

First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education

A Discussion Guide



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PURPOSE

This discussion guide is designed to provide a background on First Nations elementary and secondary education issues and lay the ground work for discussions on possible approaches to First Nations education legislation.

This is an opportunity to share ideas from a First Nations perspective on what is required to address student outcomes and ensure a quality education that is balanced, equitable, linguistically and culturally appropriate.

This guide is intended to address First Nations education from an elementary and secondary perspective. It is understood that education is lifelong and that higher education, although critical to any meaningful First Nation education dialogue, is not included in this current undertaking.

We have attempted to provide an overview of K-12 education within the context of First Nations jurisdictional perspectives. This includes funding issues, partnerships, management structures and discussion of features of First Nations realities that would impact any legislative efforts. It is understood that jurisdiction will be inclusive of clear definitions of roles for First Nations, provinces, territories and the Government of Canada. The Treaty and inherent right to education will be integral components that frame the discussions envisioned herein.

We invite First Nations parents, students, leaders, Elders and teachers to tell us your views based on the questions posed at the end of this guide. We encourage regional and national organizations, provinces and territories to submit viewpoints as well.

Your submissions may be made either at meetings that will be held across the country or online at <http://www.firstnationseducation.ca/>.



BACKGROUND

First Nation leadership across Canada has confirmed the priority of First Nation education and are dedicated to ensuring that every First Nation child has the opportunity to succeed through culturally and linguistically appropriate education. In advancing this priority, First Nations have set out a broad policy of First Nation control of First Nation education, reflecting First Nation rights, responsibilities and an indigenous worldview of lifelong learning.

Given the importance of First Nation education, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) announced on December 9, 2010, that a national process will be undertaken for First Nations to explore and provide advice on the development of options, including legislation, to improve elementary and secondary education outcomes for First Nation children who live on reserve.

This process is being undertaken in order for First Nations to explore and give advice on the development of options, including legislation and potential features of legislation, to improve elementary and secondary education outcomes for First Nation children who live on reserve. Topics include, among other things: governance and accountability; roles and responsibilities; and similarities/differences between First Nations and neighbouring provincial schools in key areas such as education programming, supports, results, funding, language and culture.

A national roundtable session, eight regional focused discussions and the development of options, including legislation, to improve elementary and secondary education for First Nation students on reserve will be undertaken. Participants will be invited to reflect on the range of experiences and circumstances within respective regions through a variety of mechanisms.

First Nation leaders, parents, students, Elders, teachers, provinces and all those with an interest in providing input and who wish to share ideas on how to enhance the education system and outcomes of First Nation students are encouraged to participate.

We envision broad engagement which will include:

- parallel engagement and outreach activities by the AFN and INAC;
- possible key meetings and/or site visits;
- web-enabled dialogue;
- submission of written reports and statements; and,
- previous studies and recommendations related to First Nations education.

A progress report will be prepared mid-way through the process and a final report with recommendations is anticipated in the fall of 2011, to be presented to the AFN National Chief and the Minister of INAC.

EDUCATION VISION

Education is the key to the social and economic strength of a community. Strong First Nation communities require people and economies to build sustainable futures and reduce the disparities that exist between First Nations and mainstream society. Lack of education results in the marginalization of First Nations individually and collectively at the political, social and economic level and this reality must be addressed.

Our vision is that 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 and ensures that all First Nations learners have the opportunity to achieve their personal aspirations within comprehensive lifelong learning systems.

First Nations peoples understand that learning is a formal and informal, instinctive, and experiential lifelong journey, encompassing early childhood learning, elementary and secondary school, career, vocational and technical training, post-secondary education (PSE) and adult learning. The primary role of holistically balanced First Nations 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 individual potential in any setting they choose.

First Nations assert their right and responsibility to direct and make decisions regarding all matters related to First Nations learning. Provision for, and access to, lifelong learning is an Inherent and Treaty right of all First Nations peoples. Governments must work together to ensure that this lifelong journey is built upon experiences that embrace both Indigenous and mainstream western knowledge systems and that First Nations have access to the supports necessary to achieve successful education outcomes at all stages.¹



“Let us put our minds together to see what future we can make for our children.”

