



# Annual Report 2009/2010

BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education  
and Training Partners Group



## INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide an update on the work done by the British Columbia (BC) Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners (the PSE Partners). It reviews the activities undertaken by the Partners, collectively and individually, from the time of the November 2009 Call to Action meeting through to the November 2010 Call to Action.

The creation of the PSE Partners in 2005 represents a unique and significant commitment by post-secondary education stakeholders in BC. The group signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), as follows.

Memorandum of Understanding

*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 BC.*

## THE PARTNERS

- The First Nations Education Steering Committee
- The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
- Métis Nation BC
- BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- BC Ministry of Education (Aboriginal Enhancements Branch)
- BC First Nations Labour Council (Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements)
- BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU)
- Research Universities' Council of BC (RUCBC)
- BC College Presidents Council
- United Native Nations Society (UNNS)
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR)
- First Nations Summit Task Group
- BC Assembly of First Nations (BC AFN)
- Service Canada

## GOALS & PRIORITIES

The Partners have identified several priority areas for their collective efforts, which are outlined in the Partners "Made in BC Approach" document. The areas of focus include the following.

- 1. Student Financial Support** – scholarships and bursaries, access to childcare and transportation support, and financial support for trades and transitions to post-secondary
- 2. Support for Community Post-Secondary Education Coordinators / Administrators** – capacity building and training in administration, conflict resolution, and policy development (including a formal accredited program)
- 3. Institutional Support** (including program and student support services) – programs to facilitate transitions to post-secondary, partnerships with Aboriginal communities to ensure relevance of programming, curriculum development, targeted funding to address under-representation in specific career fields, alternative delivery models, as well as support for students within institutions
- 4. Data Collection and Reporting** – the development of common definitions, data sharing protocols, and the use of data for informed decision-making

## PARTNERS GROUP ACTIVITIES 2009/2010

Throughout the past year, the PSE Partners met on four occasions to share information and discuss important topics related to Aboriginal post-secondary education and training. Those meetings represented an important opportunity to gather input from the Partners regarding their key initiatives. It also allowed for the identification of opportunities for joint action.

The PSE Partners also were involved in several ongoing projects in 2009/2010, including the following.

### 1. External Review of PSE Partners

Following a Request for Proposals process, Human Capital Strategies was contracted to undertake an external review of the PSE Partners. The Partners sponsored this review in order to inform a thorough consideration of the Partners' accomplishments, processes, and plans for further activities.

The findings of the external review noted that, while there are concerns about the PSE Partners' operations, the joint effort is widely perceived to be an

invaluable initiative. Further, a range of stakeholders indicated that they remain supportive of the collective focus and they are committed to improving the Partners' effectiveness. Overall, there is a strong indication that the formation and continuation of the PSE Partners is a strong reflection of the need for collaboration and partnerships to improve Aboriginal students' post-secondary participation and success.

Many of the people who contributed to the external review expressed a belief that the Partners have made a difference in the overall success of Aboriginal post-secondary learners. Key examples of the accomplishments that have been achieved include the PSE Partners' role in developing the three-year Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) initiative, and the successful efforts to bring much needed attention and focus to Aboriginal post-secondary education issues – particularly the importance of additional resources to support needed change.

#### *Recommendations from the PSE Partners Group External Review*

- 1) Governance: address factors related to governance, including the separation of technical and decision-making functions.
- 2) Management: address factors related to management including enhancing the secretariat support, reviewing the chair role, examining meeting procedures and agreeing on a planning framework.
- 3) Working relationships: promote effective relationship-building activities, create ways for all members to be engaged, and develop a formal orientation package and process.
- 4) Communication and Information-Sharing: develop a clear, consistent and reliable practice of disseminating information to the broader network of Aboriginal post-secondary education stakeholders; develop a clear, consistent and reliable process for inviting regular input on post-secondary education priorities; and build accountability into the governance and reporting of members.
- 5) Specific projects: create maps (including a visual component) to identify all the programs and service delivery entities across the province and to help target investments, develop systems to track success in Aboriginal post-secondary education, and identify promising practices to inform work and decisions.

## 2. Funding Working Group

The Funding Working Group is a sub-committee of the formal PSE Partners. It was created to advance efforts in the following areas:

- 1) identify, review, and analyze funding policy and programs related to Aboriginal post-secondary education and training in BC and Canada;
- 2) determine gaps and opportunities in funding policies and initiatives as they relate to Aboriginal post-secondary education and training; and
- 3) promote the development of resources to reduce financial barriers for Aboriginal learners, including a web portal or electronic medium to increase access to information about student awards and financial assistance.

## 3. Aboriginal Learning Links Website

In the past year, the PSE Partners have continued an important initiative to support Aboriginal learners who are interested in pursuing post-secondary education. Aboriginal Learning Links (ALL) is a web site designed to provide information on scholarships, bursaries, and resources for post-secondary education in BC. Designed for Aboriginal adult and post-secondary learners, ALL has links to information related to potential financial support, post-secondary institutions, child care, housing, and career opportunities. Statistics demonstrating usage of the site indicate a continuous increase in the number of users of Aboriginal Learning Links, which can be found at [www.aboriginallearning.ca](http://www.aboriginallearning.ca).

## 4. Data Mapping Working Group

A Data Working Group has been a sub-group of the PSE Partners Table since 2006. It was established to advocate for consistent and high quality data collection as it relates to Aboriginal post-secondary education in BC. Its purpose is to promote the collection, analysis, reporting and publication of useful data and to review and suggest recommendations for relevant research.

In 2009, a Mapping Working Group was formed, originally as a sub-committee of the Data Working Group. The Mapping Working Group intended to develop a visual “map” to share information and data from the PSE Partners. However, before proceeding with the project, the PSE Partners decided to develop common understandings of data and information sharing.

As a result, the Data and Mapping Working Groups were merged and given a mandate “to share information/

data and develop projects to inform the Partners in their respective decision making in support of student success.” The following activities were identified for the Data Mapping Working Group.

- Inventory of Programs: creating a database of “who delivers what, where,” organized into geographic regions and eventually displayed visually.
- Performance Indicators/Measures: defining meaningful and culturally appropriate indicators for Aboriginal learners.
- Learner-level data: examining what data each sector currently collects, and identifying and compiling common terminology and data sets.

