



ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
A PLACE FOR ABORIGINAL INSTITUTES

POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER
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First Nations Education Steering Committee



Executive Summary

This paper highlights issues related to the formal recognition of Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes as a critical component of the post-secondary education system of British Columbia (BC). The Province of BC has made a commitment to improving the access, retention, and completion rates of Aboriginal students in post-secondary education and training, and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development is now considering a new, integrated model for the BC post-secondary education system that will create space for the recognition, inclusion, and support of Aboriginal controlled and governed institutes in BC.

Why Is Support for Aboriginal-Controlled Post-Secondary Institutes Important?

A large gap exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation rates in post-secondary education, reflecting a number of critical issues. For example, there is generally inadequate involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision-making, limits in the availability of relevant and culturally appropriate programs and services in mainstream settings, and a number of unique challenges for many Aboriginal students.

In order to address the challenges that exist, Aboriginal communities have established a wide variety of community-based, Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes. These Aboriginal institutes offer a broad spectrum of courses and programs that include some combination of college and university programs, Adult Basic Education, Aboriginal language and culture instruction, occupation specific training, and a broad spectrum of lifespan learning programs.

None of the Aboriginal-controlled institutes in BC are private, for-profit operations, and only one is a part of the provincial public post-secondary education system. Authority for Aboriginal institutes generally rests with the founding Nation(s), which is consistent with the principles of Aboriginal jurisdiction and self-determination. The institutes are governed by community-based independent boards or by Chief and Council.

Aboriginal Institute Strengths

Aboriginal institutes understand that an education with a strong cultural foundation is critical for student success and community growth. Therefore, cultural activities and values

are integrated into the fabric of the institutes. In addition, Aboriginal institutes are often at the forefront of efforts to retain and revitalize Aboriginal languages.

Ensuring that their students are taking high quality and transferable programs and courses is also a high priority for Aboriginal Nations, as they recognize that their students must be able to use their completed courses to pursue other opportunities. Accordingly, a majority of the programs and courses are offered through agreements with public post-secondary institutes to ensure that they are fully accredited and transferable to other post-secondary institutes.

It seems that a relatively large proportion of the students enrolled in Aboriginal institutes must deal with considerable emotional, financial, and family challenges while attending school. Aboriginal institutes therefore provide students with an extraordinary level of support. To do so, Aboriginal institutes teach life-skills, arrange for peer and community mentors, facilitate interagency support networks, and emphasize personal attention to each student.

There is also a very strong community component to Aboriginal institutes. The institutes contribute to both individual and community capacity building and they are able to respond directly to priorities and training needs identified by their communities. Aboriginal communities also contribute greatly to their institutes, including through involvement in student support services, the preparation of teaching materials, and program planning.

Challenges for Aboriginal Institutes

In spite of their strengths, however, Aboriginal institutes are struggling for recognition. The institutes generally do not have access to secure, long-term funding; most are funded on a program-by-program basis only. Limited funding means the institutes cannot always offer an ideal range of courses and there is a lack of resources for facilities, curriculum development, and learning resources.

Why Should the Provincial Government Support Aboriginal Institutes?

Aboriginal institutes support student success and offer programs that reflect the distinct perspectives and values of Aboriginal peoples. However, the institutes will not supplant the services of non-Aboriginal institutions, which many Aboriginal students will continue to attend. In fact, their respective strengths and unique contributions suggest that cooperation between Aboriginal and mainstream institutions is essential.

But in order for Aboriginal institutes to continue providing strong programming, there is a need for greater overall recognition of Aboriginal institutes and the important work that they do. In turn, there are several important benefits that would result from a greater integration of Aboriginal institutes within the public post-secondary education sector.

Stronger Aboriginal institutes will increase the chances that more Aboriginal students are fully prepared to enter and achieve success in public post-secondary settings, and to then

contribute to their own communities and broader society. In addition, Aboriginal institutes can fulfill an important role in promoting and exchanging ideas and programs to better support Aboriginal learners.

Public recognition will foster a wider perception of Aboriginal institutes as legitimate and effective, which will help the institutes to address concerns related to funding inequities and ensure that Aboriginal institutes are accorded proper respect in the establishment of partnership arrangements. Greater funding will enable the institutes to develop appropriate curricula and learning resources, particularly in regard to language and culture. More funding will allow the institutes to address their staffing and program coordination challenges, and to build their student support services.

Provincial government support also is consistent with existing government commitments regarding Aboriginal jurisdiction and Aboriginal education. The BC government and Aboriginal Nations have signed a number of critical agreements that promote sharing, cooperation, and a mutual commitment to improved education for Aboriginal peoples.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is significant overlap in the goals of both the provincial and Aboriginal governments. Four of the key goals include the following.

1. Increasing the participation and success of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training.
2. Increasing or improving opportunities for student mobility.
3. Building the capacity of those entering the labour market and the labour market itself.
4. Increasing the relevancy of post-secondary education to the labour market.

Complementing those four key goals is a mutual commitment to the following issues.

- Supporting quality and respectful research
- Promoting improved data collection and sharing systems for evaluation and accountability.
- Continuing to focus on improved access and retention for Aboriginal students.
- Ensuring full accountability to students, Aboriginal communities, the public, and funding agencies.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representatives have agreed that those goals can only be pursued through the recognition of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes as valuable and credible places of learning.

Recommendation #1:

The Province of British Columbia should create policy and legislation that establishes a more integrated post-secondary education system in BC by recognizing the unique and critical role of Aboriginal institutes.

Governance: Within an integrated BC post-secondary education system, there will be a continuum of Aboriginal institute governance structures, ranging from provincial authority to full First Nations jurisdictional control as laid out in ratified treaties or self-government agreements. Between provincial authority and First Nations jurisdiction, a variety of governance structures will provide for Nation-based Aboriginal control.

Quality Assurance: In order for Aboriginal institutes to gain the recognition they are seeking, including mechanisms for students to transfer from their institutes to public post-secondary institutions, there must be an appropriate quality assurance system.

Recommendation #2:

Recognizing the need for academic quality assurance, which will facilitate student mobility, efficiency of the system, as well as mutual accountability, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) will work with Aboriginal institutes to create an effective and thorough quality assurance system based upon high standards and rigorous review.

Partnerships: Aboriginal institutes currently work in partnership with other organizations and public institutes for the implementation of programs and services. Aboriginal institutes are committed to continuing and strengthening these partnerships.

Recommendation #3:

The Province of British Columbia should support the establishment of effective, respectful partnerships between Aboriginal institutes and public post-secondary institutions through policy development, support for research of best practices, and the promotion of dialogue and exchange. These efforts should include mechanisms for a widespread sharing of expertise and resources to enhance the effectiveness of the new integrated post-secondary education system.

Funding: Both the federal and provincial government can play a key role in adequately supporting Aboriginal institutes. Coordination of efforts is to the benefit of all parties concerned – Aboriginal, the provincial, and the federal governments.

Recommendation #4:

Aboriginal representatives and the provincial government should engage the federal government in a review of the respective contributions and roles of Canada, BC, and Aboriginal Nations within an integrated BC post-secondary education system.

In terms of the BC provincial government, this policy development offers an opportunity to work with Aboriginal communities in a collaborative, new way. Specifically, with support from the provincial government, IAHLA can work with Aboriginal institutes to facilitate the creation of programming “hubs” or “centres of excellence,” strategically using resources to help each institute develop in-depth, quality programming in specific topic areas – with the work complementing the programs being offered by other Aboriginal and public institutions. In doing so, the provincial government can help to ensure the quality of Aboriginal institute programming and ease student transitions by supporting the institutes in their efforts to focus on issues of particular importance to their students and communities.

Recommendation #5:

Aboriginal institutes in British Columbia should have access to funding from the Province of British Columbia that will strengthen their programs and enhance their contributions to an integrated provincial post-secondary education system. In particular, funding should be provided to support Aboriginal institutes in developing their capacity as post-secondary programming “hubs,” enabling them to develop specific expertise in areas of critical importance to Aboriginal communities and peoples.

In addition to those with the provincial and federal governments, other partnerships will be developed.

Accountability: Aboriginal institutes are fully committed to accountability and transparency in their operations – primarily to their communities and students, as well as to funding agencies and the general public. This is a commitment that is shared by public post-secondary institutions in BC. Accordingly, a critical component of a stronger accountability framework is the collection and sharing of quality data to monitor success.

Recommendation #6:

The “Provincial Education Number” (PEN) utilized by the Ministry of Education and soon to be used by the public post-secondary institutions should be used throughout the new integrated model of the BC post-secondary education system. Using a consistent data collection mechanism will ensure that the resulting data is comparable.

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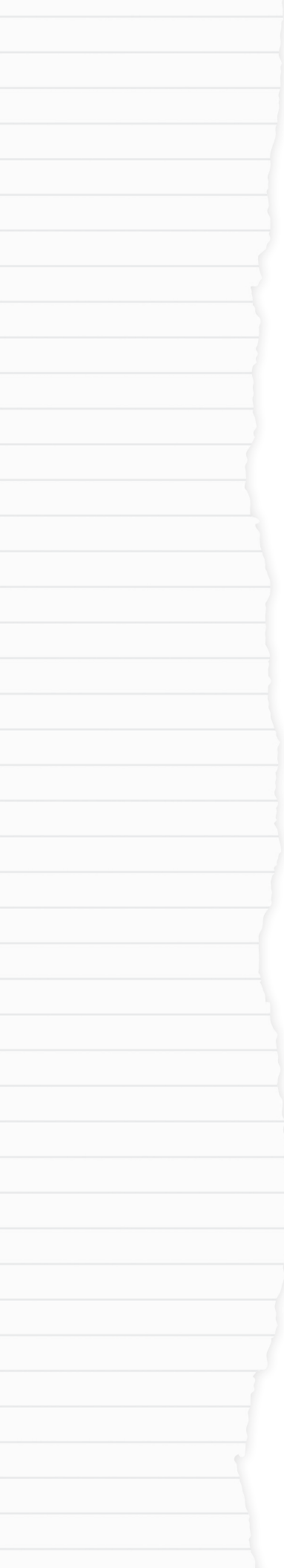
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We have to find a way to fulfill our mandate, to teach our students about the mainstream, without giving up ourselves, without assimilating into those boxes that don't meet our needs. We must be respectful and understand that those institutions complete us in a way; we need for our members to be fully equipped to deal with today's needs in society. But we must find ways to maintain our sovereignty, to maintain and support our cultural learning, while also making sure that our students can move into those institutions at their most excellent – well-equipped with their cultural tools, their cultural knowledge, their information. How do we do that? It is the responsibility not only of Aboriginal institutes and communities, but also those partners that are important to us.

Adapted excerpt from a presentation by Dr. Jeanette Armstrong,
En'owkin Centre, Fourth Annual Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forum, November 21, 2007

Introduction

This paper is intended to outline possible ways to formally recognize Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes as a critical component of the post-secondary system of British Columbia (BC). To begin, the paper outlines the unique and important role that is played by existing Aboriginal institutes, highlighting the fact that they do far more than duplicate the work being done in mainstream educational settings. The paper then outlines the rationale for stronger support of Aboriginal-controlled institutes by the government of BC. Finally, the paper outlines a recommended structure for policy that will allow the Ministry of Advanced Education (MAVED) to recognize and support Aboriginal institutes in a way that respects the range of Aboriginal community and learner needs and circumstances.



Part One:

Why Are Aboriginal-Controlled Post-Secondary Institutes Important?

1.1 Reasons for the Creation of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes

Community-based Aboriginal post-secondary institutes did not necessarily evolve in a well-planned or systematic way over time, nor did they initially receive support, recognition or core funding for operation or services. Most of the Aboriginal institutes grew from the dedication of those committed to addressing a myriad of community gaps that resulted from ineffective historical efforts to offer post-secondary education to Aboriginal learners. Many Aboriginal adult and post-secondary institutes began in substandard settings with limited or no resources. This continues to be the case with some current Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. Despite these barriers, these institutions have been in place for up to 40 years with successful outcomes (Waterfall, 2007).

As noted above, for decades Aboriginal communities in BC have been striving to offer higher education opportunities to their learners through community-based delivery by community-controlled institutes. The reasons for these efforts are numerous and varied, including a commitment to the philosophy of *Indian Control of Indian Education*. That policy, written by the then National Indian Brotherhood in 1970, affirms the commitment of Aboriginal peoples to exercise jurisdiction in regard to all areas of education.

In addition, Aboriginal post-secondary institutes initially emerged in response to community experiences and needs that include, but are not limited to, the following negative factors.

- Historically, Aboriginal learners were not achieving adequate success in mainstream secondary and post-secondary settings as a result of low expectations, racial discrimination, and culturally inappropriate settings. Few Aboriginal students were accessing post-secondary opportunities, and those who did attend universities and colleges often felt isolated, unprepared, and marginalized, causing them to leave post-secondary settings before completing their studies.

Definition

There is no single definition of the term Aboriginal post-secondary institute. For the purpose of this paper, the term is being used to refer to not-for-profit, post-secondary centres that are governed by an Aboriginal-controlled Board or Chief and Council. As described below, such centres offer a range of programs and services that are not easily categorized. In this policy paper the term Aboriginal institute does not include for-profit education agencies that are not directly controlled by an Aboriginal governing agency.

- Aboriginal communities were experiencing high unemployment rates, suggesting the need for community members who were adequately prepared to access a range of work opportunities in a variety of locations.
- Aboriginal Nations were struggling to promote personal and community healing, and a well-educated population was seen as an important component of individual and collective capacity development.
- The community, family, personal, and cultural displacement experienced by Aboriginal peoples meant that Aboriginal students had unique needs, which could best be addressed in settings that were specifically designed for them. In addition, many students needed the support of their families and communities in pursuing higher educational opportunities.
- Rising costs and diminishing funds to support post-secondary education suggested the need for alternative options that were more accessible for students and their families.

In fact, many of those issues continue to exist today, and as Stonechild (2006) notes, “Aboriginal peoples are still generally dissatisfied with [mainstream] universities’ ability to meet their higher education needs.” Indigenous studies programs in mainstream universities generally are offered only when funding is available and at the discretion of interested scholars and students, and mainstream universities are not always seen to be reflective of Indigenous peoples or knowledge.

1.2 A Continuing Education Gap

Despite efforts by Aboriginal Nations and the federal and provincial governments, a large gap continues to exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation rates in post-secondary education, as highlighted in the following information.

- The 1996 Census reported that among the population of respondents 15 years of age or older and not attending school, 3% of Registered Indians and 4% of other Aboriginal identity groups had obtained university degrees, compared with 14% of all other Canadians. The percentage of Registered Indians with some post-secondary education was 37%; for all other Aboriginal identity groups it was 47%, significantly lower than the rate for all other Canadians at 51%.
- According to the June 3, 2005 BC Stats Infoline Report, a non-Aboriginal person is five times more likely to have a university degree than a First Nation person living on-reserve, and almost three times more likely than a First Nations person living off-reserve (cited in FNEESC, 2005).
- Stonechild (2006) analyzed data provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to conclude that approximately 2% of the Canadian First Nations population attended university in 2000. A similar analysis of data provided by the Association of University and Colleges in Canada concluded that 3.2% of the mainstream population

participated in university in the same year. That means that the university participation rate of the First Nations population was 60% of that of the mainstream. In the same year, including community colleges in the calculations indicated that First Nations participation in higher education was 36% of the mainstream participation rate.

- The Auditor General's *2004 Report on Education Program and Post-Secondary Student Support* also noted that a significant education gap continues to exist between First Nations people living on- reserve and the Canadian population as a whole. The Auditor General estimates that it could take 28 years to close the educational gap between people living on-reserve and other Canadians if current trends continue unchanged.

In the fall of 2006, the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) distributed a province wide survey, the results of which are summarized in the "Report on the Statistical Description and Analysis of the 2006 Métis Nation of British Columbia Provincial Survey." The data from the MNBC survey identifies gaps that exist for Métis citizens in post secondary education in British Columbia, including the following (www.mpcbc.bc.ca/education/education.html):

- 57% of Métis children are not receiving Métis history or culturally significant teaching in their schools;
- 7.2% of Métis adults have achieved post-secondary education (largely certificate level);
- 52% of Métis adults have completed their grade 12 diploma;
- 19% of Métis adults have only achieved an elementary level education (max. Grade 9);
- 97% of Métis adults surveyed agreed Métis resource centers on campus would greatly assist Métis students;
- over 40% of respondents in the survey identified funding as the greatest barrier to achieving post-secondary education; and
- over 80% identified access to resources as being an additional barrier.

Aboriginal peoples living in urban areas also face unique issues in terms of education. The following information was included in a 2005 report released by Statistics Canada (McMullen, 2005).

- The Aboriginal population of Canada has a strong presence in urban areas. While just over half of the 976,000 Aboriginal people enumerated in Canada's 2001 Census lived on Indian reserves and other rural non-reserve areas (including the Far North), the other half resided in urban areas.

"I am 20 years old and I dropped out in grade 8 and I never really went back. I messed around too much. Then I needed to go back because you need an education to succeed."

(Young male student, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

"I was a fisherman most of my life until that collapsed and then I went into logging and that collapsed. You really don't have another choice if you want to support your family in a good way but to change. We are not always going to do what we want. We need to improve our lives with education."

(55-year-old male student, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

Siggner and Costa examined the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Aboriginal population residing in selected Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (including Vancouver) over the 1981 to 2001 period.

- Almost three of ten Aboriginal people (28%) lived in CMAs in 2001. The growth in these urban areas has been substantial. The Aboriginal population more than doubled in most CMAs, and in many cases more than tripled.
- The age structure of the Aboriginal population in CMAs is much younger than that of the non-Aboriginal population. Nationally, one-half of the Aboriginal population was under the age of 25. In contrast, about one-third of the non-Aboriginal population was under the age of 25.
- The absolute numbers of Aboriginal children and youth in some CMAs and their size relative to the non-Aboriginal population pose special challenges for the delivery of education services in those cities. Taking a longer-term perspective, this group will be a significant factor when they enter the labour force in large numbers over the next 15 years. Their ability to do so successfully hinges in large part on increasing the rates of high school completion and participation in post-secondary education.
- High school completion is considered a minimum requirement for most jobs in an urban economy. Aboriginal youth aged 20-24 in the selected CMAs were less likely to have completed high school than non-Aboriginal youth. Furthermore, while the shares of Aboriginal youth without high school completion declined between 1981 and 2001 in all of the CMAs studied, the shares of non-Aboriginal youth without high school completion decreased even more. Consequently, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth widened. Finally, Aboriginal males fell further behind their Aboriginal female counterparts in terms of high school completion between 1981 and 2001.
- Post-secondary education is often demanded for jobs in diverse and technically complex urban economies. Over the 1981 to 2001 period, most of the selected CMAs witnessed a large growth in the shares of young Aboriginal adults who were out-of-school and who had a post-secondary degree or diploma. In Canada overall, the share of Aboriginal males aged 25 to 34 years who had completed post-secondary education increased from 22% to 27%.
- When they have completed higher levels of schooling, Aboriginal people can reach employment levels on par with their non-Aboriginal counterparts, allowing them to compete in a diverse economy.

The 2005 report concludes the following.

The evidence concerning Aboriginal children and youth in selected CMAs suggests that progress is indeed being made. School attendance has increased, as have high school completion rates and the share of young adults who

have college or university credentials. Nevertheless, gaps in educational attainment between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations remain, with young Aboriginal males, especially, still being cause for concern. The conclusion, therefore, is one of cautious optimism – cautious because of the challenges remaining, but tempered with optimism because the trends are pointing in the right direction.

Overall, the continued post-secondary education gap is problematic, particularly given the considerable challenges facing Aboriginal communities and the need for a confident, well-educated Aboriginal population to address those challenges. As the report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) states:

Those who have completed high school and technical, college or university programs stand a much better chance in the job market. But it is not only the individual who reaps the rewards of higher education. Communities are attempting to build the local skills pool they require for Aboriginal self-government. Education, then, is an investment with long-term benefits for the individual, for Aboriginal communities, and for Canadian society.

1.3 Reasons for the Education Gap: Barriers to Educational Success for Aboriginal Learners

Some of the primary reasons for the continuing gap in educational success rates include the limited involvement of Aboriginal people in decision-making processes, systemic racial discrimination, a lack of relevant and culturally appropriate programs and services, financial constraints, and the difficulty Aboriginal students have in taking advantage of geographically distant and unsupportive educational opportunities.

For example, in considering why the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation and success rates continues, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC, 2005) and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) highlight numerous barriers facing Aboriginal students, as summarized below.

Too often, mainstream education programs ignore Aboriginal perspectives, values, and issues and give scant attention to the work environment in which students will use their professional knowledge and skills. In fact, the environment may replicate the negative features that led students to drop out of school in the first place (RCAP, 1996). In addition, Aboriginal support systems — peer networks, family activities, financial, personal and academic counselling, or daycare services — may not be in place in mainstream settings. For Aboriginal people, mainstream universities often represent an impersonal and intimidating environment that does not reflect or recognize their cultural knowledge, traditions, and core values (FNESC, 2005).

“Many IAHLA students live in remote and rural communities and are dealing with financial hardship, unemployment and limited access to transportation. Often they are single parents or older students who haven’t completed high school, and returning to school can be a challenge. To ask those people to uproot themselves whether they are 18 or 28 or 48 and move to the city to try to establish themselves and try to deal with all the issues in their lives and go to school at the same time and try to upgrade their education is asking a lot of anybody.”