– Tatanka Iyotanka, 1876



OVERVIEW

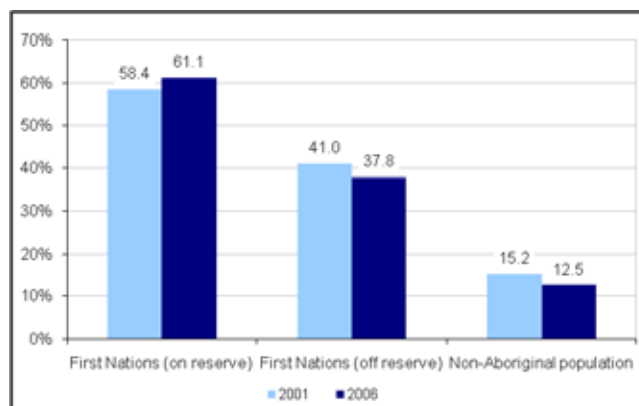
Because education shapes the minds and values of First Nations young people, it is vitally important that First Nations governments have jurisdiction over educational programs which have such a lasting impact.

The education of our children is a fundamental tool in developing and strengthening self-government in our communities. *Yet our children are at risk.* They are at risk of poverty, overcrowding, violence and racism. The following table indicates the risk factor categories, as well as the characteristics of risk:

Characteristics of Risk for First Nations Students	
Risk Factor Category	Characteristics of Risk
Community Environment	Poverty, high unemployment, inadequate housing, cultural devaluation, culture and language barriers, low educational levels, low achievement expectations from society
Family Environment	Financial strain; large family; overcrowded home; unemployed or underemployed parents; parents with little education; single female parent without family/other support; family violence or conflict; frequent family moves; low parent/child contact
Vulnerability of the child	Child of an alcohol, tobacco or drug abuser; birth defects and physical disabilities; physical or mental health problems
Early social and emotional problems	Learning disabilities, emotional problems, inability to cope with stress, low self-esteem, aggressiveness
Adolescent Problems	School failure and drop out; at risk of dropping out; violent acts; drug use and abuse; teenage pregnancy/teen parenthood; unemployed/under-employed; suicidal

According to the 2006 census, 61% of First Nations young adults aged 20 to 24 had not completed high school, compared with a rate of 13% of non-Aboriginal young adults in Canada. Furthermore, the high school incompleteness rate has slightly increased from 58% since 2001 for First Nations young people living on reserve.²

Proportion of First Nation people aged 20 to 24 years with no high-school diploma, Canada, 2001 & 2006³





High 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.

According to schools and enrolment data for 2004-2005 the population of First Nations students attending Band-operated, federal and provincial schools were as follows:

Schools and Enrolment for 2004-2005 ⁴

Province/Region/ Territory	Band-Operated		Provincial/Private		Federal		Totals	
	Schools	Estimated Pop ⁵	Schools	Estimated Pop	Schools	Pop	Schools	Estimated Pop
Atlantic	15	2,696	109	2,704	0	0	124	5,400
Quebec	40	7,257	180	8,855	0	0	220	16,112
Ontario	113	12,881	337	7,676	6	1,620	456	22,177
Manitoba	77	17,698	114	4,765	0	0	191	22,463
Saskatchewan	82	16,295	137	3,461	0	0	219	19,756
Alberta	61	10,707	253	6,958	1	99	315	17,764
British Columbia	119	5,238	603	12,506	0	0	722	17,744
Yukon	0	0	3	46	0	0	3	46
Outside Canada	0	0	9	...	0	0	9	0
Totals	507	72,772	1570	46,971	7	1719	2259	121,462

Notes: ⁶

THE INHERENT RIGHT TO EDUCATION

First Nations in Canada are very diverse. There are more than sixty distinct First Nations languages spoken in Canada, contained within eleven different language families. European settlement occurred in Canada through Treaties with numerous First Nations. Included in First Nations treaties is the right to education. Treaty and inherent rights are recognized and affirmed in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of Canada*.

The *Indian Act* specifies a wide range of authorities by the federal government with respect to First Nations. This includes determining who is an “Indian,” what is a “band,” identifies “reserves,” and outlines federal authority in First Nations education. The current Act articulates the federal responsibility to “establish, operate and maintain schools...” and enter into agreements with other jurisdictions and entities for the purposes of educating First Nations people. The section does not, however, include provisions for agreements with First Nations authorities.

