



## A Portrait of First Nations and Education

### Population

- In Canada, 1,172,785 persons identify as Aboriginal, and 698,025 identify as First Nations.
- Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing demographic. The First Nations population grew 3.5 times faster than the non-Aboriginal population in 2006.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 30% of the First Nations adult population is less than 30 years of age while 13% are 60 years of age and older.<sup>2</sup>

### Language and Culture

- First Nations peoples are culturally and linguistically very diverse, with Indigenous knowledge unique to their traditional territories; geographically, they occupy every province and territory in Canada.
- There are 633 First Nation communities across Canada with 11 language families and over 60 language dialects that tend to be specific to local communities.
- More than half (56.3%) of **First Nations youth** (on reserve) **can understand or speak a First Nations language**, and 45.8% feel that learning a First Nations language is very important.<sup>3</sup>
- Approximately 88% of First Nations schools offer some type of Indigenous language programming. **17% offer full Indigenous language immersion programming.**<sup>4</sup>
- Approximately 91% of First Nations schools offer some type of periodic cultural activities, while **57% offer regular and on-going cultural programming.**<sup>5</sup>
- Approximately 92% of First Nations schools partially integrate cultural teachings into the curriculum, while **26% of schools have cultural teachings fully integrated** into the curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

### Lifelong Learning

- First Nations lifelong learning is a process of nurturing First Nations learners in linguistically and culturally-appropriate holistic learning environments that meet the individual and collective needs of First Nations.
- Ensures learners have the opportunity to achieve their personal aspirations through

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

<sup>2</sup> Regional Health Survey, Quick Facts for Leadership, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Regional Health Survey, Quick Facts for Leadership, 2008

<sup>4</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results

<sup>5</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results

<sup>6</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results

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access to education at **all stages of learning** that occur across the life cycle - infancy through to senior years, and in a variety of settings - school, home, community, workplace, and on the land.

## Early Childhood Education (ECE)

- Early childhood development is critical to the growth and development of children.
- While 67% of First Nations' communities have licensed early learning and care programs for children under the age of six, only 22% of First Nations children have access to early childhood programs.<sup>7</sup>
- Not unlike mainstream communities, children can be wait-listed for a long time trying to access quality early learning and care programs.

## Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)

- In 2010, there were more than 515 First Nations elementary and secondary schools available to approximately 109,000 First Nations students resident on reserve lands.<sup>8</sup>
- Over 64% of these students attended 515 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.<sup>9</sup>
- Approximately 31% of First Nations students attended off-reserve provincial schools, and 5% attended either a private or federal school.<sup>10</sup>
- Secondary school data (2004-2009) identifies the rate of **First Nation graduation** at approximately 36%<sup>11</sup> compared to the Canadian graduation rate of 72%. Conversely, some First Nations exceed those rates with Membertou First Nation in Nova Scotia achieving 100% graduation rates in the last few years.
- 61% of First Nation young adults (20-24) have not completed high school, compared with 13% of non-Aboriginal people in Canada.
- **Special needs** identification and placement rates in First Nations elementary and secondary schools are 2-3 times the rate of provincial K-12 schools.<sup>12</sup>

## Post Secondary Education (PSE)

- There are an estimated 60 First Nations owned and controlled post-secondary institutions which deliver a wide range of programs to approximately 10,000 learners,

<sup>7</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results

<sup>8</sup> AANDC, Nominal Roll, 2010-11.

<sup>9</sup> AANDC, Nominal Roll, 2010-11.

<sup>10</sup> AANDC, Nominal Roll, 2010-11.

<sup>11</sup> Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education, A Discussion Guide, October 2011, page 5

<sup>12</sup> 2009/2010 & 2010/2011<sup>12</sup> nominal roll results for the SEP



including preparatory programs, adult upgrading, trades and apprenticeship, certificate, diploma, degree and advanced degree programs.<sup>13</sup>

- Aboriginal people 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 the Canadian population.<sup>14</sup>
- Only 4% of First Nations people on reserve, and 8% in total, have a university degree, compared to 23% of the Canadian population.