Since January 2010, the Data Mapping Working Group’s active membership has grown to include:

- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC)
- Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA)
- Research Universities Council of BC (RUCBC)
- BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU)
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD)
- Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR)
- Métis Nation BC (MNBC)
- Service Canada

At the July 2010 PSE Partners meeting, the Partners directed the Data Mapping Working Group to develop an inventory of Aboriginal-targeted instructional programs, initially focussing on public and First Nations institutions. This work now is well underway. The Working Group also has been asked to prepare a presentation on learner-level data.

## 5. Policy Working Group

As a follow-up to the November 23, 2009 Call to Action meeting, ALMD agreed to organize a meeting to collectively review the Ministry’s Aboriginal Strategy Review and Policy Framework. A Policy Working Group was formed, which now includes the following members:

- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC)
- First Nations Public Service
- Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA)
- Research Universities Council of BC (RUCBC)

- BC Colleges
- BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU)
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD)
- Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR)
- Métis Nation BC (MNBC)

Regular meetings of this Working Group have focused on various policy issues, such as the Ministry’s Evaluation of its 2007 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Strategy and Action Plan.

## 6. Ad Hoc Committees

The PSE Partners also struck two ad hoc task groups to address issues of common relevance and concern.

### *Nominal Roll and Adult Education*

INAC, ALMD, the BC Ministry of Education, FNEESC and IAHLA met a number of times to examine policy and funding mechanisms related to the Adult Nominal Roll. The meetings focussed on INAC’s Adult Education Policy and Program Requirements as related to the Ministry of Education’s Elementary/Secondary Program and ALMD’s Adult Basic Education Graduation Certificate.

### *Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC)*

In 1999, First Nations representatives, FNEESC, and the BC College of Teachers developed a program framework that would enable students to earn a Developmental Standard Term Certificate in First Nations Language and Culture (DSTC). Since its inception, a number of First Nations have partnered with post-secondary institutions to implement DSTC programs. Some concerns have been raised in regard to the transferability of courses and students’ inability to gain recognition of their completed DSTC coursework, and a committee has been created to consider these issues – presently including representatives from RUCBC, BCAIU, BC Colleges, IAHLA and FNEESC.

## KEY INITIATIVES OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

### First Nations Education Steering Committee

#### *Meetings with ALMD to Advance a Policy Framework*

In July, 2008, FNEESC and IAHLA presented to the provincial government a policy background paper titled *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in British Columbia:*

*A Place for Aboriginal Institutes.* That paper provides information and six recommendations to advance the formal recognition of Aboriginal-controlled adult and post-secondary institutes as a critical component of the BC post-secondary system. The policy background paper has proven to be an effective and valuable document for facilitating consultations with Aboriginal-controlled institutes and First Nations communities throughout BC and for advancing key issues with government and other relevant stakeholders.

The policy paper highlights the following recommendations.

1. The Province of BC 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.
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.
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.
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 post-secondary education system.
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.
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.

Since the release of the policy background paper, IAHLA, FNEESC, and their education partners have been considering ways to move ahead with the important recommendations included, and to ensure that the vision of Aboriginal institutes is recognized in a meaningful way.

### ***English 10, 11 and 12 First Peoples***

For the past three years, FNEESC has worked closely with the BC Ministry of Education to develop and effectively implement English 10, 11 and 12 First Peoples, and that joint curriculum development effort has had a significant and beneficial impact. Not only has the work resulted in valuable and important teaching resources that will better inform teachers and students about the realities of First Nations issues; the joint efforts also were very positive in terms of enhancing relationship-building.

The new English First Peoples courses are meaningful and rigorous additions to the BC education system. The course will help participating students to better understand First Peoples, their communities, and their contributions to society. The courses also should help Aboriginal students to feel better represented in BC schools, which will ideally help to build their self-esteem and increase their comfort in all classrooms of the province.

All public post-secondary institutions in BC have accepted English 12 First Peoples as equivalent to English 12 for the purpose of meeting entrance requirements, which clearly confirms the academic rigor of the course.

### ***Aboriginal Languages Coordinator***

FNEESC has recently expanded its staff to include a new Aboriginal Languages Coordinator. This staff person will research First Nation language curricula for use in a variety of educational settings, share a range of resources for language learning, and support efforts to enhance the many successful, practical programs, strategies and approaches that are now in place. The Coordinator is intended to help promote language teaching capacity in schools, communities, and higher learning institutes.

### ***Distance Course Delivery***

Currently, it is sometimes difficult for remote First Nations schools and adult education programs to offer a full spectrum of secondary courses due to the difficulty

of attracting qualified staff in all subject areas. This experience is shared by many remote public schools, as well, resulting in many First Nations students in small, rural schools having difficulty accessing the range of courses they need in order to achieve their academic and career goals.

To meet that challenge, FNEESC recently accessed funding to explore possibilities for offering specific courses through distance learning mechanisms. For example, a school may be able to offer biology without a fully qualified biology teacher on staff if instruction can be effectively provided through on-line access with adequate technological support in the classroom. Making this idea practical will require the presence of an in-class teacher to support the students in the school, enhancing the instruction that is provided from a distance.

In the upcoming year, FNEESC and the First Nations Schools Association, including Adult Learning Centres, will be facilitating pilot distance course delivery projects and will explore the feasibility of expanding the efforts in future years.

#### **Adult Nominal Roll**

Throughout the past year, FNEESC has worked to raise awareness about changes and challenges related to INAC's Adult Nominal Roll policy, and INAC and FNEESC have reached agreement about the need for greater clarity and consistency in terminology and understandings of the policy and adult education programming generally. INAC is therefore drafting a revised Adult Nominal Roll policy, and INAC and FNEESC will work collaboratively on a related handbook.

#### **Education Coordinators Diploma Program**

The Education Coordinators Diploma Program was designed to support the professional growth and development of First Nations Education Coordinators by providing opportunities for them to take accredited courses related to their work. The framework for the Education Coordinators Program was custom-designed by FNEESC and IAHLA with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT).