(First Nations institute instructor, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

“People ask why is it we have such a high failure rate when our people go away to public institutes. It is because they do not have the support systems that they need and they do not have the cultural connections that they need. These are real important factors to people – self-esteem and self-confidence in order for them to be successful. If this facility didn’t exist the students say they would not be in school.”

(First Nations political leader, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

Many First Nations students and communities face fundamental issues and challenges that may impede their educational achievement. Relatively high levels of unemployment and poverty for First Nations people means that many First Nations families cannot financially support themselves or their children in attending post-secondary education institutions. The 2001 Canadian Census (cited in FNEESC, 2005) indicates that, in BC, First Nations people have an average income of \$12,000 – well below the poverty level.

Aboriginal people also experience high unemployment and account for the largest number of children taken into government care. In the 1996 Canadian Census, 43% of Registered Indians and 56% of all others identified as Aboriginal were employed, compared with 62% of other Canadians. Employment rates are especially low among Registered Indians in the 15–24 age group. Over all ages, the Registered Indian unemployment rate in 1996 was 26%, compared to 19% among others with Aboriginal identity and 9% among other Canadians. The unemployment rate among Registered Indians in the 15–24 age group was especially high, at 41% (Hull, 2000). And despite the already high numbers reported in the Canadian census unemployment statistics, census unemployment figures are likely too low. In many Aboriginal communities the unemployment rate exceeds 50%; in some it exceeds 75%. Social assistance benefits and seasonal jobs are often the main sources of income on some reserves.

Added to the lower employment incomes of many Aboriginal families, the cost of attending post-secondary education is rising; across Canada there has been a 111% tuition increase, in constant dollars, between 1990-1991 and 2004-2005. Since the province of BC lifted its six-year tuition freeze in 2002, fees for the typical undergraduate program rose, on average, by 74% (cited in FNEESC, 2005). These statistics underline the fact that the majority of Aboriginal families do not have adequate employment incomes to provide funds for themselves or their children to attend post-secondary education institutions.

While many Status Indian students have access to funding from the federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), there are a considerable number of students who do not have access to these funds and there are numerous challenges related to the PSSSP funding (see Appendix One for a short description of the PSSSP and related issues). Even among those with funding, the amount provided seems inadequate to cover all of the real costs of living in a city, away from home.

In spite of the PSSSP limitations, however, it remains the critical source of support for many students. In fact, over one-third of Aboriginal former students reported Indian Band funding as one of the top two sources of financing they used for their college and institute education. They were less likely to cite personal savings, family support, and employment income than were non-Aboriginal respondents (MAVED, 2002).

The only existing financial support for Métis students is the Métis Human Resource and Development Agreement funding provided by Service Canada. The funding has many limitations and was unable to fund all interested Métis students, whose education costs

would have been \$600,000.00 during the fiscal year 2006-2007 (MNBC Lower Mainland Region, MHRDA 2007).

Family responsibilities also are often barriers to the retention of Aboriginal students (Malatest, 2002). In BC, Aboriginal post-secondary students are much more likely to be older and female (in 2001, 65% were female, with a median age of 29 versus 25 for the non-Aboriginal population), to have children, and to be single parents; in 2001, 27% of Aboriginal students were part of a couple with children and 21% were single parents, compared with 15 and 6% for non-Aboriginal students respectively (MAVED, 2001).

Related to this issue, provincial and federal policy changes to social assistance have had an adverse impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Aboriginal students, creating funding challenges that restrict Aboriginal peoples in improving their economic circumstances. As described in detail in a paper prepared by the United Native Nations Society (see Appendix Two for a full version of the report), the BC government severely curtailed access to income assistance on April 1, 2002, such that recipients are unable to receive income assistance while they are in school full-time.

Overall, as RCAP notes, “any individual or family living at the edge of survival requires solid financial assistance to make a significant life change, and few people who live in poverty will risk taking out loans for post-secondary education.”

In addition, limited academic preparation is a significant barrier for Aboriginal students’ post-secondary enrolment and a contributing factor to high dropout rates at colleges and universities. In 2001, 81% of Aboriginal former students said they had completed high school before enrolling in their college and institute programs; however, the percentage of non-Aboriginal respondents who reported completing high school was significantly higher, at 94% (MAVED, 2002). Currently, 47% of Aboriginal students in BC graduate within six years of entering high school, but this percentage does not factor in the number of students who leave high school with a ‘school leaving certificate,’ which schools do not have to report to the Ministry of Education. Often these students, and their families, believe that they have graduated, but in fact the students will find college and university beyond their reach without upgrading.

Students who have been streamed into non-academic programs in secondary school often find that their skills, course completions, or grade point standing do not satisfy the rising entry requirements of post-secondary institutions. For example, English 12 is a pre-requisite for most post-secondary programs. However, in 2005-2006, only 36% of Aboriginal students participated in English 12, compared to 67% of the non-Aboriginal population. A pass rate of 93% was consistent with both populations (Ministry of Education, 2006). For Aboriginal students attending one of the 11 northern BC School Districts, the participation rates in key Grade 12 courses are even lower, which puts these Aboriginal students at an additional disadvantage when considering post-secondary education or training. Responding to this situation, Aboriginal students and communities increasingly are calling for programs under a variety of labels — university and college entrance programs, access programs, transition

programs, or bridging programs. The recent proliferation of such programs indicates the significant need for upgrading, and suggests that the programs are making a difference in preparing people for further studies (RCAP, 1996).

Any barriers facing Aboriginal students who wish to pursue post-secondary education must be addressed. ... If the barrier is funding, more funding must be made available. If the barrier is the downfall of mainstream institutions in meeting the needs of First Nations students, other alternatives must be made available. These alternatives have been identified by First Nations people and include First Nations institutes and partnered programs offered in or near their communities. (Spence, 2000).

1.4 Responding to the Barriers

In order to address the challenges that exist, Aboriginal communities are convinced that they can provide educational opportunities that will best meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and communities. According to Armstrong et. al (2007), “without question, the evidence is clear that the best solutions are those that come from within the communities – those that are mindful of specific and unique approaches which will ensure success of students.” Accordingly, they are committed to establishing their own post-secondary institutes, usually entering into agreements with public post-secondary institutes that allow them to offer accredited, community-based courses and programs in accessible, supportive, culturally relevant settings.

The RCAP report (1996) outlines the various types of Aboriginal-controlled institutions that have evolved across Canada, including those described below. RCAP also emphasized the value of having a range of Aboriginal institutional structures, recognizing differing community needs and circumstances.

The first type of Aboriginal institute identified in RCAP resembles a full-fledged college. It attracts students from many nations and offers a wide range of programs, usually accredited through a partnership or affiliation with one or more post-secondary institutions. The largest of these is the First Nations University of Canada. While this institution is experiencing growing pains and may change its governance structure to best meet the needs of the Saskatchewan communities, it continues to provide learning opportunities for the development of Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutions in Canada. All of its courses are provincially accredited through a federation agreement with the University of Regina, and the Association of Universities and Colleges has recently accepted the First Nations University of Canada as a member.

The second type of affiliated institution is smaller and more locally focused. It serves primarily the members of a tribal council or a regional area. Smaller Aboriginal institutes generally need to access funding in order to shop for the best programs for their students; they can then approach a variety of mainstream post-secondary institutions, outline their needs, and negotiate for the educational services they want. This type of institution, for example, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, often crosses the conventional boundaries of universities, colleges and technical institutes by offering a wide range of courses.

A third type of Aboriginal institute is the community learning centre. A variety of programs are offered in the learning centre, including adult basic education, academic upgrading, distance education courses, language courses, vocational training, and community-delivered programs from larger institutions. Some programs are accredited and others are not. The local community controls the learning centre, but its operations are usually dependent on external grants in connection with program services.

RCAP summarizes this situation by stating:

Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions of all types offer programs valued by Aboriginal communities and they provide a supportive environment that encourages students to persist with their studies. The number of such colleges and institutes continues to multiply, but they share two serious problems: chronic lack of funding and the reluctance of mainstream post-secondary institutions and professional organizations to recognize their courses and the degrees or certificates they offer.

Those issues are explored further throughout this paper.

A study on *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates* (Malatest, 2002) supports the assertions of Aboriginal communities regarding the importance of Aboriginal controlled institutes. That study identified significant themes in the various practices that were found to be particularly effective in promoting Aboriginal post-secondary education. Those themes include the following.

- *Community delivery:* Community delivery has been found to bridge the gap often caused in Aboriginal relocation to urban or distant schools, and to promote community awareness in faculty and staff. It also has been shown to promote recruitment of often under-represented groups such as Aboriginal people in northern and remote communities.
- *Aboriginal control of education:* Allowing Aboriginal control of education is often seen as a means to overcome the marginalization that Aboriginal people have generally felt in the mainstream post-secondary education system, as well as a means to facilitate Aboriginal self-determination at the post-secondary level. This control also entails the creation and delivery of curriculum that has been developed by and for Aboriginal people.

- *Access programs:* Access programs, which serve to guide and support Aboriginal people and other under-represented groups, offer the transition, support, and guidance that have helped to improve Aboriginal success rates.
- *Partnerships between Aboriginal communities and mainstream educational institutions:* By working with Aboriginal communities as partners, educational institutions have worked to develop relevant and accessible curriculum and programs.
- *Student support that addresses Aboriginal needs:* Aboriginal students have benefited from personal and academic support that is proactive and relevant, helping to alleviate the feelings of isolation and loneliness that many Aboriginal people feel, especially at large urban universities and colleges.

Reconstructing Aboriginal communities after decades of disruption becomes possible with local educational and training services.

(Waterfall, 2007)

As described following, the Aboriginal institutes that now exist clearly relate to the themes highlighted in Malatest's Best Practices study, and they illustrate the importance and benefits of having unique Aboriginal-controlled institutes. However, they also illustrate several challenges that result from a lack of public recognition and financial support.

Part Two:

A Profile of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes in BC: What Makes Them Special?

2.1 A Range of Institutes

The Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes that exist within BC vary significantly, reflecting the differing needs of their communities and the students they serve, as well as fluctuations in funding and student populations. As described further in this paper, funding for Aboriginal post-secondary institutes is highly unstable and extremely limited, meaning that in some cases programs and courses may be offered in an uncertain way, when money and sufficient student populations are available. In extreme cases, institutes may not even operate for short periods of time when resources for their operations are not available. This makes any detailed description of the institutes very difficult and time specific.

This difficulty in describing the institutes was reflected in a 2005 survey of 10 Aboriginal institutes in BC (Storytellers et. al., 2005). That project report states:

Even though there is the common factor that they exist as First Nations-controlled post-secondary training organizations, there is an incredible variety in the history, size and scope of the institutes surveyed. Although 70% of the organizations have been in existence for more than 15 years, and have offered post-secondary training for more than 10 years, the range in both categories is very broad starting at 2 years and stretching to 33. Likewise, there is a wide spectrum in the size of catchments both geographically and demographically. The range in population served is from 2,800 to 80,000. 80% of the institutes provide services within a rural setting, while the other 20% service urban areas. The variety in the size of population served is also reflected in the number of students enrolled at the organizations, which ranged from 17 to 225, although the vast majority of organizations are similar in that they did have 50 or fewer students registered for post-secondary training. Post-secondary programming follows on the diversity trend with some organizations offering a single program of study while others offer six or more programs plus numerous courses.

History

Program offerings in Aboriginal institutes are contingent upon the availability of grant-based funding, which varies annually. Few of the institutes receive core funding for infrastructure or capital development. In fact, insecure funding that is based upon annually-approved grants means that some Institutes may not operate on a yearly basis. This makes it very difficult to define the institutes, provide consistent statistical data, or describe their programming in detail.

History

Formed in 2003, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) is the representative organization for a wide variety of Aboriginal controlled adult and post-secondary educational institutes across BC. The Association reflects a belief that working together can help Aboriginal institutes in developing accredited courses and programs that offer adult students the opportunity to graduate in their own community with recognized certificates, diplomas, and degrees. IAHLA is committed to undertaking research and supporting communication and coordination among Aboriginal institutes. At the direction of its members, IAHLA also represents Aboriginal institutes in presentations and negotiations with provincial and federal government agencies.

Generally, Aboriginal institutes are located throughout the province, including in very remote coastal and northern communities, in the province's interior and on Vancouver Island, as well as in an urban-based setting, as in the case of the Native Education College in downtown Vancouver. The institutes offer a broad spectrum of courses and programs that include some combination of: college and university programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees; Adult Basic Education leading to the Adult Dogwood Diploma for secondary school completion; accredited Aboriginal language and culture instruction; occupation specific training and upgrading; and a broad spectrum of lifespan learning programs that support Aboriginal people, communities, languages, and cultures.

For the past two years the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) has been working to provide substantive information about Aboriginal institutes in BC, and specifically has sponsored a survey of Aboriginal institutes in order to provide a better understanding of their work and achievements. In 2006/2007, 76% (19 of 25) of the eligible institutes and 255 learners completed and returned the project surveys. Eligible institutes include educational settings that are controlled by Aboriginal Nations and that offer some combination of adult education and post-secondary programming. In 2006/07, 47% of the responding institutes reported that they offered some combination of Adult Basic Education (ABE) and post-secondary programming the previous academic year, while 16% reported that they offered only ABE and 26% reported that they offered only non-ABE post-secondary programming. (11% of the responding institutes did not respond to this question).

Total reported student enrolments have ranged from 2,400 to 2,600 in each of the past three years:

2004/05 = 2,486 at 17 institutes

2005/06 = 2,602 at 17 institutes

2006/07 = 2,428 at 23 institutes

As of October 2007, student enrolments in 2007/08 were 1,250 at 23 institutes.

Explanations and analysis regarding total student enrolment numbers (above) are presented in Appendix Three.

In 2006/2007, 17 of the 19 responding institutes reported that 35% of their students were studying part-time and 65% studying full-time. Generally, the institutes serve small populations of students; almost one half (47%) of the responding institutes enroll less than 50 learners.

Responding Institutes' Student Enrolment

| 2006/07 | | 2005/06 | |
|---|-----|---------|--|
| N ₉ = 19 | | N = 17 | |
| Enrolling more than 100 students | | | |
| # of Institutes | 3 | 4 | |
| % of Institutes | 16% | 24% | |
| Enrolling 50 to 100 students | | | |
| # of Institutes | 5 | 5 | |
| % of Institutes | 26% | 29% | |
| Enrolling 0 to 49 students | | | |
| # of Institutes | 9 | 8 | |
| % of Institutes | 47% | 47% | |
| No Enrolment #s Provided⁽¹⁾ | | | |
| # of Institutes | 2 | 0 | |
| % of Institutes | 11% | 0% | |

In 2006/07, learners enrolled in at least 2,666 programs or courses at 22 institutes (one institute was new in 2007/08 and thus did not have 2006/07 enrolments). One learner could be enrolled in more than one program or course. Most frequently, students appear to have “additionally” enrolled in an *other* program or course. However, at a few institutes, students appear to have enrolled in College or University courses as well as ABE/upgrading courses in 2006/07.

In the percentages reported below, the “minimum” proportion of students enrolled in each program area is presented by the “all enrolments” percentage. The “maximum” proportion of students enrolled in each program area is estimated as the “enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses”. In 2006/07:

- 853 learners were enrolled in ABE or adult upgrading courses (to Grade 12) - 32% of all enrolments and 42% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses;
- 863 learners were in College or University one-year programs (e.g., certificate programs or first year college/university transfer courses) - 32% of all enrolments and 43% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses;
- 305 learners were in College or University multi-year programs (e.g., diploma or degree programs or second year and up college/university transfer courses) - 11% of all enrolments and 15% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses; and,

- 645 learners were in other programs or courses (e.g., First Aid, SuperHost, flagging, etc.)
- 24% of all enrolments.

In 2006/07, most IAHLA learners were enrolled in articulated/transferable courses or programs. Institutes were asked to report whether learners were enrolled in one or more courses or programs that were articulated/transferable with public colleges or institutes. 20 institutes reported this information for 2,142 learners. 83% of these learners were enrolled in at least one articulated/transferable course or program and 17% were not. All but two institutes reported formalized relationships with public post-secondary institutions, facilitating such transfers.

18 of the 19 responding institutes employ 150 instructors, with 70% of these instructors working part-time and 30% working full-time. Most (79%) of these instructors have a Bachelor's degree or higher level of education. A majority (55%) of the instructors also have relevant work experience and one-in-ten (10%) have First Nation language skills. They also have a variety of "other" qualifications including a Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education, a Provincial Instructors Diploma, and related skills or experience e.g., computer skills, life skills, career planning, distance education, arts and crafts, curriculum development, and Class 4 driving skills.

As mentioned above, funding for Aboriginal institutes is extremely limited and unstable. The 2006/2007 IAHLA survey showed that approximately four-fifths (79%) of the Aboriginal institutes do not have base or core funding. A similar proportion (74%) is "never" or "not often" able to fund the facilities or other capital projects they need for a healthy learning environment. Aboriginal institutes most frequently use the following funding sources: the federal government's Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP), tuition, First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA) New Paths Grants, and the federal government's Adult Nominal Roll funding.

The ISSP and New Paths Grants are both annual, insecure grant programs. The Indian Studies Support Program represents the federal government's primary financial support for Aboriginal institutes in BC. It has an annual budget of approximately \$2.1 million, while in most years the requests are twice that of the available budget. There has generally been a 2% increase to that budget annually; a continuation of that increase is uncertain. ISSP funding is allocated through a proposal process, with no guarantee of ongoing funding for any institute or program. For the past several years, no institute has been allowed to access more than \$200,000.00 annually from this funding source, and the program guidelines specifically state that the funding is intended for individual programs only; it is not intended to be a source of core funding.

For institutes that are located on-reserve and that offer adult basic education/upgrading, they may be approved for funding through the federal government's adult nominal roll. Through this program, institutes may access funds for students who have not already graduated from secondary education and who have learning plans showing that they are pursuing a Dogwood

Diploma. This program does not fund students who have already graduated, only to find that they do not have the credentials required for acceptance into a post-secondary program – a large proportion of Aboriginal students who need upgrading. For those students, institutes apply for funding through the ISSP University and College Entrance Program (UCEP). Again, this funding is proposal based and therefore uncertain, and for the past several years UCEP program funding has been capped at a maximum of \$75,000.00 per institute (see Appendix Three for statistics regarding student enrolment in adult nominal roll programs).

The institutes who do have students registered on the federal government's nominal roll program are also eligible for annual grants through the New Paths for Education Program. This is an annual funding program with no guarantee of continued existence. For the past several years, the program has provided small grants, based on the number of adult secondary students, for enrichment services and activities, such as the purchase of library books, computer upgrading, or small professional development initiatives. The grants normally do not exceed about \$10,000.00 per institute.

Other than those programs, there are no major, consistent funding sources available to Aboriginal institutes. Other funding sources generally include tuition, periodic grants from charities or non-governmental organizations, and community resources (which are extremely limited). With such limited funding, the institutes truly rely on the dedication of their communities and staffs, who are committed to continuing the work of the institutes by piecing together funding in creative ways. For example, a survey by Storytellers et. al. (2005) found that Aboriginal institutes are forced to rely on time-consuming efforts such as the following:

When asked about creating fundraising practices many organizations listed proposal writing and bingos as activities. Fundraising drives were also noted, especially in relation to specific targets such as capitalization of a facility or equipment. Other practices included an in-facility store/cafeteria, a hot lunch program, fun events like hockey pools, ...

Finally, Aboriginal institutes generally are committed to accountability and quality service, demonstrated by the fact that seventy-nine percent of the institutes have undergone an external program evaluation in the last five years.

2.2 Institute Strengths

Local Control

None of the Aboriginal-controlled institutes in BC are private, for-profit operations, and only Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is a part of the provincial public post-secondary education system. NVIT is one of the few Aboriginal institutes with the ability

Vision for NVIT:

In discussions with Grand Chief Edward John, the founding chair of NVIT, Grand Chief Gordon Antoine indicated his vision for NVIT to eventually round out its capacity to offer degree programs, graduate degrees, and to conduct research relevant to First Nations communities.

Pull Out Highlight Box:

The MAVED Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, approved by Cabinet in 1995, provides for the establishment of public Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. This option has proven successful for the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which has used the policy and its public status to its advantage. However, it has not met the needs of the majority of Aboriginal institutes. Not only is the FTE requirement not feasible for most of the small centres; the option of becoming a public institute is not consistent with the commitment to Aboriginal control and jurisdiction highlighted above.

to meet the provincial government's Full Time Equivalent (FTE) requirement for public institute status. In addition, NVIT's founding Nations and Board of Directors decided that the benefits of achieving public recognition made this an appropriate goal for the institute.

Authority for Aboriginal institutes generally rests with the founding Nation or collection of Nations, which is consistent with the principles of Aboriginal jurisdiction and self-determination. The institutes are generally governed by community-based independent boards or by Chief and Council, which means that the people responsible for the Institutes' operations are very familiar with student and community circumstances and needs.

Of vital concern to Aboriginal post-secondary institutions is the need to ensure the ability of local Aboriginal leadership to participate in a direct and local way in the identification, creation, and delivery of programming focused in specific key educational areas critical to their community's cultural and economic goals.

