleaker every year for First Nations learners hoping to enroll in post-secondary education.

The federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) is the program that enables First Nations learners to access tuition support and living allowances to attend post-secondary education. The allocation of funds works like this:

²¹Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Early Childhood Development, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100035227/1100100035228>



- The federal department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) determines national and regional allocations (based on historical amounts not need) and funding guidelines.
- AANDC partners with local First Nations organizations to assist in the administration of the program based on federal guidelines.
- First Nations develop and implement local level policies to fund students, based on historical, annual funding allocations determined by the federal government.
- First Nations learners make application to the First Nations organization administering the PSSSP fund (usually the community which they are a member of).
- Within the budget defined by AANDC, First Nations funding policies may vary dependent upon local level priorities

2007-2008 PSSSP data in BC found most students received less than the allowable funding due to funding shortfalls.

- 55% of 792 single students living away from home received less
- 61% of 287 single parent students received less
- 75% of 292 married students with spouses received less

The insert left demonstrates shortfalls in PSSSP funding for First Nations students in British Columbia. Research conducted by the Grand River Post-Secondary Education Office (GRPSEO) shows funding shortfalls for 20 First Nations students enrolled in various programs. The funding shortfall for the students ranges \$274.96 to \$48,906.45. These case studies can be found in the accompanying chart (Appendix A).

The historical nature of the national funding formula has no room for growth in population, no room for tuition hikes and no room for any additional ancillary fees. The GRPSEO data

also shows a reduction of funded students over time. For example, available funding meant 217 students were unfunded in 2004-2005, by 2010-2011, 401 students could not be funded.

Increases in the costs to attend post-secondary, has over time, forced local community organizations to develop more and more stringent policies in an effort to stretch the funding to support the numbers of qualified learners wishing to enroll in post-secondary education. The lack of adequate funding coupled with the annual budget allocation has led to the creation of priority categories at the community level. This creates a very tenuous situation for First Nations organizations when most students seek to enroll in multi-year programs.

For First Nations students wishing to enroll or hoping to continue post-secondary studies, the lack of adequate funding can mean that even if you are high enough on the priority list to receive funding, you may be required to await annual or semester to semester approvals before actually receiving funding.

The national funding allocation for the federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program was capped in 1996. After that, the costs of post-secondary education sky-rocketed, the numbers of eligible First Nations students increased dramatically and the annual rate of increase in funding for PSSSP was limited to 2% annually. The funding limitations reveal:



- In 2008, the Program supported an estimated 22,303 students at a total cost of \$300 million
- In 2008, \$724 million was needed to support the number of First Nations learners qualified to attend post-secondary. This figure includes:
 - o The 'real' costs to support 22,303 learners (\$147 million)
 - o \$64 million for 3213 students who were ready to enroll
 - o \$208 million to address the backlog of students ready but unable to enroll, and
 - o \$5 million for the 280 learners needed to address the gap in post-secondary attainment between First Nations and non-First Nations learners in Canada.
- Approximately seven in 10 First Nations youth aspire to complete a PSE degree
- Persistent barriers are preventing First Nations from reaching their goals
- Lack of funding remains the primary barrier PSE for First Nations people living on reserve, and
- In 2005, more than one in four (27%) felt the lack of funding was prohibiting access to PSE.²²

Funding support for First Nations post-secondary education also includes Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning. There is a fundamental difference in how Indigenous post-secondary institutions are supported in relation to the support afforded to mainstream post-secondary institutions.

Mainstream post-secondary institutions are established through legislation and as such, are classified as 'public' post-secondary education institutions with recognized authority to grant certificates, diplomas and degrees. Indigenous institutions are created and owned by First Nations to address the needs of the community and operate as public institutions. Indigenous institutions have not been created through an act of the legislature, and therefore, are not "recognized public post-secondary institutions".

The inequity and absence of legislative support for Indigenous institutions means that their certificates, diplomas and degrees are not recognized the same as those conferred by provincially recognized colleges and universities. Indigenous institutions are also not eligible to receive federal grants (i.e. for infrastructure, research) or provincial operating grants available to mainstream post-secondary institutions. There is no source of stable, ongoing financial support for Indigenous institutions. The financial success of Indigenous institutions is largely dependent upon their ability to seek out and secure project grants. When delivering multi-year programs, they are often operating on a 'hope and a prayer' that money will continue to come in. They often find themselves in situations of having to "pay" mainstream post-secondary institutions for the recognition to grant certificates, diplomas and degrees.

In fact, governments in Canada exercise inconsistent approaches to financially supporting Indigenous institutions. The First Nations University of Canada, an affiliate of the University of Regina, is the only Indigenous institute that receives annual operational funding from the federal government. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which has achieved the status of a "recognized public post-secondary institution" in the province of British Columbia, is the only Indigenous institute which receives provincial

²² Assembly of First Nations, *Fact Sheet First Nations Post-Secondary Education*



funding in the same manner as other provincially recognized and supported post-secondary institutions in B.C. The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies has achieved provincial recognition in the province of Saskatchewan but does not receive funding in the same manner as provincially supported post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan. All other Indigenous institutions of higher learning in Canada are dependent upon securing funding through the federal Indian Studies Support Program, an annual proposal driven process. Indigenous institutions also acquire project funding from a myriad of different sources. The success of Indigenous institutions is largely dependent upon their ability to raise funds.

In summary, the amount of funding for First Nations education is an annual budget exercise by the federal government rather than an examination of needs and a vision for quality. Annual funding allocations, including the release of core funding, the timing of grant funding approvals and the timing of receipt of funding carries with it a host of negative consequences for the local administration and delivery of First Nations education programs and services. Current levels of funding, consistently find First Nations in deficit situations and situations of 'borrowing from Peter to pay Paul' in order to support the diverse needs of learners and in particular, learners enrolled in multi-year programs.

There is clearly, a need for secure and adequate funding to support the establishment of education systems to support First Nations learners. Federal support for First Nations education that is focused on kindergarten to grade twelve limits the foundation required for First Nations peoples to become self-sustaining and competitive in the workforce. Canada needs to solidify its support for all First Nations learners, for culturally and linguistically based education from early childhood to post-secondary. Canada needs to ensure:

- access to licensed, early learning and child care programs
- adequate funding for elementary and secondary education systems
- access to appropriate supports for all special/exceptional learners throughout their educational journey
- all qualified First Nations learners have the support they need to enroll in post-secondary education,
- long-term stable and adequate funding support for Indigenous institutions of higher learning, and
- a variety of student support services are available to ensure all learners are successful.

Without ample opportunity and adequate support for all First Nations learners through all levels of education, they will continue to struggle with obtaining post-secondary credentials. Lack of success at post-secondary education will result in First Nations finding it increasingly difficult to develop the human potential and the capacity to thrive as healthy and prosperous individuals, families, communities and Nations. Canada needs the First Nations population to address the increasing demand for a qualified and talented labour force. Canada must work with First Nations to enhance Canada's workforce and economic viability now and into the future.

"Closing the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples would add \$71 billion to Canada's GDP by 2017."¹



Discrepancy in Vision for First Nations Education

The discrepancy in vision for First Nations education has existed since European contact. One of the statements describing First Nations view of education was articulated in *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972). It reads:

“Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. Indian culture and values have a unique place in the history of mankind. The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience, should reinforce & contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian.”

The Government of Canada supports education for First Nations education, ‘for their full participation in Canadian society’. It is a system for all Canadians, based on a Canadian or Eurocentric worldview. For decades, First Nations have questioned the relevancy of mainstream education and continue efforts to create education programs and systems that reflect the First Nations’ worldview. This section highlights the discrepancies in vision which will demonstrate the need for unique approaches and culturally relevant programming to foster First Nations’ success in education.

First Nations peoples in Canada are steadfast in what they need to achieve with respect to the education of their children. An education based on the perspectives, values, beliefs, histories, culture, language, epistemologies and world-view of First Nations peoples have been articulated repeatedly. Here are some expressions of the goal of First Nations education as expressed by First Nations peoples.

“In Indian Tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child, to see that he learns all he needs to know in order to live a good life... We want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian traditional and culture. The values which we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, in our legends and in the culture. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values he will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian”²³

“First Nations view education as a process of nurturing learners in linguistically and culturally-appropriate, holistic learning environments that meet individual and collective needs, thereby ensuring that all First Nations people achieve their personal and collective visions within lifelong comprehensive learning systems.”²⁴

“The key elements of First Nations lifelong learning include language immersion, holistic and culturally relevant curricula, well-trained teachers, focused leadership, parental

²³ National Indian Brotherhood (now, the Assembly of First Nations), *Indian Control of Indian Education*, Ottawa, 1969, 2

²⁴ Assembly of First Nations, *Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper*, 2010



involvement and accountability, and safe and healthy facilities founded on principles that respect First Nations jurisdiction over education.”²⁵

The perspective of the Storytellers' Foundation and Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society shares this important consideration with respect to the success of First Nations learners:

“It is evident that the programming offered by the [Indigenous postsecondary] organizations is often beyond developing skill sets for individual advancement and is frequently more directed to training individuals within the context of the common good for the community. As one respondent said, ‘it’s about training to keep the community alive.’”²⁶

The Government of Canada holds a different vision for First Nations education. It began with the removal of children from their families, their homes and their communities to attend residential boarding schools. The goal of education at the time was, “to kill the Indian in the child”. Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1920, was quoted as saying,

“I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill.”

Although the residential school era has long past, many First Nations peoples continue to feel the scars of the experience and continue to distrust the federal government's approach to First Nations education.

Today, the Government of Canada “is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal peoples enjoy the same education opportunities as other Canadians.”²⁷ More specifically:

“The goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Program of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) is to support the elementary and secondary education of First Nation students living on reserve.”²⁸

This statement makes no mention of the type of education or quality of education that will be supported for First Nations learners. In terms of support for post-secondary education, the extent of support is as follows:

“Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) has two funding programs that could provide financial assistance for eligible Status Indian and Inuit students to help offset tuition, travel or living expenses.”²⁹

²⁵ Assembly of First Nations, *First Nations Control of First Nations Education*, 2010, 3

²⁶ Storytellers' Foundation and Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society, *Funding and Best Practices Research*, CBC First Nations Post-Secondary Institutes, Indian Studies Support Program Research Project, April 2006

²⁷ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, <http://www.aandc-aandc.gc.ca>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid



Once again the statement makes no reference to the vision or expectation of the kind of education that is expected to be achieved.

Clearly, there is a discrepancy in the vision for education from a First Nations perspective and from the perspective of the Government of Canada. As education for First Nations learners continues to undergo reform, First Nations remain hopeful that further reforms will reflect Canada's endorsement (November 12, 2010) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Article 15 of the Declaration states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.
2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

Hansen and Macleod (2004) address the issue of vision for First Nations education with this statement:

“Education is a powerful platform for achieving either or both visions, but the consequences of imposing a mainstream education on First Nations and Inuit can be devastating. Education is an instrument of acculturation – without a linguistically and culturally appropriate education system, First Nations are at greater risk of losing their culture altogether. With growing populations of First Nations, it is time for a new vision of education. The vision needs to respect the integrity of both mainstream and First Nations cultures, and to open up opportunities in both.”³⁰

The National Panel on First Nation Elementary Secondary Education for Students on Reserve released their report entitled, *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nations Students*, in 2012, which commented on the need for transformative change to address the discrepancies in the vision for First Nations education. They concluded:

“This comprehensive report reflects what First Nations have been saying for decades and acknowledges there is no time to waste in taking action to resolve what is needed to have First Nations learners flourish. If action is taken to reflect the spirit and intent of the report of the National Panel, First Nations will be supported to create the type of education systems that will acknowledge and support First Nations cultures, languages, social, political and economic needs. This action will eliminate the discrepancies with respect to the vision of education for First Nations and focus efforts on eliminating the barriers. This in turn will increase the number of First Nations graduates, support First Nations communities, assist Canada in addressing the increasing need for a highly skilled

³⁰ Hansen and Macleod, *Final BOFS Evaluation Report*, June 30, 2004, 43



workforce, and support Canada's socio-economic growth and development – a winning solution for all.”³¹

Following an intensive review of First Nations education, which was focussed on visits to First Nations communities and schools and meeting with First Nations leaders, educators, administrators, elders and others, the National Panel commented on the education system for First Nations on reserve. They report that:

“the education “system” for First Nations students on reserve is a far cry from any system that other Canadians would recognize in terms of its equivalency with the legislative provisions and structures supporting their respective provincial school systems, or the degree of input, accountability, and democratic governance most Canadians take for granted.” (9)

In an effort to bridge the vision of First Nations for education with the vision of the Government of Canada, the National Panel determined that aggressive action with an immediate financial investment is needed to reform First Nations education in ways that will serve the needs of First Nations peoples, communities and Canada. The Panel suggested three principles to guide reform:

1. First Nation education reform must be based on the child's right to their culture, language and identity, and to a quality education that is appropriate to their needs. The First Nation child must always be at the centre of this effort through a “child first” commitment that is embraced by all.
2. First Nation education reform must be undertaken in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration among First Nations, the Government of Canada, and provincial and territorial governments.
3. First Nation education reform must feature a commitment to mutual accountability for roles and responsibilities as well as financial inputs and educational outcomes.(viii)

Key recommendations of the National Panel include the need for First Nations and Canada to “co-create a child-centered First Nations Education Act” and for “adequate funding to support a First Nations education system that meets the needs of First Nations learners, First Nations communities and Canada as a whole”. A solid commitment by the federal government for the establishment of First Nations education systems, through legislation, is expected to not only support the systems needed for First Nations to succeed and thrive but also to secure long term, sustainable financial investments.