Students in the program have opportunities to broaden their knowledge and skills regarding policies, governance, project management, budgeting, communications and community development. The 20-course program is accredited by NVIT and it ladders into business administration and teacher education degree programs. The first cohort of nine students graduated from the program in June of 2009 and courses in the program continued to be offered throughout the 2009/2010

academic year.

#### **Developmental Standard Term Certificate in First Nations Language and Culture**

As described above, in order to address the urgent demand for First Nations language teachers, in 2001 BC First Nations, the BC College of Teachers (BCCT) and FNEESC jointly developed a framework for a program to enable students to earn a Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) in First Nations Language and Culture. That program involves three years of 90 credit hours of course work at a post-secondary institution, including studies in an Aboriginal language indigenous to BC, First Nations studies or culture, BCCT academic prerequisites, and professional development in teaching.

With financial support from the New Relationship Trust Society, in 2009/2010 FNEESC was able to provide funding to BC First Nations communities to support the development and implementation of 10 DSTC programs. FNEESC also continues to explore ways to strengthen the DSTC program in order to support local language and culture enhancement efforts.

#### **Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA)**

The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) was created in 2003 to represent and work on behalf of Aboriginal controlled adult and post-secondary institutes in BC.

Those community-based institutes offer a broad spectrum of courses and programs that include: college and university programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees; Adult Basic Education leading to the Adult Dogwood Diploma for secondary school completion; language instruction; occupation specific training and upgrading; and a broad spectrum of lifespan learning programs that support Aboriginal people, communities, languages, and cultures.

Working together through IAHLA, Aboriginal controlled adult and post-secondary institutes are striving to increase recognition of the institutes' unique and successful approaches to community-based, culturally relevant learning, and to collaborate to most effectively use existing resources and increase opportunities for adult learners.

IAHLA is registered as a non-profit Society. The Association is directed by a ten member Board of Directors that is appointed at its Annual General Meeting.

### **2010 Annual General Meeting and Conference**

Each year, IAHLA hosts a provincial Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM). This event provides an opportunity for IAHLA members to network, provide direction for ongoing IAHLA activities, and participate in professional development that is focused specifically on the needs of Aboriginal-controlled adult and post-secondary education settings.

Highlights of the 2010 AGM and conference – *Transmission of Knowledge: Past, Present, Future – Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in BC* – include the following.

- Keynote addresses by three generations of family, including Umeek (Dr. Eugene Richard Atleo), Hereditary Chief and Research Liaison at the University of Manitoba and Associate Adjunct Professor at the University of Victoria, A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo), National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and Tyson Atleo, Hereditary Chief in line of the Ahousaht First Nation
- Addresses by Grand Chief Edward John, First Nations Summit Task Force, and Honourable Moira Stillwell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
- The Year Five Data Collection Project Summary
- The adoption and implementation of the IAHLA Strategic Plan 2010/2011
- An invitation to Umeek (Dr. Eugene Richard Atleo) to be the first IAHLA Patron

### **Other Communications Activities**

IAHLA also maintains regular communications with its members and other interested stakeholders by distributing information updates, as well as maintaining a web site at [www.fnesc.ca/iahla](http://www.fnesc.ca/iahla). In addition, IAHLA Board members link to IAHLA members through a mentorship initiative.

### **Data Collection Efforts**

Since 2005, IAHLA has been working to collect and share substantive information about Aboriginal institutes in BC, and specifically has sponsored an annual survey of Aboriginal institutes in order to provide a better understanding of their unique needs, work, and achievements. The ongoing IAHLA data collection effort focuses on five major elements.

- Personal Development
- Leadership
- Cultural Development
- Wisdom Development
- Student Satisfaction, and
- Academics

In 2009/2010, 70% of the 30 eligible institutes and 361 adult learners completed and returned the project surveys. Highlights of the 2009/2010 data include the following.

- 20 of 21 responding institutes report current year enrolments of 1,564 learners (a 24% increase from last year)
- 62% of responding institutes report that they offer programs that ladder directly into degree programs
- 43% are offering post-secondary Aboriginal Language programming, an increase of 11% from last year
- 48% of responding institutes offered post-secondary Cultural Studies programming in 2009/2010
- 24% of the institutes indicated that they have experienced a decrease in funding since last year
- 85% of the learners agree they are satisfied overall with their institutes, and 83% would recommend their institutes to others

IAHLA greatly appreciates Aboriginal institutes' participation in its annual Data Collection project. The aggregate information has been useful for highlighting the important role of IAHLA institutes in the post-secondary education system in BC. The 2009/2010 IAHLA Data Collection report is available on the IAHLA web site ([www.fnesc.ca/iahla](http://www.fnesc.ca/iahla)).

### **The Better Learner Assessments Project**

In April, 2009, IAHLA received funding through the national Office of Literacy and Essential Skills for the *Better Learner Assessment* literacy project. This project, which spans two years, is intended to improve the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of academic assessment tools that are used to determine the literacy and essential skill levels of adult learners entering post-secondary institutions.

This research is intended to develop enhanced assessment processes, which will allow adult education providers, including IAHLA member institutes, to better welcome adult Aboriginal learners and accurately establish their literacy and essential skill levels. By reducing the stress and increasing the accuracy of assessment processes, the project will be of great benefit to education providers and to adult Aboriginal learners.

Year One (2009/2010) of this project included a literature review and survey of academic assessments currently used to determine the skill levels of learners applying to adult and post-secondary institutes. 40 public post-secondary and IAHLA institutes responded to the *Better*

*Learner Assessment* survey. The results of the survey will form the background for subsequent research, which will include focus groups, assessment revisions, and piloting of the materials developed through the initiative. The research findings will be presented at the 2011 IAHLA AGM.

### **Research with UVIC and NVIT**

2009/2010 represented the second year of the Province of BC's \$65 million Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy, and IAHLA continues to strive to ensure that this funding is used in a transparent and effective way. In addition, IAHLA has been involved in a number of projects that are part of the provincial government's strategy.

For example, *Aboriginal Service Plans* (ASP) are intended to articulate strategies within public post-secondary institutions that will meet the needs of Aboriginal communities and improve Aboriginal student success. Through a partnership with the University of Victoria (UVIC) and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) ASP, IAHLA has been working to explore issues associated with education agreements between Aboriginal-controlled and public post-secondary institutions in BC. In Year 2 of this process, the partners drafted an Education Agreement Tool Kit, which was presented at the IAHLA AGM. The goal is to pilot the Tool Kit this fall and release the final version in 2011.