(Armstrong et. al., 2007)

2006 / 2007 IAHLA Data Collection Project:

- *Aboriginal institutes involve community members in programming and learning, especially Elders (89%) and First Nations governance structures, e.g., Bands and Tribal Councils (84%).*

Responding to Unique Student Needs

It is difficult to generalize about the students enrolled in Aboriginal post-secondary institutes, as they vary significantly in terms of their needs and goals. However, there are several points that can be made in this regard – factors that are key to understanding the institutes and their work.

Although data in this area is limited, anecdotal information strongly suggests that a relatively large proportion of the students enrolled in Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes have significant family obligations and limited financial resources. In addition, many of the students have returned to school after a lengthy break, and often after a negative experience in their previous schooling experience. While efforts to promote community and personal healing are ongoing in Aboriginal communities, a large proportion of the students must deal with significant emotional, financial, and family challenges while attending school, so Aboriginal institutes must meet not only academic but also a variety of personal needs if their students are to be successful.

The highest percentage of our students are adults who have been failed by the public secondary schooling system and are returning to accomplish higher learning goals as mature students. These students demographically are in their mid-twenties to early-thirties, typically with a spouse and children. Typically, they are already established within a surrounding reserve community, as either new home owners or on the list for on-reserve housing – both requiring community residency. Such students can focus on their educational goals, while at home, without the trauma and turmoil of having to re-locate and secure infrastructural needs to support “family” in health, daycare, and counseling, and with the support systems available in extended family systems. They avoid leaving family behind and thereby avoid risk of isolation and possible negative impacts to family relationships.

(Armstrong et. al., 2007)

The program provides an effective means for First Nations students to develop study skills and earn first and second year academic credits in a small, supportive learning environment before making the transition to a university setting.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

The goals of the students entering the institutes are varied. Many students enrolled in Aboriginal institutes are interested in preparing for further education and/or accessing the knowledge, skills, and accreditation required for work. For example, evidence suggests that Aboriginal institutes play a critical role in assisting Aboriginal students in moving to mainstream, public institutes. Many students who enroll in locally-offered programs require the development of their skills, confidence, and awareness of post-secondary opportunities, which Aboriginal institutes can offer. For example, students receive career counseling and they are assisted in developing short and long term learning plans that serve as a map that articulates goals with achievable completion schedules. Students in Aboriginal institutes are advised of prerequisite requirements, which must be met prior to transitions elsewhere. University-transfer course options are recommended to ladder into further education in a public post-secondary institute setting (Waterfall, 2007).

“I went to En’owkin because I wanted to learn more about the Aboriginal customs from right across Canada. En’owkin was so important to me in my development, not only as a writer and storyteller and now as an educator but also as a human being. I have been teaching at UBC for six years and I can say with all honesty, unless we have support for our Aboriginal students we keep losing them. The beauty of the En’owkin Centre is that it gave support for Aboriginal students by Aboriginal mentors and it was inclusive and we were guided in a good way for two years. That gave me the strength I needed to just dominate the University of British Columbia. I don’t think my fellow classmates knew what hit them.

(Richard Van Camp, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

Partnerships with public post-secondary institutes provide the mechanism to offer community-based, first-step learning opportunities that lead to successful transitions because academic skills are strengthened and self-identity and confidence reinforced. These factors enable learners to make effective transitions and personal contact is maintained throughout students' continued academic pursuits in urban settings.

(Waterfall, 2007)

However, students enrolled in Aboriginal institutes often have equally important and interconnected goals. These can include improved self-confidence, better parenting skills, preparation for and an opportunity to act as a role model for other community members (including their children), and a better ability to make community contributions. As RCAP (1996) comments, "after being out of school for some years, returning to the classroom takes courage and determination. ... Many adults go back only to provide a better life for their children." As noted in the 2005 Storytellers et. al. report, for First Nations-controlled post-secondary institutes the definition of student success may be somewhat different than mainstream institutions. It is evident that the programming offered by the 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." Aboriginal institutes must therefore strive to support students in achieving a range of goals.

Cultural Foundation

Aboriginal institutes recognize that an education with a strong cultural foundation is critical for student success and community growth. Therefore, cultural activities and values are integrated into the fabric of the institutes, from the boardroom to the classroom.

Aboriginal institutions use Indigenous knowledge as the foundation for governance, institutional policy, programs, management, and student services ... The phenomena of balancing and bridging two worlds or multiple worlds are assumed as a central aspect of the institutes [and] the institutes have rich resources upon which to draw for assistance in developing Indigenous approaches and content to programs /courses such as their students, families, and community members.

(Archibald and Williams, 2007)

Most First Nations and Métis in BC recognize that their traditional languages are threatened with extinction and they are making efforts to recover and retain their languages as an important part of their traditional cultures. Aboriginal institutes are often at the forefront of

"It helped me with confidence and self-esteem. It opened doors for further education. It helped me overcome my fears."

(Aboriginal student cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

"I was sitting at home doing nothing and all of the sudden my son asked me how to do this homework question. I couldn't even do it - and he is only in grade 2. So I thought 'I need to go back to school!'"

(Young mother and student, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

"We were sitting down watching the news with my sister and her kids and we asked the younger one "what are you going to be when you grow up." He said, "I am going to be like uncle because he doesn't do anything." That was kind of a kick in the butt right there. I didn't realize I was a role model. Then I almost quit last year but they came and found me at home."

(Male student in his 30's, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

efforts to retain and revitalize Aboriginal languages, and many of the institutes offer formally accredited language teacher education courses. This is a role that is seen as best undertaken by Aboriginal controlled, local institutes. As a respondent in the Storytellers et. al. (2005) survey stated, “We need leaders, philosophers, thinkers, medicine people, all sorts of training that doesn’t need to be in any college or university and never will be. Other public institutions do not have the right or the tools to do our language – they are not pedagogically about us.”

However, the accreditation of courses and programs can be very problematic as most public institutions do not have the expertise in Aboriginal language and culture to develop curriculum and programming and at present Aboriginal post-secondary institutes do not have a recognized mechanism to accredit their language programming so that credits will transfer to public institutions. Such courses and programming are necessary to train Language and Culture Teachers (including immersion teachers), linguists, people with Master’s and Doctoral Degrees to teach in post-secondary institutions, and other critical language and culture experts to work in areas such as Aboriginal governance and economic development in culturally sensitive areas.

Language fluency courses are necessary, because of the state of endangerment of virtually all language groups in BC. Aboriginal institutes need to create and deliver quality adult language fluency learning programs in each language family in BC, to fill the critical lack of First Language instructors in this province’s schooling system. These courses and programs can only succeed if they are located within a language community, providing a resource of fluent speakers, Elders and experts in cultural studies. If anything, this is the strongest argument to provide direct and immediate support to Aboriginal post-secondary institutions who are engaged in this extremely critical area of maintaining the province’s rich heritage of First Languages

(Armstrong et. al., 2007)

Other courses and curricula are also reviewed for their cultural content and often modified to make them more sensitive and relevant to Aboriginal learners. Institutes also ensure that Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are incorporated into curriculum development and delivery. In addition, the general atmosphere of the programs is relevant to Aboriginal learners. Efforts to ensure cultural appropriateness include, among other things, the use of Aboriginal people as guest speakers, Aboriginal role models, and language lessons for instructors, staff, and interested students. The institutes’ instructors also understand and respect cultural practices, such as protocols associated with funerals and community events. The result is appropriate and respectful learning environments for students. A further benefit of culturally appropriate programming is building the capacity of community members and others who wish to engage in resource extraction activities or other economic activities that

require knowledge of traditional territories. An example of this aspect includes people who work in the community who are responsible for responding to referrals from companies and need to have a thorough understanding of cultural activities that could be impacted by resource companies.

The culturally grounded nature of the program is one of the most important supports for students who typically must master two cultures. Having support in their own culture facilitates student learning.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

2006/2007 IAHLA Data Collection Project

Promoting aspects of culture is centrally or very important to 84% of the institutes in 2006/07. It was centrally or very important to a similar proportion (88%) of responding institutes in 2005/06.

Two-thirds of the institutes report that they place equal emphasis on culture and education/employment, while 2 (11%) institutes place a stronger emphasis on cultural development than on education/employment.

79% of the institutes offer First Nations language courses in 2006/07. Typically, up to 50% of their learners participate in these language courses. In 2005/06, a similar proportion (71%) of responding institutes offered First Nations language courses.

Two-thirds of the 2006/07 responding institutes (68%) are involved in language revitalization projects.

One-in-two learners surveyed report being more culturally active and one-in-five improved their ability to carry on a conversation in their First Nations language.

High Standards, Accreditation and Transferability

Ensuring that their students are taking high quality, recognized and transferable programs and courses is a high priority for Aboriginal Nations, as they recognize that their students must be able to use their completed courses to pursue other opportunities. As mentioned above, one of the primary areas being addressed by Aboriginal institutes is the significant need for programs to assist Aboriginal students in making a successful transition into colleges and universities. Accordingly, all Aboriginal institutes strive to offer programs and courses that are of the highest quality, and many of the programs are offered through affiliation or brokering agreements with public post-secondary institutes to ensure that they are fully accredited and

transferable to other post-secondary institutes through the BC transfer system. The report of Storytellers et. al. (2005) also noted an emphasis on high standards so that students are well prepared for what college and university courses expected of them.

The IAHLA data collection project, mentioned above, does not ask institutes about the transitions its students plan to make, or have made, to public post-secondary institutions. However, it does ask students about their plans for the following year. Some students report more than one plan. As well, students' plans may change over the course of the year, or in subsequent years. For students in their first year (58% of those responding), this may be somewhat early for their final plans to be known. On the other hand, these first year responses are reflective of students' plans relatively soon after they enter their institutes.

In 2007/08, between 10% and 28% of the 404 students responding to the project's surveys planned to transition into public post-secondary institutions in the following academic year. 7% reported they planned to continue studying at NVIT (including 5% who were already attending NVIT), 11% reported they planned to continue studying at a non-First Nations, provincial, public college or institute, while 10% planned to continue studying at a university.

Similarly, in 2006/07, between 8% and 25% of the 404 students responding to the project's surveys planned to transition into public post-secondary institutions the next year. 5% reported they planned to continue studying at NVIT or the Institute for Indigenous Governance (IIG), 8% reported they planned to continue studying at a non-First Nations, provincial, public college or institute, while 12% planned to continue studying at a university.

However, unlike mainstream post-secondary institutes, Aboriginal institutes offer programs that are grounded in Aboriginal culture, language, and experience. As noted above, knowledge of and respect for Aboriginal history, culture and values lead to curriculum and pedagogy that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people.

2006/2007 IAHLA Data Collection Project

Aboriginal institutes provide knowledge and skills to students based on staffs' assessments of students' literacy and numeracy levels. Responding institutes use a variety of assessment tools to place students – most frequently the Canadian Adult Achievement Tests or other institute/college assessments. Most often, students are assessed at the Advanced level (Grade 10/11) in terms of both literacy and numeracy. A few institutes (10%) also engage contractors to conduct external psycho-educational assessments.

Four-in-five learners agree they are better able to learn since beginning at their institute. Seventy percent or more of these learners also agree that they have been helped to prepare for their further education, learn problem solving skills, learn research skills and/or learn to seek help for their needs. More than half the learners surveyed state they have been helped to prepare for getting a job and/or have learned computer skills.

Learner satisfaction with courses, facilities and relationships ranges between 70% and 85%. Learners rate their relationships with other students and teaching staff most highly, followed by their courses. Just over half of the institutes report they use both general student satisfaction surveys and course/instructor evaluation forms.

Therefore, a key strength of Aboriginal institutes is that they offer both culturally appropriate and high quality, fully accredited, transferable courses. This situation best serves the needs of Aboriginal learners while they are enrolled in the institute, while also ensuring the students' ability to pursue their future goals and interests. For example, Armstrong (2007) describes the programming at the Okanagan Nation's post-secondary institute, as follows.

Institutions such as En'owkin enjoy success as a result of the pedagogical approaches which are part of the unique and rich cultural intellectual processes available from within our own knowledge systems. By way of example, some language and cultural studies courses are delivered in nine week modules which transport students to culturally significant sites, to experience language and cultural immersion as well as to re-connect them with their land and history. Other modules, such as project-based course work or producing a cultural history for publication as a way to approach college level research writing, are common. Students are highly motivated as a result of both cultural-relevance and academic achievements gained. These are fundamental pedagogical reasons why Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions require direct support so that they can continue to provide much needed cultural and academic stepping-stones to academic programming in public institutions.

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions were established primarily out of the mandate to provide Aboriginal students with viable alternatives to access higher learning while supporting their unique learning needs, and at the same time providing a clear pathway into programs of higher learning in public institutions armed with the fundamental tools to succeed in those highly competitive systems. (Armstrong et. al., 2007)

RCAP (1996) also asserts that the ability to design and offer relevant programs is one good reason to promote Aboriginal institutes, but there is another: their success rate in seeing students through to completion of their programs often surpasses that of mainstream post-secondary institutions. According to the RCAP report, “the evidence we have reviewed indicates that education under the control of Aboriginal people typically pursues the dual objectives of fostering skills relevant to participation in contemporary society and reinforcing cultural identity. It also produces better outcomes according to objective measures of academic achievement and contributions to the community and subjective assessments of personal growth and satisfaction.”

The IAHLA data collection project also provides evidence to support the RCAP claims. In 2007/08, institutes reported the course completion rate for their learners the previous academic year (in 2006/07). In 2007/08, institutes reported an overall 2006/07 course completion rate of 80%. Whether learners successfully completed one or more of the courses or programs they were enrolled in that year was reported for 1,190 of these learners at 20 institutes. Of those, 80% (950 learners) successfully completed at least one course they were enrolled in that year and 20% did not.

Almost one-half of the awards made to students in the last academic year were certificates. In 2007/08, 18 (78%) responding institutes provided the number of certificates, diplomas, degrees or other awards made to students in the last academic year (2006/07). Of the 888 such awards, 48% were certificates, 10% were diplomas, 1% were degrees and 41% were other awards (including Adult Dogwoods and course-specific awards).

Support for Students

One critical component of Aboriginal institutes’ design and success is their emphasis on providing students with an extraordinary level of support. As indicated above, some Aboriginal students require special support because of personal and home issues, and because of the unique issues facing Aboriginal communities generally. As RCAP (1996) notes:

Aboriginal programs often include elements that strengthen Aboriginal identity and self-esteem and build support networks among the students. These elements appear to be essential components of successful programs. They begin to heal the wounds the individual has accumulated over years of failed schooling, and they establish a stronger basis for the individual to pursue further training and education. Aboriginal adult programs must have the resources to include these components.

Aboriginal institutes provide individual support for students, teach courses in life-skills and Aboriginal language and culture, and arrange peer, community and distance mentors. At these institutes there is understanding of the challenges and problems faced by the students, support for constructive behaviour changes, and above all an environment of respect for

“We have been brought up in two different worlds so in order for us to step out further into the white world we need to know who we are first. I know where I can go now because the culture has built self-esteem and strength in me to know I do mean something in this world.”

(50-year-old male student, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

“Because of the programs offered through the college I can acquire skills that will keep me self-reliant and that is important to me. I do not want to be going to the welfare office. I want to be doing it myself. We need money for these programs in a big, big way.”

(Mature male student, IAHLA Introduction DVD, 2005)

the safety and sanctity of each individual. The report of Storytellers et. al. (2005), for example, found that effective practices in transition programs included personalized service, characterized as “one person at a time.”

Also, in response to the low literacy levels of many Aboriginal adult learners, Aboriginal institutes generally provide English language and language comprehension remediation. Improving literacy skills has proven vital to improving the success rates of adult Aboriginal learners.

The centre is friendly, students feel safe and secure, and there is a nurturing environment and a sense of belonging. Students take the program because it is offered at a First Nations institute. They need the support, comfortable atmosphere and First Nations environment. Then they gain confidence and feel ready to move to other mainstream institutes or to work.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

There was a sense of belonging, sense of family, comfortable atmosphere. Every step they encouraged me and understood my goals. They genuinely wanted to help. Having a First Nations teacher who pushed us and had high expectations was key.”

(Aboriginal institute student cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

Student support is also provided by the program and institute staff in practical ways, including, as possible, the provision of computers for student use, tutoring services, a study room for students, on-site counselling, and Elder involvement to allow students an opportunity to discuss cultural and spiritual issues. Aboriginal institutes have strong ties with local Aboriginal communities, Elders and resource people, and they collaborate with these groups in cultural programs (RCAP, 1996). The personal and academic needs of students in an Aboriginal institute setting are well known as learning progresses and challenges arise. In many communities, an interagency support network for students is provided and may include: medical, social, psychological and financial interventions or support as needed. Personal attention to each student is a key to providing whole growth and reinforcement of self-identity and self-esteem leading to positive outcomes (Waterfall, 2007). Some institutes also offer part-time work to help students financially.

For example, in the 2005 Storytellers survey, the “one-stop shopping” aspect of Aboriginal institutes was noted as a best practice. Typical of the institutes is that many educational and social services are offered on-site, thereby allowing the staff to assist students with any issues or problems that may impact their ability to learn while at the institute. This could be as

simple as helping fill out a government form or as troubling as assisting with incidents of sexual and physical abuse. One respondent commented, “The education opportunities and learning environment we offer is just a small component of our students getting past their [socioeconomic and human conditions].”

Cultural remediation initiatives – including counseling, tutoring and the provision of cultural mentors and academic role models – provided to students who are undergoing stress, bereavement and/or personal problems are core to Aboriginal student services. Cultural extracurricular programming, including on-site cultural events, round-tables, conferences, festivals and on-going peer-group events, serves to provide social and academic guidance and support to students in a way that focuses on Aboriginal student interests and needs.

(Armstrong et. al., 2007)

Aboriginal institutes also support students by providing as much flexibility as possible. This flexibility includes scheduling classes appropriately, and assessing students upon entry to determine their starting point so that they can begin studying at the level that is right for them. For many students, such flexibility is necessary for them to “get a foot back into education.”

Aboriginal institutes generally have small classes, which provide students with good access to instructors and student services. This environment makes students feel less intimidated than they would in mainstream institutes and also allows for a supportive relationship amongst students.

The staffs of the institutes provide emotional encouragement and a friendly, safe, welcoming, and comfortable environment. The institutes have been referred to as healing spaces, where students who have suffered a history of racism and other problems can get the support they need. Family-like relationships develop between students, instructors, and Elders-in-Residence, and there is generally a sense of belonging and understanding. Many students initially need such an atmosphere and benefit from a concerted effort to celebrate learner success; then they feel more confident and ready to move to other mainstream institutes or to work.

Inclusion, welcoming, sharing and kindness are extended to all peoples who the institution serves.

(Archibald and Williams, 2007)

In addition, for Aboriginal students who leave community-based learning situations and transfer to urban-based public post-secondary settings, their care does not stop when they

leave their home communities — it is extended throughout their academic careers and fostered by personal contact, public acknowledgement and celebration of their academic achievements, provision of financial support through scholarships and bursaries, and other personal touches that inspire and uplift students in their continued pursuits.

The Heiltsuk have a traditional ritual called “Ca-ca-xee-la”, which means the act of uplifting and giving encouragement to loved ones. This is practiced today and evident in the high enrollment and successful retention of its Aboriginal post-secondary learners who complete their studies and return to work in their home community. In essence, we share the mutual need to foster self-reliant, productive citizens who contribute to the whole mosaic of life within an internal and external setting.

(Waterfall, 2007)

2006/2007 IAHLA Data Collection Project ...

63% of responding institutes provide Life Skills programs to students. Typically, 25% to 50% of their learners enrolled in them in 2006/2007.

Almost all institutes offer one or more shorter, non-credit, courses and workshops, especially those on life skills (68%), career planning (68%) and computer skills (68%).

The institutes provide academic advising (94%) and peer support (95%) interventions and/or referrals. Referrals are most common for drug and alcohol prevention (47%) and family violence prevention (42%). The learners surveyed used academic advising (65%) and/or peer support services (66%) most often. Almost all the learners using such services found them to be very or somewhat useful.

The institutes link with a wide range of other providers to deliver supports and other services to learners. Most common are links with public colleges/universities, traditional/spiritual advisors and Elders and social development services.

More than four-in-five of the 255 learners surveyed agree they feel better about themselves and/or more confident since beginning at their institutes. Most (more than 75%) have also set future goals in areas like their family life, personal lives and/or education.

Instructor Quality

Perhaps the most important factor in the provision of excellent student support is the institutes' instructors, who are expected to be particularly encouraging and caring. Another important issue for Aboriginal institutes is their emphasis on hiring Aboriginal staff. When Aboriginal instructors are available to teach courses, they achieve a special connection to students and they afford the opportunity for students to learn from instructors who understand where they are coming from. Even in those cases when courses cannot be taught by Aboriginal people, the non-Aboriginal instructors often seek, through their own initiative, ways to improve their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture. In this way they are able to enhance their ability to deliver courses whose content is structurally sound and relevant to Aboriginal people.