In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood released the policy paper “Indian Control of Indian Education.” It was in response to the 1969 federal White Paper which called for the elimination of First Nations peoples in law. In 1974 the federal government response was to support local administration of First Nations schools, while maintaining overall budgetary, policy and program control.

In 1986 the Auditor General of Canada noted that “the relevant sections of the *Indian Act* under which education to Indians is provided do not define education or provide any direction for its delivery. This means there is no firm basis on which a coherent and consistent policy on education can be formulated.” Furthermore “there was little Indian involvement in the design, delivery, administration, control, review and evaluation of provincial education programs as they relate to Indian children.”



In 1988 the four year national review of First Nations education *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future* called for the recognition and protection of aboriginal rights through a constitutional amendment. In the absence of a constitutional amendment, the report recommended the enactment of federal legislation which explicitly recognizes the First Nations inherent right to self-government as follows:

This legislation would recognize the right of First Nations to exercise jurisdiction over their education and mandate federal, provincial and territorial governments to vacate the field of First Nations education. No delegation of authority over First Nations governments is acceptable as a substitute for First Nations jurisdiction recognized and affirmed in the Constitution of Canada (vol. 1 pg 67)

In 2000, the Auditor General of Canada identified a growing gap in the rate of educational attainment of First Nations people compared to the Canadian population. The Auditor General noted that “Indian and Northern Affairs Canada cannot demonstrate that it meets its stated objective to assist First Nations students living on reserves in achieving their educational needs and aspirations. For example, the Department does not have the necessary assurance that First Nations students are receiving culturally appropriate education.... Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, together with First Nations and based on the needs and aspirations of First Nations, should develop and implement an action plan with targets to close the education gap, without delay.”

CURRENT STATUS

Today there are more than 518 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 518 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.

In 2006 of the \$1.2 billion in federal funding for First Nations K-12 education (excluding capital funding), an estimated 57% (or \$689.4 million for 70,000 students) was allocated to support First Nations schools. Over 41% (or \$487.3 million for 44,000 students) of the remaining funding was allocated to support First Nations students attending provincial and private schools – most of which was transferred to provincial school boards through the many tuition agreements with First Nations communities. Approximately 1% (or \$12.4 million) was allocated to the five federal schools in Canada, while an additional 1% (or \$10.9 million) went to INAC’s headquarters office to cover administrative costs.⁷

“I believe an Indian education system that incorporates the strengths of our traditional learning patterns practiced by our Indian governments long before European contact must form the basis of an Indian education system that will meet the requirements of the treaties with the crown.”

– Wheeler, W., (2001). Thoughts on the responsibilities for indigenous/native studies.
In the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Brandon, MB

Distribution of First Nations Education Funding⁸



First Nations schools are funded under an outdated Band Operated Funding Formula that was developed in 1988. Although the objective of INAC's First Nations Elementary/Secondary Education Program is to "provide eligible students living on-reserve with elementary and secondary education programs comparable to those that are required in provincial schools," it is clear that the outdated funding levels generated from the national formula can no longer support a comparable elementary/secondary program.⁹

In 1996 the federal government placed a cap of 2% on annual expenditure increases in First Nations education. This is despite both a steady growth in inflation and the First Nations population over the same period. Combined, these two factors add up to a required average annual increase of 6.3% *since 1996* for First Nations education. In contrast, funding increases from provincial and territorial school systems averaged 4.1% *per year*, despite a steady *decline* in enrolment.

For INAC's entire First Nations elementary and secondary education budget (totalling \$1.56 billion in 2009-2010), there was a funding shortfall of \$620 million in 2009-2010 beyond the 2% cap and a cumulative funding shortfall of almost \$3.2 billion since 1996.