In addition, using ASP funding, IAHLA, NVIT and UVIC hosted the second Successful Student Transition Forum in March 2010 at the Saanich Adult Education Centre. This event provided an important opportunity to discuss issues related to students making a successful transition into a post-secondary setting, as well as ways to ensure greater success for Aboriginal students in this regard.

### **Transitions Research**

Despite many attempts by public institutions to increase the enrolment and success of Aboriginal learners, studies clearly show that Aboriginal post-secondary enrolment and success rates still lag far behind those of other Canadians.

Responding to that situation, in 2008 IAHLA and UVic jointly conducted a comprehensive, community-based research project to investigate the transition of Aboriginal students from Aboriginal-controlled adult and post-secondary institutes to public post-secondary institutions. The research found that IAHLA institutes play a vital role in providing Aboriginal students with a solid foundation through holistic models of education that incorporate Aboriginal epistemologies and ontologies. These institutes allow students to learn in supportive,

safe, community-based environments where they have access to support services in their natural environment with family, friends, culture and community. A report outlining the findings of the research is available on the IAHLA web site ([www.fnesc.ca/iahla](http://www.fnesc.ca/iahla)).

Based upon the transition project research findings, three separate pilot projects were subsequently funded. Those pilot projects, which were designed through roundtable discussions, are meant to enhance and support the work that is already being done at Aboriginal institutes in BC. The pilot projects focused on: Reciprocal Institutional Orientation Project (Chemainus Native College and Vancouver Island University; Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University and the University of Northern British Columbia; and En'owkin Centre and NVIT); Post-Secondary Survival Skills Resources; and Transformative Indigenous Learning Strategies (Heiltsuk College – focusing on career development; and Saanich Adult Education Centre – focusing on the master-apprentice Sencoten language program).

### **Parental Encouragement and Post-Secondary Education**

In partnership with the FNSA and FNEC, and with financial support from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, in the spring of 2010, IAHLA delivered a series of Career and Education Planning Workshops for youth, parents, Elders and community members, to share information on career planning and post-secondary access.

Specifically, nineteen community-based workshops were offered, focusing on the importance of encouraging youth to stay-in-school and consider higher learning opportunities, the need for early and careful course planning to keep options open, the importance of financial planning and how to identify and access scholarships and bursaries, and how parents and communities can support learners in their transitions to post-secondary education.

The initial workshops were very well-received, with over 400 participants. IAHLA is seeking further funding to expand this workshop series.

### **Indian Studies Support Program**

The Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) is a federal initiative that provides funding to support First Nations post-secondary programs through an annual proposal process. Any First Nations Band, Tribal Council or First Nations post-secondary institute located in BC may apply for ISSP funding.

Each year, a Committee consisting of regional First Nations representatives evaluates the proposals and makes recommendations to INAC for the distribution of the funding. FNEESC provides administrative support to the ISSP Committee.

This year, the ISSP Committee reviewed 48 proposals totalling \$5.2 million in funding requests, and was able to recommend funding for 17 projects totalling \$2.1 million.

## Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development

### **2007 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan: Status Report**

In 2007, BC announced the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007 Strategy), which was intended to improve outcomes for Aboriginal learners and 'close the gap' in terms of higher education and employment. The 2007 Strategy was one component of commitments made by BC in the New Relationship, Transformative Change Accord, Métis Nation Relationship Accord, and Memorandum of Understanding of the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners.

Initiatives implemented under the 2007 Strategy include the following.

- **Aboriginal Service Plans:** provided \$15 million over four years (2006/2007 to 2009/2010) for 11 public institutions to develop and implement three-year strategic plans in partnership with Aboriginal communities. The plans outline goals and actions to improve Aboriginal learners' access, participation, and success in post-secondary education. Institutions will submit their final reports in January 2011.
- **Aboriginal Special Projects Fund:** invested \$8.9 million over three years to support the development and piloting of new programs and courses, cultural education support and transition programs, student recruitment activities, and student support services.
- **Aboriginal targeted seats:** 192 new public post-secondary seats were targeted for Aboriginal learners in strategic program areas to help address labour market shortages.
- **Scholarships and financial awards:** provided funding to directly support Aboriginal students, including the following.
  - ◊ \$10 million endowment for the Aboriginal Student Award, administered by the Irving K. Barber Scholarship Society. An additional \$0.5 million

was provided to allow for disbursements over the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic years.

◊ By directing the Alberta Centennial Scholarship towards Aboriginal learners, \$52,130/year was provided to approximately 26 students (\$2,005 each) per year from 2006/2007 to 2009/2010.

◊ \$100,000 was provided in one-time funding (2006/2007) to the Chief Joe Mathias Scholarship for Aboriginal Learners, which is administered by FNEESC.

- **Gathering Places:** investing \$13.6 million over four years to build culturally welcoming buildings on public post-secondary campuses that will decrease isolation and increase retention for Aboriginal students by reflecting the character, community and traditions of Aboriginal cultures.
- **Aboriginal Transitions Research:** allocated \$1.7 million to provide evidence that supports learner transitions along the post-secondary education continuum. Three projects were funded, each to address a different transition point:
  - ◊ UBC: Undergraduate to Graduate.
  - ◊ UVic: Aboriginal Institute to Public Institution.
  - ◊ TRU: Adult Basic Education to Post-Secondary Education.
- **Aboriginal Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP):** targeted approximately \$1.5 million of CALP funding over three years (2007/2008 to 2009/2010) to support partnerships between community-based Aboriginal organizations and public post-secondary institutions to provide literacy programs and services, such as small group instruction, one-on-one tutoring, and organizing workshops and events related to literacy.

### **Development of New Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Policy Framework**

The Ministry has been working on a renewed policy framework for Aboriginal post-secondary education and training and is committed to consulting and engaging with post-secondary system stakeholders and Aboriginal community partners in its development.

