



highlights

December 2007

Fourth Annual Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forum Continuing the Dialogue on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Issues

On November 21, 2007, representatives of post-secondary education stakeholders from throughout the province gathered in Vancouver for the Fourth Annual Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forum – *Choices for Aboriginal Learners: Moving Post-Secondary Policy and Programs Forward Through Dialogue and Engagement*. Hosted by the Ministry of Advanced Education with support from the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Forum provided a wonderful opportunity for participants to share their experiences and understandings of how Aboriginal post-secondary education is progressing in BC.

Aboriginal representatives prepared for the November Forum by coming together in a September 2007 meeting to share their ideas regarding what policy changes would make Aboriginal post-secondary education more effective. The November Forum represented an important opportunity to expand upon those initial thoughts with input from provincial government and public post-secondary institute representatives.

The November Forum included the welcome by Honourable Steven Point, Lieutenant Governor of BC, and a keynote speech by Shawn Atleo, BC AFN Vice Chief. Six breakout sessions allowed



Fran Hunt Jinnouchi, on behalf of the University of Victoria, and Pauline Waterfall, on behalf of IAHLA, sign collaboration agreement. See "Creating a Shared Path" on page 2.

the participants to join in dialogue about the strengths and challenges of Aboriginal controlled institutes in BC, as well as possibilities for more effective partnerships with the public post-secondary education sector. It is hoped *(continued on page 4)*

Celebrating our Collective Efforts

The date is set! Please join IAHLA at our 2008 Annual General Meeting on April 23-24, 2008. The theme of this year's event is "Jurisdiction and the Third Sector." The IAHLA AGM represents an important opportunity to review the work being done by our association, to plan our future initiatives, and to discuss new developments in the area of jurisdiction and Aboriginal post-secondary education.

Watch for the Call for Presenters notice in early January!

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The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) was formed at the request of Indigenous controlled Post-Secondary Institutes and Adult Learning Programs to address and further the mutual interests of all Indigenous controlled Learning Centres in British Columbia (BC). The organization receives administrative support from the First Nations Education Steering Committee.



Creating a Shared Path

*Submitted by Fran Hunt-Jinnouchi,
University of Victoria*

Creating a Shared Path: Aboriginal Service Plan is a three-year strategic and operational Aboriginal Service Plan submitted in partnership between the University of Victoria and Camosun College in response to the Ministry of Advanced Education's call for three-year action plans that can be implemented by interested post-secondary institutions to improve access, participation and success of Aboriginal learners.

IAHLA signed on to work with the University of Victoria and Nicola Valley Institute to develop best practices model(s) for collaboration between non-public Aboriginal institutions and public post secondary institutes. Through this initiative UVic and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology will facilitate a 2-day session to bring together IAHLA, the Indian Studies Support Program and post-secondary institutes to develop a collaboration model for partnerships. The session will include:

- discussion on affiliation agreements
- Indigenous ownership of curriculum
- cross-faculty appointment
- development of common terminology (re: Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, etc)

The goal is to develop a position paper on meeting outcomes in order to pilot partnership models in year two.

Data Collection Efforts Continue

IAHLA continues to organize the annual collection of data to describe the delivery and outcomes of Indigenous adult and post-secondary education institutes in BC. To pursue this goal, IAHLA developed a survey in 2005/06 that explores issues such as program offerings, learner satisfaction, completion and graduation rates, as well as funding sources of Aboriginal institutes.

This year, in light of the recent provincial government's announcement to make all Adult Basic Education tuition free in BC, IAHLA is working closely with the First Nations Schools Association to ensure we collect consistent data on all First Nation adult learners attending our institutes/schools.

Data for the 2007/2008 project is now being submitted and a report will be available soon. The Final Report for last year's project was completed in March 2007. Also this year, IAHLA compiled a data analysis report - 2006-07 Focus Report. Both reports are now available on the IAHLA web site (www.fnesc.ca/iahla).

IAHLA DVD

The Board approved the development of a short video to help promote and outline the unique role of the IAHLA institutes. We all know the great student support and quality of education our institutes are providing, but sometimes it is hard to explain what is so unique about our institutes.

Lisa Jackson, film maker and Argentic Communications, Phillip Djwa, worked very hard to produce this excellent video, which was premiered during the Fourth Annual Aboriginal PSE Forum. The video was well received by the attendees.

Please view the DVD by following the links on the IAHLA website.

Plans to Explore Adult Assessment

IAHLA recently submitted a proposal to the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills for research directed at a Literacy Project: Better Learner Assessments. This proposal was supported by the University of Victoria, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

Learner assessment is the gateway to adult education. Whether seeking basic reading and numeracy skills, trades certification, or entrance to undergraduate programs, all adult students face some form of assessment of their skill levels. Unfortunately, all adult educators can share stories of prospective students who felt intimidated and discouraged before even taking placement tests. Those challenges are compounded for most adult Aboriginal learners, as a result of previous negative experiences with school as well as assessment tools and processes that do not reflect their cultures and experiences.

To improve the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of literacy and essential skills assessment methods, the IAHLA literacy project will conduct a survey of assessment methods in use and will produce modified, culturally sensitive assessment processes that will be available to all adult education providers.

The IAHLA Board is looking forward to hearing the outcome of this proposal submission.

BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Update

Student Funding

The BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group has agreed that a priority area of work relates to the need to better support Aboriginal students, especially in the area of finances. This issue includes the need for funding that will support students as they participate in pre and post-secondary education and training programs, including the availability of childcare and affordable housing. Based upon current funding levels, students face barriers in accessing funding support for upgrading, college, and university programs and trades training. Furthermore, students seeking post-graduate programs face additional challenges.

Information Sharing: Best Practices and Networking Opportunities

Given this situation, it is important to help front-line staff understand the various post-secondary funding sources that are available, and to provide them with materials that will help them support students who are seeking financial resources for school.

Accordingly, the Partners' Funding Working Group will be organizing three regional workshops to bring together the front-line staff involved in assisting Aboriginal students with planning and funding their post-secondary education and training. The purpose of the events will be to share funding information and to create linkages between service providers. The workshops will take place between January and March 2008; in the following areas: Kamloops, Vancouver and Campbell River. Two other deliver sites will be added, if additional funding is available. At this time, Service Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Ministry of Education are providing funding to support these workshops.

Further details will be sent to First Nations communities, schools and post-secondary institutes soon.

Funding Web Portal Proposal

In addition to the Funding Networking workshops, the

BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group will be working to create a 'one stop' location for funding information.

Currently, there is no centralized, up-to-date source of post-secondary education funding information. Most of the necessary information is available on the Internet, but often students and staff find it difficult to access and explore the numerous relevant sites. Furthermore, students often think the term 'scholarship' means funding available for only an elite group of academically inclined individuals, and many students therefore do not attempt to apply for the available funding. It is hoped that a one-stop repository of education and financial planning aids and tools with interactive supports could increase uptake rates.

To date, the Partners' Funding Working Group has compiled information and a number of active web links. The Working Group intends to make this information available through a web portal and it is working with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to explore the development and hosting of this site. It is hoped that the initiative will be launched by the spring of 2008.

Talking About Aboriginal Post-Secondary Issues

As described above, on September 21 and 22, 2007, representatives of IAHLA, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, and the provincial government held a Dialogue on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Policy in BC. That gathering provided an opportunity to discuss critical aspects of Aboriginal post-secondary education.

At the meeting, IAHLA shared several discussion papers to stimulate conversation about some important issues. Anyone interested is welcome to request a summary of the September forum, which includes those discussion papers in their entirety.

The participants at the September meeting highlighted the following themes related to Aboriginal-controlled institutes. (*continued on p. 4*)

Welcome to Our New IAHLA Board Member

IAHLA is very pleased to welcome our newest Board member – Jeannette Armstrong of the En'owkin Centre. Jeannette has a long history of working with Aboriginal controlled institutes, including in her roles as researcher, writer, teacher, and administrator. Jeannette brings to IAHLA a wealth of ideas and relevant experience, as well as a strong commitment to the importance of Aboriginal institutes as a clear reflection of the value of First Nations control of post-secondary education.



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- A commitment to accountability to and involvement from the Aboriginal community.
- A difference in challenges faced by institutions that serve the needs of urban Aboriginal people and those that serve land-based people, particularly in terms of security for institutions in urban environments, where the Aboriginal voice has been marginalized.
- A commitment to equitable, accountable governance and respectful involvement of Elders and knowledge keepers.
- The need for a process to allow Aboriginal institutes to control the transfer of Indigenous knowledge.
- The need for recognition of the institutes’ unique role in post-secondary education, including their preparation of students to enable them to excel in the public system.

Overall, Aboriginal-controlled institutes assert the voice of Aboriginal people and are changing the picture of post-secondary education in BC, but there is a need to recognize that authority rests with First Nations. Also, the institutes need greater sustainability, including adequate funding.

Another key concern includes the need to build on Indigenous knowledge to guide the work of post-secondary institutes. For many people who attend Aboriginal institutes, it is the revitalization, maintenance and re-achievement of their identity that gives them the strength to go on. The question is how to make Indigenous knowledge accessible while at the same time protecting that knowledge. To make that possible, it is important to form respectful partnerships with other institutions.

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that the Forum resulted in a much better understanding of Aboriginal institutes, and ultimately greater recognition of their important role within the post-secondary education system.

The Forum summary will be posted to AVED’s website early in the new year.

Research on Indigenous Institutes

IAHLA submitted a joint proposal with the University of Victoria (UVic) including the University of Victoria’s Office of Community Based Research (OCBR) and the Office of Indian Affairs (INAF) under the Ministry of Advanced Education’s Transitions request for proposals.

The proposed research project will describe Aboriginal controlled private institutions and explore the role they play in preparing Aboriginal students to make the transition to public post-secondary systems. The research will also identify the program development, policy, and funding issues facing Aboriginal institutions, and it will highlight recommendations for how support for the institutes can be enhanced.

IAHLA hopes that the data gathered from this study will help to identify the legislative change needed to lead to core funding for private First Nations institutes. The research will also explore the need for First Nations courses to be accredited through the BCCAT system, and the need to enhance the ability of First Nations institutes to undertake effective partnerships with public post-secondary institutes.

We are awaiting the outcome to the submitted proposal.

IAHLA Board

Chair: Verna Billy-Minnabarriet, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology - Merrit

Vice-Chair: Pauline Waterfall, Heiltsuk College - Waglisla

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