When the government of Canada and First Nations find the way to achieve both visions, it is then and only then that the full contributions of First Nations learners to First Nations economies and to society in general, will be realized.

³¹ The National Panel was a joint initiative of the Prime Minister of Canada and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, mandated to conduct an independent review of elementary and secondary education.



My time at all of these Institutions was filled with joy and sorrow. Learning about Native life from the perspective of a displaced Native is an extremely difficult thing to do. I carried the new painful knowledge of residential school, addictions, racism, segregation and violence with me through my daily life. It was hard to accept that the answers to my questions from years ago brought with them feelings of anger, sorrow and guilt. I have lived a very “white” life and with that came the privilege that few, if any Native people experience living in this country.

Aboriginal Graduate Student Stories about
Undergraduate to Graduate Transitions, 2010

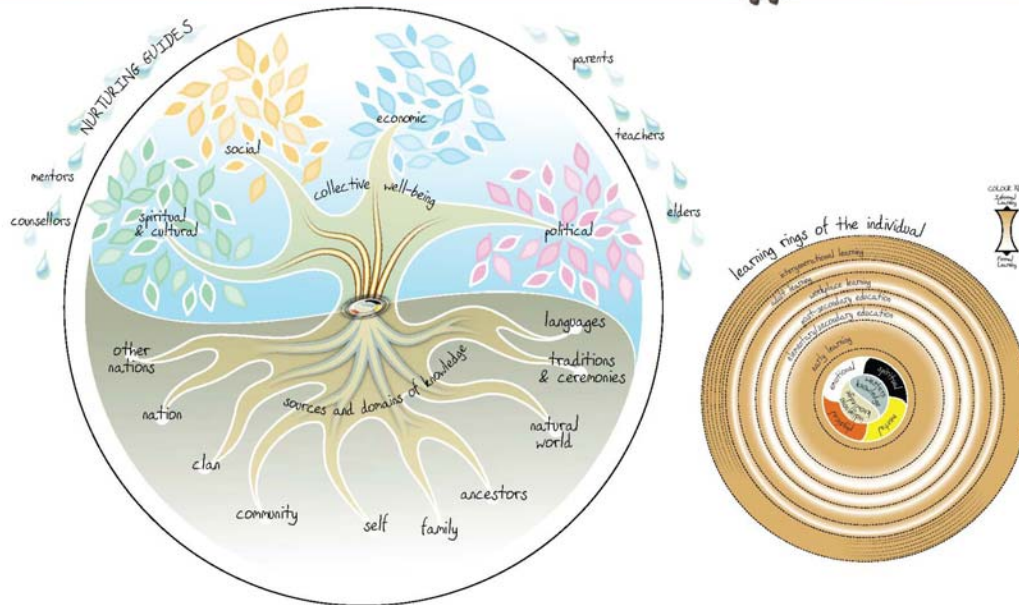
Building a Solid Foundation to Support First Nations Learners

Transitioning from secondary school to post-secondary is a major undertaking for any young person. For many First Nations learners, it usually requires moving away from family, friends and community to attend post-secondary studies as most post-secondary institutions are located outside First Nations communities. Ready or not, students will need to manage living on their own without the normal family and extended family supports most have become accustomed to from life on reserve. First Nations learners will also be required to manage their financial affairs living outside their communities which may be their very first experience with budgeting and financial management. How well they have prepared for the transition to post-secondary and how they are supported through their journey will ultimately determine their success.

There is a wealth of research to suggest the types of initiatives needed to assist First Nations learners to succeed in education. This section will reveal a foundation on which to build understanding for the design of initiatives and approaches to support First Nations learners in post-secondary.

It is important to first examine work compiled by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) from 2007. One of the products of the work was the creation of the First Nations holistic lifelong learning framework which examines the linkage and relationship between lifelong learning and community well-being.





A condensed explanation of the framework explains that learning is a continuous activity, interactive and interconnected cycles throughout life. Relationships are circular, holistic and cumulative. The collective well-being includes the four dimensions of personal development - emotional, spiritual, physical and mental. Learning is grounded in experiences that include Indigenous and western knowledge traditions. The tree draws nourishment through its roots – the sources of knowledge – self, family, ancestors, community, languages, traditions, ceremonies, ancestors, natural world, clan, nation and other nations. The lifelong learning process includes early learning to post-secondary, adult learning, workplace learning and inter-generational learning. Nurturing guides include parents, elders, teachers, mentors and counselors - all people that influence our learning.³²

This broad perspective will help us to begin to understand First Nations learners, what influences their decisions and what types of supports are needed to assist them with their decisions.

The creation of the First Nations holistic lifelong learning framework was followed by three community dialogues hosted jointly by the CCL and the Assembly of First Nations. The purpose of the community dialogues was to test how the First Nations holistic lifelong learning framework could be used to help address learner needs. The communities selected for the dialogues included Whitehorse, Yukon, Onion Lake, Saskatchewan and Nipissing, Ontario. Given the geographic and culturally/linguistic differences of the participating communities, the findings revealed strong commonalities and shared priorities across the communities. They were:

³²Canadian Council on Learning, First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessModelsFirstNations.html>



1. To live in safe, healthy communities – living in balance (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual);
2. Increase parental and community involvement by providing opportunities for learning through teaching of traditional values throughout the lifespan; in the home, at school (including Early Learning), on the land and in the community and workplace;
3. Understanding and becoming aware of our generational ties through clan/kinship and genealogy;
4. Increase the use and fluency of their languages among learners of all ages and in all areas of community life;
5. Ensuring the active and meaningful engagement of Elders throughout the community, as teachers, decisions makers and role models;
6. Providing more learning spaces to facilitate the transfer of historical, linguistic, cultural and Indigenous knowledge;
7. Building trusting relationships through consistent communications with all agencies, organizations and families;
8. Increasing community understanding of the roles and responsibilities of their territorial stewardship, through experiencing the teachings on and from the land;
9. Provide mentoring/employment opportunities for all professions and for all community members, with a focus on the youth.³³

These are all important considerations which provide a foundation for the design, development and implementation of programs and services to assist students throughout the lifelong learning journey.

Research commissioned by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in 2010 reinforces the findings of the CCL work. Best practices in Aboriginal adult education identified in the research found the following key elements necessary to address the issue of support student:

1. *Holistic*: It engages and develops all aspects of the individual (emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual) and the community, and stresses the interconnectedness of all life under the Creator.
2. *Lifelong*: It begins before birth and continues through old age and involves the intergenerational transfer of knowledge.
3. *Experiential*: It is connected to live experience and reinforced by traditional ceremonies, meditation, storytelling, observation and imitation.
4. *Rooted in Aboriginal languages and cultures*: It is bound to language, which conveys a community's unique values and worldview while ensuring cultural continuity.
5. *Spiritually oriented*: It possesses a spiritual element which is fundamental to the learner's path to knowledge. This is manifested in spiritual experiences such as ceremonies, vision quests and dreams.
6. *Communal activity*: It is a communal process in which parents, family, Elders and community have a role and responsibility.
7. *Integrates Aboriginal and Western knowledge*: It is an adaptive process that draws from the best of traditional and contemporary knowledge.³⁴

³³ Assembly of First Nations, *Community Dialogues on First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning, Learning as a Community for Renewal and Growth*, 28

³⁴ HRSDC, *Best Practices in Aboriginal Adult Education*, June 29, 2010, 18



The HRSDC (2010) report also recommends:

Recognizing and facilitating the provision of student support services:

The provision of student support services should be viewed by service providers, funders and policy makers as part of a holistic approach to providing Aboriginal adult education in Canada and should be integrated within each institution and program. Specific funding for those student support services may be required above and beyond standard curriculum delivery costs.

Providing stable, consistent and predictable institution/program funding:

Future policy discussion or debate concerning Aboriginal adult education would benefit from the inclusion of long-term, stable institutional/program funding as an important topic for consideration.

These foundational perspectives offer guidance for policy makers, educational institutions, educators and others in understanding the significant elements important to First Nations peoples. In consideration of the existing supports, research of colleges and universities in Ontario (Malatest, 2010) revealed the need for program expansions such as the following:

- Hiring Aboriginal recruitment officers as well as student risk management officers to better support students. Emphasis was also placed on developing the capacity to support students with disabilities. In addition, stakeholders wanted to maintain consistency in their service delivery by being able to hire staff on a long-term basis.
- Developing or expanding mentorship programs in order to guide Aboriginal students.
- Launching new programs for students during the summer, including an Aboriginal orientation program (to help students prepare for the transition).
- Creating more partnerships with First Nations communities.
- Building an e-meeting room. This would be a place where students could use and learn about technology in a comfortable environment.
- Securing a commitment and long-term funding to build a specialized residence to house Aboriginal students in cities where vacancy rates are low.³⁵

The needs have been documented. Recommended action has been documented. The 'will' to support First Nations learners is necessary. Greater understanding of the issues can lead to the effective design, development and implementation of initiatives to address transitions, access, retention and success of First Nations learners in education.

The primary role of holistic balanced learning systems is to transmit First Nations ancestral languages, traditions, cultures and histories while at the same time preparing and making accessible to the learner the support and tools that will allow them to achieve their full potential in any setting they choose.

Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes, 2010

³⁵ Malatest, R. A. Promising Practices: Increasing and Supporting Participation for Aboriginal Students in Ontario, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 36



Finance: The Greatest Barrier

There are a multitude of barriers impacting the success of First Nations learners that begin with the diversity among First Nations peoples with respect to culture and language, customs, traditions and histories. The barriers impacting access, transitions, retention and graduation are also due in part to colonization, the legacy of residential schools and the current socio-economic status of First Nations communities. Many of these barriers are distinct to First Nations people and their communities. Given these unique circumstances, targeted and specific intervention is essential to address the access, transition, retention and graduation if First Nations learners are to succeed in post-secondary education

The barriers to success for First Nations learners in post-secondary have been well documented and the issue of funding comes up repeatedly as the most significant barrier for First Nations learners. This section of the report will attempt to expose the impacts and extent of the funding issue for First Nations education and First Nations learners. An exploration of the funding issues, found the following:

1. The federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) does not support the numbers of qualified First Nations students who want to attend post-secondary. Eight-nine percent (89%) of students surveyed reported that the PSSSP is vital to ensure First Nations students can access post-secondary education.³⁶

Canada reported in 2010, that the combined spending for these three programs was estimated at \$300 million.³⁷ Nationally, this level of financial support falls well below what is needed based on the numbers of students that wish to pursue and qualify to attend post-secondary education programs. The statistics show:

- Approximately seven in ten First Nations youth aspire to complete a PSE degree.
- Persistent barriers are preventing First Nations from reaching their goals.
- Lack of funding remains the primary barrier to PSE for First Nations people living on reserve
- In 2005, more than one in four (27%) felt the lack of funding was prohibiting access to PSE.
- In 2008, the PSSSP program supported an estimated 22,303 students at a total of \$300M. In actual fact, \$724M was needed in 2008 (to support the real costs of education, additional students ready to enrol, the backlog of students unable to enrol and the number of students required to address the gap in educational attainment with non-First Nations students)³⁸

Data gathered by First Nations community organizations that assist the federal government with the administration of the PSSSP program, demonstrate the need for increased financial support. For example,

³⁶ Assembly of First Nations, *Virtual Summit, AFN Survey of First Nation Post-Secondary Students 2011*, 2011

³⁷ Federal Investments in Post-Secondary Education and Training, May 5, 2010, 8

³⁸ Assembly of First Nations, *Fact Sheet on First Nations Post-Secondary Education*