### **Evaluation of 2007 Strategy**

The Ministry is conducting an external evaluation of its 2007 Strategy in order to make evidence-based decisions when developing the new policy framework. Some of the initiatives under the 2007 Strategy, in particular the Aboriginal Service Plan initiative, were viewed as pilots, intended to explore and identify potential new ways

to support and enhance Aboriginal learner success. By conducting this evaluation in the fall and winter of 2010, the Ministry will be able to incorporate lessons learned from the full three years of implementation into the new policy framework.

The Province also has committed to building a New Relationship with First Nations, built on respect, recognition and reconciliation, and to working collaboratively with First Nations and the Métis Nation. In accordance with these commitments, the evaluation will be conducted collaboratively with Aboriginal community partners through a Steering Committee comprised of members of the PSE Partners Table's Policy Working Group.

### ***Industry Training Authority***

ALMD is responsible for the Industry Training Authority (ITA), a Crown agency that manages industry training and apprenticeships in BC. The ITA is working with its Aboriginal Advisory Council and other stakeholders to guide the development and delivery of an Aboriginal Apprenticeship strategy, which aims to increase awareness, access and participation in apprenticeship training. The Aboriginal Advisory Council has developed an Aboriginal Trades and Apprenticeship Business Plan, which identifies 12 strategies and 28 actions to be implemented by the ITA and other stakeholders over a three year period.

In 2009, the ITA transferred ownership of its mobile training unit to NVIT. NVIT is using the mobile unit to deliver an Aboriginal Bridging to Trades program in communities throughout the Province. The Bridging to Trades program complements the efforts of the ITA to increase access to trades training for Aboriginal people.

### ***Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement***

In February 2008, BC and Canada signed a six-year Labour Market Agreement, through which BC will receive approximately \$66 million per year.

- The Aboriginal Training for Employment Program (ATEP) directly connects Aboriginal people to employment opportunities in BC by facilitating the transition of BC Aboriginal people into sustainable employment through job-related training and support services.
- There has been an initial ATEP request for proposals (RFP) resulting in seventeen Aboriginal organizations providing training and employment opportunities for approximately 600 Aboriginal people in the fields of culinary arts, tourism, health care, social services, the mining sector, and the construction trades.

- A second RFP process is anticipated for the fall of 2010, and will be posted on the BC Bid site. This RFP will improve and build on the ATEP model.
- In 2008, BladeRunners program funding was significantly augmented with the commitment of \$14 million over six years through the Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement. BladeRunners, which has been operating for fifteen years, is an award-winning employment program that helps at-risk youth between the ages of 15 and 30 obtain and sustain full-time employment in construction and other industries. In 2008/2009, the program assisted 334 youth (approximately 66 percent Aboriginal youth), with over 77 percent of those young people finding permanent employment. BladeRunners program services are currently available in Prince George, Williams Lake, Whistler, Vancouver, Surrey, Chilliwack, Victoria, Tofino, Port Alberni, Duncan, Ladysmith, Nanaimo and Comox. ALMD will be expanding services into the North and Southern Interior through a procurement process in November, 2009.
- ALMD is providing the ITA with \$6 million in funding for Aboriginal trades training over 6 years through the Canada-BC Labour Market Agreement. In the first year, the ITA has funded a number of demonstration projects to support Aboriginal people in trades and apprenticeship programs. These projects will assist approximately 465 Aboriginal people.

## **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada BC Region**

### ***Education Information System (EIS)***

INAC Headquarters Education Branch is taking the lead on the development of a new INAC national education system for reporting that will be implemented in the fall of 2012. The Education Information System (EIS) will link all education programs from proposals to final reports and will allow for comparisons of aggregate results.

### ***Post-Secondary***

INAC post-secondary education funding supports over 3,000 students each year for certificate, diploma, degree and post-graduate level programs (3,356 in 2009/2010). Over 800 funded post-secondary education students graduate or complete their program of study each year (847 in 2009/2010).

INAC BC Region has been working with FNEC to utilize an allocation methodology that allows INAC to monitor actual costs on a per-student basis and to allow for any

overall program surplus to be shared between bands with a high demand for post-secondary funding. Requests for funds in 2010/2011 were particularly high, due at least in part to the high number of applicants.

In addition, the March 2010 Federal Budget made reference to the Government of Canada engaging in a new approach to providing support to First Nations and Inuit students to ensure that students receive the support they need to attend post-secondary education. To date, no decisions have been made regarding the proposed new approach for post-secondary education, and INAC is continuing to work with the AFN and regional partners, such as FNEESC, to understand their perspectives on this matter.

Finally, INAC BC Region partnered with FNEESC to deliver four Education Coordinator Workshops in September 2010, which provided training on post-secondary education and nominal roll to approximately 200 participants. That training is intended to assist the Coordinators in their delivery of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

## HRSDC / Service Canada

HRSDC / Service Canada participates with the PSE Partners' Table by sending representation from the Aboriginal Partnerships Unit (APU), BC / Alberta / Territories / Saskatchewan / Manitoba Region.

The APU delivers the new Aboriginal Skills, Employment & Training Strategy (ASET) which was formerly known as the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS). In BC, 14 ASET agreements have been signed, which extend to the end of March 2015. ASET holders were tasked with developing a 5 year strategic business plan, which will guide them as they continue to deliver crucial employment and training services to Aboriginal people in their respective geographic areas. The 5 year budget for this initiative is approximately \$242 million and is designed to leverage partnerships with other levels of government, education institutions, organizations and employers. The ASET focuses primarily on demand driven training support, partnerships and accountability.

HRSDC also announced an additional Fund this year called the Strategic Partnership Fund (SPF). Any Aboriginal organization may apply for SPF funding, although the fund is designed to compliment the ASET and proposals therefore must identify how the initiative will support the success of the ASET.

HRSDC perceives its participation on the PSE Partners' Table as an excellent opportunity for sharing information and exploring partnerships.

## United Native Nations

Established in 1969, United Native Nations (UNN) is an Aboriginal organization that represents the socio-economic and cultural interests of the off-reserve rural and urban people of Aboriginal ancestry in BC. The organization is governed by a democratically elected Board of Directors that represents nine UNN zones. The priority issues identified by Aboriginal peoples in urban, rural and remote off-reserve communities include health, child and family services, access to education, justice issues, employment and training, and housing and homelessness.