According to the 1988 Band Operated Funding Formula services included in the formula are as follows:¹⁰

- teachers
- paraprofessionals
- administrative support
- other services
- professional development
- education leave
- cultural education
- special education
- advice and assistance
- other costs
- First Nation boards/committees/authorities



Items specifically *not included* in the Band Operated Funding Formula according to the 1988 funding document include:¹¹

- Instructional services – provincial schools
- Instructional support services – provincial schools
- Student accommodation services
- Student financial services
- Student transportation
- Guidance and counselling (elementary/secondary)
- Facility rental for education purposes (included in Band Support Funding)

Basic education governance services *not included* in the formula include:

- Low cost special education additional costs i.e., enrichment, remedial, transportation
- Native language curriculum development
- Native language immersion/language of instruction
- Transportation
- Teacher training/enhanced professional development
- Native teacher pension fund
- Information technology¹²

Canada has an international obligation through treaties, S.35 of the *Constitution Act* and numerous international instruments to support First Nations education. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was endorsed by the government of Canada on November 12, 2010. The Declaration calls upon state governments such as Canada to work with First Nation peoples to develop and implement effective measures to ensure First Nations are empowered 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.” It also calls for measures to uphold First Nations rights to language and identity. Article 13 calls upon States to take effective measures to protect the right of First Nations peoples:

“to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing system and, literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.”

Canada also has a responsibility to uphold First Nations rights to language and identity as a signatory to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Among other matters, the *Convention* confirms that all children have the right to an identity without unlawful interference, and commits Canada to providing education in a manner that affirms First Nations cultural identities, languages and values.

FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS

First Nations choose to operate their own schools because it is an inherent right. It is part of the Aboriginal right to self government. This right has never been surrendered. The *Charter of International Human Rights* clearly articulates the right of parents to “choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”¹³



The challenges of First Nations schools, however, are:

- Running a distinct set of schools, especially when most are small, is expensive;
- Students in public schools generally have access to a greater range of services.¹⁴

Within this context First Nations elect to operate their own schools despite these challenges because:

- Controlling education is an essential part of self-government. It allows the Nation to determine how education meets the needs of its children, and its needs as a Nation.
- The culture, history and language of the Nation must be central to the education its children receive. The greatest depth of understanding, expertise and commitment in these areas lies within the Nation.
- The public education system has largely failed to meet the needs of First Nation children. In spite of notable exceptions, and the good will of many educators, the overall pattern remains discouraging.
- Rather than leading to better understanding between First Nations and Anglo-Canadian cultures and peoples, public schools often reinforce inaccurate but widely held stereotypes and marginalize First Nations' cultures and children.¹⁵

“By treating Aboriginal peoples as if they are the same as non-Aboriginal Canadians, Canada engages in systemic discrimination. For example, although the Haudenosaunee are the only non-state people to be recognized by the United Nations as independent agents, rather than NGOs, Canada denies they have a distinct identity as a people and denies their nationhood, or even that they have a distinct worldview.”

– Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Oct. 2000

EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

According to the *Caledon Institute of Social Policy* school boards or education authorities perform two types of functions in the school system: they are the executive manager of schools *and* a service provider for schools. Education authorities generally oversee the human resources within their school system, negotiating contracts and the terms of employment for teachers and providing for stable employment with opportunities for professional training and advancement. Education authorities develop the leadership that is critical to successful schools by nurturing a cadre of principals, usually out of the ranks of teachers, with experience and knowledge. They also administer the finances of the school system within their jurisdiction and the allocations to individual schools, including responsibility in some provinces for raising a portion of their own revenue. In addition to management functions, education authorities or school boards provide a range of centralized services. The service function is especially valuable where economies of scale require a shared specialty among many schools, such as speech therapy.¹⁶



The Institute describes the kinds of responsibilities inherent to a school board's authority. For example, a typical board would normally in its course of business be responsible for:

- determining the number, size and location of schools
- building, equipping and furnishing schools
- providing education programs that meet the needs of the school community, including needs for special education
- prudent management of the funds allocated ...to support all board activities, including education programs for elementary and secondary school students, and the building and maintaining of schools
- preparing an annual budget
- supervising the operation of schools and their teaching programs
- developing policy for safe arrival programs for elementary schools
- establishing a school council at each school
- hiring teachers and other staff
- helping teachers improve their teaching practices
- teacher performance
- approving schools' textbook and learning materials choices, based on the list of approved materials...
- enforcing the student attendance [requirements]
- ensuring schools abide by [all requirements] and regulations.

The overall governance of education systems requires the exercise of, at minimum, the following authorities:

- establishing overall budget requirements for the education system
- strategic multi-year planning for all levels of education
- determining regulations and policies governing the organization of the system, including schools and school boards/districts/authorities
- establishing standards for teacher certification and teacher education programs
- researching, developing and testing curriculum documents for school and school board/district/authority use
- data collection and research and statistical analyses
- a broad variety of regulations regarding texts, teaching materials, special education, student evaluations and tests
- providing professional recommendations and legal advice to the government.