Grand River Post-Secondary Office at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario, reports: based on the eligible costs for unfunded students, in 2010/2011, there were 401 unfunded students, requiring an additional \$4,524,412, up from 217 students unfunded in 2004/2005, requiring an additional \$1,819,215.³⁹

A sample of data from Treaty 7 First Nations in Alberta (Kainai and Siksika) revealed that during 2007/2008 to 2010/2011, 2,776 students were sponsored and 1,628 or 36% of the 4,585 applicants were not able to be funded. In addition for all of Treaty 7 alone, only 697 [students] could potentially be sponsored and yet these two First Nations had 1146 applicants.⁴⁰

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) supports Aboriginal students with scholarships and bursaries. In 2010-2011, there were 1,779 recipients requesting \$29,139,917. NAAF was able to award \$5,489,800 or 18.8% of the total amount requested, leaving 81.2% of the requests unmet.⁴¹

2. Low family incomes make it difficult to support children to attend post-secondary

First Nations people have incomes well below the average in Canada. Therefore, First Nation families cannot support their children who want to pursue post-secondary studies to the same extent as other families, and First Nations students need to obtain more money from other others.⁴²

Aboriginal women in Canada earn less than their non-Aboriginal female counterparts. In 2006, the average annual income for an Aboriginal woman was \$21,733 or 77% of the income a non-Aboriginal woman (\$28,272). The gap was larger for Registered Indian women (\$20,743). Aboriginal women earned 72% of the average income of Aboriginal men (\$30,110).⁴³

3. Employment opportunities are limited

First Nations graduates cannot expect to find the same good jobs and good pay as other Canadians...First Nation people with a certain level of education earn less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Lower income combined with larger debt on which interest at rather high rates starts accumulating after graduation make for a large financial burden for First Nations people. (Waslander 2009)

³⁹ Grand River Post-Secondary Education Office, *Annual Report, 2010-2011*, 33

⁴⁰ Treaty 7, *Treaty 7 Post-Secondary Position Paper*, January 2012, 8

⁴¹ National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, *Annual Report 2010-2011*, 15

⁴² Adapted from Waslander, B. *Focusing Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Post-Secondary Education Program: Targets and Impacts*, June 24, 2006, 13

⁴³ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, *Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Economy, The Links Between Education, Employment and Income*



4. First Nations cannot expect to earn the same income levels as non-First Nations

Estimated lifetime earnings (thousands of dollars, rounded to nearest fifty thousand)⁴⁴

	Men			Women		
	First Nation		Non-Aboriginal	First Nation		Non-Aboriginal
		earlier graduation			earlier graduation	
No diploma	54	546	1,099	23	239	483
High school	84	895	1,411	55	581	738
Trade	91	971	1,525	50	533	750
College	98	1,076	1,681	70	754	984
University	1,45	1,548	2,227	1,00	1,077	1,329

5. First Nations peoples are debt averse

Gunderson (2010) examined the issue of student debt and debt aversion for Aboriginal learners. His findings revealed that the low earnings and poverty experienced by Aboriginal people results in:

- Concern that their lower earnings may make it difficult to repay any debt;
- Less experience with credit which is difficult to get if one has low income;
- Less access to funds from families or in the form of self-financing.⁴⁵

In such circumstances they rationally may be reluctant to borrow and have a debt if they drop out. Many Aboriginal students may also not access loans because of the availability of federal funding administered through the Bands which they tend to regard as a treaty right. Many factors contribute to debt aversion on their part for various regions, which include:

- Government paying for post-secondary education is generally regarded as a treaty right;
- Stress and anxiety of repaying loans, especially if they have children to support or earn insufficient income after graduating (especially if they return to the reservation);
- Fear of failure to graduate as well as their experience with financial struggles of family and friends and a reluctance to burden their own family with the debt;
- Debt and mortgages are a foreign idea and often seen as a burden not an investment. (Gunderson 2010)

6. First Nation learners are ill prepared for post-secondary due to inadequate funding levels for elementary and secondary education

⁴⁴ Ibid, 18

⁴⁵ Gunderson, M. *Student Financial Assistance Strategies and Attitudes Towards Debt Among Underrepresented Groups*, March 2010



The poor quality of Aboriginal schooling prior to university and lack of family education may not prepare them to undertake and to complete post-secondary education. (Gunderson 2010) Sufficient funding is required to have licensed early childhood centres in all First Nations communities. The 1980's funding model used by the federal government to support First Nations elementary and secondary schools needs to be updated to reflect today's needs. Funding is required in every First Nation community for literacy and basic skills programs (including numeracy, critical thinking and analytical skills) for adults who have not completed secondary school.

7. Many First Nations learners complete post-secondary education at a later age

Entering post-secondary later is likely to increase the need for upgrading and supports to reintegrate back into the education system.

8. Many First Nations learners are female and many have family responsibilities

Given the strong ties with family and extended family, First Nations learners are required to find ways to support children or family members. This applies to male and female students. Financial assistance must be sufficient enough to address the learners' needs and their responsibilities for other family members.

Malatest (2002) found, significant family demands are both financial and time restraints impacting the successful completion of postsecondary education.

9. Many First Nations live in poverty which makes attaining a post-secondary education very challenging

One in four First Nations children live in poverty. Furthermore, Aboriginal children in Canada endure health, education and housing at levels usually associated with impoverished developing countries.⁴⁶ Setting aside funding for education is difficult when money is needed for food, housing and health care.

10. Living in poverty results in a lack of reading books and computers.

Families living on a tight budget may find purchasing books and computers difficult. Literacy impacts learning. Lack of computers and lack of internet access puts learners at a severe disadvantage given the use of technology today.

11. Living in poverty or close to it does little to support financial literacy.

Attending post-secondary institutions often requires students to move away from their home communities. This may be the first time they have ever needed to have their own bank account and the first time they will need to manage their own finances.

⁴⁶Canadian Feed the Children website, http://www.canadianfeedthechildren.ca/how-you-can-help/fund-a-project/national-aboriginal-nutrition-program-in-canada/?gclid=CNKzuxlpa4CFeEDQAod_EG3QQ



12. First Nations learners require unique support services to foster retention

Many students who seek out and enrol in Aboriginal adult education programming have a history of negative experiences with the educational process and the traditional education system. According to one key informant, “they feel alienated and betrayed by the educational system.” To counter those negative experiences, successful Aboriginal adult education institutions focused on the individual to turn those negative experiences into positive ones. To achieve this, those institutions focused on building self-esteem, self-worth and ensured the experiences of their students were positive rather than negative. By emphasizing and nurturing positive educational experiences, the successful institutions were able to then increase completion rates; increase the proportion of students who received credentials; and increase the numbers of students who furthered their education or went on to successful employment.⁴⁷

Aboriginal and American Indian students report that they are socially marginalized and isolated which leads to a feeling that they do not belong in places of learning. Aboriginal and American Indian students report that they cannot rely on the support of their teachers. They do not believe their teachers care for them, but rather have contempt for them; they believe they are not wanted in school.⁴⁸

Barriers which continue to be relevant today:

- A legacy of distrust in the Aboriginal community of the education system due to residential schools and other historic practices seen as having a negative and assimilative effect on Aboriginal communities;
- Lack of preparation for university or college at the secondary education level;
- Feelings of social discrimination, isolation, and loneliness at postsecondary institutions;
- A lack of respect for Aboriginal cultural and cultural differences at the postsecondary level (Malatest 2002)

13. Mainstream institutions need to be welcoming and responsive

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (2010) reports “[Mainstream] post-secondary institutions have not been seen as welcoming of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. Historically, institutions have not placed accommodation of Aboriginal values, experience and ways of learning in the mainstream of course and program design.”⁴⁹ Creating a welcoming place with a full array of supports services for First Nations students requires significant financial resources.

Preston (2008) suggests mainstream institutions need to welcome Aboriginal leaders, Elders, instructors, staff, students, and community members as integral

⁴⁷ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Best Practices in Aboriginal Adult Education in Canada Final Report*, June 29, 2011,

⁴⁸ Sited in Canadian Council on Learning, *Reclaiming the Learning Spirit: Learning From Our Experience*, Roundtable Report, 2008, 24

⁴⁹ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students*, October 2010



members of governing, planning, and decision-making committees. She also suggests empowering Aboriginal peoples to become self-determining, Aboriginal counsellors help students cope with the constant discrimination and marginalization faced by many Aboriginal people, the presence of resident Elders assists in bringing Aboriginal philosophy and traditional values to the institution, adequate library resources focusing on Aboriginal issues promote the academic and cultural needs of Aboriginal peoples, and that having aboriginal gathering centers, which honour guest speakers, social celebrations, and Aboriginal ceremonies need to be readily available for instructors, students, and the school community.⁵⁰

14. Most First Nations learners must leave their communities to attend post-secondary

Age and geographic location are variables related to education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people that are cited frequently in the literature. (Merrill, Bruce, Marlin 2010)

An Assembly of First Nations online survey for First Nations post-secondary students revealed that almost 68% of respondents felt that more First Nations people would enrol in postsecondary programs if they were offered closer to where First Nations peoples reside.⁵¹

15. Indigenous institutions of higher learning lack adequate resources to grow their successes with First Nations learners

The Senate Standing on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (2007) acknowledged the success of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning with this statement:

"We cannot emphasize enough the established importance of these institutions and of Aboriginal programming for post-secondary learners. The successes of Aboriginal-controlled institutions should be acknowledged by government, supported and built upon. In our view, government's objective should be to put in place measures that strengthen and promote the long-term viability of these key institutions for the future of Aboriginal post-secondary education. We therefore strongly urge the Department, in its current review of the ISSP, and in collaboration with organizations representing Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, to undertake a careful re-evaluation of current short-term funding practices overall, and its current position with respect to core funding in particular."⁵²

16. Income impacts wellness, wellness impacts learning.

⁵⁰ Preston, J. P. *Overcoming The Obstacles: Postsecondary Education and Aboriginal Peoples*, University of Saskatchewan, 2008

⁵¹ Assembly of First Nations, Virtual Summit, AFN Survey of First Nation Post-Secondary Students 2011

⁵² Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, *No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, February 2007, 39



The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (2011) identified the kinds of resources required to support student wellness. In order of least import to most important, the following supports are needed:

- life skills
- mental health
- academic assistance
- financial assistance
- physical
- cultural, spiritual, and,
- social and emotional support.⁵³

17. First Nations require role models to aspire to and for guidance

The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology affirmed that one of the barriers facing Aboriginal students include the fact that many are the “first in their families to access post-secondary education”.⁵⁴ Role models that First Nations learners can aspire to and role models with experience in accessing funding, and in navigating through the post-secondary system are essential from access and registration right through to graduation.

18. Funding levels can limit educational aspirations

When there is limited funding, learners may choose to enrol in short term certificate or diploma programs rather than multi-year programs like graduate programs or multi year apprenticeship programs. First Nations learners may also choose to stop their learning after obtaining one post-secondary credential. This kind of thinking does not lend itself to being prepared for Canada’s constantly changing work force needs.

In summary, financial support has a significant impact on the success of First Nations learners in post-secondary education. Specialized supports are required to actualize the human potential and lifetime achievements of First Nations learners.

Government’s Need to Step up Support for First Nations Post-Secondary Education

Federal and provincial government support for First Nations learners is not a new phenomenon. They have acknowledged the need for specialized and dedicated support to increase the numbers of First Nations learners that succeed in post-secondary education. The Auditor General of Canada has made numerous recommendations to the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for improvements to the delivery of education for First Nations. Recommendations included the need to

⁵³Toulouse, P. *Walk in Our Moccasins: A Comprehensive Study of Aboriginal Education*, 2009/2010, Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, 28

⁵⁴ Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Opening the Door: Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, December 2011



“develop clear policies and procedures for transferring control of education to Indian organizations” (1986).

In terms of educational attainment, there is a significant gap between First Nations students living on reserve in comparison to the rest of the general population. The Auditor General (2004) stressed that, “We remain concerned that a significant education gap exists between First Nations people living on reserves and the Canadian population as a whole and that the time estimated to close this gap has increased slightly, from about 27 to 28 years.”⁵⁵ The education attainment of First Nations learners continues to be a concern today.

This gap in education attainment continues to pressure provinces and other stakeholders to initiate and continue affirmative action to reduce the gap “in the best interests of Canadian society”. The “effort” to achieve this outcome varies from province to province.

Alcorn and Levin (1998) stressed that the equality of condition is of “fundamental importance”. They argue that with the commitments by educational institutions for “equality of access” (financial assistance, distance education and off-campus programs) and “equality of condition” (provision of student support services and attention to different learning styles), institutions open the doors to disadvantaged groups and First Nations learners.⁵⁶ Shift the current focus of policy and program development from one that reacts to learning deficits alone, to one that recognizes, builds upon and celebrates strengths [of First Nations peoples].⁵⁷

This section of the report highlights initiatives undertaken by provinces that will be referred to as “*the leaders*” for innovative practices in support of First Nations success in post-secondary education. This section will conclude with highlighting the national efforts of the Council of Education Ministers in encouraging provinces to continue to support First Nations learners in education.