## Métis Nation British Columbia Skills and Employment Center

In 2009/2010, Métis Nation British Columbia Métis Skills and Employment Center (MSEC) received funding through Service Canada and the Aboriginal Skills Training Strategic Fund to undertake an initiative that involves Essential Skills and Literacy building for Aboriginal learners, with an employment practicum at the end of the three month program.

MSEC also is delivering the Culinary Hospitality Opportunity Program (CHOP), which is funded through the Aboriginal Training Employment Partnership of ALMD. The program is 14 weeks long and targets culinary entry training that focuses on Essential Skills.

In addition, funding from the Office of Literacy Essential Skills has provided MSEC with an opportunity to begin developing Essential Skills curriculum for specific trades, including carpentry and culinary. The curriculum is being integrated into all programs MSEC delivers, including the Blade Runners Programs in Prince George and the Fraser Valley, which are funded through ALMD.

Finally, MSEC is delivering the Skills Enhancement for Aboriginal Learners (SEAL) program in the Metro Vancouver Urban area. That six week long program focuses on skills building, and will be delivered until March 2011.

## Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) continues its commitment to *the New Relationship, the Transformative Change Accord, and the Métis Nation Relationship Accord*. These accords provide the Ministry's framework and guiding principles for achieving progress in the areas of improved Crown-Aboriginal relationships, education, housing and

infrastructure, health, and economic opportunities, all aimed at improving social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal peoples.

Across the provincial government, the New Relationship approach has become the acknowledged standard for working with First Nations, Métis, and urban Aboriginal peoples and organizations. This approach has facilitated significant achievements by the Ministry in establishing partnerships with other provincial ministries, Aboriginal organizations, and Canada.

MARR also is committed to working in partnership with government and non-government partners to identify and share qualitative and quantitative data to monitor progress on closing the socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in BC. With the inclusion of new indicators for the Métis population, MARR continues to make progress toward commitments made through the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*.

#### **Reporting Progress on the Transformative Change Accord and the Métis Nation Relationship Accord**

The *Transformative Change Accord*, signed in 2005, committed the federal government, provincial government, and First Nations of BC, as represented by the First Nations Leadership Council to establish a ten year plan to bridge the differences in socio-economic standards between First Nations people and other residents of the province. The parties agreed to take immediate actions to improve relationships and close gaps in education, housing and infrastructure, health, and economic opportunities. A set of indicators for each area were recommended by leadership for monitoring change over the ten year period.

MARR is responsible for preparing an annual report on progress made, which is titled *New Relationships with Aboriginal People and Communities in British Columbia*. A technical report, *Measuring Outcomes*, accompanies that document. These reports together create a holistic reporting framework and provide the following.

- Annual highlights of government actions that are supporting positive changes in the lives of Aboriginal individuals and communities
- An overview of key accomplishments across government that form cornerstones to support progress in closing socio-economic gaps
- Technical information that tracks progress over time in each of the five priority Transformative Change Accord (TCA) areas

The *Measuring Outcomes* document includes a set of indicators that monitor outcomes in each of the five TCA priority areas. Additionally, since 2007, MARR has worked with BC Stats to collect annual data for indicators that measure public awareness of the diversity and value of First Nations cultures. The latest survey, conducted in October 2009, included questions specific to the Métis population, which will inform future reports.

The most recent *Measuring Outcomes* was publicly released in 2010 and is now available at ([http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/social/measuring\\_outcomes/index.html](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/social/measuring_outcomes/index.html)). The 2009/2010 report will be released in November 2010.

The *2009/2010 Annual Report on Progress: New Relationships with Aboriginal People and Communities in British Columbia* was released in July 2010 as an electronic publication. This publication complements the *Measuring Outcomes* document by capturing progress, including plans and strategies being implemented by government, First Nations and Métis, as well as stories about individual Aboriginal people who share their experience of how their lives are improving as a result of these commitments.

#### **Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard**

The Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard (AADS) is a provincial government data standard that was created to ensure consistency across government ministries and agencies for the collection of information about Aboriginal identity. The standard is to be applied by ministries and agencies responsible for the delivery of services and programs designed to improve the socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal persons. Through the use of the AADS, government can be consistent in the way Aboriginal citizens are identified, and can be responsive to recognizing the distinctiveness of Aboriginal populations in BC. When implemented by a Ministry, the AADS questions permit Aboriginal people to self-identify as Aboriginal on administrative forms, as well as identify their Aboriginal identity group: First Nations, Métis, or Inuit.

The data standard was developed through a joint Aboriginal / government working group. Broad Aboriginal representation included organizations such as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), Métis Nation BC (MNBC), BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCA AFC), First Nations Technology Council, First Nations Statistical Institute, First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), Pacific Association of First Nations Women (PAFNW), and BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS), among others.

The AADS came into effect in March 2007. MARR is responsible, along with the Ministry Chief Information Office (CIO), for managing reviews and revisions of the standard, and for ensuring that the standard is applied across government. In 2010 MARR met with all Ministries identified as mandatory adopters to learn about their progress in implementing the AADS. A status report, including recommendations for further implementation, is under development. Additionally, a review of the AADS is being undertaken in 2010/2011 to determine if revisions are required.

With the full implementation of the AADS, government will be able to engage in more informed policy development, program planning, and resource allocations to benefit Aboriginal populations. The AADS also is aligned with Canadian Census questions.

### ***Aboriginal Youth Internship Program***

Now in its fourth year, the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program welcomed 23 new interns in September 2010 to take part in the 12-month program designed to increase Aboriginal youths' leadership capacity, education and career opportunities. The program represents a partnership with the BC Public Service Agency.

### ***Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective***

The Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective (UAYC), a consortium of Aboriginal youth organizations in BC, has continued to progress in the past year. The UAYC's mandate is to promote an increased voice for Aboriginal youth in government, and to improve policies and services for Aboriginal youth. In addition to the 2009 action plan titled *Our Culture, Language and Education*, a Child and Family Service action plan is being developed in 2010.

The 2010 Unity in Action' Forum was held in conjunction with the Gathering Our Voices Aboriginal Youth Conference. This year's forum empowered youth delegates to: have a greater voice in decisions that affect them and their communities; promote a positive model of leadership for youth; update youth and decide on next steps related to the UAYC's *Our Culture, Language and Education Action Plan*; provide youth input into UAYC's policy work on child and family services; provide youth will skills and knowledge about how to engage effectively in their communities; and expose youth to opportunities for themselves and their communities.