“It is important...to establish a variety of indicators of success and tools of measurement, beyond performance on standardized tests. One size does not fit all; there are many kinds of learners, many kinds of learning, and many ways of demonstrating our accomplishments. Without better research and data, we don't know where we are going, where we want to go, and if we are getting there.”

—Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, *Moving Forward in Aboriginal Education: Proceedings of a National Roundtable*, 2005



If First Nations are to have a school *system*, and not just a collection of schools, *full control and ownership of schools must be vested in First Nations* education authorities or school boards. These systems are essential specialized agencies that are *concerned solely with education*.

First Nations governments and education authorities exercise many of these authorities, however the constraints of the *Indian Act*, outdated federal policies and programs, and severe underfunding have failed to provide adequate support for First Nations education systems and, by extension, have failed to provide adequate support for First Nations control of First Nations education.



First Nations can demonstrate how they are implementing their education systems, however changes are needed in law and policy to ensure First Nations can provide a high quality, culturally-relevant education experience to First Nations peoples with equitable programs and services to those which exist in the mainstream school system in Canada.

EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Canadian education systems typically have three organizational levels on which education services are offered.

1. **First-level services** are directly related to the operation of a school (i.e. teaching, school administration), and are provided directly for the students by teachers, principals and professional and support staff.
2. **Second-level services** are services that are directly offered to first-level professionals and generally include: pedagogical support; professional development support; and administrative support.
3. **Third-level services** are typically provided by Ministries of Education and include broader education services such as the development of regulations, standards, certification and codes of conduct, as well as the setting of school curriculum.

Despite delivering a chronically underfunded First Nations education program, the Federal Government demands that First Nations meet the education standards established by the provincial or territorial education authorities in which they reside. The authorities under the *Indian Act* which enable this state of affairs are essentially the same authorities which were in place to manage residential schools in the 1950s. Structural change must occur to enable the emergence of First Nations education systems which are focussed on high quality, culturally relevant education for First Nations students. It is essential that structural change include a guarantee of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding, equitable in treatment to provincial schools and education systems.

Although numerous experts and politicians calling for the development of First Nations-controlled education systems, there is no official funding to support First Nations education systems.^{17 18}



As a result, the lack of support for First Nations education systems has drastically affected the learning environments, and ultimately student outcomes, in First Nations schools. Teachers are not as well supported as their counterparts in provincial schools, where ongoing professional development improves teaching methods. The lack of administrative and technical support for First Nations schools pulls school principals, and often teachers, away from their role as educators.¹⁹

Although it is difficult to determine the exact costs needed to create and maintain effective First Nations systems, the First Nations Education Council estimates that a funding commitment of \$431 million over five years would be required for all First Nations across Canada to become members of a First Nations education system.

Of course, many First Nations education systems already exist, such as the First Nations Education Council in Quebec, the First Nations Education Steering Committee in British Columbia and the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey in Nova Scotia. However, these systems have limited and fragile budgets and are often unable to provide services at a level comparable to that of provincial education systems.

First Nations languages deserve official status within Canada, constitutional recognition and accompanying legislative protection. The federal government is obligated to provide adequate resources to First Nations to ensure the development of language structures; curriculum materials; First Nations language teachers; resource centres; and immersion programs. First Nation language is lifelong and most critical from pre-school through secondary in order to imprint language thinking and skills at an early age. First Nations support and protect the status of aboriginal languages as primary languages in many First Nations communities.

First Nations have developed language policies in education and these policies must be acknowledged and implemented in all schools serving First Nation students as well as protected legislatively.

“We believe that Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal communities must have the opportunity to implement their vision of education. Aboriginal children are entitled to learn and achieve in an environment that supports their development as whole individuals. They need to value their heritage and identity in planning for the future. Education programs, carefully designed and implemented with parental involvement, can prepare Aboriginal children to participate in two worlds with a choice of futures. Aboriginal people should expect equity of results from education in Canada. This will not happen if the education system continues unchanged. For significant change to occur, Aboriginal people must have the authority to organize their own education and to influence how their children are educated.”

– Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3, Chapter 5, 1.5



JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction refers to legal power or authority, and includes the rights to make laws. In 1988 the *AFN Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction over Education* which accompanied *Tradition and Education* defined jurisdiction as follows:

Jurisdiction means the inherent right of each sovereign First Nation to exercise its authority, develop its policies and laws, and control financial and other resources for its citizens (p 46).

Jurisdiction, in its more general sense, can be inherent. Constitutionally based or delegated.²⁰ Delegated jurisdiction is authority that has been granted by another level of government. For example, the bylaw making power of First Nations under the *Indian Act* is generally characterized as *delegated jurisdiction*, especially given the Minister's power to disallow bylaws.²¹

BARRIERS TO JURISDICTION

Mechanisms are required to address barriers to full jurisdiction over First Nations Education. These barriers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Process** – INAC's devolution process was not well defined and failed to provide the opportunity for First Nations input. First Nations governments negotiated and signed education agreements with INAC and undertook contractual obligations to provide education services. The lack of involvement of First Nations in the development and implementation of INAC programs and policies has hindered local jurisdiction over education.²²
- **Funding** – adequate funding has not been provided for First Nations education or the transfer of educational jurisdiction to First Nations. Few First Nations have access to the negotiations and payment processes of the federal government. First Nations have little to no input to resourcing decisions, budget negotiations and cost sharing formulae.
- **Provinces/Territories** – existing relationships between the provinces/territories and First Nations has been as follows:
 - The federal government has purchased educational services from provincial/territorial education departments for First Nations attending those schools. INAC has not limited the cost of student tuition and services paid to provincial and territorial schools but has severely limited the financial support to First Nations schools.
 - There have been discrepancies between the tuition paid to provinces/territories and First Nations with First Nations receiving less.
 - Provincial/territorial education has failed to be relevant to the development needs and interests of First Nations communities. There have been problems of integration where First Nations students have been required to change to fit into existing systems.
 - First Nations are required to conform to provincial/territorial standards so that First Nations students can transfer to provincial systems of education.



“There is, in fact, no education system for the First Nations. We have an agreement according to which the federal government provides funds to First Nations communities and they manage their own affairs. But there are no national norms, no determined courses, no teaching certificate required. All the other children in the country benefit from a legal protection in the field of education. The only children deprived of this security are First Nations children living on the reserves.”

- Jim Prentice, former Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs (2006)

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Preconditions for success for First Nations education organizations and features for legislative development must include:

- A structure that is community driven
- Education accountability to parents and community
- Sensitivity to culture and language education requirements
- Flexibility in order to meet regional or cultural variations
- Operational e.g. decision-making, transparency and financial accountability
- A student-centred mission
- A capacity to expand over time.

According to current research on knowledge, skills and abilities competencies the literature indicates that literacy is complex in a knowledge based society and literacy competencies extend beyond reading and writing to extracting and critically analyzing information to solve problems in different settings such as school, advanced education, work and in the community.²³ Additional preconditions for success include a vision for enhanced First Nations student outcomes. These include:

- Learner centred and responsiveness to the strengths, abilities and needs of individuals.
- Acknowledging and valuing language, culture, spirituality and the traditions of learners, families and communities.
- Program delivery through collaborative partnerships.
- Supporting innovation and excellence in teaching and learning.
- Sharing responsibility and accountability.

The benefits over time of enhanced First Nations education governance systems include:

- Education accountability to parents and leaders
- Education research and development
- Effective curriculum adaptation
- Setting education goals appropriate to First Nations needs, expectations, unique characteristics, socio economic challenges and geography
- Monitoring success (or failures) and developing strategies to respond
- Effective evaluation systems for schools, teachers, administrations and others.²⁴



“If decades of Aboriginal poverty and marginalization are to be reversed, there is an urgent need to re-examine what is understood as First Nations, Inuit and Métis learning and how it is measured and monitored. Comprehensive and accurate information can and must contribute to the development of policies and programs that meet the expressed needs and aspirations of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. Most importantly, such information empowers the Aboriginal learner, the family, community and education system to effect meaningful change.”

– CCL 2007 – Redefining How Success is Measured in FN, Inuit and Metis Learning.