Saskatchewan

The federal government and the province of Saskatchewan supported the establishment of the First Nations University of Canada in 1976 “to enhance the quality of life, and to preserve, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of first Nations people”.⁵⁸ The First Nations University of Canada continues to receive government grants to support its operations. Today, the University welcomes over 800 full-time students in over 230 courses and has more than 3,000 alumni. First Nations University of Canada is “*a unique institution that specializes in Indigenous knowledge, providing post-secondary education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike within a culturally supportive environment*”.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Auditor General, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada*, (Chapter 5 - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada-Education Program and Post-Secondary Student Support), November 2004

⁵⁶ Alcorn, W and Levin, B. *Post-Secondary Education for Indigenous Populations, Presentation to the International Congress on Social Welfare*, University of Manitoba, July 1998, 5

⁵⁷ Canadian Council on Learning, *What is the Future of Learning in Canada*, Ottawa, 2011

⁵⁸ First Nations University of Canada, <http://www.fnuniv.ca>

⁵⁹ Ibid



The province of Saskatchewan also formally recognizes the Saskatchewan Institute of Technologies (SIIT). On July 1, 2000, the Province of Saskatchewan passed legislation to recognize SIIT as a post-secondary institution through the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act. The SIIT Act has given the institution recognition from both the First-Nations and non First-Nations communities. This legislation helps First Nations students transfer credits to other post-secondary institutions and have their certificates and diplomas recognized by both First-Nations and non First-Nations employers.⁶⁰

SIIT is mandated to provide academic, career education, and training to First Nations adults in Saskatchewan. It is governed by the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Legislative Assembly and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act of the Province of Saskatchewan.⁶¹

Ontario

The Province of Ontario undertook research in 1988 which resulted in the creation of a five year strategy to increase the number of Native students attending and graduating from Ontario's colleges and universities. This work culminated in a report issued in 1990 which provided the foundation for the creation of a five year Native Education and Training Strategy. The goals of the strategy were:

- To increase Native participation and completion rates in university and college programs;
- To increase the sensitivity and awareness of postsecondary institutions to Native culture and issues; and
- To increase the extent and participation of Native people in decisions affecting Native postsecondary education.⁶²

The strategy began as an initiative that would provide colleges and universities with incentives to deliver programs to address the specific needs of Aboriginal learners. Soon after its creation, it also became a funding source to support the delivery of programs and services at Aboriginal owned and controlled post-secondary institutions.

This targeted funding was an acknowledgement of the unique supports needed to support First Nations learners in post-secondary. The uptake of colleges, universities and Aboriginal institutions to this initiative and the success of the program have resulted in continued, targeted support for First Nations learners at these post-secondary institutions.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities created a new framework to support Aboriginal learners in 2011 which diminishes the decision making authority of Aboriginal peoples in post-secondary. This is a step back from the authorities Aboriginal peoples had in the 1990 Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy.

British Columbia

⁶⁰ Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, <http://www.siit.sk.ca/about/history>

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Volume 3, Chapter 5 – Education, Appendix 5A: Native Education and Training Strategy, 1996



The province of British Columbia supported Aboriginal learners since 2001 by funding 150 projects through an Aboriginal Special Projects Fund.⁶³ Building upon previous work, in 2005, a new “government to government relationship with Aboriginal people based on reconciliation, recognition and respect” was established which culminated in the creation of the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy.⁶⁴ The vision statement contained in Strategy states:

“Aboriginal post-secondary education outcomes are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal learners, and that public institutions and Aboriginal organizations and institutions play appropriate roles and are supported by the combined resource of the federal and provincial governments”.

The Strategy and Action Plan was created to close the educational gap for educational learners and ensure the delivery of effective and accountable programs and services. The objectives are to:

- a. Increase the access, retention, completion and transition opportunities for Aboriginal learners
- b. Increase the receptivity and relevance of post-secondary institutions and programs for Aboriginal learners
- c. Strengthen partnerships and collaboration in Aboriginal post-secondary education
- d. Ensure effective measurement and progress monitoring

Harmonious working relations between the province of British Columbia and First Nations empowers and enables First Nations to impact the design and development of initiatives impacting First Nations in post-secondary education. However, the vision of a ‘comparable education’ falls short if First Nations envision an education system that supports First Nations languages, cultures and identities.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

The Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) determined ‘Aboriginal education’ a priority, encouraging provinces to provide targeted support to enhance First Nations success in post-secondary education. For example, in 2009, CMEC reported that a variety of programs and services are needed to support First Nations learners’ transitions and success in post-secondary education. They include:

- Transition-to-school supports and services
- Mentors
- Instructional methods and resource supports
- Active community and family engagement, perhaps through community-school programs; provision of family needs so students can participate more fully (e.g., meals, transportation, child care)
- Culturally sensitive curricula

⁶³ British Columbia, *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/docs/educator-resources/strategy.pdf>

⁶⁴ Ibid



- First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit language programs (regionally adapted to meet local needs)
- Recognition of Aboriginal traditional knowledge
- Recognition of need to eliminate the current federal 2-per-cent cap on postsecondary funding
- Civic studies: at the secondary level, familiarize students with the history of Aboriginal peoples, as well as their historical roles and rights (treaties); specifically, include more First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and culture in curriculum relative to European culture (French/English), so that the role/influence of Aboriginal peoples is better appreciated
- Equitable funding for all Aboriginal groups (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis)
- Recognition of Métis eligibility (currently not acknowledged in federal programming)
- Equitable funding for postsecondary students (loans/bursaries/scholarships)
- In-school intervention supports
- Transition-to-school and workplace supports and services⁶⁵

Key findings of the 2010 CMEC report titled, *Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions by Aboriginal People from K – 12 to Post-Secondary*, include:

- the major challenges are funding to attend post-secondary education and academic preparedness
- the main supports are transition programs which include Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, programs focused on readiness like Aboriginal Head Start programs, as well as parenting skills programs,
- Funding for education at every level is viewed as a Treaty right, and
- A lack of information about which approaches and supports are most effective.

The 2010 CMEC literature review uncovered the depth and breadth of continued work that needs to occur to support First Nations learners in post-secondary education. The conclusions were as follows:

1. There is a persistent gap between the educational achievements of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. For some forms of PSE attainment, the gap is growing as growth in educational participation among non-Aboriginal people outpaces growth among Aboriginal people. For other forms, the gap is shrinking, but so slowly that it will take an estimated 30 to 60 years for it to close.
2. Educational attainment is even more important to the success and life opportunities of Aboriginal people than of non-Aboriginal people as a whole.
3. The barriers to completing PSE for Aboriginal people in Canada are widely recognized and acknowledged, but persist. This persistence reflects a combination of factors, including deeply ingrained philosophical approaches about PSE, and a complex, sensitive, and evolving division of jurisdictional responsibilities.
4. As a result, many members of the population continue to face barriers far greater than those faced by most non-Aboriginal Canadians, and fall short of realizing their full human, social and economic potential. As the

⁶⁵CMEC, *Summit on Aboriginal Education, Strengthening Aboriginal Success Summary Report*, February 24-25, 2009, 21



Aboriginal population continues to grow rapidly, this loss will take an increasing toll on Aboriginal people themselves and on Canadian society as a whole. Action to redress this situation is imperative.

5. In taking action to improve PSE outcomes, it must be recognized that Aboriginal people are not a homogeneous group. Solutions to increase their PSE participation and improve their educational outcomes must reflect and respond to differences between and within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations.
6. More data, research, and evaluation are needed in order to have a clear understanding of the efficacy of various approaches being used to increase Aboriginal PSE outcomes.
7. To be successful, policy changes and interventions must be decided, designed, and implemented in conjunction with Aboriginal groups and organizations.⁶⁶

Provinces are taking affirmative action to support the increased educational attainment of First Nations learners. These are foundation initiatives that have sparked continued support for the successful completion of First Nations learners in post-secondary education.

Increased understanding and respect of the diversity of First Nations peoples and empowering the active involvement of First Nations learners, leaders, educators and community members is essential to define and create responsive education systems to enhance the success of First Nations learners in post-secondary education.

Foundational Approaches to Support First Nations Transitioning to Higher Education

The interconnectedness of First Nations individuals to their families and their communities requires understanding before considering the design and development of supports to assist First Nations learners on their educational journey. This interconnectedness is demonstrated through the work of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) and in the work of the Indigenous Education Institute of Canada at the University of British Columbia.

ONECA commissioned research to examine the supports needed to assist students with transitions to post-secondary. The research found several interrelated and recurring themes, highlighting the need for regular communication between all stakeholder groups (students, parents, educators, administrators, counsellors and other support staff). The interrelated and recurring themes are illustrated in the following diagram.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions by Aboriginal People from K-12 to Postsecondary Education*, 2010, 64

⁶⁷ Hill, *Aboriginal Students Transitions Project*, Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, March 2011, 51



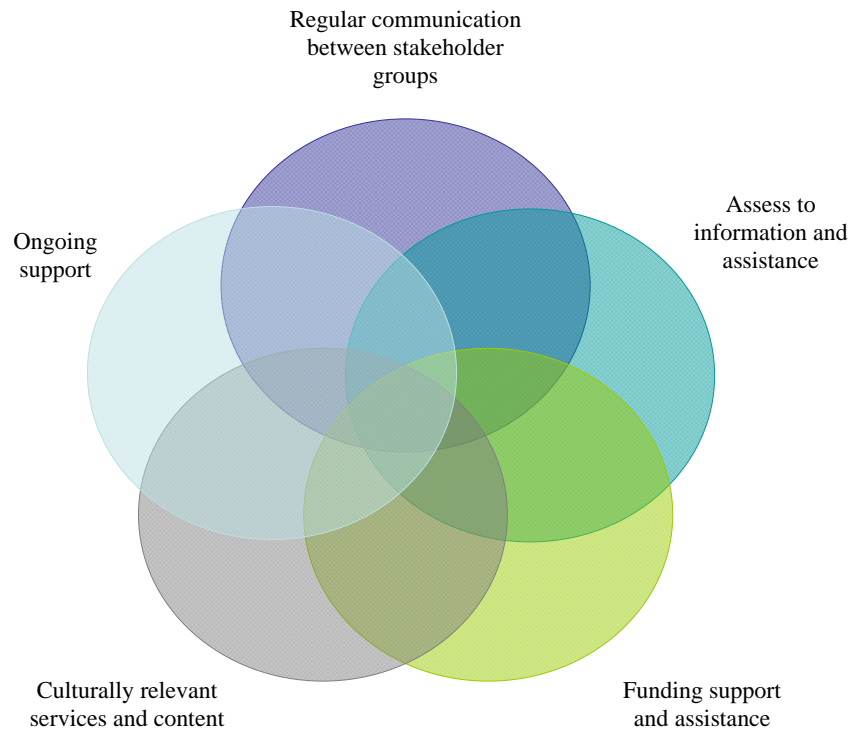
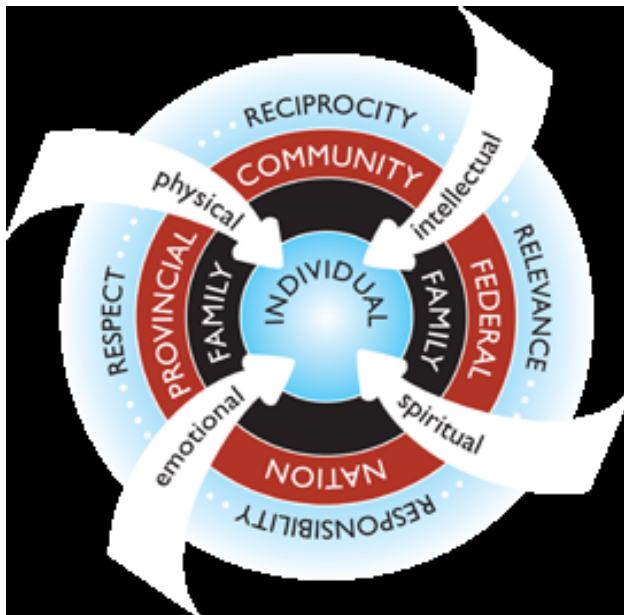


Figure 1 - ONECA 2011

In addition to the recurring themes, ONECA found the need for, “*frequent and continuous monitoring by the support team (teachers, counselors, advisors, faculty, tutor,*

mentors employers) from the community right through to post-secondary graduation”⁶⁸ to assist in the retention and graduation of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary. The organization found that, it is not enough just to assist First Nations students to ‘access’ post-secondary education. The network of student supports must also continue throughout post-secondary and straight through to graduation.