### ***Enhancing Awareness in the Public Service***

Throughout 2009/2010, MARR and the Public Service Agency have been planning an initiative to build greater awareness of BC's diverse Aboriginal populations and

the New Relationship approach within the provincial public service. The Building Public Service Capacity in Aboriginal Relations (BCAR) initiative is meant to strengthen the capacity of the public service for working respectfully, knowledgably and effectively with Aboriginal communities, organizations and people. In 2010/2011, six priority actions are intended to be implemented, including the creation of an Aboriginal engagement guidelines document for the public service.

### ***First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council***

In 2009/2010, MARR continued to provide funding for the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, a provincial Crown Corporation formed by the Government of BC in 1990. The Council administers programming that assists BC First Nations in their efforts to revitalize their languages, arts and cultures.

Highlights of the Council's work in 2009/2010 include: the completion of a successful three-year pilot of four language and culture immersion programs; the launch of an interactive, online map of First Nations languages, which contains data about the status of each language; and the development of the FirstVoices Language Tutor, which allows communities to build online language lessons. The Council also published the *2010 Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages*, an in-depth, comprehensive study that provides concrete information on speakers and learners of First Nations languages in BC, as well as an analysis of available resources.

### ***Economic Development***

MARR is supporting the delivery of the Aboriginal Business and Entrepreneurship Training (BEST) program in ten communities throughout the province. This initiative also receives financial support from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (Labour Market Agreement funding).

MARR also supports Aboriginal small business development with First Citizens Fund programs, including the following.

- Business Loan Program delivered by five Aboriginal Capital Corporations that provide approximately \$4 million in business loans annually
- Aboriginal Business Development Centres in Fort St. John, Prince George and Cranbrook, funded in partnership with Western Economic Diversification
- Business Support Officer positions in Aboriginal Capital Corporations in Prince Rupert, Port Alberni, Kamloops and West Vancouver, supported in partnership with Aboriginal Business Canada

In addition, MARR supports the BC Aboriginal Business Awards, in partnership with the BC Achievement Foundation, to recognize successful Aboriginal-owned businesses and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal joint ventures. The 2010 BC Aboriginal Business Awards is scheduled to take place on December 1st in Vancouver.

MARR is part of a working group that is continuing to implement the First Nations Economic Development Action Plan. The working group includes representatives of the federal and provincial governments, the First Nations Leadership Council, and several Aboriginal community organizations (Industry Council for Aboriginal Business, Aboriginal Tourism BC, New Relationship Trust, All Nations Trust Company, and others).

MARR also is partnering with the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and MNBC on the implementation of the MNBC Economic Development Strategy.

## BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU)

The BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU) includes the BC Institute of Technology, Capilano University, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Justice Institute of BC, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, University of the Fraser Valley, and Vancouver Island University.

BCAIU institutions share a common value in working together, optimising relationships with other education institutions and organizations, business and industry, and local communities. By bringing together the contributions of government, business groups, and industry leaders, and responding to the needs of their communities, BCAIU institutions are catalysts for prosperity.

## BC Colleges

BC Colleges (BCC) has been a member of the Aboriginal post-secondary education Partners' Group since its inception and has established strategies that are intended to further the recruitment, retention and success of aboriginal learners. For a number of years, BCC has identified Aboriginal post-secondary education as one of its priorities for government policy and funding. BCC has made presentations to government and has initiated activities to foster greater collaboration and partnership between our member institutions, with other post-secondary institutions, and with Aboriginal institutes and organizations.

BCC has included Aboriginal post-secondary education as a key strategic area to be addressed with its counterparts in Alberta as part of an MOU between BCC and the Alberta Association of Colleges and Technical Institutes (AACTI). In this regard, BCC partnered in a special roundtable in Lac La Biche, Alberta in February 2007, attended by Aboriginal educators from BC and Alberta, college and institute presidents and other senior administrators, Premier Stelmach, and his Minister of Community Development. The Roundtable resulted in a series of recommendations designed to improve access, retention and success of Aboriginal students. The two associations continue to look for opportunities to collaborate and advance shared Aboriginal post-secondary education objectives.

In addition, both BCC and its member institutions have introduced some new actions that support the Aboriginal post-secondary agenda, including the following.

**Gathering Places** – Colleges either have opened or have under construction Gathering Places at each of their institutions.

**Performance Measures** – A project is underway to produce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets for a select number of college areas, the purpose of which is to measure the value-added of colleges to communities or regions throughout BC. Aboriginal post-secondary education is one specific policy area identified in this work. The interim report for this project is expected to be complete by February 2011.

**College System Education Planning** – Introduced in 2009, this project brings together the leadership at each BCC college to develop a framework that will facilitate college system education planning. The project has involved meetings and information sharing on education priorities, areas for collaboration and partnership between and amongst colleges, and opportunities for planning and delivery between colleges and as a system of colleges. Development and delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal learners is one of a few key areas that have been identified for enhanced collaboration. In the Spring of 2011, an interim report on this project will be shared with the broader post-secondary community.

**BCC Budget Submissions** – BCC has identified Aboriginal post-secondary education as a priority for the 2011/2012 BC Budget. We have asserted the need for additional funding that is used in new ways to effectively address this critical educational area; in particular, it is important to move special project/discretionary funding to a more regularized form of financial support.

**Appropriate Programs and Services** – Led by Northwest Community College (which has mentored some BCC college leaders), BCC is consulting with Aboriginal communities and developing processes to sensitize the learning communities to the history and varying circumstances of Aboriginal peoples. This is an important area of work and BCC is interested in partnering with Aboriginal communities in making the institutions more welcoming and responsive to the particular needs of Aboriginal learners.

These areas of activity, while not exhaustive, illustrate the level of priority the 11 BCC members place on this important policy area. BCC is committed to furthering the objectives set out in the MOU and the overall work of the Partners Group throughout the next year.

### Research Universities' Council of BC (RUCBC)

The research-intensive universities in BC are committed to working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities, government and other partners to enhance capacity for Aboriginal people so that they are able to achieve educational outcomes comparable to non-Aboriginal populations.