Students were enthusiastic about both the learning environment and the quality of instruction that they were experiencing in the program. They stressed the positive and supportive atmosphere created by the faculty and staff, and the degree of individual attention and challenge they received. They emphasized how much they value the First Nations focus in their coursework and they commented that other educational experiences that they had lacked this important perspective.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

Local Delivery and Community Involvement

As mentioned above, most Aboriginal-controlled institutes are located in or very close to Aboriginal communities, which appears to have tremendous significance to the communities and to students. Many students have indicated that they would not have enrolled in a post-secondary program if it were located in a different location; for many, family and work responsibilities would make a move impossible. Also, students often speak about the comfort of studying near home, and many students report that prior to enrolling in an Aboriginal institute they lacked the confidence needed to undertake new studies while also making a major life move.

Without community-based programming, almost none of the past and current students would have been able to participate.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

There is also a very strong community component to Aboriginal institutes – a characteristic that makes the institutes especially unique and effective. The institutes support Aboriginal communities by enhancing members' skills and they contribute to individual and community

capacity building. The overall development of students' self-confidence, self-discipline, and awareness will help them achieve success in whatever they choose to do, which will ultimately make them stronger community members.

Many institutes also focus on subjects directly related to the employment needs of Aboriginal communities. This contribution is critical, as preparing Aboriginal people to assume the complete range of responsibilities associated with self-governance must be recognized as a top priority. Aboriginal communities and organizations urgently require trained personnel to plan and implement their own community-development efforts, and post-secondary education is extremely important for broadening the range of professional skills Aboriginal people will acquire (RCAP, 1996).

Additionally, the institutes offer lifelong learning opportunities for all community members, often providing non-accredited workshops for community members who need support in terms of technology learning, safety issues, parenting, etc. Finally, the institutes allow Aboriginal communities to retain control of their languages and cultures, which is a fundamental goal of Aboriginal nations throughout BC.

The program helps to build confident and capable citizens who, in turn, can make important contributions to their communities. The list of jobs now held by former students demonstrates just how significant this outcome is.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

In addition, community members contribute greatly to Aboriginal institutes. Community recognition of students' achievements increases their self-esteem and pride, and encourages them to continue to pursue their educational and career goals. Community members often volunteer their time to assist with the development of teaching materials, and in many cases program planning includes a diverse group of community members, including Elders. Several institutes also include Elders councils, made up of local Elders who students trust and can ask for traditional or spiritual support. Other effective practices for community engagement noted in the 2005 Storytellers report include:

- holding student-led symposiums at the facility and inviting the community;
- establishing work-school based committees where members of the community's business sector have regular interaction with school administrators;
- enlisting the support of high-profile community members who attended programs at the institute; and
- encouraging institute staff to sit on boards of community organizations.

Generally, Aboriginal institutes offer services in holistic settings that encompass cultural, family, and community values and ways. They work in partnership with community stakeholders to provide personally relevant and academically challenging education opportunities within a safe, caring and supportive environment. They work to reinforce self-identity, historical teachings and life long learning

(Waterfall, 2007)

2006 /2007 IAHLA Data Collection Project:

49% of the learners surveyed agree they have become more active in their communities.

Overall, Malatest's report on Best Practices in Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education (2002) states, "the literature reviewed and interviews conducted for this report contained nothing but the strongest support for the existing Aboriginal institutions." Some of the factors attributed to their success at attracting and retaining Aboriginal students include their Aboriginal staffs and Aboriginal control of curriculum development. Student support also has been central to improving Aboriginal performance and morale at the post-secondary level, although "the difference that student support makes is not quantifiable ... and often receives little of the analysis or acclaim garnered by specific programs or initiatives" (Malatest, 2002).

Some of the key practices listed by those surveyed in the Storytellers (2005) project are:

- having small class size and a relaxed but professional atmosphere;
- vetting curriculum through a local committee before delivery to ensure it is culturally relevant;
- ensuring programs have transferability before they are delivered;
- instructors having ample time outside of the classroom for preparation / student / community contact;
- experiential components associated with culture and spirituality services such as circles and smudges;
- Elder participation in all aspects from language instruction, curriculum development, policy development and spiritual guidance;
- encouraging institute staff to sit on boards of community organizations;
- providing a safe, friendly, First Nations atmosphere at the organization;

- using direct visits to villages/face-to-face individual contact and word-of-mouth as student intake strategies;
- recruiting responsive Board members;
- extensive intake interviews for assessment and other purposes and follow ups throughout the training period; and
- flexibility to respond quickly to a community need and within the delivery of a course or program.

2.3 Challenges for Aboriginal Institutes

In spite of the many strengths highlighted above, there are many significant challenges for Aboriginal institutes. Although they occupy a distinctive sector in post-secondary education, the majority of Aboriginal institutes are struggling for recognition for the excellent work they do. As described above, Aboriginal institutes do not have access to secure, long-term funding; most are funded on a program-by-program basis only, sometimes for only three months at a time. Base funding to cover infrastructure and administrative costs and capital funding to provide safe, healthy learning environments is generally unavailable. Many of the institutes began operation over 10 years ago in substandard facilities that are now in urgent need of repair.

Because of limited funding, the institutes cannot always offer an ideal range of courses and/or only the beginning of a program. This means that students who want to finish a program must transfer to another post-secondary institution. While this structure may work well for some students, it can present challenges for students who would prefer or who can only afford to complete their education closer to home.

In a 2005 survey of 10 Aboriginal institutes in BC (Storytellers et. al., 2005), all organizations responded that there is a demand for more post-secondary training than they are currently offering. Lack of funding to the organizations was cited most often as the reason why more training is not being offered, followed by capacity or skill level of prospective students and a lack of student numbers.

Other challenges presented by limited funding include a lack of resources for curriculum development, most specifically for efforts to include culture in the programming. Resources are not readily available for promotion and recruitment activities. The institutes generally have limited computer, library, and learning resources, and most of the programs offer few services for students with special needs, including no accommodations for students who require special physical access. As well, although student support is a strength of the institutes, given the range of student needs even stronger counselling and student advising services are needed.

Finally, it is difficult for Aboriginal institutes to maintain consistent full-time instructors because their pay scales are often lower than other institutes. As grants are generally annual

and often proposal driven, funding is uncertain from one year to the next; this means that instructors do not know if they will have continued employment, creating stress for both the instructors and program administrators. Professional development opportunities for instructors and other staff members are also extremely limited.

RCAP summarizes the funding difficulties of Aboriginal institutes by stating:

Aboriginal post-secondary institutions live on precarious federal and provincial funding; they depend on small program grants, which are short-term, often project-specific and always subject to change. This instability unsettles operations and makes long-term planning difficult. Aboriginal post-secondary institutions must be recognized and given stable funding.

The unpredictability of funding from year to year means that good teachers, who have invested considerable time in developing their skills, do not know from year to year if they will have employment. There is a danger that the best of them will be lured away to positions with more job stability.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

The budget does not allow for the hiring of a faculty of full-time instructors who could provide service to the growth and development of the institute.

(Aboriginal institute program evaluator cited in Kavanagh, 2007)

The Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium (2005) also wrote "the amount of funding for Aboriginal education at all levels has not kept pace with enrolment levels, systems changes, and needs." As summarized in the Storytellers 2005 survey report:

What is common amongst the organizations is the effects that chronic under-funding has created. ... An immediate and reliable source of funding is required if the surveyed First Nations-operated post-secondary institutions are to continue to offer their current services. Access to an annual funding source would allow each of the institutions to maintain and improve upon their buildings, to purchase the necessary supplies and fixtures, to attract and retain high quality teachers and student support staff, to increase the number and types of courses offered, to alleviate instability, and finally, to compensate for the debt incurred when students are unable to pay tuition.

In addition to funding, maintaining an adequate number of students is also an issue for consideration, as significant work is required to develop programs while limited populations of students may be available to take the courses. Small numbers of students in a program also can have a negative effect on course planning and selection. Finally, while small student numbers can be beneficial in terms of student support and quality interactions with instructors, it can also inhibit certain kinds of learning that benefit from a relatively larger, more diverse group structure.

Another common challenge relates to communication and the promotion of the learning opportunities available through Aboriginal institutes. This issue has multiple facets, including limited resources for student and faculty recruitment as well as the need for a better general understanding of the opportunities available through the special settings.

Part Three:

Why Should the Provincial Government Support Aboriginal Institutes?

It is time for governments to fund and support the development of [Aboriginal institutes] of higher learning. ... These institutes experience a chronic lack of funding and also the reluctance of mainstream post-secondary institutions to recognize their courses and programs/degrees. Courses and programs offered by these institutes of higher learning are highly relevant and valued by communities; it has been demonstrated that these institutes provide a supportive learning environment and students are encouraged to persist and complete their programs/degrees (Assembly of First Nations, 2005).

Given that a number of effective Aboriginal controlled post-secondary institutes already exist, it is important to consider the importance of seeking a stronger relationship with MAVED.

3.1 The Benefits of Provincial Government Support

There are several important benefits that would result from a greater integration of Aboriginal institutes within the public post-secondary education sector. To begin, those benefits would greatly strengthen Aboriginal institutes. Stronger Aboriginal institutes would in turn enhance the entire post-secondary education system, as Aboriginal and mainstream institutes have much to offer one another – especially given the high mobility of students between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settings.

As described above, many of the students who enroll in Aboriginal institutes do so in order to gain the skills, credentials, and confidence they need to pursue other educational opportunities, highlighting the importance of partnerships and holistic efforts to support Aboriginal students in their educational paths. Stronger Aboriginal institutes will increase the chances that more Aboriginal students are fully prepared to enter and achieve success in public post-secondary settings, and to then contribute to their own communities and broader society, which will benefit all of BC.

The importance of addressing post-secondary access for Aboriginal learners was emphasized in a recent Labour Market Survey by Statistics Canada (2005). That study showed an important link between labour force participation and post-secondary completion.

According to the new data from Statistics Canada, labour market conditions have improved for off-reserve Aboriginal people in Western Canada. However, gaps still persist between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population. During the 12 months ending in March 2005, unemployment rates for Aboriginal people residing in the West were 2.5 times higher than for non-Aboriginal people, on average.

In fact, the share of off-reserve Aboriginal people in the West who had a job increased from 54.2% in 2001 to 57.2% in 2005. Still, this was well below the proportion of 65.2% among non-Aboriginal persons. At the same time, the unemployment rate for these Aboriginal people fell from a high of 16.7% in 2001 to 13.6% in 2005. But this was more than twice the rate of 5.3% among non-Aboriginal people.

In particular, Aboriginal youth, a growing group, struggled to obtain employment in western Canada. In 2005, Aboriginal youths in western Canada had difficulty in the labour market, with an employment rate of 43.6%, compared with 61.7% for non-Aboriginal youths. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal youth was more than double that of non-Aboriginal youth – 20.8% compared with 10.0%.

While many Aboriginal people in western Canada had a much harder time in the labour market than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, those who had completed some form of post-secondary education, such as trade school, college or university, did not. The employment rate for Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 who had finished post-secondary education was 82.5%, just shy of the 83.5% for non-Aboriginal persons in western Canada. Education also considerably narrowed the gap in unemployment rates. For post-secondary-educated Aboriginal people, the unemployment rate was 6.9% compared with 3.9% for non-Aboriginal people. In comparison, the unemployment rate for all levels of education was 4.4% for non-Aboriginal people and 11.5% for Aboriginal people.

Non-Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 were more likely to have completed post-secondary education than Aboriginal people the same age. In 2005, 55.6% of non-Aboriginal persons had completed some form of postsecondary education, while only 39.9% of Aboriginal persons had done so. Aboriginal people were also less likely to have a university degree and more likely to have a trade certificate or college diploma than non-Aboriginal people.

The Importance of Recognition

In order for Aboriginal institutes to continue providing strong programming, there is a need for greater overall recognition of Aboriginal institutes and the important work that they do. Currently, Aboriginal controlled institutes in BC must continually strive to justify their existence and promote their special role. Sometimes, the institutes even struggle to promote their importance within the Aboriginal community.

Relationships require a foundation of mutual respect and commitment. Aboriginal institutes need to help public institutes understand and respect what Aboriginal institutes are doing in the communities and there needs to be a mutual understanding of collaboration and partnership development. ... It is difficult to have a good working relationship when public institutes are seen as having “power over” Aboriginal institutes. This situation is created and perpetuated by the fact that public institutes are recognized and funded through the provincial government and Aboriginal institutes are, more often than not, barely surviving – and yet still proving to have high success rates with their learners.

(Leighton, 2007)

Operating as a complementary component of the provincial post-secondary education system will help Aboriginal-controlled institutes promote a greater understanding of the needs of Aboriginal learners and the unique learning environments that help to ensure their success. Public recognition will also foster a wider perception that the programs and courses offered in Aboriginal institutes are as legitimate and effective as those offered by mainstream institutes. This improved perspective will help all Aboriginal institutes to address concerns related to funding inequities, instructor and student recruitment, and it will help to ensure that Aboriginal institutes are accorded proper respect in the establishment of partnership arrangements. This recognition of the academic rigour and validity of programs will also encourage labour market acceptance of students from Aboriginal post-secondary institutes on an equal footing as they accept students from public institutions offering the same programming.

As the report of RCAP (1996) states:

Governments and the Canadian educational community should recognize [Aboriginal post-secondary institutes] by supporting them and giving them the opportunity to gain the same respect accorded public post-secondary institutions. This recognition should be translated into core funding for the services they provide and accredited status within provincial and territorial post-secondary systems so that students can transfer between Aboriginal and provincial or territorial institutions without penalty. Such arrangements already exist between institutions in different provinces, each of which has its own standards.

Relationship building must start from the top. By understanding and recognizing the crucial role that Aboriginal institutes play in the lives of Aboriginal adult and post-secondary students in this province, MAVED would be in a position to encourage and support the building of these relationships.

(Leighton, 2007)

Enhancing Respect for Indigenous Knowledge and Language and Culture Preservation

In addition, recognition of Aboriginal institutes as an important sector of the post-secondary system will promote greater acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledge as a unique and exciting alternative knowledge system. Aboriginal institutes can demonstrate the importance of appropriate protocols for Indigenous knowledge use, recognizing that Indigenous knowledge is under the authority of Aboriginal Nations. Aboriginal institutes can also demonstrate the use of appropriate research protocols, exploring how research can be conducted and shared in ways that respect local authority for language, culture, knowledge, stories, and intellectual property. Finally, Aboriginal institutes can show how to properly recognize healers, spiritual advisors, and knowledge keepers, without losing the integrity of their knowledge. Aboriginal institutes can share all of this vital information with mainstream post-secondary institutions.

In addition, as described above, Aboriginal institutes must be recognized for their unique contribution to the preservation and teaching of Aboriginal languages. As Premier Campbell stated in his announcement of new funding to preserve Indigenous languages in BC on March 31, 2006:

We know that preserving and revitalizing [Aboriginal languages] has a profound impact, especially on First Nations young people. It says that we value their culture. We know that helps lead to greater self-esteem, to improved educational outcomes, and to improved literacy.

The Province recognizes that the root of expertise in Indigenous languages resides within First Nations communities and institutions. First Nations post-secondary institutions play a critical role in the revitalization of First Nations languages as they are the training ground for First Nations language teachers and new speakers.

Addressing Resource Inequities

Financial resources from the provincial government would also be critical for the growth of Aboriginal institutes. With more sufficient financial resources, Aboriginal institutes will be better able to effectively support Aboriginal communities throughout the province and help narrow the gap between the education attainment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the province. Greater funding will enable them to develop appropriate curricula and learning resources, particularly in regard to language and culture. More funding will allow the institutes to address their staffing and program coordination challenges, and to build their student support services. With greater financial support, Aboriginal institutes will also enhance their ability to offer on-site programs in Aboriginal communities, as well as on-line learning programs to remote students.

Promoting Cooperation

According to RCAP (1996), Aboriginal institutes play a unique role in the education of Aboriginal adults, and for 20 years, they have shown durability and resilience. However, as RCAP further recognizes, they will not supplant the services of non-Aboriginal institutions, which many Aboriginal students will continue to attend. Canadian post-secondary education institutions provide a wide range of programs that Aboriginal post-secondary institutes can not possibly replicate. Canadian colleges and universities, therefore, should continue their efforts to create a more hospitable environment for Aboriginal students.

At the same time, Aboriginal institutes offer a milieu that supports student success and programs that reflect the distinct perspectives and values of Aboriginal peoples. As Aboriginal governments come forward with unique needs for service programs, Aboriginal institutes will be able to respond to these requests with innovative programs defined by Aboriginal people.

Their respective strengths and unique contributions suggest that to move ahead with the development of autonomous Aboriginal institutes, cooperation between Aboriginal and mainstream educators and institutions will be essential. With the expansion of e-learning opportunities, possibilities for cooperation will also grow. Aboriginal and mainstream institutes can continue the collaborative efforts they have started by furthering their discussions of possibilities for sharing technological infrastructure and training, as well as course programming.

Public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia offer on-line registration to students. Their Service Plans are posted on the Internet, and student outcomes documented, stored and analyzed in computer-based data warehouses. Post-secondary institutions worldwide are investing heavily in on-line teaching. Aboriginal communities are investing in developing online tools to enable Aboriginal students to have access to the language and culture of their Elders. Aboriginal people regard ICT infrastructure and capacity in Aboriginal communities to be fundamental to meaningful participation in social, cultural and economic development in the 21st century and to bridging the 'digital divide'.

(Craig, 2007)

Aboriginal institutes can also fulfill an important role in promoting and exchanging ideas and programs to better support Aboriginal learners in all post-secondary education settings. With sufficient funding and recognition, Aboriginal institutes can offer a wealth of knowledge related to cultural sensitivity that would be useful to public and private educational institutes that serve Aboriginal students. The institutes can share courses and programs that could help mainstream post-secondary settings to modify their own offerings and improve their cultural content and interest to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Most public institutions of higher learning have developed support programs for their Aboriginal students and cultural centres to showcase Aboriginal culture. With greater cooperation and respect, Aboriginal institutes can contribute to these programs, making them more effective and relevant for Aboriginal students and helping to spread knowledge of Aboriginal cultures to the larger student population. Finally, collaboration between public institutes and an Aboriginal institute can lead to more culturally appropriate career counselling, as well as better student, course, and program assessment tools.

Aboriginal post-secondary institutes are like the little engine that could. Their proven records are measurable, and given an opportunity to enhance what they already do well, by the development of effective partnerships and added support funding, Aboriginal controlled institutes will be in a position to assist more Aboriginal learners.

(Waterfall, 2007)

3.2 Additional Rationale for Provincial Government Support

In addition to the benefits that would result from the provincial government's recognition of Aboriginal institutes, it is important to recognize that provincial government support

is consistent with existing government initiatives and commitments regarding Aboriginal jurisdiction and Aboriginal education.

Building on Partnerships Already in Place

Aboriginal peoples and the Government of BC are extremely well positioned to be looking at new approaches to supporting Aboriginal learners in accessing and completing post-secondary programming.

Significant success already has been achieved in the K-12 system as a result of a strong partnership approach highlighted in the *1999 Memorandum of Understanding on Aboriginal Education*, which was signed by First Nations of BC, the provincial and federal governments, the BC Teachers Federation, BC College of Teachers, BC School Trustees Association, BC Principal's and Vice-Principal's Association, and First Nations political organizations. The most recent advancement from this partnership arrangement was the passage of Bill 46 on November 29, 2006, which recognizes and identifies actions to support First Nations jurisdiction over K-12 education on-reserve. Several of the action items contained in the Agreements and legislation have been successfully undertaken, including the development of English 12-First Peoples and improved information sharing.

Building on this success, the BC government, First Nations, and Métis, along with various post-secondary partners and the federal government, signed a similar *Memorandum of Understanding on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education* on March 11, 2005. In the subsequent three years, many of the action items identified in the jointly developed and adopted *Made in BC Approach to Post-secondary Education and Training Strategy* have been initiated.

Consistency with Previous Provincial Government Commitments

The BC Government also has previously demonstrated its commitment to addressing the concerns of Aboriginal people in numerous ways. In 1991, the provincial government recognized the inherent right of Aboriginal people to self-government, and subsequently participated in the establishment of the BC Treaty Commission to negotiate treaties.

In addition, the *Ministry of Advanced Education Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, approved by Cabinet in 1995, is based upon the following principles.

The Province envisions a society in which:

1. relationships between Aboriginal people and all British Columbians are based on equality and respect.
2. Aboriginal people can fulfill their aspirations for self-determining and self-sustaining communities; and

3. all British Columbians enjoy the social and economic benefits of cooperation and certainty.

The policy vision is:

Post-secondary education participation, retention, and success rates for Aboriginal people will at least equal that of non-Aboriginal people, and will be attained within a post-secondary education system in which both public institutions and Aboriginal organizations and institutions play appropriate roles and are supported by the combined resources of the federal and provincial governments.

The 1995 policy framework also focuses on the following objectives:

1. increase the participation and success rates of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education and training;
2. support capacity building toward self-government for Aboriginal people through post-secondary education and training opportunities for Aboriginal people;
3. establish a long-term plan to ensure that Aboriginal people can acquire the knowledge and skills required for effective self-government in the post-treaty environment; and
4. secure federal government commitment to maintain financial contributions for post-secondary education and training for Aboriginal people.