The Indigenous Education Institute of Canada at UBC examined factors affecting decisions of First Nations learners to enroll in graduate studies. This research resulted in the creation of an Indigenous holistic framework which

⁶⁸ibid, 36



reinforces the need for a continuous and interconnected approach. The framework illustrates that, *the considerations and relationships found to be necessary to support student transitions to graduate studies. The components of the framework include consideration of the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual being, the importance of relations with family, community and governments, as well as the need for respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility.*⁶⁹

These two concepts have been developed to specifically address First Nations success in education. The common elements demonstrate the interconnectedness that must be considered to design and develop effective approaches to foster the success of First Nations learners in post-secondary.

The other important element to highlight with regard to these two foundation approaches is summed up very nicely by S. Brenda Small, Negahneewin College. She says,

“It is very important to think about our work as originating in the community because it is those kinds of processes that will take root and will effect long-term change for the overall social justice needs of our communities.”⁷¹

First Nations Families and Communities Support First Nations Learners

Support Starts at Home

“Each First Nation person has a unique role in lifelong learning within their community. The learner’s role is to identify personal goals and live in a respectful manner based on nurturing individual gifts and talents. Elders have a mentoring, stabilizing, teaching and guidance role. Educators are responsible for acting as positive role models and for transmitting culturally appropriate and relevant emerging knowledge. All are responsible for ensuring that the spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and physical needs of each learner are met.”⁷⁰

Many people have the potential to influence a persons’ decision to pursue higher education. Research commissioned by the Canadian Millennium Foundation (2008) concluded that,

“For First Nations learners, the first point of influence begins at home with the family – parents, siblings, grandparents, aunties and uncles. Outside of the family are close friends, elders, community members and other people of whom the learner looks up to as role models. Role models that impress upon and

⁶⁹ University of British Columbia, *Aboriginal Transitions: Undergraduate to Graduate (AT:U2G), Community Report #1, Summary of Phase 1 Research Findings*

⁷⁰ Treaty 7, *Treaty 7 Post-Secondary Education Position Paper*, January 2012, 13



influence a young person's decisions about education can be found everywhere".⁷¹

The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation (2008) also reported that,

"Background factors matter significantly in terms of PSE access. Parental education is a major determinant of PSE access in general and university access in particular. But parental education is not the only thing that matters: living in an urban area is also positive... These factors all have quite significant effects and are quite independent of income. These are, in a sense the "givens" — the cultural endowments with which students arrive in the education system. The task of policy is to try to equalize these endowments somewhat, through interventions both academic (through the school system) and financial (through the student aid system).⁷²

What Students Say about Who Inspired their Learning

One must never under-estimate the profound and long-term impacts of family, friends and community members on the educational journey of First Nations learners.

Monica Red Crow

"extends thanks to her twin sister Mona Crowe-Melting Tallow. Mona has always seen Monica's potential. Monica also extends thanks to all the elders and adopted families, family, friends, coworkers, peers and the instructors. Without all of their support and encouragement, Monica explains, she would not have been able to achieve what she has achieved to date."⁷³

In reference to the Access Program she attended at Red Crow Community College, Monica Red Crow attests,

"I did not realize this program could change my life. It helped me to know who I am, Nitsitapi. It helped me to find our sacred ways of knowing and to understand the colonization and oppression of First Nations people". Monica's experience helped her find her ancestors, her relations and who she is. It helped focus her on "our sacred ways of knowing and getting back to my roots and the grandfathers and grandmothers beliefs, values and cultural teachings."⁷⁴

Lucille Wright had this to say,

"I am proud to mention that my family, especially my daughter who was very supportive and active in mentoring and encouraging me to strive towards my education goals...I credit my Granny, the late Margaret Bad Boy, for instilling our traditional values and beliefs by teaching me how to apply them daily. It was

⁷¹ Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, *MESA Project: Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Assistance, Annual Report*, 2008, 46

⁷² Adapted from the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, *MESA Project: Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Assistance, Annual Report*, 2008, 46

⁷³ National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, *Honouring Our Students*, March 2007, 25

⁷⁴ Ibid, 25



based on commitment and trusting myself that I was able to achieve my goal. As I reflect back, my journey had renewed my spirit and the confidence that I can effectively contribute for the betterment and maintaining our ways of knowing. In conclusion, this has been good medicine, a journey towards healing and positive thinking. I am proud to have graduated with my two daughters not only once but twice (BGC in 2004 and BEd in 2006). My girls have been my mentors and inspiration to complete this journey in my life. My experience will always be a special story to tell.”⁷⁵

Angela Weenie reflects on her life's journey which involved moving away from home to attend school and always thinking back about those very special moments in time and the persons that influenced her. She says,

“Writing about and remembering the early influences in my life serve to sustain me and provide direction in my teaching and research. I look at my grandparents and parents as the leaders, teachers, and mentors who have shaped my views on education. They believed strongly in the work ethic and education as the way to autonomy and self-determination. Their vision and philosophy has guided me in my work.”⁷⁶

Brian Smith said:

“It has been my intent to give back what was given to me by the Creator. I am very fortunate to be living in a strong traditional community where all of my family speaks fluently and practice the ways we were taught by our parents and grandparents. Seeing and experiencing the ceremonies, the story telling and just keeping in touch with the elders is an unforgettable experience. Keeping in contact with the elders is crucial because they are the keepers of the teachings and culture in the history of the people.”⁷⁷

In considering graduate school, a student wrote that,

“she kept her heart and teachings from her grandfather at the forefront and decided that graduate studies were both necessary and important for the betterment of Aboriginal people... She heard the voices of the elders saying, ‘You need to get an education and bring it back to the people.’” She knew, she was “not on this journey alone; she represented the dreams and aspirations of her ancestors and the future of her people. The strength and energy of her supporters were the most valued and revered gifts.”⁷⁸

Family, friends and other community members can have significant impacts on students' decisions and perseverance in post-secondary education.

First Nation Communities Support their Learners

⁷⁵ Ibid, 30

⁷⁶ Weenie, A. *Toward an Understanding of the Ecology of Indigenous Education*, First Nations Perspectives 2, 1, 2009

⁷⁷ National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, *Honouring Our Students*, 2007, 26

⁷⁸ University of British Columbia, *Aboriginal Graduate Student Stories about Undergraduate to Graduate Transitions*, 2010, 29-30



First Nations have increasingly exercised their responsibilities in education through the development of community led initiatives to strengthen the support services they provide for First Nations learners. This community effort not only increases the human capacity development of First Nations individuals, it also enhances the overall development of their Nations.

“Learning is not only about formal education, but a lifelong process of communicating, teaching and learning, and sharing knowledge among all members of family and community”.
Native Women’s Association
of Canada

Implementing community initiatives that intersect with supports outside the community are important for continuity of support services. It has been crucial to develop a system in which students have access to counselling that is both professionally accredited and culturally relevant, and that multiple counsellors are available to address specific and urgent student needs.⁷⁹

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) is one such organization that exists to provide training and support to its member counsellors, educators and administrators so that they can support the learners.

ONECA commissioned research projects to examine the role of First Nations counsellors and measures required to support First Nations learners transitioning to post-secondary education. The 2010 report included a literature review and an online survey to identify the roles and duties of Native education counselors. The literature review described a very extensive role for Native Education Counsellors, which includes the following:

- Provides social, mental and emotional counseling
- Provides career guidance, academic plans and pathways
- Plans and coordinates educational and cultural events
- Plans and provides life skills, wellness and job readiness workshops (Darou, 1998)
- Participates in school and community functions
- Provides cultural sensitivity and organizes spiritual workshops (Wyrostok & Paulson, 2000)
- Monitors student achievement and progress
- Coordinates academic and special needs services to students
- Researches and collates scholarship and bursary information
- Accesses and locates funding and/or administers financial resources
- Motivates, encourages and communicates with students
- Participates and contributes in Student Education Plans
- Collects data and provides reports according to funders
- Maintains and submits budgets for their departments
- Meets with other educators to bridge transitions between levels
- Communicates between Institutions and Students
- Communicates between all stakeholders and their representatives
- Interprets information and polices and provides to stakeholders
- Locates, maintains and distributes resources to educators
- Participates in working committees that are directly related to students

⁷⁹ Aboriginal Strategic Plan Implementation Report, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, September 2010, 4



- Participates in strategic planning sessions to ensure a Native voice (Corbiere, 2000).⁸⁰

Native education counselors are described as the “point person” for First Nations students at education institutions. ONECA “argues that even when budgets are restrictive, the role of these counselors should be “maintained and maximized (with adequate space) for relevancy in educational services to occur. Aboriginal students require culturally competent counseling services that meet their educational, mental, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs. They need to feel that they belong and are valued and this is provided by the Native Education Counsellor.”⁸¹

Practices found to be important to assist First Nations students in making the transition to post-secondary (ONECA 2010), include:

- post-secondary visits, events and career fairs
- workshops on independent living, academic success and urban services
- family involvement and community support (role models, graduation, incentives)
- Native education counselor support
- strong guidance department i.e. career pathways, programs and post-secondary course selection
- financial – First Nations post-secondary policies, incentives, scholarships and bursaries information

The 2011 research commissioned by ONECA revealed that, frequent and continuous monitoring is needed by the entire support team (teachers, counselors, advisors, faculty, tutor, mentors and employers) to assist in retaining First Nations students through to post-secondary graduation.⁸²

Some First Nations communities employ Post-Secondary Coordinators which also have an important role in supporting students. They reported that Post-Secondary Coordinators will:

- a. Be the primary connection between the learner and post-secondary education as an advisor, counselor, advocate, liaison and technical support person in order to facilitate student access, retention and completion rates
- b. Respond to First Nation strategic directions through post-secondary education learners’ access and achievement; and
- c. Be the critical link between the learner, First Nation community and the administrative body of the PSSSP program (as it relates to the data collection, policy effectiveness and improvements at the community level through post-secondary education programming).⁸³

⁸⁰ Toulouse, P. *Walk in Our Moccasins: A Comprehensive Study of Aboriginal Education Counselors in Ontario 2010*, Ontario Native Education Counsellors Association, 26

⁸¹ Ibid, 6

⁸² Hill-MacDonald, L. *Aboriginal Student Transitions Project*, Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, 2011, 36

⁸³ Assembly of First Nations, *Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper*, June 21, 2010, 21



The Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)⁸⁴ of Nova Scotia is another of many community organizations committed to taking action to enhance the preparation, access and transitions of First Nations learners wishing to pursue post-secondary education. They found that best practices in supporting learners can be categorized as Access and Attraction, PSE Programming, Areas of Support, Data Collection and Tracking, and Collaboration and Communication.⁸⁵ Research to guide their collective action in supporting their students suggests the following:

1. continuing to support Aboriginal communities in promoting the importance of higher education in achieving quality jobs and autonomy for their communities through career fairs and information sessions
2. using proactive recruitment practices such as informative pamphlets, websites and summer camps to attract prospective students. These practices should be directed towards Aboriginal males as well as females with dependants, as these groups are typically underrepresented in PSE, and inform students of high demand areas of employment within their community to help them better choose a reliable course of study in PSE. Recruitment should also be directed towards Aboriginals at an early stage in their schooling, so that students view a PSE as a realistic option for their future
3. offering transition programs at the community level that prepare students for a full academic course load in PSE
4. insisting that post-secondary institutions establish flexible admission policies that address the special circumstances of Aboriginal students without lowering admissions standards. Admissions standards should evaluate students on a holistic level by considering such things as transcripts, life experiences, references and interviews
5. insisting that post-secondary institutions reserve seats in high demand, if not all, post-secondary programs that meet the specific needs of the Aboriginal community, and
6. allowing coordination committees in each First Nations community to set and implement priorities around key community-driven programs⁸⁶

Another collaborative community effort to address student needs in post-secondary is the *Aboriginal Transitions Research Project*. This project involved the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (British Columbia), Heiltsuk College, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the University of Victoria. The research culminated in the release of the *Aboriginal Student Transitions Handbook* in 2011 which proves to be an excellent resource for Aboriginal learners, their families and others.

These are some examples of how First Nations communities nurture and support their learners. If First Nations communities are to offer or continue to provide these types of student support services, they must have secure and adequate funding.

⁸⁴ Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey supports thirteen Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia.

