

BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education & Training Partners, Spring 2006

For further information about the Partners, please contact Karen Bailey-Romanko karenbr@fnesc.ca
Link to the Partners through the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)
Post-Secondary Education and Training web-page www.fnesc.ca/programs/PSE%20and%20Training.php

BACKGROUND

March 11, 2005 marked a significant commitment by post-secondary education stakeholders in British Columbia with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training.

"We, the undersigned, acknowledge, that although there has been some progress in recent years, there is a need for improved levels of participation and success for Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training in British Columbia. We state our intention to work collectively toward this goal within the mandates of our respective organizations and to bring in other partners as appropriate. This will be accomplished by building on our successes to date, collectively identifying needs, and implementing strategies to improve the success of Aboriginal post-secondary learners in British Columbia."

The signatories to this MoU form an ongoing BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners group, which meets to work together to address issues of immediate attention, such as improving access to post-secondary education and training for Aboriginal learners and streamlining the transition of Aboriginal students from secondary education to post-secondary institutions.

The Partners have held seven meetings since the initial January 12, 2005 meeting. During this time, the organizations have learned of the respective mandates of the Partner organizations, developed Terms of Reference and Key Priorities.

CURRENT WORK

Data

The Partners are examining available data on Aboriginal post-secondary education and training student and identifying data challenges and gaps. Currently institutions are limited in their ability to track Aboriginal enrolment and there is no provincially standardized process for self-declaration of Aboriginal status. The Data Working Group is looking for methods to address the data challenges.

Funding Sources:

The Partners are interested in exploring and compiling a document of the various funding sources available to support students. The proposed document will include INAC funding for First Nations students, AHRDA funding, youth programs, Canada Student loans, scholarships and bursaries and work opportunities.

KEY PRIORITIES MARCH/06

1. Support activities that reduce the barriers to and increase opportunities for Aboriginal students to access post-secondary education and training by promoting:

- student transitions from K-12 to post-secondary education and training;
- transitional programming required to support the Aboriginal students, including returning mature students;
- the delivery of Aboriginal bridging and ABE programs that are designed for Aboriginal learners;
- increased levels of funding to allow Aboriginal students access to post-secondary opportunities;
- greater access to post-secondary education through community based delivery; and
- the availability of mentors and role models for Aboriginal students.

2. Increase the retention and graduation rates of Aboriginal post-secondary education learners by promoting:

- a reasonable level of funding for Aboriginal student support, including daycare, transport, tutoring, etc.;
- a greater level of funding for institutional support for Aboriginal learners;
- the availability of mentors and role models, including Elders in Residence;
- increased student support services for Aboriginal students;
- the hiring of Aboriginal faculty and staff; and
- the development of more Aboriginal-specific content for the Aboriginal post-secondary curriculum, including Métis content.

3. Increase the collection and use of data to guide improvements for Aboriginal learners in the post-secondary arena by:

- promoting the value of reliable data collection and usage in the post-secondary arena;
- identifying where data gaps exist; and
- recommending the improvement of data collection to support monitoring and planning efforts.

4. Encourage discussion and identification of the issues of racism at a macro level and identify best practice/initiatives to address the issues of racism within the post-secondary education institutions.

5. Foster the development of more equitable partnerships between public post secondary institutions and Aboriginal post-secondary institutions.

6. Promote career awareness and increase access to information for all fields of study and employment opportunities, including the trades.

The Partners

Original MoU Signatories

First Nations Education Steering Committee
First Nations Summit
Strategic Action Committee
Métis Provincial Council of BC
United Native Nations Society
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
Ministry of Advanced Education - Aboriginal Programs

University Presidents' Council of BC
University College Presidents
British Columbia College Presidents
Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
Members
BC AHRDA Society
Ministry of Education – Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch
Ministry of Economic Development
Service Canada