The quality of First Nations education is based on traditional values which retain and incorporate the principles of wholeness, order, balance and respect for the natural world. These values are contained in high quality First Nations education. Quality First Nation education must reflect:

- Parental engagement and commitment to incorporating local cultural values and traditions in the schools
- Clearly written policies and standards for the operation of the school
- An organizational structure that is supportive of the goals and philosophy of the education system which promotes interaction with the community membership
- Quality curriculum that is value based and addresses student learning styles
- Long-term planning and ongoing evaluation of programs and materials in schools and as a measure for improving and reporting results
- Adequate resourcing for student services, long range planning, infrastructure and to address the range of systems related costs in terms of supports, services and standards.

Implementation of First Nations jurisdiction over education involves many changes in current practices of both First Nations and the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Implementation requires the recognition of the sovereign status of First Nations and reform of federal policy and legislation. The process of negotiation between the federal government and First Nations must be supported by a structure acceptable to all parties. Each First Nation must assess their needs related to exercising jurisdiction.²⁵

Your feedback and thoughts are important to us and we encourage you to share your important views with us.



The themes below will be used to guide discussions in roundtable sessions and those participating in the online engagement.

1. The approach to federal legislation that would help make quality education more accessible to First Nation students and their families

Areas considered important to explore:

- Legislation that is national in scope and that applies to the education of First Nation children on reserve
- Legislation that enables and builds on provincial and regional efforts that can improve First Nation education
- Legislation that enables each First Nation to make its own laws regarding education
- Other suggestions

2. Requirements that should be in First Nation legislation to achieve effective management and delivery

Areas considered important to explore:

- Governance and accountability requirements
- A First Nation delivery model where a regional education authority is responsible for the management of reserve schools
- Other suggestions

3. The most important features to include in First Nation education legislation so that First Nation students would have access to quality education

Areas considered important to explore:

- Roles and responsibilities of governments, First Nations school boards and/or education authorities, schools, and parents, in how education will be managed and delivered
- Predictable financing of education
- Curriculum and program development and delivery
- Student and school evaluations
- Teacher and staff hiring, accreditation and evaluation
- School environment regulations and standards
- Other suggestions

4. Specific features of legislation that could best address the unique needs of First Nation students

Areas considered important to explore:

- How language and culture will be addressed
- How First Nation control will be maintained
- Other features



5. Tools other than legislation that would help to ensure that First Nation students have access to quality education

Areas considered important to explore:

- Strengthened financial arrangements
- Strengthened partnership arrangements
- School- or student-focused programming
- Other suggestions

6. As a parent, areas that would make the most significant difference in the success of your child's education

Areas considered important to explore:

- Standards for literacy, numeracy, and attendance
- Better teachers
- Focus on language and culture
- Opportunity for more parental involvement in school
- Other suggestions



ENDNOTES

- ¹ AFN First Nations Control of First Nations Education, It's Our Vision, It's Our Time, July 2010
- ² Canadian Council on Learning (2009). The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success. Ottawa, December 2009.
- ³ Statistics Canada, "Labour Force Activity (8), Aboriginal Identity (8), Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (14), Area of Residence (6), Age Groups (12A) and Sex (3) for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2006
- ⁴ INAC (2005). Excel Table NCR # 429054 v.1 by Rutledge, L., provided on request from the Education sector of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- ⁵ INAC (2005). Elementary/Secondary Education Enrolment Statistics 96-97 to 04-05. Microsoft Excel Worksheet Estimates, prepared by Matthew Chan, INAC
- ⁶ *Note: The population numbers include some self-government agreements. Some of the population numbers for self-governing agreements such as James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey and the Nisga'a Final Agreement are estimates for 2004-2005. Other FN self-government agreement students for Yukon, Mianpukek, and Sebelt are not included.*
- ⁷ FNEC Paper on First Nations Education Funding, 2009 pg 10
- ⁸ Ibid pg. 13
- ⁹ Ibid
- ¹⁰ Ibid
- ¹¹ VanEvery-Albert, C. A Review of the Band Operated Funding Formula, Ontario, pg. 4
- ¹² Ibid pg 5
- ¹³ Postl, B., BC First Nations Schools Funding Analysis: 2003-2004 School Year, Victoria 2005
- ¹⁴ Ibid pg 4
- ¹⁵ Ibid
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