⁸⁵ Orr, J. *First Nations Post-Secondary Education and Training Literature Review and Best Practices Leading towards recommendations for comprehensive post-secondary planning and evaluation framework for Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey*, June 16, 2008, 41

⁸⁶ Orr, J. *First Nations Post-Secondary Education and Training Literature Review and Best Practices Leading towards recommendations for comprehensive post-secondary planning and evaluation framework for Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey*, June 16, 2008



Community Owned and Controlled Indigenous Institutes Support Students

First Nations communities also support First Nations learners through the creation and continuously evolving Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (IIHL's).

Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning began to emerge in the mid 1970's and service First Nations learners in several provinces. These institutions were established to address a number of pressing issues at the time, including: concern with appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, the maintenance of cultural traditions in education, to ensure and guarantee culturally appropriate materials and courses, and to better serve the needs of their [Indigenous] communities.⁸⁷ The evolution of IIHL's reveals that:

- Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (IIHLs) are Indigenous operated educational institutions that have emerged in response to the need for post-secondary programs that better meet the specific learning requirements of First Nations people.
- IIHL's are an alternative to provincial colleges and universities, IIHL programs and curricula are developed from an Indigenous perspective that fosters learning - including knowledge of one's identity and language.
- IIHLs are designed to reach those students who would otherwise not participate in, or complete, post-secondary education including older students, women, lone parents and students with family responsibilities.
- Many IIHLs are located within First Nations communities to improve access for students living in remote locations, they can also be found in larger urban centres.
- In 2007, there were 45 IIHLs (list provided by the National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning and updated to reflect those institutions that offer post-secondary programs) across Canada with total enrolments of approximately 10,000 students.⁸⁸

Most Indigenous institutions in Canada are located within First Nations (on reserve) or Aboriginal communities (off reserve), providing locales where learners do not have to leave their communities or their family support systems in order to attend.

“The important distinction between Indigenous post-secondary institutions and mainstream post-secondary institutions was summed up by Jenkins (2007) in a review of Indigenous post-secondary institutions in Canada and the United States. Jenkins states that, “Indigenous post-secondary institutions engender the decolonizing of Indigenous minds while providing the community with programs that directly counter colonial structures and graduates trained to fill key roles in Indigenous communities striving toward self-determination”.⁸⁹

Given the ‘grass roots’ nature of these community established, owned and controlled Indigenous post-secondary institutions, Indigenous institutions are characterized by the following:

⁸⁷ Hill, L. *Aboriginal Institutes of Higher Education, A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions*, Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, August 2005, 28

⁸⁸ Canadian Council on Learning, *Postsecondary Education in Canada: 2008-09*. Ottawa. 2009

⁸⁹ Sited in *A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions by Aboriginal People from K-12 to Post-Secondary Education* commissioned by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada in 2010



- Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes are multi-faceted entities. Each institute reflects a local, Indigenous response to community and individual education needs—no two institutes are alike.⁹⁰
- Aboriginal-controlled institute staff provides a continuum of care and nurturing support to learners – from Life Skills and basic education upgrading through to post-secondary and beyond. Staff maintain contact as a means to support each individual learner. At the same time, staff establish links with other service providers (within and outside the community) in order to support learners.⁹¹
- The success rates of First Nations institutions are largely due to their commitment to student support. Student support services offered in First Nations institutions include: academic, career, social and financial counseling; cultural and spiritual teachings; peer support; elder support; student housing; and assistance in accessing community organizations such as childcare, transportation and other social programs. The creation of student centered support environments contribute to the retention and success rates of First Nations institutions.⁹²
- Programs grounded in Indigenous knowledge have the potential to instill pride and self-confidence in learners while preserving and maintaining First Nations values, languages, cultural practices and intellectual property rights.⁹³
- Research conducted by the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association IAHLA institutes offer Aboriginal adult learners development in academic, personal, leadership, cultural, wisdom and vocational skills.⁹⁴

Indigenous institutions exist for the express purpose of addressing the human resource needs and capacity development of First Nations communities. Programs and services reflect First Nations worldview, epistemologies, cultures, customs, languages, values and histories. Some First Nations learners consider attending Indigenous institutions before considering attending mainstream institutions due to their unique mandates. Despite the fact that Indigenous institutions do not receive the same levels of funding as mainstream post-secondary institutions and do not have the legislative authority to grant provincially recognized credentials, they continue to evolve. The capacity development of Indigenous Institutions is dependent upon grant funding and although they have a significant role in supporting the educational attainment of First Nations learners, in post-secondary, their capacity for success is minimized due to the lack of financial support from government.

Post-Secondary Institutions Support First Nation Learners

First Nations learners attend Indigenous institutions, and mainstream colleges and universities when they enrol in post-secondary education in Canada. This section of the

⁹⁰ Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Consortium, *Aboriginal-Controlled Post-Secondary Institutes in British Columbia: Issues, Costs and Benefits*, November 2010, 22

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 22

⁹² Hill, L. *First Nations Post-Secondary Education: An Examination of Post-Secondary Student Support and Institutional Development*, 200x, 5

⁹³ *Ibid*, 7

⁹⁴ Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, *Aboriginal-Controlled Post-Secondary Institutes in British Columbia: Issues, Costs and Benefits*, November 2010, 23



report will list some of the supports currently available to assist First Nations learners making transitions to post-secondary education.

The types of supports that exist to support Aboriginal learners transitioning to post-secondary are presented in the following categories:

1. Student funding
2. Support services
3. Culturally relevant programs, and
4. Governance.

The four categories attempt to differentiate between the range of efforts being taken to increase access to post-secondary education and those that empower First Nations to control over their education.

Student Funding

The primary funding support program for First Nations learners who enrol in post-secondary education is the federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program. Eligible students may obtain financial assistance from the program in the following areas:

- Tuition support for part-time and full-time students that may include fees for registration, tuition and the cost of books and supplies required for courses.
- Travel support for full-time students who must leave their permanent place of residence to attend college or university. Students may qualify for funding to return home twice per academic year.
- Living expenses for full-time students to help cover the costs such as food, shelter, and transportation.⁹⁵

Other sources of funding include grants in the form of scholarships, awards and bursaries. The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF)⁹⁶ is the single largest organization that provides students an avenue to access funding to support post-secondary education. To date the Foundation has awarded more than \$42.7 million in scholarships and bursaries to more than 11,500 First Nations, Inuit and Métis students nationwide.⁹⁷

There are also a host of scholarships, awards and bursaries that can be accessed through the financial aid offices of mainstream colleges and universities. Some of these scholarships, awards and bursaries are designed specifically for access only by First Nations students.

In a survey of their member institutes in 2010, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) reported that while the number of scholarships targeted at Aboriginal students has increased, bursaries have not. AUCC also concluded, *actual*

⁹⁵ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Post-Secondary Student Support Program, <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033682>

⁹⁶ NAAF was recently renamed, Indspire.

⁹⁷ National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, http://www.naaf.ca/about_naaf



*university costs assumed by students are increasing while Aboriginal funding for post-secondary education is not keeping pace.*⁹⁸

The First Generation Bursary established by the province of Ontario must be acknowledged. While it is not an Aboriginal specific bursary, the First Generation Bursary, “provides targeted support to first generation postsecondary students with financial need. A first generation student is defined as a student whose parents have not participated in postsecondary studies. Public Ontario colleges and universities administer the bursary on the ministry’s behalf and as a result may have additional eligibility requirements.”⁹⁹ This bursary is of particular significance to First Nations learners, as many First Nations learners are “firsts” in their families to enroll in post-secondary education.

Although the amount of funding First Nations learners that is available through the federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program is stretched, efforts to increase students access to funding through scholarships and bursaries is increasing. However, First Nations peoples have held the long-standing position that education is “an inherent Treaty right”. Therefore, there is a tendency to rely on federal PSSSP funding for post-secondary support rather than to seek out and enter into competitive processes to obtain scholarships, awards and bursaries.

Support Services

There has been much breadth and creativity in the design and development of support services to support the recruitment, transitions, access and retention of First Nations learners in post-secondary. A review of the literature revealed the following.

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association conducted web-based research of resources to support Aboriginal learning transitioning to post-secondary which culminated in the release of the report titled, *Student Transitions Report Web-Based Resources* (2010). This report is an excellent source of information to support students transitioning to post-secondary.

The University of Manitoba found access programs to be an effective tool to increase enrollment and success of First Nations students in university studies. Their access programs include:

Academic support

- An extensive pre-university orientation held in August
- Individual academic advising
- Introduction to University course for degree credit
- Tutorials

Academic Advisors consult regularly with the Access students.

Personal Support/Counselling

- Individual and Family
- Housing assistance

⁹⁸ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students*, October 2010, 16

⁹⁹ Government of Ontario, *First Generation Bursary, Ontario Student Assistance Program*, <https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/OSAPStarttoFinish/StudentinSpecialCircumstances/index.htm>



- Childcare assistance
 - University/urban adjustment assistance
 - Communication and personal development workshops
 - Career counselling
- Counselling Support Staff are available for Access students.¹⁰⁰

Research by Alcorn and Levin (1998) found that over the past twenty-five years, access programs contributed significantly to the success of Aboriginal students in Manitoba. The access programs they found helpful were those based on a common set of practices and principles. More specifically, they were:

“based on the belief that if academic, social, personal and financial barriers are addressed, minorities, and disadvantaged groups, for who post-secondary education has not been a viable option, will enrol and succeed in post-secondary studies at the same levels as non-excluded members of society. The programs follow the tenets of equality of condition which implies that mere access is not sufficient, but must be accompanied with the kinds of supports that give to students who are motivated, but poorly prepared and under-resourced, a realistic opportunity to succeed (Unruh & Levin, 1990).”¹⁰¹

Since their inception, the Access Programs have demonstrated that hundreds of people who were educational failures – who had not completed secondary school, and would never have been admitted, under ordinary circumstances, to a college or university – can enter, succeed, and contribute to the community as well as changing their own lives.¹⁰²

Research commissioned by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada reported that, *“key informants also recognized numerous situational, dispositional and institutional factors that impeded student success. Strategies they reported using to overcome these barriers included flexibility, adaptability, mentoring, counselling, partnerships and an understanding of Aboriginal knowledge and culture.”¹⁰³* This research was found to be congruent with strategies to improve access to learning for Aboriginal adult learners reported by the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (ALKC). The ALKC found these practices helpful:

- Community delivery of courses and programs;
- Aboriginal faculty and staff;
- Better policies for credit transfer and learning recognition;
- Flexible admission policies;
- Culturally relevant student support services;
- Aboriginal input in program and curriculum development; and
- Long-term partnerships between schools and communities are essential.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ University of Manitoba, Access Programs, <http://www.umanitoba.ca/extended/access/info/faqs.shtml>

¹⁰¹ Alcorn, W and Levin, B. *Post-Secondary Education for Indigenous Populations, Presentation to the International Congress on Social Welfare*, University of Manitoba, July 1998

¹⁰² Alcorn, W and Levin, B. *Post-Secondary Education for Indigenous Populations, Presentation to the International Congress on Social Welfare*, University of Manitoba, July 1998, 5

¹⁰³ Malatest and Associates Ltd. *HRSDC Best Practices in Aboriginal Adult Education in Canada*, June 29, 2011, 30

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 30



Profiles of First Nations institutes and community based literacy organizations¹⁰⁵ revealed the use of several kinds of initiatives and programs to support student access and retention. They include:

- bridging programs (college and university preparation courses)
- basic literacy training including English, French and math
- life skills training
- adult basic education, academic foundations
- university college entrance programs
- First Nations college prep, preparatory courses to improve academic skills
- onsite child development centre
- tutors
- essential skills workshops
- e-learning

The Canadian Association of Deans in Education, committed to support Aboriginal learners in an effort to address the discrepancy in educational attainment outcomes of First Nations learners compared to non-First Nations learners. To improve access, they suggest, “transitional support and retention strategies need to be developed in partnership with Indigenous communities, in order to increase substantially the numbers of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people enrolling in and completing secondary, post-secondary, teacher education, and graduate programs.”¹⁰⁶

Research conducted by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) revealed the use of the following strategies by their college and institute members:

- Active Aboriginal student recruitment
- Integrate recruitment in a community relations process tied to Aboriginal student services
- Recruitment strategies which link Aboriginal students to programs, and provide laddering opportunities from adult upgrading, to college preparatory and post-secondary programs in career fields in high demand in Aboriginal communities and elsewhere.
- Having a focal point with targeted and visible Aboriginal student services, personal one-on-one support through Aboriginal advisors or counsellors, and a welcoming place to meet, gather, study and learn;
- Services by Elders to provide cultural connections, personal support and counselling, and teach traditions that provide a community atmosphere.¹⁰⁷

ACCC (2010) research also revealed that:

“The most commonly-identified practices for Aboriginal recruitment are: visits, meetings and partnerships with First Nations, career days, fairs and conferences, media and marketing, working in partnership with high schools, and dedicated Aboriginal recruitment services at mainstream institutions.