The policy structure proposed in *this* paper addresses all of those objectives, as it is intended to strengthen Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. Those institutes can then continue and expand their efforts to encourage the participation of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education, promote successful student growth and transitions to other educational and employment settings, and contribute to community building. The policy option described in this paper also focuses on using federal and provincial government funding in a complementary way to most effectively support Aboriginal institutes.

New strategies must provide ... for community-based development and delivery systems which enable the post-secondary system to respond to Aboriginal people as distinct societies capable of identifying their unique learning needs.

MAVED Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, 1995.

In addition, on May 20, 2005, the Government of BC and the Chiefs of BC, represented by the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, signed a framework document entitled *The New Relationship*. The vision contained within this framework is as follows.

We are all here to stay. We agree to a new government-to-government relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights. Our shared vision includes respect for our respective laws and responsibilities. Through this new relationship, we commit to reconciliation of Aboriginal and Crown titles and jurisdictions. ...

The historical Aboriginal-Crown relationship in British Columbia has given rise to the present socio-economic disparity between First Nations and other British Columbians. We agree to work together in this new relationship to achieve strong governments, social justice and economic self-sufficiency for First Nations which will be of benefit to all British Columbians and will lead to long-term economic viability.

The New Relationship document also contains a recognition by BC of the vision of First Nations to achieve four goals – including two goals that relate directly to the jointly held objective of increasing the number of First Nations learners who access and successfully complete a post-secondary education. Those goals are as follows.

1. To restore, revitalize and strengthen First Nations and their communities and families to eliminate the gap in standards of living with other British Columbians, and substantially improve the circumstances of First Nations people in areas which include: education, children and families, and health, including restoration of habitats to achieve access to traditional foods and medicines;...
2. To revitalize and preserve First Nations cultures and languages and restore literacy and fluency in First Nations languages to ensure that no First Nations language becomes extinct.

In 2006, the Métis Nation Relationship Accord was also signed between the Province of British Columbia and the Métis Nation of British Columbia. That Accord recognizes the following (www.gov.bc.ca/arr/social/down/arr_metis_accord.pdf).

At the First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal Issues in Kelowna on November 25, 2005, First Ministers committed to strengthening relationships with Aboriginal people based on mutual respect, responsibility and sharing as well as collaboratively working with Aboriginal people in order to close the gap in the quality of life for Aboriginal people in Canada.

The Métis Nation British Columbia embraces these commitments and undertakes to work with the Province of British Columbia in order to make progress and achieve results on a number of fronts including, but not limited to, relationships, education, housing, health and economic opportunities.

A positive working relationship between the province and the Métis people of British Columbia is essential to moving forward on the goals and outcomes identified by First Ministers in Kelowna.

Finally, on April 24, 2007, Premier Gordon Campbell and Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced the Province's \$65-million Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy. That strategy is intended to help Aboriginal students and institutions in the following ways.

- Reducing financial barriers through \$10.3 million in scholarships for Aboriginal students, starting in September 2008/09.
- Increasing access, retention and success by investing \$14.9 million to create three-year service plans between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities that identify interests and educational needs of Aboriginal students and create programs that meet those needs.
- Providing over \$12.1 million to increase programs that are designed, in conjunction with First Nations communities, to be culturally appropriate in content and delivery, such as language and university preparation programs.
- \$12.8 million to encourage more transitions to programs offered by post-secondary institutions in fields like health, social work and business.
- Investing \$15 million over three years to create gathering places that reflect Aboriginal culture at public post-secondary institutions.

Consistency with International Commitments

Provincial government support for Aboriginal institutes is also consistent with International commitments to the educational rights of Indigenous peoples. For example, the following is described in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Article 13

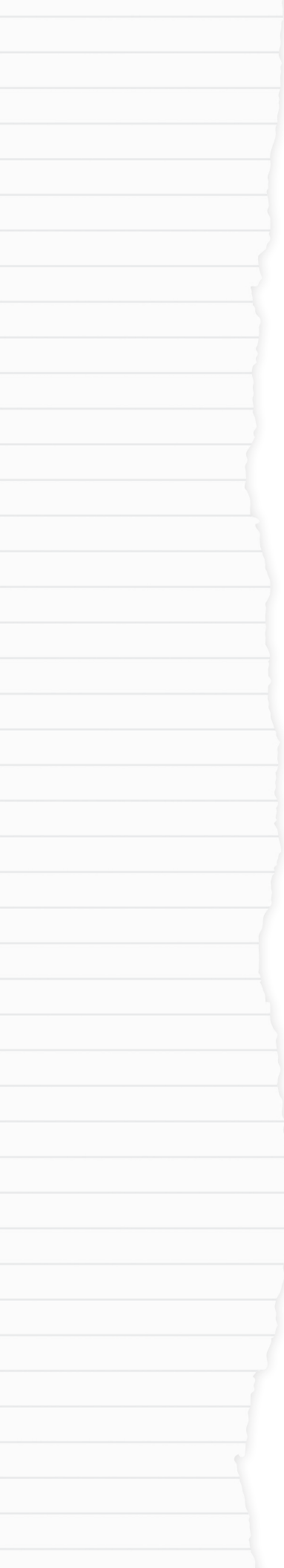
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

Article 14

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.

Article 15

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.



Part Four:

Provincial Comparisons

In terms of provincial comparisons, other Ministries are also recognizing the importance of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes and making efforts to address the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student success rates.

For example, the *Aboriginal Education Action Plan, 2004 – 2007*, of **Manitoba** Advanced Education and Training (www.edu.gov.mb.ca/abedu/action_plan/abed_action_plan.pdf), sets out four broad goals: 1. increase high school graduation rates of Aboriginal learners; 2. increase access and completion of post-secondary education; 3. increase successful entry into and participation in the labour market; and 4. improve the research base for Aboriginal education and employment. Within those goals, the Manitoba government highlights, among other things, the need to:

- establish a University College of the North to include community-based training in key campus communities, distance education, and the development of relevant northern and Aboriginal programming needs;
- complete the review of all ACCESS programs for best practice and improved outcomes;
- through partnership, increase participation of First Nations education authorities in the Adult Learning Centre Network;
- through college partnerships, encourage the development of quality training and course delivery by Aboriginal instructors;
- and establish “stand alone” Aboriginal adult learning centres.

Saskatchewan has the second highest proportion of First Nations and Métis population in the country. In that province, it is expected that by 2016 approximately 45% of the children entering kindergarten will be of First Nations or Métis ancestry. Yet in Saskatchewan, only 30% of First Nations and Métis peoples aged 15-24 years have completed at least high school education. First Nations and Métis students have a higher dropout rate and lower high school completion rate than non-Aboriginal K-12 students. The Saskatchewan Government, therefore, stated that “in recognition of the increased expectation for accountability and

improved outcomes for all children and youth in the province, it is necessary to reinforce the need for equitable outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners” (www.learning.gov.sk.ca).

In Saskatchewan, since the 1970’s a parallel post-secondary system has gradually evolved with both First Nations and Métis institutions delivering trades and technical programs and the First Nations University of Canada (previously Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) delivering university programming. The 2003 government report, *Building Partnerships: First Nations and Métis People in the Provincial Education System*, called for improved supports and educational outcomes of First Nations and Métis students, as well as high quality learning programs for all students. Most recently, *The Learning Community in Aboriginal Education: Priorities Report 2005-2007* argued strongly for increasing partnerships and shared decision-making with Aboriginal peoples.

The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework of the **Alberta** Government (<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/FNMI/fnmiPolicy//PolicyFramework.asp>) was developed through one of the largest consultation processes on Aboriginal education undertaken in Canada. It includes the following goal.

Goal 3: Learners are well-prepared for participation in post-secondary studies and the labour market.

- Increase the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit high school graduates making a successful transition into a post-secondary diploma or degree program, apprenticeship training, or employment.
- Increase the number of career planning programs and services throughout the learning system.
- Provide choices and bridges to post-secondary learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners participating in academic upgrading programs.
- Provide programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners that reinforce cultural and linguistic identity, enhance character development, and develop life management skills.

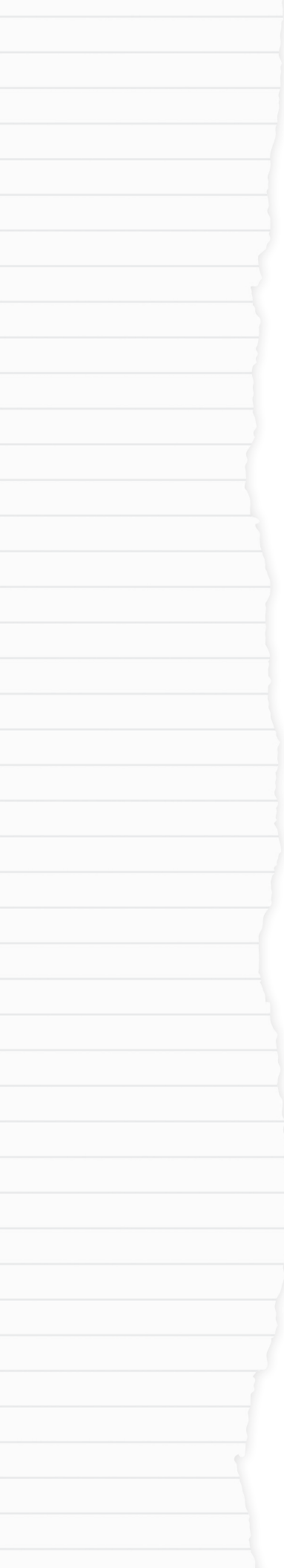
Specifically in terms of *Aboriginal institutes in other provinces*, the largest and best-known of Canadian semi-independent post-secondary institutions is the First Nations University of Canada (formally called the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College). (www.firstnationsuniversity.ca). This institute is controlled by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and accredited as a member of the Canadian Association of Universities and Colleges. The First Nations University of Canada now maintains an average annual enrolment of over 1200, with one-quarter of its students coming from outside Saskatchewan and representing every province and territory in Canada. That institute, it should be noted, also has a unique funding agreement with the federal government, providing it with funding

that is not only at a higher level, but that is also more stable and secure than that provided to any other Aboriginal institute in Canada.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI, www.gdins.org) was created to serve the educational and cultural needs of the Saskatchewan Métis and Non-Status Indian community. The Institute is designated as the official educational arm of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan. GDI offers a variety of accredited educational, vocational, and skills training opportunities for Métis people in partnership with the province's universities and various regional colleges. The institute is the only Métis owned and operated educational institution of its kind in Canada. The GDI is funded by grants from the province of Saskatchewan and the federal government, and it serves nearly 1,000 students every year.

Malatest, in his review of Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada (2002), found that many other Aboriginal institutions operate across the country, but without the level of financial support of the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the First Nations University of Canada. These institutions, while smaller in scope, often operate through partnerships with larger colleges or universities. Most of the institutes rely on small program grants that are short-term, project-specific, and may be subject to change. The provincial governments generally do not support smaller institutes, although they may provide student financial assistance to learners if they are in departmentally approved training programs offered by such schools (Malatest, 2002).

Overall, Aboriginal people in Canada have begun to exercise more significant control of post-secondary education, but they have had less control over education at the post-secondary level than at any other level. Almost all Aboriginal education dollars are spent on universities, colleges, and programs that are not under direct Aboriginal control. In contrast, Malatest (2002) reports that “many of the interviews conducted and much of the literature reviewed for this study demonstrate that whenever Aboriginals are given control of their own programs or institutions, there have been higher rates of success in Aboriginal enrolment and graduation.” As an example, Malatest cites the University of Regina, which has an Aboriginal enrolment rate of 15%, in a province where overall Aboriginal people make up 14% of the population. The author claims that this equal enrolment is due to the University of Regina's association with the First Nations University of Canada – the best-funded Aboriginal institute in the country.



Part Five:

International Comparisons

Internationally, a wide variety of initiatives and programs have sought to overcome barriers to success of Indigenous peoples in post-secondary education. While those initiatives have varied, common approaches include the following.

- There is often government funding of Indigenous students participating in post-secondary education, such as the Post-Secondary Student Support Program in Canada and ABSTUDY in Australia.
- Grants, scholarships, and bursaries are offered specifically for Indigenous people.
- Indigenous educational institutes have been created, whether affiliated with larger institutions, such as the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, or independently operated, such as the American tribal colleges.
- Targeted programs have been created at mainstream universities and colleges that actively promote and support Indigenous post-secondary education, and there are also specific programs developed for Indigenous people, such as Indigenous law, health, and education programs.
- The use of community delivery has allowed post-secondary education to be offered within or closer to Indigenous communities.
- Efforts have been made to develop and use Indigenous curriculum and culturally sensitive materials and pedagogies, as well as alternative assessments for Indigenous students.
- The strengthening of Indigenous literacy and language skills, both in traditional Indigenous languages and in English and French, has been a priority.

Examples of International Efforts to Establish Indigenous Institutes

Since 1982, the *Māori in New Zealand* have developed several alternative education innovations in a variety of education sites, all of which have been based on traditional Māori underpinnings. For example, Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa (www.twor.ac.nz), or University of

Raukawa, was the country's first private university-level institution. Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa became an incorporated body in 1984, although it was not recognized by the Crown until 1993 under new legislation known as the *Education Amendment Act 1990*. Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa aims to contribute to the Māori and the wider community by producing skilled graduates who can move between the Māori and Pakeha worlds effortlessly. The institution is a unique centre of higher learning devoted to the world of Māori knowledge, (Mātauranga Māori). The method of teaching at Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa is based upon knowledge and wisdom passed on by Māori ancestors and is a holistic approach to learning and teaching. Courses are based on group learning, or “hui,” rather than individual learning. The three core subjects are Māori language, Iwi and Hapū studies, and information technology and telecommunications.

In *Australia*, the Aboriginal-controlled Batchelor Institute (www.batchelor.edu.au) began in the mid-1960s, providing short training programs for Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants in community schools. During 1990, programs began to be expanded and diversified in response to the importance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have placed on gaining accredited awards in the areas of professional and para-professional occupations. Two principles underpin all aspects of the institute's life. First, cultural interaction and cross-cultural learning follow a ‘both ways’ philosophy which enables exploration of Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts. Second, through its work and its courses, Batchelor Institute affirms the aspiration to self-determination and employment held by Indigenous Australians.

In 1989, the Commonwealth Government, through the Higher Education Funding Act (1988), recognized Batchelor College as a higher education institution, though one outside the Unified National System of higher education. In 1995, the college was granted autonomy from the Northern Territory Department of Education as an ‘agency’ within the public sector. It became the independent Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, under Northern Territory legislation, on 1 July 1999, the first ever education institution in Australia offering higher education courses to be owned and controlled by Indigenous Australians. It is the Institute Council's intention that Batchelor will eventually achieve full university status.

The college has developed several strategies and pedagogies to assist in Indigenous student success at the post-secondary level. These include:

- a form of flexible delivery able to respond to the requirements of mature-age students, including their family and ceremonial obligations;
- a “both ways” philosophy of education, designed to reconcile and use both mainstream and Indigenous Australian cultures in its teaching methods and course materials; and
- a network of Community Study Centres in over 35 remote Northern Territory communities.

From a 1985 enrolment of about 100 students undertaking one teacher training program, the institute has grown to enroll over 3100 students in 2003. Those students are studying about 80 higher education and vocational education and training courses, with over one-third of the students enrolled in higher education programs. Batchelor Institute currently enrolls more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the higher education level than any other tertiary institution in Australia.

The *United States Tribal College* movement began in the late 1960s with the establishment of community colleges on the Navajo and Sioux reservations and on an abandoned missile base in Northern California. There are now 32 federally recognized Tribal Colleges and Universities in the United States. Located mainly in the Midwest and Southwest, Tribal Colleges and Universities service approximately 30,000 full- and part-time students. They offer two-year associate degrees in over 200 disciplines with some providing a bachelor's and master's degree. They also offer 200 vocational certificate programs. The colleges have a national advocacy organization, the American Indian College Fund, and a professional journal.

Tribal colleges are given government funding per student as prescribed by the Tribal College Act, as well as funding from corporations and philanthropic organizations. They also have their own Tribal College Fund, which targets specific priorities outlined by individual colleges. As in Canada, however, limited funding has been a constant challenge for the colleges.

All tribal colleges are controlled by boards of trustees who are nearly all local American Indian community members. Most administrators are American Indians, but most faculty members are non-Indian. Tribally operated colleges have allowed Aboriginal students to begin their university education at or near their home.

The American federal government has recognized the important role Tribal Colleges and Universities play in American Indian communities and on July 3, 2002, President Bush signed Executive Order 13270 on Tribal Colleges and Universities (www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whtc/edlite-index.html). The Executive Order established the President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities and the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities. That federal government initiative recognizes the following:

Tribal Colleges and Universities are both integral and essential to their communities. They are often the only post-secondary institutions within some of our Nation's poorest rural areas. Tribal Colleges and Universities serve a variety of people, from young adults to senior citizens, American Indians to non-American Indians. They also provide crucial services and add hope to communities that suffer high rates of poverty and unemployment.

Common Themes

Major themes in all of the Aboriginal educational institutional goals or practices around the world encompass the following (Barnhardt, cited in Malatest, 2002).

- Commitment to community
- Integration of functions
- Sustained local leadership
- Participation of Elders
- Spiritual harmony
- Use of local languages
- Traditional ways of knowing
- Traditional teaching practices
- Congenial environment
- Participatory research

Part Six:

Issues for Consideration in Developing Policy

6.1 Aboriginal Control and Governance

One of the primary challenges related to Aboriginal institutes operating within the public post-secondary education system relates to control. There is a need to clarify the relationship between the provincial government and Aboriginal authorities to recognize that for many institutes, authority must be retained by the founding Aboriginal Nation(s).

Currently, Aboriginal institutes are governed by Board members drawn from the Aboriginal community, and as such the Boards are sensitive both to the needs of their communities and to the constraints that too often prevent Aboriginal learners from fulfilling their potential. In the case of the only existing public-Aboriginal institute — NVIT — the institute has consistently selected its own Board members, but the provincial government has retained the authority to approve or not approve NVIT's recommendations. To date, the provincial government has never exercised that power and NVIT has not experienced difficulties in this regard. However, other Nations maintain that the Ministry's ultimate authority for Board member selection is not consistent with the imperative of Aboriginal control.

6.2 Cooperation and Agreements

Aboriginal institutes must work with one another, with public post-secondary institutes, and with the federal and provincial governments to build a strong and appropriate post-secondary system in BC. In particular, relationships between public and Aboriginal institutes can be strengthened through more respectful and appropriate affiliation agreements, which can allow for creative program development and resource sharing. The policy structure proposed in this paper recognizes this critical issue and highlights work that can be done to build stronger partnerships and a more effective sharing of information and resources.

Existing affiliation agreements will be strengthened by requiring increased accountability on the part of public institutions for effective relationships with Aboriginal organizations, and increased accountability for quality and student outcomes measurement by Aboriginal organizations.

MAVED Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, 1995.

6.3 Accountability

Aboriginal post-secondary institutes are fully committed to accountability and information sharing. However, it must be recognized that their primary accountability is to their students and communities. In this regard, the institutes' accountability is complex and rigorous; they of course have a responsibility to offer programs that are academically sound and effective, and they must also support students in their personal growth and development. The institutes must incorporate Aboriginal languages and cultures in appropriate ways, and they must also follow all relevant Indigenous and community protocols for information sharing, research, and knowledge development. Aboriginal institutes are also expected to contribute to community building and to overall efforts to advance Aboriginal education goals.

In addition to those concerns, Aboriginal institutes also recognize their accountability to funding agencies and to the general public. The institutes acknowledge the importance of demonstrating success in terms of conventional measures and they understand the importance of fiscal responsibility.

In this regard, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) has already initiated significant work. As described above, at the direction of its member institutes, IAHLA has begun collecting and sharing data to demonstrate the work being done by Aboriginal institutes, including student retention, course completion, and graduation rates. This information is intended both to promote transparency about programming and to identify areas for collective development efforts to ensure that quality standards are maintained.

Current policy development efforts must recognize the complexity of Aboriginal institute accountability, ideally reflecting a fundamental accountability to Aboriginal students and communities, with a secondary responsibility to share information openly with the provincial government and the general public. Further suggestions regarding accountability are highlighted in the template agreement between MAVED and an Aboriginal institute, which is included in Part Seven of this paper, below.

6.4 Resources for Curriculum Development and Research

As noted throughout this paper, the inclusion of traditional languages and cultures is one of the primary goals of Aboriginal institutes, which makes curriculum and research development crucial to the continued creation and success of culturally relevant programs. However,

curriculum development is very time consuming and expensive, making the task almost impossible given the existing budgets of Aboriginal institutes. As such, it is critical that this issue be addressed. Without resources for these activities, those attempting to revitalize and teach their Aboriginal cultures, histories, and languages will continue to struggle.

6.5 Community and Institute Contributions

As described above, Aboriginal communities and institutes have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the availability of locally based, appropriate post-secondary learning opportunities for Aboriginal students. In spite of limited, insecure funding, they have managed to provide quality, supportive learning opportunities through the dedication and contributions of institute staff, community leadership, Elders, and community members. This support will continue to provide a foundation for the institutes. To enhance federal and provincial government financial support for Aboriginal institutes, Aboriginal communities will provide in-kind support in a variety of ways, including the following.