## Effects of Poverty

- 1 in 4 children in First Nations' communities lives in poverty.
- Suicide rates among First Nations youth are 5 to 7 times higher than other young non-Aboriginal people in Canada.
- A First Nation youth is more likely to end up in jail than to graduate high school.<sup>15</sup>
- Food security is an issue for almost 50% of reserve residents.<sup>16</sup>
- Almost half of First Nations households do not have an internet connection.<sup>17</sup>

## Infrastructure and Capital Needs<sup>18</sup>

- Approximately 47% of First Nations currently need a new school.
- Of those waiting for new schools, 27% have been waiting less than 5 years, 29% have been waiting 5-10 years, 22% have been waiting 10-15 years, 9% have been waiting 15-20 years, 3% have been waiting 20-25 years, and 7% have been waiting more than 25 years.
- Approximately 74% of First Nations schools currently require MAJOR repairs.
- The majority of repairs relate to requirements for additional space, plumbing and sewage issues, electrical, roofing, building code issues, and structure and foundation.
- Health and safety of students is a concern for 72% of First Nations schools, and 32% of schools have an issue with access to clean drinking water.
- Only 46% of First Nations schools have a fully equipped gym, and only 37% have a fully equipped playground or outdoor playing field.
- Only 52% of First Nations schools have a fully equipped kitchen.
- Only 18% of First Nations schools have a fully equipped science lab.
- Only 39% of First Nations schools have a fully equipped library.
- Only 48% of First Nations schools have fully equipped technology, and only 67% report

<sup>13</sup> Assembly of First Nations, Fact Sheet Post Secondary Education

<sup>14</sup> Centre for the Study of Living Standards, Investing in Aboriginal Education in Canada: An Economic Perspective, February 2010, page iv

<sup>15</sup> Assembly of First Nations, Fact Sheet – Quality of Life of First Nations, June 2011

<sup>16</sup> Regional Health Survey, Quick Facts for Leadership, 2008

<sup>17</sup> Regional Health Survey, Quick Facts for Leadership, 2008

<sup>18</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results



good connectivity.

## Labour Force Participation

- The most commonly reported source of income for First Nations was from paid employment (54.4%), followed by social assistance (38.9%), and child tax benefits (32.6%).<sup>19</sup>

## Future Projections

- In 2026, the Aboriginal population is projected to make up 4.6 percent of the Canadian population.
- Aboriginal population will account for 19.9 percent of labour force growth and 22.1 percent of employment growth over the 2006–2026 period.<sup>20</sup>
- The Aboriginal population is expected to make up 12.7% of the labour force growth between 2006 and 2026.<sup>21</sup>

## Funding

- Funding has been identified as the MAIN challenge by over 55% of First Nations schools.<sup>22</sup>
- First Nations schools are funded under an outdated Band Operated Funding Formula (BOFF) created in 1987. BOFF does not include essential education components such as technology, First Nations language immersion, sports and recreation, student data management systems or libraries.
- Funding for First Nations schools has been subject to a 2% cap on annual expenditure increases since the mid-1990's. As a consequence, funding has not kept pace with the needs of a growing population, nor has it kept pace with increasing educational costs such as teacher salaries or school supplies and equipment.
- Provincial school districts often charge "out of province" tuition rates for students from First Nations. These rates are often double the amount provided for students attending First Nations schools.
- Significant investments in education are required to realize the full potential and economic impact of Aboriginal youth, particularly given Canada's labour shortages and increasing need for a highly skilled and competitive workforce.

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<sup>19</sup> Regional Health Survey, Quick Facts for Leadership, 2008

<sup>20</sup> Centre for the Study of Living Standards, Investing in Aboriginal Education in Canada: An Economic Perspective, February 2010, page iv

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Diagnostic Report on First Nation and Inuit Post-Secondary Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, page 4

<sup>22</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results

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## Community Strengths

- Despite the challenges faced by First Nations, community members have identified many successes and community strengths<sup>23</sup>: family Values, traditional Activities, communities working together, education, and strong Leadership.
- First Nations have identified many successes within their schools, including<sup>24</sup>: academic achievement, language and cultural programming, student attendance, student leadership, and sports and recreation.

## Treaty and Inherent Right to Education

- Section 35 (1) of the Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes Aboriginal and Treaty rights and affirms First Nations inherent right to self-government including the creation of laws and systems for the provision of lifelong learning for First Nations populations.
- First Nations expect the Crown, not only to recognize their jurisdiction to lifelong learning, but also to “fulfill their Constitutional, Treaty and international obligations to First Nations peoples by supporting the design and implementation of First Nations comprehensive learning systems with adequate and sustainable resourcing”<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Regional Health Survey, Quick Facts for Leadership, 2008

<sup>24</sup> 2011 AFN School Survey Results

<sup>25</sup> First Nations Control of First Nations Education, page 20