Effort to support Aboriginal students with application and admissions procedures was achieved through: integrated approaches, “First contact” services for

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 62-73

¹⁰⁶ Association of Canadian Deans of Education, *Accord on Indigenous Education*, 2010

¹⁰⁷ Association of Community Colleges of Canada, *Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities 2010 Environmental Scan*, iii



completion of application forms, collaboration with Aboriginal partners, Aboriginal student transitions initiatives (i.e. summer programs, welcome programs) and through supportive admissions policies and practices.

Aboriginal and mainstream colleges also offer assessment services to Aboriginal learners (high school entrants and mature students) through college entrance and academic testing, prior learning and assessment recognition, career assessments and pre-admissions testing.

Colleges have emphasized the key role support services play in enabling Aboriginal students to achieve their academic goals and transition into employment. Colleges called these services “wrap around” services to emphasize the need to support students in a holistic manner.”

The types of student services and the percentages of colleges providing them are:

Percent of Colleges Providing Aboriginal Student Services	Yes
Academic counselling for Aboriginal students	94%
Learning centre for tutoring services	90%
Personal counselling for Aboriginal students	90%
Employment and career counselling	88%
Job search skills training and search support	79%
Support to find housing	81%
Financial counselling for Aboriginal students	78%
Dedicated Aboriginal student centre	73%
Work placements or internships	73%
Support to find daycare in the community	70%
Support services with Elders from the community	68%
Special advice to Aboriginal students on your college website	67%
Daycare on campus	62%
On campus food bank	57%
Inter cultural counselling for Aboriginal students	59%
Anti-discrimination counselling for Aboriginal students	57%
Other	50%
Aboriginal mentorship program	47%
Resident Elder services	49%
Transportation	44%

Source: 2010 Survey of Aboriginal programs and services

The ACCC colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities 2010 Environmental Scan revealed that twenty-one (21) Aboriginal colleges and institutes partnered with mainstream institutions to deliver programs for First Nations learners. Some of the programs were access and preparatory programs and others include certificate, diploma, apprenticeship and degree programs.

ACCC found changes in the provision of student support services from 2005 to 2010. They found that:

- Aboriginal community engagement is fundamental for the effective delivery of Aboriginal programs and services.
- The Aboriginal voice must be heard within and across institutions through Aboriginal representation at the governance and senior administrative levels; curriculum which



is culturally relevant and embeds Aboriginal world views and traditional knowledge; purposeful hiring practices to increase Aboriginal faculty and staff recruitment; intercultural training for college faculty and staff; and providing Aboriginal students with a welcoming environment that allows them to celebrate their culture.

- Support services are key for Aboriginal student retention and success as they address the barriers many Aboriginal students must overcome to succeed. These services are pivotal in creating a culturally-appropriate, welcoming and supportive learning environment.¹⁰⁸

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) calls for everyone to participate in improving access for Aboriginal learners. They suggest:

- Put out the welcome mat. Universities, governments, bands and students determine the best solutions for K-12 students from different regions, in different regions. Universities and Aboriginal communities collaborate together to mentor teachers and students, test effective practices and connect resources to needs to greatly enhance high school completion rates.
- Promote distance education. Studies show a 45% increase in distance learning courses for Aboriginal students in recent years. Distance education brings educators to remote communities and allows students to study at home, without breaking important family and community ties.¹⁰⁹

Student support services utilized by AUCC (2010) member institutes include:

- on-campus facilities
- the provision of function and activity
- meeting/lounge
- cultural events, social events and
- Aboriginal libraries.

AUCC found, “changes in methodology and technology for off-site program delivery including broader bandwidth, delivery in partnership with other organizations and an increase in staff travelling to remote locations to deliver off-site curriculum. There was also an increase in the number of institutions that have established initiatives to support Aboriginal students who wish to pursue advanced studies.”¹¹⁰

University of British Columbia research to examine First Nations students transitioning from undergraduate to graduate studies (Archibald, et al, 2010) determined there to be four categories of transitions: the decision to pursue graduate studies, access and admissions, first year experiences and completion of a graduate program. Factors that facilitate access and retention and factors that hinder students that emerged from the research were as follows:

- Mentoring and supportive relationships make a difference

¹⁰⁸ ACCC, *Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities 2010 Environmental Scan*, iii

¹⁰⁹ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students*, October 2010

¹¹⁰ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students*, October 2010, 16



- Individual responsibility to plan and to prepare for graduate school makes a difference
- People make institutions users and Aboriginal friendly, and relevant
- Depersonalized and colonial institutional barriers still exist
- Navigating different expectations in graduate studies is challenging
- Navigating racism is a critical challenge
- Working with and providing communication about university student services are important
- Sharing Aboriginal Knowledge and Aboriginal methodology for graduate education is necessary¹¹¹

The UBC research also acknowledged a need to pay greater attention to addressing Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal methodology in respectful, responsible and reciprocal ways. Key findings of the research resulted in the creation of a framework to include three components. The components are:

- (1) Access – peer and faculty mentoring, encouragement and supportive relationships from family and peers were helpful to introduce and influence Aboriginal undergraduate students to pursue graduate studies.
- (2) Relationships – intergenerational relationships that include mentoring from other graduate students, peers, family and community members as well as the relationships which make the university user friendly were essential in helping students through the applications and admissions process.
- (3) Technology – the use of technology was determined important for the sustainability of the project and for province wide portability. Suggested uses of technology include opportunities for social interaction, storing and accessing information and resources, developing materials, engaging in learning experiences with a participatory and networked oriented approach.¹¹²

In the second phase of the UBC research, the three components were piloted with five participating universities across British Columbia in 2009-2010. This work revealed that a successful province-wide transitional framework to assist Aboriginal undergraduate students to enroll in graduate studies would need to include these considerations:

- Intergenerational learning relationships make a difference
- Student empowerment and agency is essential
- Flexible approaches facilitate province-wide applicability and sustainability
- Developing relationships, knowledge and skills take time, and

¹¹¹ Archibald, J., Pidgeon, M., Hawkley, C. *Aboriginal Transitions: Undergraduate to Graduate, Phase 1, Final Report*, University of British Columbia, 2010, <http://www.aboriginaltransitions.ca/atu2g/>, 59

¹¹² *Aboriginal Transitions: Undergraduate to Graduate (AT:U2G), Community Report #1, Summary of Phase 1 Research Findings*, University of British Columbia



- Graduate studies is often not a priority for Aboriginal undergraduate students while they are completing their undergraduate programs.¹¹³

Malatest (2010) researched promising practices in Ontario which revealed the following:

- A physical program presence on campus (i.e., an Aboriginal student services centre) appears to provide a number of benefits. It helps provide Aboriginal students with an immediate sense of belonging and helps guide students to the appropriate services both on and off campus. It is a forum for showcasing Aboriginal culture and provides non-Aboriginal faculty with a consistent resource to which they can refer students who are in need of assistance. Over time, these centres may help build awareness of Aboriginal issues and have a positive impact on the environment in which Aboriginal students study.
- Programs do not have to be wide in scope to have a noticeable impact. Meeting a specific need (e.g., night classes) of an identifiable population (e.g., working mothers) can increase student retention.
- Programs that enlist the support of Elders and Aboriginal community leaders are reported to encourage future student enrolment. These initiatives can take place both on campus, where Elders can act in a counselling capacity, or on reserve, where they can serve as role models and advisors. Outreach programs designed with the input of
- Aboriginal Elders are more likely to be successful.
- Distance education and programs that allow Aboriginal students to stay connected to their families and communities will mitigate many of the factors that contribute to an early exit from PSE. Retention may also be increased through offering intensive courses that do not require prolonged stays at the institution.
- Closer integration with existing resources such as Contact North has enabled many PSE institutions to make their courses available to learners in remote areas. However, there appears to be a need for greater communication between Contact North's educational partners in order to more effectively expand the program's reach.
- Partnerships between PSE institutions can help cover gaps in infrastructure. This could include sharing physical facilities and equipment, and it could also involve sharing intellectual property. These types of partnerships increase the return on the investment in distance education.
- Building networks outside of PSE institutions, such as with local employers, helps to bind the institution to the surrounding community. In addition, it creates a direct linkage between the benefits of PSE and economic opportunity.
- A holistic approach to student support appeals to Aboriginal students, particularly those who are mature students with family responsibilities. This could involve offering childcare, assistance with housing and personal counselling.
- Peer counselling and mentoring are considered valuable programs by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. For institutions that would like to develop their Aboriginal student services but are concerned about negative feedback from larger interest groups on campus, this type of program is non-threatening. It may

¹¹³ Aboriginal Transitions: Undergraduate to Graduate (AT:U2G), Community Report #2, Summary of Research Findings, University of British Columbia, 2010, 44-46



also increase interaction and thereby decrease resistance to future program expansion.¹¹⁴

There are many different initiatives that are being employed. All of these considerations and affirmative actions will foster successful and increased transitions, access and retention in post-secondary for First Nations learners.

Culturally Relevant Programs

Culturally relevant content and culturally relevant programs is a significant factor in attracting and retaining First Nations learners to post-secondary studies. The ability to relate to the content and then apply the learning later is a drawing card that some First Nations learners will find hard to resist.

Additional considerations for Aboriginal learners are needed to accommodate the needs of more mature learners who may possess life skills, but require more support with basic academic skill preparation, as well as flexible delivery models of teaching and delivery. An example is the self-paced and modular programs that NEC provides for many Aboriginal learners to accommodate mature students who have work and family demands.¹¹⁵

ACCC reports, there are now 80 publicly-funded colleges that offer education and training programs for Aboriginal students. The breadth of programming includes: preparatory programs, adult education and upgrading programs, post-secondary certificate and diploma and trades programs, aboriginal-specific certificate/diploma programs, community-based programs, programs offered in partnership with Aboriginal institutions and distance learning programs. ACCC members affirmed the need to deliver community-based programs to address issues of access and retention.

The 2010 ACCC environmental scan includes the depth and breadth of the programs that are available to First Nations learners. The following is a sampling of culturally relevant programs delivered in partnership between mainstream colleges and universities and Indigenous post-secondary institutions. It includes:¹¹⁶

En'owkin Centre	Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization Indigenous Artists Program Nsyilxcen Language Program Baccalaureate Degree in Indigenous Studies
Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society	Practical Nursing Trades and Technology Bridging Program
Blue Quills First Nations College	Bachelor of Arts Bachelor of General Studies
Maskwachees Cultural College	Indigenous Social Work Diploma First Nations Management Diploma

¹¹⁴ Malatest, R. A., *Promising Practices: Increasing and Supporting Participation for Aboriginal Students in Ontario*, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 38-39

¹¹⁵ Coastal Corridor Consortium, *Transforming Aboriginal Post-Secondary Accessibility, Exemplary Practices Discussion Paper*, BC, 2008, viii-ix (excerpts)

¹¹⁶ ACCC, *Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities 2010 Environmental Scan, Programs offered by Aboriginal-Controlled Colleges and Institutes*



Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute	Community Wellness Certificate
Old Sun Community College	College Outreach Program University Outreach Program
Red Crow Community College	Aboriginal Licensed Nurse Practitioner Program Niistitapi Teacher Education Program Water Quality and Testing
Yellowhead Tribal College	Health Care Aid with an Aboriginal Focus Certificate Aboriginal Teacher Education Program – Access Year Aboriginal Child and Family Services
Dumont Technical Institute	Engineering Pre Law Liberal Arts
Yellowquill College	Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager
Anishinabek Educational Institute	Anishinabek Governance and Management Native Community Worker – Healing and Wellness Traditional Aboriginal Healing Methods Aboriginal Lands and Resources Management
First Nations Technical Institute	Aboriginal Media Aviation Indigenous Community Health Approaches Public Administration
Iohahi:io Akwesasne Adult Education	Early Childhood Education Human Resource Management Program Nursing Diploma Program
Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute	Business Administration Certificate Master of Education
Ogwehoweh Skills and Trades Training Centre	Horticulture
Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Educational Institute	Aboriginal Financial and Economic Planning Social Service Worker – Native Specialization
Seven Generations Education Institute	Renewable Energy Certificate Program Aboriginal Cultural Interpretation Program Aboriginal Teacher Education Program
Six Nations Polytechnic	Practical Nursing with Aboriginal Communities Ongwehoweh Language Diploma Program Aboriginal Medical and Professional Health Sciences Preparation Program

For a complete inventory of programs and services designed to address the needs of Aboriginal learners, check the ACCC website at: www.accc.ca.