- Elder support, including input into operations, programming and courses, will continue to ensure their cultural appropriateness, and direct counseling and support for students will enhance their self-esteem, cultural awareness, and personal healing – all critical for future success in family, school and work.
- The Institutes' staffs and students will have access to community cultural programs and events. As communities already invest significant resources – time and money – into cultural initiatives, collaborating with these efforts will reduce the need for Aboriginal institutes to create services on their own.
- Contributions from community language authorities and language speakers represent an invaluable resource. Most communities have established efforts for preserving and promoting their language use, which can complement the work being done by Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. Working directly with community language efforts not only means that communities and institutes can share limited and valuable resources; it also means that the efforts will be better coordinated and appropriate.
- Communities and institutes can share their expertise in regard to intellectual property rights and respectful research – critical issues for Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples have consistently asserted the need to respect their self-determination regarding ownership and sharing of their Indigenous knowledges. Aboriginal scholars and leaders have worked to increase an understanding that Indigenous knowledge must not be appropriated, stolen, or commodified. Rather, Indigenous protocols must be respected and practiced authentically. Indigenous knowledges include things such as Indigenous science, Oral Traditions, Traditional Ecological Knowledge/place-based knowledge, Indigenous education, Indigenous law, etc. There are also Indigenous epistemologies / ways of knowing, such as intergenerational learning, experiential learning, learning through story, songs, dance, and ceremony, revealed knowledge, and reflection.

An Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Policy Forum organized in November 2007, which included representatives of both the provincial government and Aboriginal communities, recommended that AVED develop a policy for respecting Indigenous knowledges. Further, the forum members recommended that such a policy:

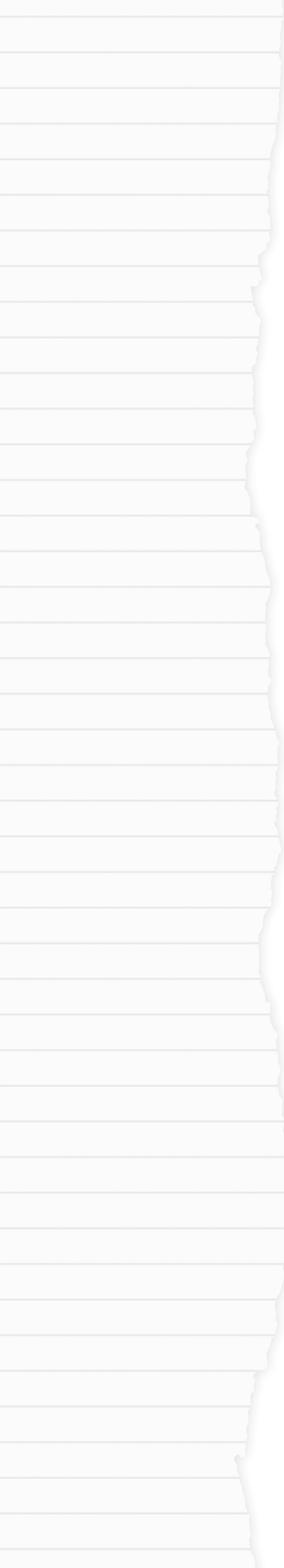
- acknowledge the benefit of Indigenous knowledges and recognize the link to the holistic health and wellness of individuals and communities;
- recognize that Indigenous knowledge is owned by community;
- include protocols for using Indigenous knowledges, particularly in teaching and in academic research; and
- recognize that Aboriginal communities must develop protocols for institutes to follow.

Aboriginal post-secondary institutes have a distinct role in teaching Indigenous knowledges for Nations, resulting in unique understandings and experiences that can be shared with other institutes and in policy development efforts. Aboriginal institutes use Indigenous knowledges as the foundation for their governance, institutional policy, programs, management, and student services. Faculty and staff who work in Aboriginal institutions are expected to value and understand how to incorporate Indigenous knowledges into their teaching, learning and work. The Institutes blend both Indigenous and Western / modern approaches throughout their operations. Aboriginal institutes also have rich resources upon which to draw for assistance in developing Indigenous approaches and content to programs /courses, such as their students, families, and community members.

In addition, Aboriginal institutes and Aboriginal scholars are expected to work with Aboriginal communities in respectful ways. Aboriginal communities are committed to retaining the intellectual property rights for their oral histories, their cultural knowledge, and especially their languages. There are also local protocols for the conduct of research, including the respectful involvement of Elders and other community members, appropriate reporting to leadership, and ultimately a need for mutual understandings regarding the ownership of curriculum, data, and research reports. Aboriginal institutes and communities have a unique perspective and awareness of these issues, and they can provide extremely valuable contributions in regard to considerations of Indigenous knowledges, intellectual property rights, and appropriate ways to approach research.

The phenomena of balancing and bridging two worlds or multiple worlds are assumed as a central aspect of [Aboriginal institutes]. ... Engagement with Indigenous Nations is an interdependent process; a collaboration based in place, community and family; a process that promotes respect, co-construction of knowledge, telling of stories, and the placing of a different narrative in modern or western spaces.

(Archibald and Williams, 2007).



Part Seven:

A New Integrated Model of Post-Secondary Institutions In BC – Making Space for Publicly Recognized Aboriginal- Controlled Institutions

At present there are a range of post-secondary institutions in BC, including those that are currently publicly recognized: Universities, Colleges, and Institutes (British Columbia Institute of Technology and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology).

A number of private post-secondary institutions also operate in BC.

Finally, as described throughout this paper, Aboriginal-controlled institutes – although not yet formally recognized – have been and continue to provide essential services that are encouraging the success of Aboriginal learners and tremendously strengthening the BC post-secondary education system as a whole.

The Province of BC has made a commitment to improving the access, retention, and completion rates of Aboriginal students in post-secondary education and training, and MAVED is now considering a new, integrated model for the BC post-secondary education system that will create space for the recognition, inclusion, and support of Aboriginal controlled and governed institutes in BC.

There are clear reasons for a greater integration of Aboriginal institutes within the BC post-secondary education system, as described in section 3 above. For example, participants in the consultations that have taken place regarding this new model – including both Aboriginal and public institute representatives – agreed that there is significant overlap in the goals of both the provincial and Aboriginal governments. Four of the key goals include the following.

1. Increasing the participation and success of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training.
2. Increasing or improving opportunities for student mobility.
3. Building the capacity of those entering the labour market and the labour market itself.

4. Increasing the relevancy of post-secondary education to the labour market.

Complementing those four key goals is a mutual commitment to the following issues.

- Supporting quality and respectful research
- Promoting improved data collection and sharing systems for evaluation and accountability.
- Continuing to focus on improved access and retention for Aboriginal students.
- Ensuring full accountability to students, Aboriginal communities, the public, and funding agencies.

In response to the specific question of “how” the goals would be pursued, consultation participants agreed that it would be:

“...through the development of meaningful, respectful, and substantive agreements and the recognition of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes as valuable and credible places of learning.”

Recommendation #1:

The Province of British Columbia should create policy and legislation that establishes a more integrated post-secondary education system in BC by recognizing the unique and critical role of Aboriginal institutes.

7.1 Governance

Within this new model of an integrated BC post-secondary education system, the governance continuum will range from provincial authority, which is embedded in the Canadian Constitution through the division of heads of power (section 92) that recognizes the authority of provinces over education, which is exercised through the creation of provincial legislation, to full First Nations jurisdictional control as laid out in ratified treaties or self-government agreements.

Between provincial authority and First Nations jurisdiction, an inclusive model of post-secondary education will incorporate a variety of governance structures that provide for Nation-based Aboriginal control.

For example the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology is governed by a board of governors made up of representatives who are recommended by the founding First Nations communities. As described above, there is already an existing policy and legislative basis for this option.

The new integrated model will also incorporate Aboriginal post-secondary institutes that are Nation-based and under the exclusive control of the founding Aboriginal or small collective of Aboriginal Nations. While these institutes have existed for decades, there is no policy or legislative foundation that supports their existence.

Finally, the new model of an integrated system will leave room for the full recognition of Aboriginal jurisdiction as embedded within treaties or self-government agreements. At present there is only one example in this category – Wilp Wilxo’oskwhl Nisga’a. The Nisga’a are currently negotiating with the Province to realize recognition of and support for their Nisga’a House of Learning.

7.2 Quality Assurance

An area that also requires attention is quality assurance within Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. In the 2006 discussion paper “Post-secondary Quality Assurance Practices,” prepared for IAHLA by Nancy Morgan and Melissa Louie, quality assurance is described as:

... relating to the achievement of educational program standards established by institutions, professional organizations, government, and/or standard-setting bodies established by government. Quality assurance mechanisms are the processes by which the achievement of these standards is measured (<http://www.cicic.ca/postsec/accreditation/accreditation.en.stm>).

Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes are committed to providing high quality, recognized and transferable programs and courses. Accordingly, the institutes have had significant discussions regarding standards and evaluation. There is a great deal of agreement that an evaluation process should be designed that focuses on providing support to institutes as they reflect on their programs and courses to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Facilitating a collective, supported process is vital as Aboriginal institutes are small, operating with limited, unstable funding, and committed to working together to benefit from the shared experiences of their colleagues. A requirement of a future accreditation process may be that Aboriginal post-secondary institutes’ programs are evaluated on a regular basis.

Recommendation #2:

Recognizing the need for academic quality assurance, which will facilitate student mobility, efficiency of the system, as well as mutual accountability, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) will

work with Aboriginal institutes to create an effective and thorough quality assurance system based upon high standards and rigorous review.

Another aspect of quality assurance relates to accreditation. The term “accreditation” refers to the approval of a post-secondary institution or program that has been found by an accreditation body to meet predetermined standards through a recognized process of validation (<http://www.cicic.ca/postsec/accreditation/accreditation.en.stm>). Morgan and Louie describe several models of accreditation within Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. The paper concludes that more work is required in order to identify a recognized accreditation process for BC Aboriginal post-secondary institutes.

The IAHLA Framework document, adopted by its membership in April 2007, contains three specific references to its intentions to develop an accreditation model that is suitable for BC Aboriginal post-secondary institutes.

- Gain recognition and accreditation for more of the courses and programs they provide
- Coordinate the development and accreditation of courses and programs across the sector and share accreditation with other institutes
- Develop and share curricula and credentials, particularly in First Nations language instruction and accreditation

In order for Aboriginal institutes to gain the recognition they are seeking, including mechanisms for students to transfer seamlessly from their institutes to public post-secondary institutions, there must be an appropriate accreditation process in place. Aboriginal post-secondary institutes and public institutions must work collaboratively to develop a mutually acceptable process that serves both their needs. This work can also include consideration of the provincial government’s ongoing efforts in this regard. For example, a January 31, 2008 MAVED Press Release stated the following.

Minister Coell announced the development of an Education Quality Assurance (EQA) designation that will become British Columbia’s brand for post-secondary education for both public and private institutions. The EQA will be used around the world to promote high quality, reputable, and credible BC post-secondary institutions, and will enable students to readily see which institutions, both public and private, are “recognized” as having met established quality assurance standards.

Additional actions noted in the Education Quality Assurance:

- Moving to a results-based accreditation process that holds private institutions accountable for the extent to which students achieve stated program outcomes. For example, a school may choose to measure its results based on how many students obtain jobs after completing a program. That school would be required to publicly report on employment rates of its students as a condition of its accreditation. Students will be able to make better informed choices about career training.
- Enhancing accountability of the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA). Periodic reviews, surveys, and increased public reporting requirements will increase transparency and give the public more opportunities to provide constructive feedback and advice to PCTIA. This will help the agency better respond to changing needs of students and schools.
- Restructuring PCTIA fee structures. Changes are being made to level the playing field between small and large institutions. Institutions that have a history of non-compliance will face increased fees. These changes will increase fairness and accountability between institutions.

Recognizing the need to facilitate student mobility, efficiency of the system, as well as mutual accountability, it is imperative that the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) collaboratively discuss and develop a process to respect the expertise of each and to facilitate information sharing and mutual standards. Implementing this recommendation will not require legislative or policy changes. Rather, it will require encouragement by the provincial and Aboriginal governments as well as a commitment from BCCAT and IAHLA.

7.3 Partnerships

Evaluation, accreditation and articulation of courses and programs are actually key components of the overall partnership opportunities that must be developed. As described above, Aboriginal institutes currently work in partnership with other organizations and public institutes for the implementation of programs and services. Aboriginal institutes are committed to continuing and strengthening these partnerships. It is important to note that Aboriginal institutes are striving to establish partnerships with relevant institutes from a range of areas. It is critical that Aboriginal institutes work with partners that best reflect community and student needs, regardless of where those institutes are located.

Some potential partnership opportunities include the following.

Table 1: Opportunities for Collaboration and Partnerships

| Brokering Agreements Terms for: | Affiliation Agreements Terms for: | Partnership Agreements Terms for: | Intellectual Property: |
|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of services • Credit recognition • Funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making • Funding • Granting of credentials • Modifying curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making • Recognition of accreditation • Funding • Reciprocity of expertise • Transfer of credits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing knowledge and research protocols |

More research and consultation is required to fully develop the exact scope and nature of partnership opportunities and benefits.

Recommendation #3:

The Province of British Columbia should support the establishment of effective, respectful partnerships between Aboriginal institutes and public post-secondary institutions through policy development, support for research of best practices, and the promotion of dialogue and exchange. These efforts should include mechanisms for a widespread sharing of expertise and resources to enhance the effectiveness of the new integrated post-secondary education system.

7.4 Funding

A critical consideration in the development of a new integrated model of post-secondary education is the appropriate role for the provincial government in terms of funding Aboriginal post-secondary institutes.

Public institutions in BC receive core funding reflected by targeted Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), as well as capital funding allocations. This funding includes resources secured through federal transfer payments. Public institutions are also eligible for targeted funding allocations to support specific government priorities, such as literacy, Aboriginal education, and trades training. Unfortunately, under the current structure, Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes, with the exception of NVIT, are not eligible to apply for or receive any of these dollars.

It is understood that the federal government has, according to section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1985, responsibility for “Indians and land reserved for Indians” and the province has, according to Section 92, responsibility for education. However, there is considerable confusion regarding who has responsibility for Aboriginal post-secondary programming.

At present, the federal government is refusing to take responsibility for Aboriginal post-secondary education other than as a social responsibility. This situation means that the federal government provides limited funding in this area – even though education is the key to improved health outcomes, economic participation, and social circumstances. The proposal-driven, unstable funding provided through ISSP and Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agencies (AHRDAs) is not adequately supporting Aboriginal institutes, which is to the detriment of the entire BC post-secondary education system.

In fact, both the federal and provincial government should play a key role in adequately supporting Aboriginal institutes. The federal government has a critical role in terms of meeting its responsibility for the provision of core funding and resources for capital development.

While pursuing adequate support from the federal government, the provincial government also can do much to help Aboriginal institutes ensure the quality of their programming. Coordination of efforts is to the benefit of all parties concerned – Aboriginal, the provincial, and the federal governments. In addition, contributions from stronger Aboriginal institutes will benefit mainstream institutes and students throughout the province, helping to meet the provincial government’s goal of closing the gap in Aboriginal education success rates in BC.

Recommendation #4:

Aboriginal representatives and the provincial government should engage the federal government in a review of the respective contributions and roles of Canada, BC, and Aboriginal Nations within an integrated BC post-secondary education system.

In terms of the BC provincial government, this policy development offers an opportunity to work with Aboriginal communities in a collaborative, new way, including the provision of funding to support the critical work of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. Specifically, with support from the provincial government, IAHLA can work with Aboriginal institutes to facilitate the creation of programming “hubs” or “centres of excellence,” strategically using resources to help each institute develop in-depth, quality programming in specific topic areas – with the work complementing the programs being offered by other Aboriginal and public institutions. In doing so, the provincial government can help to ensure the quality of Aboriginal institute programming and easier student transitions by supporting the institutes in their efforts to focus on issues of particular importance to their students and communities.

Recommendation #5:

Aboriginal institutes in British Columbia should have access to funding from the Province of British Columbia that will strengthen their programs and enhance their contributions to an integrated provincial post-secondary education system. In particular, funding should be provided to support Aboriginal institutes in developing their capacity as post-secondary programming “hubs,” enabling them to develop specific expertise in areas of critical importance to Aboriginal communities and peoples.

In addition to those with the provincial and federal governments, other partnerships to be developed include the following.

- First Nations Technology Council: Resources have been identified to support connectivity in many First Nations communities in BC, which will include opportunities for Aboriginal post-secondary institutes. Resources have also been identified to support individual capacity building with respect to technology literacy; these needs can be well served by Aboriginal institutes.
- First Peoples’ Heritage, Language and Culture Council (FPHLCC): There are important opportunities for Aboriginal post-secondary institutes to partner with the FPHLCC, as the organization’s focus is supporting language initiatives of language families. Such partnerships would be similar to the concept of Centres of Excellence, which promotes efficient initiatives through the creation of economies of scale.
- New Relationship Trust: In the Spring of 2005, leaders from the First Nations Summit, the BC Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the Province of BC jointly agreed to a new relationship – one based on respect, recognition, and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights. One year later, the New Relationship Trust Corporation was created to help realize this joint vision by providing financial support to First Nation communities, organizations and individuals in BC. With the goal of creating a stronger, healthier, more prosperous future for First Nations in BC, the Trust currently supports programs in five key areas: education, capacity, culture & language, youth & elders, and economic development (www.newrelationshiptrust.ca).
- Métis Nation Relationship Accord: In the spring of 2006, leaders from Métis Nation British Columbia and the Provincial Government achieved historic success with the signing of the Métis Nation Relationship Accord. The agreement provides a framework for the Province of British Columbia and MNBC to strengthen existing relationships, and move collaboratively forward together to close the gap in the quality of life of Métis relative to non-Aboriginal residents of British Columbia. The Accord identifies six major objectives: education, health, housing, economic development, Métis identification and data collection, and collaborative renewal of the tripartite process.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the funding partnerships discussed above, Aboriginal Nations and institutes must pro-actively explore options for creating economies-of-scale. Aboriginal Nations and Aboriginal post-secondary institutes are already exploring potential opportunities for cooperation in order to strengthen their programming. The creation of programming “hubs” or “centres of excellence,” described in recommendation #5 above, relates directly to such resource sharing opportunities.

7.5 Accountability

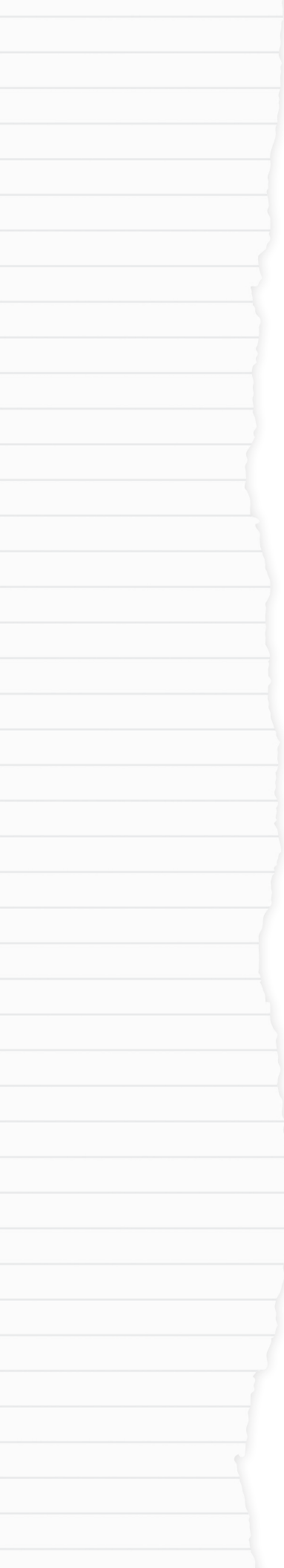
As described earlier in this paper, Aboriginal institutes are fully committed to accountability and transparency in their operations – accountability primarily to their communities and students, as well as to funding agencies and the general public. This is a commitment that is shared by public post-secondary institutes in BC.

Aboriginal and public institute representatives have agreed that a critical component of a stronger accountability framework is the collection and sharing of quality data. Data will provide a mechanism for determining where to invest strategically, as well as monitoring the results of those investments and providing feedback regarding successes and challenges.

Recommendation #6:

The “Provincial Education Number” (PEN), now utilized by the Ministry of Education and soon to be used by public post-secondary institutions, should be used throughout the new integrated model of the BC post-secondary education system. Using a consistent data collection mechanism will ensure that the resulting data is comparable.

Implementing this recommendation will require a commitment from MAVED and Aboriginal institutes to work collaboratively, as well as a recognition of the funding required for such an effort. In fact, it is imperative that there be a full review of the costs associated with the use of the PEN system-wide, including consideration of the funding required for Aboriginal institutes to participate in the data system, involving software, hardware, licensing, connectivity, planning, training, and operating costs. This review should also consider the potential role of the federal government.



Part Eight:

Budgetary Requirements for the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Paper

Recommendation #1:

The Province of British Columbia should create policy and legislation that establishes a more integrated post-secondary education system in BC by recognizing the unique and critical role of Aboriginal institutes.

Creating and implementing policy and / or necessary legislation to recognize Aboriginal institutions – their uniqueness and roles – will require further consultation and the creation of an ongoing partnership between Aboriginal institutes and MAVED. This process will require funding to ensure appropriate Aboriginal participation in the consultation and implementation phases.