AUCC reported a significant increase (2005 to 2010) in the number of degree programs in Native Studies as well as a significant increase in the number of institutions that have established initiatives to support Aboriginal students who wish to pursue advanced studies.¹¹⁷ A sampling of programs with significant Aboriginal content delivered off campus, include:

¹¹⁷ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students*, October 2010, 16



University of Alberta	Aboriginal Teacher Education
Algoma University	Community Economic and Social Development
Brandon University	Northern Teacher Education Program
Brock University	Mohawk immersion Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education Certificate in Aboriginal Adult Education
Cape Breton University	Mi'kmaq Business Development Program Bachelor of Business Administration for First Nations Bachelor of Arts program. Court Workers Certificate
Dalhousie University	Bachelor of Social Work
University of the Fraser Valley	Early Childhood Education Diploma
Lakehead University	Native Nurses Entry
University of Lethbridge	School of Health Sciences
University of Manitoba	Bachelor of Social Work Northern BN degree program for Aboriginal students Aboriginal Focus Programs (continuing education, outreach) Aboriginal Environmental Stewardship Diploma
McGill University	Certificate in Education for First Nations and Inuit Certificate in Aboriginal Literacy Education Bachelor of Education for Certified Teachers Certificate in Aboriginal Education for Certified Teachers Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Student Personnel Services
Memorial University	Diploma in Native and Northern Education
University of New Brunswick	Bachelor of Education for Aboriginal Students
University of Northern British Columbia	Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Certificate in Nisga'a Studies
University of Ottawa	Community-Based Native Teacher Education Program
University of Prince Edward Island	Master of Education in Leadership and Learning
University of British Columbia	Native Indian Teacher Education Program Certificate in Aboriginal Health Care Administration Chinook Aboriginal Business Education First Nations Bachelor of Social Work Program Okanagan Language Program
University of Regina	Bachelor of Social Work Northern Teacher Education Program
St. Thomas University	Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Certificate in Native language immersion teaching
Simon Fraser University	First Nations Languages Program Aboriginal Education in service, pre-service Leadership Exchange Program
University of Victoria	Bachelor of Laws Program Certificate Program in Aboriginal Language



	Revitalization Diploma in Indigenous Child and Youth Care – First Nations Partnership Programs Certificate Program in Aboriginal Fine Arts
	Certificate in Administration of Indigenous Governments
Wilfrid Laurier University	Masters in Social Work
University of Winnipeg	Kinesthesia Specialist Educational Assistant program

For a complete listing of programs and services designed to address the needs of Aboriginal learners, check the AUCC website at: www.aucc.ca.

The University of Victoria undertook a four year study called, the LE,NONET Project to support the success of Aboriginal students in university. The project examined bursaries and emergency funding, peer mentoring, preparation seminars and staff and faculty training. The Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training Report released in 2009 revealed a need for training in the following areas: historical context, contemporary realities, culture, local peoples and land, diversity of Aboriginal peoples' experiences and relationship building. Curriculum content was identified for the staff and faculty groups.

Curriculum content for staff training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding for Aboriginal Students - Student experiences at UVic - Cultural sensitivity - Hiring Aboriginal staff - University relationships and campus services 	Curriculum content for faculty training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worldview, culture and protocols - UVic context - Classroom environment/teaching skills - Specific topics - Curriculum development - Student experiences¹¹⁸
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The research also revealed the need to develop workshops to achieve the following core competencies:

- Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge
- Aboriginal History and the History of Colonialism in Canada
- Awareness of Social Location
- Skills to intervene in classroom situations
- Understanding and responding to Aboriginal student needs¹¹⁹

The variety and breadth of programs available and the numbers of institutions delivering culturally specific programs is evidence of the interest expressed by First Nations learners. Increased enrolment to programs of interest and relevance for First Nations learners has significant potential to yield positive outcomes with respect to retention and graduation.

Governance

¹¹⁸ University of Victoria, *Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training (SFACT) Needs Assessment Report, LE,NONET Project*, June 2009

¹¹⁹ Ibid



The Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy, created in Ontario in 1990 and implemented in 1991 was an excellent initiative to increase Aboriginal governance of post-secondary education for Aboriginal learners. The Strategy provided an avenue to flow funding to colleges, universities and Aboriginal institutions to support targeted initiatives in post-secondary education. To access strategy funding, institutions were required to:

- (a) Ensure that a process exists which would provide local Native community representatives with direct access to the governing body/senate on all aspects effecting Native postsecondary education within the institution;
- (b) Establish a Native committee with significant local Native community membership to oversee key Native programs and services. The committee will also assist in the determination of appropriate mature student admissions criteria for Native students and be involved in reviewing the admissions protocol affecting Native applicants;
- (c) Develop, in collaboration with the institutional Native committee, a comprehensive plan of action, including an evaluation process, designed to enhance the institution's sensitivity to Native issues and to increase the accessibility and retention rates of Native students within the institution. This plan should be approved by the institution's governing body/senate.¹²⁰

The criterion was essential to elevating the decision making capacity of Aboriginal people in Ontario's post-secondary education system. Shortly following the creation of the Strategy, some institutions found it difficult to ensure decision making capacity connected to the governing body of the institution. Some of the colleges resolved this issue by appointing Aboriginal representatives to the Boards of Governors, placing Aboriginal peoples at the highest level of governance.

The 2011 Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Strategy of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in Ontario, continues to encourage all partners to work together to enhance the success of Aboriginal learners in education. The partners they identify as needing to work together include:

- First Nation, Métis, and Inuit leadership and communities;
- Aboriginal organizations;
- the postsecondary education and training sectors;
- the elementary and secondary education sectors;
- Ontario ministries; and
- the federal government.¹²¹

The Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Strategy created in 2005 in British Columbia evolved in a similar fashion. In addition to the creation of framework to enable targeted support for Aboriginal learners in mainstream and Indigenous institutions of higher learning, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (March 11, 2005) empowered Aboriginal peoples to get directly involved in collaborative decision making to improve the levels of success of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary .

¹²⁰ RCAP 1996

¹²¹ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Strategy*, Ontario, 2011, 17



The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) conducted research in 2010 which examined the 'engagement between the university and the Aboriginal community'. The findings of the research reveal effort to support the beginnings of a governance role for Aboriginal peoples in post-secondary education. Among the most commonly reported changes between 2005 and 2010, are:

1. Increased engagement between university and Aboriginal community leaders;
2. Increase in communication between the university and the Aboriginal community;
3. Increased influence of Aboriginal community within the university;
4. Increased communication between the university Board of Governors and the Aboriginal community;
5. Additional participation of other Aboriginal sectors and stakeholders as collaborators with university programs, services and activities.¹²²

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) also reviewed their responsiveness to Aboriginal learners. The report entitled *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students* identified the following changes in development at member institutions (2005 to 2010):

- number of universities with a dedicated space for an Aboriginal library on campus
- changes in methodology and technology for off-site program delivery including broader bandwidth, delivery in partnership with other organizations and an increase in staff travelling to remote locations to deliver off-site curriculum
- a significant increase in the number of degree programs in Native Studies
- a significant increase in the number of institutions that have established initiatives to support Aboriginal students who wish to pursue advanced studies
- scholarships targeted at Aboriginal students has increased but not bursaries
- actual university costs assumed by students are increasing while Aboriginal community funding for post-secondary education is not keeping pace
- many changes in the relationship between university board/president and Aboriginal community leadership including changes in the level of administrative responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs¹²³

In the 2010 environmental scan commissioned by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges,

a new trend has emerged whereby mainstream colleges are restructuring to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. Many institutions emphasized the importance of adopting holistic approaches to serving Aboriginal learners because Aboriginal services departments or offices cannot do it alone. An institution-wide approach integrates support services more effectively.¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid, 22

¹²³ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Answering the call: The 2010 inventory of Canadian university programs and services for Aboriginal students*, October 2010, 16

¹²⁴ ACCC, *Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities 2010 Environmental Scan*, iii



An increased governance role for First Nations peoples in education was affirmed in the report of the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education in 2012. The Panel, jointly announced by the Prime Minister and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, called for the co-creation of a Child-Centered First Nation Education Act.¹²⁵

Conclusion

First Nations and the government of Canada share the need to increase First Nations success in education to close the socio-economic gap that exists between First Nations peoples and other Canadians. Policy change is essential and systemic change is required.

Report after report recommendations have been made to reform First Nations education to increase the recruitment, retention and graduation of First Nations peoples in post-secondary education. Numerous initiatives and strategies have been implemented - most of which offer enhancements to mainstream provincial systems. Most of the actions to date focus on the need to ‘help’ First Nations learn – content entrenched in western epistemologies and world-view. This report provides a perspective that includes holistic approaches from a First Nations world-view. Continued support for First Nations learners must include this foundation in order to achieve maximum results.

There is urgency to change the status quo – before another cohort of students fall victim to an educational system that does not fully address their needs. Long-term support to enhance and develop adequately resourced and supported First Nations education systems from early childhood through to adult education and post-secondary are critical to the success of First Nations in post-secondary education. Targeted, enhanced and continued support for First Nations learners in Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning and in the mainstream post-secondary system must continue. The way forward must be directed by First Nations for the creation of systems to address this complex issue.

Canada’s approach to First Nations education must respect, reflect and be grounded in First Nations languages, cultures and traditions, and address the social and economic realities of their communities. First Nations strongly urge Canada to fulfill their obligation to support First Nations right “to establish and control their educational systems and institutions” (UNDRIP) which thereby demonstrates their commitment to supporting *First Nations Control of First Nations Education*.

¹²⁵ Haldane, S, Lafond, G., Krause, C. *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students, The Report of the National Panel on First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve*, February 8, 2012



Appendix A

Actual Case Study Costs

A Message to all families - It is wise to save for your child's education!
 Every year post secondary funding falls short of what is required.
 Every year students have to cover part or all of their costs of going to college or university.
 Here are some facts from past research:

Student Profile	Program	Location / Residence	Total Expenses	Total GRPSEO	Shortfall covered by student
Single, no dependents, sharing expense of house	Undergrad - Biology	Guelph, ON	\$13,015.32	\$12,029.16	\$986.16
Single, no dependents, co-habiting - apartment	Undergrad - Law	Ottawa, ON	32,669.24	15,552.91	17,116.33
Single, no dependents, living on own - apartment	Undergrad - Economics	St. Catharines, ON	12,263.96	8,012.00	4,251.96
Single, no dependents, living with parents	Undergrad - Biology	Dartmouth, Nova Scotia	14,702.50	10,589.00	4,113.50
Single, no dependents, living on own - apartment	College - Nursing	Brantford, ON	14,406.85	9,082.33	5,324.52
Married, dependent, Apartment	Undergrad - Science	Halifax, Nova Scotia	16,694.75	11,548.00	5,146.75
Single, no dependents, living on own - residence	College - Food & Nutrition Mgmt	Kemptville, ON	13,891.94	13,441.00	450.94
Married, 1 dependent, family at home - house	Graduate - Medicine	Hamilton, ON	71,020.93	22,114.48	48,906.45
Single, no dependents, co-habiting - house	Graduate - Agricultural	Brookfield, Nova Scotia	10,685.68	4,624.00	6,061.68
Single, no dependents, living on own - residence	Undergrad - Visual Arts	Toronto, ON	14,770.88	11,791.58	2,979.30
Married, no dependents, living with	College - Massage Therapy	Ohswegen, ON	14,715.03	7,200.00	7,515.03



mate - house					
Single, no dependents, living on own apartment	Undergrad - Commerce	Guelph, ON	14,828.39	12,512.10	2,316.29
Single, no dependents, living on own apartment	College - Computer Prog.	London, ON	18,553.04	13,273.60	5,279.44
Single, no dependents, living on own apartment	College - Software Engineer	Brantford, ON	10,112.33	9,787.16	325.17
Single, no dependents, co-habiting apartment	Undergrad - Law	Windsor, ON	30,980.01	15,277.86	15,702.15
Single, no dependents, living with parents	Undergrad - Nursing	Beausejour, Manitoba	12,121.36	11,846.40	274.96
Single, no dependents, living on own apartment	College - Pre-Technology	London, ON	13,240.30	9,549.60	3690.70
Single, no dependents, living on own apartment	Masters - Architecture	Toronto, ON	21,982.15	13,816.78	8,165.37
Single, no dependents, living on own house	Undergrad - Business	Echo Bay, ON	23,398.10	11,556.20	11,841.90
Single, no dependents, living with parents	U.S. College - Business	Sanborn, NY	10,317.00	9,758.43	558.57
Total					\$151,007.17

Figure 2 - Grand River Post Secondary Education Office