Ongoing communications and engagement between Aboriginal institutes and MAVED can be facilitated by building upon initiatives that already exist. For example, Aboriginal institutes can be supported in participating in the MAVED Annual Forum on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education. Similarly, the IAHLA Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting, which is currently funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), can be expanded to include a component specifically designed to allow for collaboration on issues of mutual interest. Finally, the IAHLA Board can meet with MAVED on a regular basis in order to develop a strong partnership and effective working relationship.

Funding for the consultation and implementation processes could include ...

Annual Budget

| Activity | Budget |
|--|---------------------|
| Forum on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education | \$ 30,000.00 |
| Engagement through expansion of the IAHLA Conference (to supplement financial support from INAC) | \$ 25,000.00 |
| AVED bi-annual meetings with the IAHLA Board (2 X 10,000.00/year) (to supplement financial support from INAC for ongoing IAHLA meetings) | \$ 20,000.00 |
| Total | \$ 75,000.00 |

Expected Outcomes:

- The inclusion of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes in BC's post-secondary system, adding a new dimension of expertise to enrich an already high quality BC post-secondary system.
- Increased student access to quality programming.
- Increased programming choices for students.

Linkages with the Aboriginal Post-secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007) of the Ministry of Advanced Education:

Strategy and Action:

Increase participation in strategic program areas

The Ministry will increase access, participation and completion rates for Aboriginal learners to help British Columbia address labour market shortages by targeting sections/classes for programs identified as key priorities (e.g., Health, Social Work, Business).

Strategy and Action:

Support Aboriginal learner transition

- Incorporate Aboriginal literacy into the Adult Literacy Plan.
- Support capacity building for First Nations near treaty.
- Support province-wide transition projects.

Strategy and Action:

Enhance opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be reflected within the infrastructure of institutions

The Ministry will provide financial support and explore public/private partnerships to assist public post-secondary institutions develop gathering places that reflect the cultural needs and characteristics of Aboriginal students, community, and traditions.

Strategy and Action:

Increase the number of culturally relevant programs and services

The Ministry will continue to provide, and will augment, project-based funding that supports innovation in culturally-appropriate curriculum, program and service design and delivery.

- Continue, and augment, the Aboriginal Special Project Funding (ASPF), recognizing the importance of ASPF funding to the viability and longevity of post-secondary institutional program planning and implementation of programs and support services.
- Support for the development of language curriculum.

Recommendation #2:

Recognizing the need for academic quality assurance, which will facilitate student mobility, efficiency of the system, as well as mutual accountability, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) will work with Aboriginal institutes to create an effective and thorough quality assurance system based upon high standards and rigorous review.

In order to ensure that IAHLA courses and programs are recognized and transferable, it is critical that quality assurance be maintained. Accordingly, IAHLA will work with Aboriginal institutes to create mutually agreed upon standards and a thorough system of evaluation for Aboriginal institutes. For example, IAHLA can provide support to Aboriginal institutes that will allow them to undertake thorough reviews of their programming, including analyses of their success rates, surveys of students and other stakeholders, and instructor input. Information collected by the institutes themselves can also be enhanced through reviews by external evaluation teams that are committed to supporting the accountability and growth of Aboriginal institutes.

Such a quality assurance system will enhance the institutes' accountability to Aboriginal communities and students, as well as to funding agencies and the general public. Equally important, the quality assurance system will be created in a manner that fosters growth of the institutes over time through the identification of institute strengths and areas for improvement, as well as the facilitation of plans for development.

It is critical that the details of the quality assurance system be developed in consultation with Aboriginal institutes. Working with the institutes will ensure that the system is relevant and effective within their unique contexts. It will also ensure that there is a strong commitment to the processes that are designed, resulting in more enthusiastic participation in and greater long-term success of the quality assurance system.

Some of the critical issues to be considered in the consultations that will take place include, among others:

- confirming the standards for quality program delivery within the unique context of Aboriginal institutes;
- ensuring that the quality assurance system provides accountability to communities and students, as well as funding agencies and the greater public, while also promoting growth and improvement over time;
- ensuring widespread participation in the evaluation processes, including involvement and input from a range of stakeholders, including students, instructors, Board members, Elders and other advisors, community members, and others;
- including processes to avoid conflict of interest, reflecting the critical need to maintain the integrity of the overall process as well as individual evaluations;

- considering how to appropriately access and involve the expertise required for an effective evaluation process, including expertise related to the design of the process, advice for the implementation of the overall initiative, and expertise for the conduct of individual evaluations; and
- considering how to ensure that the process complements other relevant processes within the provincial post-secondary education system, such as ongoing MAVED quality assurance initiatives.

The development of the IAHLA quality assurance system will require funding to support a number of activities, including but not limited to the following.

- Research and documentation of options for consideration, including input from individuals and organizations with related expertise
- Consultation with Aboriginal institutes and communities to establish a framework for the standards and evaluation process
- The design of an evaluation template, data collection instruments, perception surveys, protocols for external evaluation teams, and other necessary tools for implementing the process
- The identification and initial training of external evaluation team members.

Once the process and the necessary materials have been developed, the evaluation process will be piloted by four institutes to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Following the completion of any adaptations identified through the pilot projects, the evaluation process will then be implemented on an ongoing basis through a regular evaluation cycle of 4 institutes per year. The ongoing implementation will require funding that will be distributed directly to institutes to cover their direct costs (including staff time, survey distribution and analysis, communication activities etc), as well as the costs of administering the overall process, including training for external evaluation team members.

Funding for the development of a mutually agreed-upon process for quality assurance could include ...

Year One

| Activity | Budget |
|--|---------------|
| Development of the quality assurance components, including consultation and research | \$100,000.00 |

Year Two

| Activity | Budget |
|--|---------------|
| Pilot projects for the standards and evaluation mechanisms (4 x \$10,000.00) | \$40,000.00 |
| Revisions to process as required | \$10,000.00 |

Following Year Two - Annual

| Activity | Budget |
|--|---------------|
| Implementation of regular evaluation cycle (4 institutes per year) | \$ 60,000.00 |

Expected Outcomes

- A recognized quality assurance system for Aboriginal institutes, contributing to the recognition and transferability of their courses and programs.
- Improved student mobility.
- Increased student access to quality programming.
- Improved labour market recognition of credentials from Aboriginal post-secondary institutes.
- Increased success of Aboriginal learners as a result of improved access to transferable programming in an environment that provides supportive learning opportunities close to home.
- A reduced gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in the area of post-secondary education.

*Linkages with the Aboriginal Post-secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007)
of the Ministry of Advanced Education*

Strategy and Action:

Increase participation in strategic program areas

The Ministry will increase access, participation and completion rates for Aboriginal learners to help British Columbia address labour market shortages by targeting sections/classes for programs identified as key priorities (e.g., Health, Social Work, Business).

Strategy and Action:

Enhance opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be reflected within the infrastructure of institutions

The Ministry will provide financial support and explore public/private partnerships to assist public post-secondary institutions develop gathering places that reflect the cultural needs and characteristics of Aboriginal students, community, and traditions.

Recommendation #3:

The Province of British Columbia should support the establishment of effective, respectful partnerships between Aboriginal institutes and public post-secondary institutions through policy development, support for research of best practices, and the promotion of dialogue and exchange. These efforts should include mechanisms for a widespread sharing of expertise and resources to enhance the effectiveness of the new integrated post-secondary education system.

The current process of creating partnerships between Aboriginal and public post-secondary institutions is ad hoc and results in a wide variety of agreements. Some of the agreements serve the needs of both parties well, while others do not. Facilitating a more effective, consistent approach to partnerships will require a deliberate and purposeful process of consultation and research to inform the development of a set of principles and objectives upon which institutions can base future partnership agreements.

Currently, research is being undertaken to review the existing agreements between Aboriginal and mainstream post-secondary institutions. That research is intended to identify what exists, the strengths of existing arrangements, any challenges and concerns, as well as suggestions for the establishment of more effective partnerships in the future.

Building upon that work, IAHLA and MAVED can cooperatively share the research results and promote wider consultations about the issues identified. The consultations can build upon the research findings to collaboratively identify best practices, possibilities for resource sharing, appropriate funding mechanisms, as well as required resources.

In addition, an individual can be hired to provide ongoing support in this area. This person can work with both Aboriginal and mainstream institutions to promote meaningful dialogue and cooperation, including direct assistance in the development of formal agreements for sharing resources and programming. This person can, among other activities, share research findings and best practices, improve networking, facilitate negotiations, help to resolve issues of concern, and work toward greater consistency in relationships and agreements throughout the province.

Funding for a process for consulting, conducting research, and developing parameters for partnerships could include ...

Year One

| Activity | Budget |
|---|---------------|
| Consultation and follow-up based on research currently taking place | \$ 50,000.00 |

Following Year One – Annual

| Activity | Budget |
|--|---------------|
| Ongoing support through a staff person who works to promote best practices | \$ 100,000.00 |

Expected Outcomes

- Improved integration of shared knowledge and expertise, leading to richer and more effective program offerings.
- Improved student mobility.
- Increased access to more programs delivered locally.
- Reduced duplication of course offerings, therefore enabling greater focus on programs that are effective and relevant to students.
- Increased accountability of both public and Aboriginal institutes with respect to programming and student services through improved information sharing.
- Reduced competition between institutions by fostering an understanding of their respective strengths.
- Enhanced opportunities for collaborative research and data gathering for common goals.

Linkages with the Aboriginal Post-secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007) of the Ministry of Advanced Education:

Strategy and Actions:

Strengthen agreements and partnerships

- Encourage, and explore opportunities to improve affiliation agreements between public and private Aboriginal institutions.

- Encourage and strengthen partnerships between public institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations through Aboriginal Service Plans.
- Work with MOU partners to ensure ongoing communication, collaboration and advice.
- The Ministry will work through the MOU Partners group and other Ministries to address provincial and federal government policies and initiatives as they pertain to Aboriginal post-secondary education.
- The Ministry will continue to support the New Relationship by working with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to ensure the benefits of government's Five Great Goals are realized by Aboriginal people.
- Over the next years, the Ministry will take steps to increase coordination, collaboration and integration of funding requests. One approach is to shift from funding many short-term initiatives to funding a smaller number of large initiatives focusing on strategic priorities; for example, increased funding through the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund could be competitively allocated to support three or four major provincial priority projects.

Recommendation #4:

Aboriginal representatives and the provincial government should engage the federal government in a review of the respective contributions and roles of Canada, BC, and Aboriginal Nations within an integrated BC post-secondary education system.

By working together, Aboriginal leadership and the Government of BC can participate in discussions with the federal government to encourage a mutual commitment to Aboriginal post-secondary institutes and to review the types of support that should be provided by each level of government.

In order to ensure that the new integrated BC post-secondary system is as effective as possible, it is critical that all stakeholders within the system are adequately supported. Specifically, if they are to contribute in a meaningful and valuable way, Aboriginal institutes must be adequately supported in terms of recognition and funding. Meeting this goal requires that the federal government fulfill its obligations for education, complemented by the provincial government offering additional support to ensure high quality programming. By working together, all parties can also facilitate the creation of a streamlined, efficient, and relevant post-secondary education system.

There is no budget request to accompany this action. Work will be undertaken to have the federal government fund the involvement of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes and its own involvement in this process. The province will participate as a partner..

Expected Outcomes

- Improved commitment and information sharing amongst relevant partners, facilitating a greater integration of efforts to support Aboriginal learners.
- More reasonable and better coordinated support and funding for Aboriginal institutes, resulting in more successful transfers to the public post-secondary institutions and improved Aboriginal post-secondary education rates.
- Increased access to more programs delivered locally.
- Increased development and availability of Aboriginal language and culture curricula.
- Accredited Aboriginal language and culture curricula.

Linkages with the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007) of the Ministry of Advanced Education:

Strategy and Actions:**Strengthen agreements and partnerships**

- The Ministry will work through the MOU partners group and other Ministries to address provincial and federal government policies and initiatives as they pertain to Aboriginal post-secondary education.
- The Ministry will continue to support the New Relationship by working with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to ensure the benefits of government's Five Great Goals are realized by Aboriginal people.
- Over the next years, the Ministry will take steps to increase coordination, collaboration and integration of funding requests. One approach is to shift from funding many short term initiatives to funding a smaller number of large initiatives focusing on strategic priorities; for example, increased funding through the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund could be competitively allocated to support three or four major provincial priority projects.

Strategy and Action:**Enhance opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be reflected within the infrastructure of institutions**

The Ministry will provide financial support and explore public/private partnerships to assist public post-secondary institutions develop gathering places that reflect the cultural needs and characteristics of Aboriginal students, community, and traditions.

Strategy and Actions:**Strengthen agreements and partnerships**

- Encourage, and explore opportunities to improve affiliation agreements between public and private Aboriginal institutions.
- Encourage and strengthen partnerships between public institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations through Aboriginal Service Plans.

Recommendation #5:

Aboriginal institutes in British Columbia should have access to funding from the Province of British Columbia that will strengthen their programs and enhance their contributions to an integrated provincial post-secondary education system. In particular, funding should be provided to support Aboriginal institutes in developing their capacity as post-secondary programming “hubs,” enabling them to develop specific expertise in areas of critical importance to Aboriginal communities and peoples.

Research demonstrates that Aboriginal post-secondary institutes, while long-standing in service, have historically and continue to be funded in a manner that does not support sustainable programming. This situation significantly impedes upon the institutes’ ability to pursue the goal of economies-of-scale.

Instead, additional financial resources would allow Aboriginal institutes to explore possibilities for and implement focused programming. In such a way, IAHLA could work with Aboriginal institutes to facilitate the creation of programming “hubs” or centres of excellence, strategically using resources to help each institute develop in-depth, quality programming in specific topic areas – with the work complementing the programs being offered by other Aboriginal and public institutions.

For example, each Aboriginal institute could select to focus on a specific area of expertise. Some of the areas that could be explored include, but are not limited to: Aboriginal language and culture; Aboriginal governance / public administration; education; health; early childhood development; Indigenous sciences; business administration / community economic development; data collection and use; technology; land use management; and social work.

The institutes would expend considerable time and resources to develop their capacity in one of those specific topic areas, resulting in higher quality programming and greater potential for meaningful research and education. The institutes could then provide their programs locally, and they could also share their expertise and programs through distance learning and partnerships with other Aboriginal communities, as well as with other Aboriginal and public post-secondary institutions.

Clearly, determining the focus and location of each “hub” will require significant consultation with Aboriginal institutes. This consultation will include consideration of a number of critical criteria, including, but not limited to, the following.

- Which institutes have experience / existing strengths in delivering programming in specific subject areas
- Which institutes have demonstrated an ability to meet standards for delivery relevant for the specific subject areas

- Which areas, if any, have particularly high levels of demand in terms of specific programs
- What partnerships currently exist that will support centres of excellence in particular locations
- What overall support is available for the creation and maintenance of the hubs

Creating programming “hubs” will also depend upon the establishment of effective partnerships with public institutions in order to efficiently undertake the necessary research, and in order to appropriately create and adapt existing curricula. Generally, the work required to develop and implement each hub will include, among other activities:

- undertaking research and consultations with students and Aboriginal communities, as well as dialogue with other Aboriginal and public institutions;
- developing the infrastructure required for the effective implementation of programming “hubs”;
- modifying existing and creating new curricula to reflect the institutes’ focus and meet the academic and cultural needs of students;
- integrating Aboriginal languages into all aspects of programming; and
- providing the support and courses necessary for students to successfully enroll in, complete, and transition from the programs being offered.

In keeping with the April 2007 \$65 million investment in Aboriginal post-secondary programming in public post-secondary institutions, it is critical that Aboriginal institutions, which serve as a bridge to those institutions, provide effective service to Aboriginal students. In that way, students will make seamless and more successful transitions to public institutions to continue their studies. The provincial government can help to ensure the quality of Aboriginal institute programming by supporting the institutes in their efforts to focus on issues of particular importance to their students and communities.

Funding to support Aboriginal institutes in focusing their efforts through programming hubs could be as follows:

Year One

| Activity | Budget |
|--|---------------|
| Funding to support Aboriginal institutes in their efforts to create programming “hubs” – 4 institutes @ \$200,000.00 per institute | \$ 800,000.00 |

Year Two

| Activity | Budget |
|--|------------------------|
| Funding to support Aboriginal institutes in maintaining their centre of excellence “hub” – 4 institutes @ \$150,000.00 per institute | \$ 600,000.00 |
| Funding to support additional Aboriginal institutes in their efforts to create programming “hubs” – 2 institutes @ \$200,000.00 per institutes | \$ 400,000.00 |
| Total | \$ 1,000,000.00 |

Year Three

| Activity | Budget |
|--|------------------------|
| Funding to support Aboriginal institutes in maintaining their centre of excellence – 6 institutes @ \$150,000.00 per institute | \$ 900,000.00 |
| Funding to support additional Aboriginal institutes in their efforts to create programming “hubs” – 2 institutes @ \$200,000.00 per institutes | \$ 400,000.00 |
| Total | \$ 1,300,000.00 |

Following Year Three – Annual

| Activity | Budget |
|--|------------------------|
| Funding to support Aboriginal institutes in maintaining their centre of excellence – 8 institutes @ \$150,000.00 per institute | \$ 1,200,000.00 |
| Total | \$ 1,200,000.00 |

Expected Outcomes

- Focused post-secondary opportunities and more effective student support and programming within Aboriginal institutes, resulting in a greater number of Aboriginal students accessing post-secondary education and transferring to the public post-secondary institutions.
- Improved Aboriginal post-secondary education rates in BC.
- Increased capacity development for Aboriginal communities and all of BC.
- Increased labour market participation by Aboriginal people.
- Improved Aboriginal language revitalization efforts, resulting in greater protection of a valued resource for all British Columbians.

Linkages with the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007) of the Ministry of Advanced Education:

Strategy and Action: Support Aboriginal learner transition

- Incorporate Aboriginal literacy into the Adult Literacy Plan.
- Support capacity building for First Nations near treaty.
- Support province-wide transition projects.

Recommendation #6:

The “Provincial Education Number” (PEN), now utilized by the Ministry of Education and soon to be used by public post-secondary institutions, should be used throughout the new integrated model of the BC post-secondary education system. Using a consistent data collection mechanism will ensure that the resulting data is comparable and meaningful.

The need for improved data collection, sharing, and analysis has been identified as a priority in the Memorandum of Understanding of the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group, as well as in ongoing discussions as the Partners Group works to implement its work plan. At present, there are many challenges related to the collection and analysis of relevant data, including a lack of common data sets, no common definitions, and a limited capacity to analyze the data that does exist.

Both public and Aboriginal institutes are committed to improving their capacity to collect and share data. Work must be undertaken to determine what data is needed and for what purpose, how the data will be collected and shared, and who will undertake the analysis. Once those issues have been more fully explored, IAHLA, MAVED, and Aboriginal institutes can work toward the collaborative use of a common data management system, with the system coordinated by one institute and providing for participation by all other Aboriginal institutes.

Funding for identifying and implementing a data management system could be as follows ...

Year One

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Research and consultations to identify data management system options and identify a plan for a data management system | \$ 50,000.00 |
|--|--------------|

Year Two

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Establishment of a hub for data management system implementation, including initial training, infrastructure development, and adaptations to existing data management mechanisms to ensure their compatibility and relevance | \$ 100,000.00 |
|--|---------------|

Year Three and Annual Ongoing

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Implementation of the data management system, including ongoing training, administration, and communications | \$ 100,000.00 |
|--|---------------|

Expected Outcomes

- Improved student tracking to assist with the identification of areas for strategic investment.
- Improved capacity to determine the results of strategic investments to contribute to planning for further enhancements.
- Improved capacity to track students throughout the integrated post-secondary system to assist with policy development as required.
- Improved ability to report on the successes and identify areas for improvement in BC's integrated post-secondary system.

Linkages with the Aboriginal Post-secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007) of the Ministry of Advanced Education:

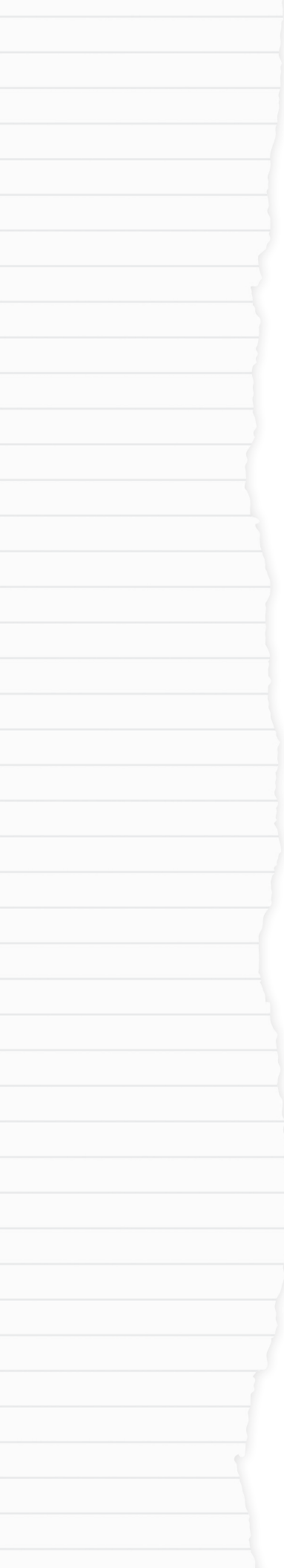
Strategy and Actions: Effective planning based on system-wide data tracking and performance measures based on student success

- Review current policy procedures in order to develop and implement a standardized Aboriginal self-identity question for all public post-secondary institutions.
- Continue research on Aboriginal private institutions.
- Continue to enhance/expand the Student Transitions Project.
- Develop and implement Aboriginal Student Surveys.

As the Action Plan is implemented, there is a need to increase the level of performance information available to better monitor progress and to improve performance. Information will be produced regarding Aboriginal learners. Indicators to be monitored could include information such as:

- Participation rate: overall growth in enrolment, Aboriginal learners as percentage of total student population, regional rates, participation by program.
- Transition rate: number and rate of learners transitioning into post-secondary education from K-12 within one year of K-12 completion, rate of transition from Adult Basic Education to further post-secondary.
- Completion rate: completion of program (certificate, diploma, degree).

- Level of Credential awarded: number of learners in certificate, diploma, undergraduate, and graduate programs.



Appendix One:

Brief Description of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program Guidelines and Associated Challenges

The following summary of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program Guidelines was taken from:

First Nations Post-Secondary Education Handbook for the BC Region With Reference to the National Post-Secondary Education Program Guidelines. Prepared by the First Nations Education Steering Committee with Input from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, BC Region. <http://www.fnesc.ca>

1.1 Overview

The Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) Post-Secondary Education National Program Guidelines outline maximum time limits and funding amounts for post-secondary financial support. First Nations and other Administering Authorities do not have to fund students to the maximum allowances outlined in the National Program Guidelines. However, they cannot exceed maximum allowances or study period time limits.

The National Program Guidelines also outline minimum eligibility requirements related to students, institutions, and programs of study. First Nations may choose to apply additional eligibility requirements, but the minimum requirements set out in the National Program Guidelines must be met.

2.1.1 Student Eligibility

To be eligible, a post-secondary education student must:

- a) be a registered Indian or Inuit person;
- b) be resident in Canada for 12 consecutive months prior to application (for students studying outside of Canada, this residency requirement only applies in the first year of study);

- c) be accepted by an eligible post-secondary institution;
- d) be accepted into an eligible program of study (i.e. certificate, diploma, degree, or University College Entrance Preparation (UCEP)); and
- e) maintain continued academic standing with the institution.

2.2.1 Eligible Institutions

Eligible Institutions are:

- a) post-secondary institutions that grant certificates, diplomas and/or degrees; and are either
- b) recognized as eligible by the province/territory. (In BC, eligible programs are those outlined in the Canada Student Loan program.)
- c) First Nations educational institutions affiliated with or delivering post-secondary programs by arrangement with an eligible public post-secondary institution.

2.3 Program Eligibility

A. Eligible Post-Secondary Education programs:

- a) are offered by an eligible post-secondary institution:
- b) are at least one academic year in length, as defined by the institution (for part-time students, programs must be the equivalent of one academic year); and
- c) have entrance requirements that include completion of secondary school studies, or its equivalent, as recognized by the post-secondary institution.

B. Eligible UCEP programs:

- a) provide the prerequisites and/or supporting courses for students to attain the academic level required for entrance into a college or university program;
- b) may include Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses (not Ministry of Education K – 12 courses); and
- c) must be offered in a Canadian post-secondary institution.

C. UCEP Requirements:

A statement from the post-secondary institute offering the program that attests that:

- a. the UCEP program will provide the student with the necessary courses to attain the academic level for college or university entrance, and
- b. the student will be eligible to be accepted into a regular college or university credit program upon successful completion of the UCEP courses.

3.1.1 Time Limits

A. UCEP Time Limits

According to INAC guidelines, students may be funded for a maximum of one academic year (as defined by the institution).

Maximum Amounts Payable (based on 1989 Guidelines and still in effect today)

- actual cost of tuition and other compulsory student fees
- books and supplies (to a maximum of \$2000/year)
- for student in UCEP, certificate, diploma and degree program, the maximum amount payable per year cannot exceed \$35,000.

B. PSSSP Time Limits

According to the National Program Guidelines, there are no time limits for funding of tuition, compulsory student fees, and required books. However, the National Program Guidelines note three levels of post-secondary programming for the purpose of defining time limits for funding of living allowances, travel, incentives, tutoring, and counselling.

Level 1: Community College Certificate or Diploma Program

Students may receive financial assistance to complete a maximum of one program at Level 1, the length of which is defined by the institution.

Level 2: Undergraduate University Programs

Students may receive financial assistance to complete a maximum of one program at Level 2, the length of which is defined by the institution.

Level 3: Advanced or Professional Degree Programs (e.g. dentistry, medicine, law, Masters, or Doctoral programs)

Students may receive financial assistance to complete a maximum of one advanced or professional degree program (as defined by the institution)

Students who have completed a Level 2 program, with or without assistance from PSSSP, are ineligible for Level 1 program assistance. Students who have completed a Level 3 program, with or without assistance from this program, are ineligible for Level 1 or 2 program assistance. Both these cases prevent a student who is having difficulty finding employment in their field of study from getting the required education to become employable.

Challenges Related to the PSSSP Funding

The First Nations Education Steering Committee has identified the following challenges related to the PSSSP Program.

- UCEP funding does not support the following students.
- Those who dropped out of school prior to completing Grade 12 and who require more than one year to upgrade their academic skills for post-secondary entrance.
- Students who graduated from high school with the minimum requirements of Communications 12 and Math 11E and who now require more than one year to gain the prerequisites for university entrance.
- Students who want to attend post-secondary but are unsure of their career choice. Such students often require upgrading, career exploration support, as well as time to confirm their career choice and to obtain required prerequisites.

The INAC PSSSP does not support the following students.

- Those students who wish to enter a first year trades program that does not require Grade 12 or its equivalent as a prerequisite. Over the years, post-secondary institutes have raised entrance requirements for all programs, but some trades and vocational fields do not require Grade 12 as an entrance requirement.
- Those students who have entered a trades training program that does require Grade 12 or its equivalent as a prerequisite, but which extends beyond one year in length.

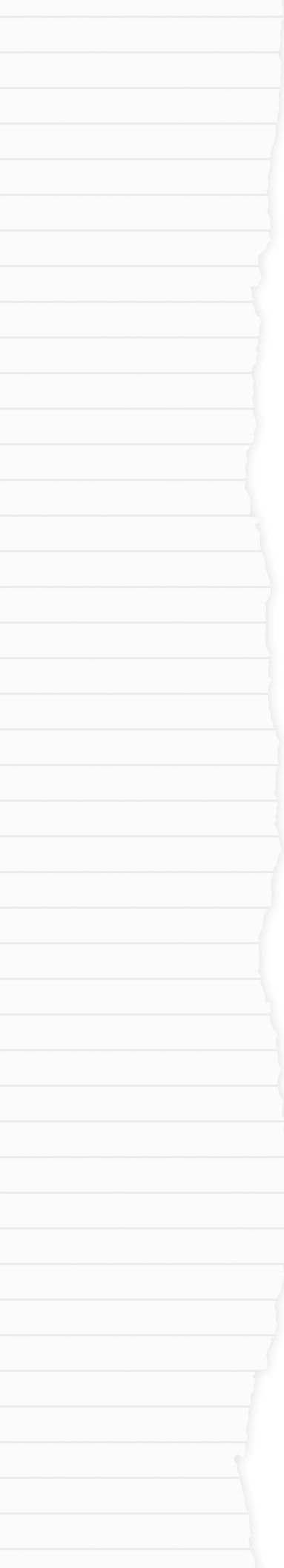
Students who complete a level of study using their own source of funding (ie student loans) and then choose to return to school to pursue a different program of study at that level can not receive PSSSP funding.

Students who enter and complete a certificate (Level 1) and then wish to go on to obtain a diploma (which is still considered a Level 1) cannot be funded for a second program at Level 1.

Only one degree at the Level 3 means a student can complete either a Masters or a PhD, but not both. This limitation prevents students from higher education levels.

For communities near the US border communities, given limited on reserve housing or employment often the adults will move to a nearby US community. They are then considered ineligible for PSSSP funding, as they do not meet the one-year residence requirement. This is also true for young athletes who are recruited to play for US teams and then choose to go to school.

The \$2000 limit on books and supplies per year is difficult for students whose programs require equipment, ie cameras, computers, etc. The maximum living allowance is also seen as too limited given current costs of living, especially in urban areas.



Appendix Two:

Position Paper Respecting the Impact of Changes to BC Social Policy on a Decision to Close the Native Education Centre

Prepared by June Scudeler, Assistant Policy Analyst For the United Native Nations Society (UNN)

On April 28, 1969 the BC Association of Non-Status Indians (BCANSI) was formed in order to address the political and socio-economic concerns of non-status Aboriginals in British Columbia. BCANSI formally changed its name to the United Native Nations Society (UNN) in 1977 as a more accurate depiction of its membership of status, non-status, Métis and Inuit. UNN represents 40,000 Aboriginal people in BC with membership open to anyone of Aboriginal ancestry.

The mandate of the Society is to advocate for the betterment of all Aboriginals living off reserve in BC. Currently, the UNN is working in concert with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), a national organization representing off reserve Aboriginal peoples.

As the representative of off-reserve Aboriginal peoples, UNN is concerned about the impending closure of the Native Education College (NEC), as it provides opportunities for urban Aboriginal peoples to access education in order to improve their employability. As only one of two Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in BC, NEC is essential to the aspirations of urban Aboriginal peoples.

Importance of the Native Education College

NEC opened its doors in 1967 and became British Columbia's largest private Aboriginal college. The focus has been to meet the needs of Aboriginal adult learners requiring developmental, vocational and applied academic programs to access employment or further post-secondary education.

Aboriginal people thrive in a learning environment that reflects their specific cultural, spiritual and learning needs. The NEC, housed in a Longhouse style building, is an essential learning institution for Aboriginal peoples, especially for the urban population. Not only

does NEC provide educational Adult Basic Education so Aboriginal people can finish their secondary education, NEC's areas of study include a partnership with Warriors Against Violence, in which participants learn holistic family healing methods. Students can also learn digital filmmaking, family and community counselling and economic development. These programmes help make Aboriginal peoples employable and less prone to accessing income assistance.

NEC and Aboriginal Employment

As NEC notes, provincial and federal policy changes to social assistance have an adverse impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Aboriginal students, providing funding challenges that restrict Aboriginal peoples in improving their economic circumstances.

The BC government severely curtailed access to income assistance on April 1, 2002. According to the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance "employable clients will be limited to a cumulative 24 months (two years) of income assistance out of every 60 months (five years). Any months of full or partial support and/or shelter assistance that you receive after April 1, 2002 will count towards your total." A single parent with a child under three years old is exempted from the 24-month rule; however, a single parent is expected to be employed when all his or her children are three years old. Even if the parent can find suitable employment, the lack of affordable daycare is a barrier to employment. The high cost of living in the Lower Mainland, especially in Vancouver, makes it difficult for Aboriginal families to survive.

Income assistance recipients are unable to receive income assistance while in school. According to BC's Employment and Assistance Regulations, a family unit is not eligible for income assistance {...} if an applicant or a recipient is enrolled as a full-time student in a funded program of studies." As the majority of NEC's programs are full time, Aboriginal peoples on income assistance are unable to access NEC's programmes. The BC government is effectively blocking the employment prospects of Aboriginal peoples by not allowing them to attend school full time while on income assistance.

Over fifty percent of the Aboriginal population is under twenty-five years of age and seventy-two percent of Aboriginal youth reside in urban centers. Aboriginal people have children at a younger age than non-Aboriginal people; Aboriginal youth are adversely affected by the changes to income assistance. Fewer Aboriginal students receive their Grade 12, thus making employment harder to find and to maintain.

NEC provides an essential means for urban Aboriginal peoples to gain practical skills to gain meaningful employment in an Aboriginal educational institution. That NEC is an Aboriginal college is of a paramount importance to Aboriginal students as NEC reflects their cultures, needs and values and ensures academic and employment success.

Appendix Three:

Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) Student Data May 6, 2008

1. Total Student Enrolment

Total reported student enrolments have ranged from 2,400 to 2,600 in each of the past three years:

2004/05 = 2,486 at 17 institutes (Source: 2005/06 Custom Institute Reports)

2005/06 = 2,602 at 17 institutes
(Source: 2005/06 IAHLA Data Collection Project Report, p. 6)

2006/07 = 2,428 at 23 institutes
(Source: 2007/08 IAHLA Data Collection Project Report, p. 5)

As of Oct 2007, student enrolments in 2007/08 were:

2007/08 = 1,250 (as of Oct 2007) at 23 institutes
Source: 2007/08 IAHLA Data Collection Project Report, p. 4

Explanations and analysis regarding total student enrolment numbers (above) are presented under subsections a through e below.

a) Double Counting – How and Why it Happens

It is possible for one learner to be reported as being enrolled at more than one institute. For example, a student enrolled at a community-based, institute may also be reported as enrolled at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT).

In 2007/08, when asked what formalized relationships they have with public post-secondary institutions (colleges, institutes or universities), 5 institutes reported they have formalized

relationships with NVIT. These 5 institutes reported 318 students enrolled at their institutes in 2006/07. However, not all students at these institutes may be enrolled in programs or courses covered by the relationship with NVIT. For example, 4 of the 5 institutes with NVIT relationships also have formalized relationships with other public post-secondary institutions (e.g., University of Victoria, Northwest Community College and Simon Fraser University). Thus, “up to 318 student enrolments” may potentially be double counted by NVIT and these 5 institutes.

In 2007/08, 1 institute reported it has a formalized relationship with the Native Education College (NEC). Even though NEC is not a public post-secondary institute, the responding institute included NEC in their response to this question. This institute had a student enrolment of 15 in 2006/07. Thus, these 15 students may be included in both this institute’s reported student enrolments and those reported by NEC.

Other institutes may have relationships with other First Nations institutes who responded to the survey but the IAHLA Data Collection Project (the Project) does not ask about these relationships and thus it is not possible to identify them or the potential student enrolments they cover.

As well, in 2007/08, all but 2 responding institutes (21) have a formalized relationship with one or more public post-secondary institutes. This suggests that some of the above student enrolments may be “counted” in the public post-secondary sector as student enrolments as well as by IAHLA institutes.

b) Changes in Number and Type of Institutes Responding

Each year new institutes respond to the Project. 17 institutes responded in 2005/06, 19 institutes responded in 2006/07 and 23 institutes responded in 2007/08. As well, each year one or more of the institutes that responded the previous year do not respond in the current year.

In 2006/07, 3 institutes that responded the previous year (in 2005/06) did not respond and 5 new institutes responded. In particular, institutes with nominal roll students excluded the first year were invited to participate the second year.

In 2007/08, 1 institute that responded the previous year (2006/07) did not respond and 5 new institutes responded.

Overall, the Project has experienced a trend towards more adult learning centres responding to the survey each year, while primarily post-secondary institutes continue to respond.

c) Changes by Institute

Student enrolments at a specific institute may fluctuate each year. In particular, student enrolments at NEC were reduced in 2007/08, likely as a result of uncertainty over funding and the possibility of its closure that year.

d) “Missing” Learners at Non-Responding Institutes

There were 5 institutes that did not respond to the Project in 2007/08. They are listed below. The numbers presented in brackets beside each institute are 2005/06 school enrolment numbers from the “BC Region Band Operated Schools for 2006/07” spreadsheet created by INAC and are the number of students aged 19 and over and enrolled as of Sept. 30 - 2005-06.

Neskonlith Education Center (n = 35 students)

Community Futures of the Central Interior First Nations (n = n/a)

Penelakut Adult Learning Centre (n = 33 students if this is the same as Kuper Island Band School)

N’Kwala School (n = 2 students)

Yu Thuy Thut School (n = 51 students)

e) Other Aboriginal Adult Learners

The student enrolments reported above include some, but not all, Aboriginal Adult Nominal Roll learners in the province. For example, the 2007/08 FNSA School Measures and Data Collection Project gathered adult learner surveys from 8 schools (with Adult Nominal Roll students) that did not submit surveys to the IAHLA Data Collection Project.

2. Estimated Student Enrolments by Program

2006/07 learners primarily enrolled in Adult Basic Education (ABE)/adult upgrading or one-year College/University programs.

In 2006/07, learners enrolled in at least 2,666 programs or courses at 22 institutes (one institute was new in 2007/08 and thus did not have 2006/07 enrolments).

One learner could be enrolled in more than one program or course. Most frequently, students appear to have “additionally” enrolled in an other program or course. However, at a few institutes, students appear to have enrolled in College or University courses as well as ABE/upgrading courses in 2006/07.

In the percentages reported below, the “minimum” proportion of students enrolled in each program area is presented by the “all enrolments” percentage. The “maximum” proportion of students enrolled in each program area is estimated as the “enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses”. In 2006/07:

- 853 learners were enrolled in ABE or adult upgrading courses (to Grade 12) - 32% of all enrolments and 42% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses;
- 863 learners were in College or University one-year programs (e.g., certificate programs or first year college/university transfer courses) - 32% of all enrolments and 43% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses;
- 305 learners were in College or University multi-year programs (e.g., diploma or degree programs or second year and up college/university transfer courses) - 11% of all enrolments and 15% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses; and,
- 645 learners were in other programs or courses (e.g., First Aid, SuperHost, flagging, etc.) - 24% of all enrolments.

Adult Nominal Roll student enrolments:

In 2007/08, 12 institutes reported they were receiving Adult Nominal Roll funding in 2007/08. Each of these institutes also reported the number of students enrolled in ABE or adult upgrading courses in 2006/07 who were Nominal Roll funded.

Only 2 of these 12 institutes had students enrolled only in Nominal Roll funded ABE or upgrading courses. Three institutes had students enrolled only in ABE/upgrading courses, but were also receiving funding from other sources (were not solely Nominal Roll funded). Seven institutes had students enrolled in College and University programs or courses in addition to ABE/upgrading courses.

These 12 institutes reported 381 learners in ABE or adult upgrading courses were Nominal Roll funded in 2006/07 - 14% of all enrolments and 19% of enrolments excluding those in other programs or courses.

Similarly, these 12 institutes had 349 Adult Nominal Roll students in 2005/06 according to the “BC Region Band Operated Schools for 2006/07” spreadsheet created by INAC (defined as the number of students aged 19 and over and enrolled as of Sept. 30 - 2005-06).

3. Proportion of Students in Articulated/Transferable Courses

Aboriginal post-secondary adult learners are enrolled in courses that are recognized by and/or can be transferred to public post-secondary institutions.

In 2006/07, most IAHLA learners were enrolled in articulated/transferable courses or programs. Institutes were asked to report whether learners were enrolled in one or more courses or programs that were articulated/transferable with public colleges or institutes. 20 institutes reported this information for 2,142 learners. 83% of these learners were enrolled in at least one articulated/transferable course or program and 17% were not.

As noted above, all but two institutes reported formalized relationships with public post-secondary institutions, facilitating such transfers.

4. Proportion of Students Planning to Transition to Public Post-Secondary Institutes

The Project does not ask institutes about the transitions its students plan to make, or have made, to public post-secondary institutions.

However, it does ask students what their plans are for next year. Some students report more than one plan. As well, students' plans may change over the course of the year, or in subsequent years. For students in their first year (58% of those responding), this may be somewhat early for their final plans to be known. On the other hand, these first year responses are reflective of students' plans relatively soon after they enter their institutes.

In 2007/08, between 10% and 28% of the 404 students responding to the Project's surveys planned to transition into public post-secondary institutions in the following academic year. 7% reported they planned to continue studying at NVIT (including 5% who were already attending NVIT), 11% reported they planned to continue studying at a non-First Nations, provincial, public college or institute, while 10% planned to continue studying at a university.

Similarly, in 2006/07, between 8% and 25% of the 404 students responding to the Project's surveys planned to transition into public post-secondary institutions the next year. 5% reported they planned to continue studying at NVIT or the Institute for Indigenous Governance (IIG), 8% reported they planned to continue studying at a non-First Nations, provincial, public college or institute, while 12% planned to continue studying at a university.

5. Student Completions and Awards

In 2007/08, institutes reported the course completion rate for their learners the previous academic year (in 2006/07). In 2007/08, institutes reported an overall 2006/07 course completion rate of 80%. Whether learners successfully completed one or more of the courses or programs they were enrolled in that year was reported for 1,190 of these learners at 20 institutes. Of those, 80% (950 learners) successfully completed at least one course they were enrolled in that year and 20% did not.

Almost one-half of the awards made to students in the last academic year were certificates. In 2007/08, 18 (78%) responding institutes provided the number of certificates, diplomas,

degrees or other awards made to students in the last academic year (2006/07). Of the 888 such awards, 48% were certificates, 10% were diplomas, 1% were degrees and 41% were other awards (including Adult Dogwoods and course-specific awards).

In the 2006/07 IAHLA Data Collection Project, 17 (89%) responding institutes provided the number of certificates, diplomas, degrees or other awards made to students in the last academic year (2005/06) through their relationships with public post-secondary partners. Of the 255 such awards, 49% were certificates, 17% were diplomas, 2% were degrees and 32% were other awards (including Adult Dogwoods, GEDs and course-specific awards).

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