As a member of the PSE Partners Group, RUCBC represents BC's four research-intensive universities: the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Victoria (UVic), Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

The research-intensive universities undertook a number of initiatives related to Aboriginal students, education and research in 2009/2010, including the following.

#### **UBC**

- UBC has focused on implementing its Aboriginal Strategic Plan, paying particular attention to improving and expanding the services and support available for Aboriginal students. In addition to strengthening the services it provides for Aboriginal students, expanding its curriculum on Aboriginal topics, and furthering its ability to support cross-cultural conversations, UBC has been working to enhance programs that will attract and retain Aboriginal students.
- Significant Aboriginal programs are offered across UBC and at both campuses, in Education, Arts, Law, Medicine, Forestry and the Sauder School of Business, with specific curricular concentrations in Aboriginal languages, First Nations Studies, First Nations Legal Studies, and teacher education.
- UBC's Vancouver Campus provides 60 awards in total

of almost \$200,000 for Aboriginal students to attend the university.

- UBC's Okanagan campus is growing its Aboriginal awards program and currently offers four awards for Aboriginal students. The Okanagan Campus continues to build its capacity to accommodate increased student numbers, including space for Aboriginal programs and services in the new University Centre, as well as a new Aboriginal student gathering space.
- UBC is at the forefront of the development of new models of collaborative research in partnership with Aboriginal organizations and communities. UBC researchers work on issues of concern to Aboriginal people, often in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and organizations.
- Equally exciting is Vancouver campus' recent attraction of new Aboriginal and other expert faculty across the university. UBC Vancouver currently has more than 20 full-time Aboriginal faculty members on permanent professorial appointments, and the Okanagan has more than six, in addition to the many Aboriginal faculty and staff working in other capacities.

#### **UVIC**

- UVic recognizes the special role the university can play in regard to Canada's Indigenous peoples. UVic continues to build on its commitment to and greatly valued relationship with Indigenous communities. It is UVic's goal to be the university of choice for Indigenous students.
- Funded through ALMD, UVic's Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) aims to enhance access, retention and the success of Aboriginal students at UVic while building relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations. The ASP includes initiatives with eight partners encompassing 25 nations and two organizations. Community initiatives include outreach to youth to enhance science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills, development of an Elders program to support students, staff and faculty, and development of exit strategies to prepare and support students as they complete their studies.
- The grand opening of the First Peoples House took place in early 2010. The House provides an academic and cultural centre for Indigenous students and a welcoming space on campus for the broader community.
- UVic has undertaken an Aboriginal Transitions Research Project with IAHLA to examine the role that Aboriginal-controlled institutes play in supporting students' transitions to public post-secondary

institutions.

- UVic's LE, NoNET is a groundbreaking pilot project with the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation to measure ways to improve the success rates of Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. The project has included mentoring, community internships, research apprenticeships, financial support, and a seminar for Aboriginal students.
- Significant Aboriginal programs are offered across UVic, including the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, Indigenous Governance Program, Indigenous Specializations in the School of Social Work, the Master's Program in Counselling for Aboriginal Communities, and the Akitsiraq Law Program, which is offered in partnership with the Akitsiraq Law School Society and Nunavut Arctic College. UVic also offers the Indigenous Student Mini-U Summer Camp and Indigenous Adult Orientation.
- With respect to research, UVic has many leading scholars, including Professor John Borrows, one of Canada's leading Aboriginal law scholars who holds the endowed Law Foundation Chair in Aboriginal Justice and Governance, and Professor James Hopkins, who holds the inaugural National Aboriginal Economic Development Chair.

### **SFU**

- SFU is implementing a First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan, which was passed by the university senate in 2007. Major components of that Plan include: academic program development, research development, student recruitment, retention, and support, liaison and outreach to the Aboriginal community, international engagement, Indigenous knowledge development, infrastructure and facilities development, and Aboriginal leadership development.
- As part of that Plan, SFU established the Office for Aboriginal Peoples (OAP) in 2009 and its first director began in January 2010. The mandate of the OAP is to lead the implementation of the First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan.
- SFU has reinforced its commitment to First Nations student success with the launch of an admission policy specific to Aboriginal undergraduates in September 2010. First Nations, Métis, or Inuit students who lack the high-school average required to enter individual SFU faculties and schools now can request a special review of their application. Under the Aboriginal Undergraduate Admission Policy approved by SFU's Senate, an applicant's educational history, cultural knowledge, work experience,

educational goals, and other achievements will also be considered. This policy is designed to reach out to mature Aboriginal people who are considering a university education.

- SFU offers a Minor and a Major in First Nations Studies and programs in Aboriginal education. In addition, the First Nations Languages Program is being preserved and revitalized, with administrative offices being moved from SFU Kamloops to SFU Burnaby.
- The Learning Strategies Group (LSG) in the SFU Faculty of Business and the Industry Council of Aboriginal Business (ICAB) work together on the Leadership Exchange Program. This is the first university-based business relationship development program in Canada to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal senior leaders together to learn from each other.
- SFU offers several transition programs, including two Aboriginal Pre-University Bridging Programs and the Pes'ka Shad Valley Program, which is a summer camp program for Aboriginal youth held on the SFU campus.
- SFU also has a full-time Indigenous Recruiter Coordinator. The recruiter visits schools, communities, and career fairs. An academic advisor, who is specifically designated to assist Aboriginal students and applicants, offers pre-admission academic counselling.

### **UNBC**

- UNBC has a high percentage of Aboriginal student enrolment relative to other public universities, and sees this as an important growth area for both enrolment and for promoting cultural diversity on campus. Partnerships with First Nations communities are an important part of UNBC's activities.
- The University has an ongoing commitment to encourage further implementation of First Nations perspectives into the UNBC curricula. Some examples include a new Masters degree in First Nations Studies introduced in the Nass Valley; the UNBC Education Program, implementing the Developmental Standard Term Certificate in Burns Lake, Prince Rupert, Ft. St. James, and the Nass Valley; and UNBC partnering with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to create a collaborative Public Administration and Community Development degree.
- UNBC opened the Gathering Place or Lhuhuhwhezdel on September 21, 2010. The Gathering Place will provide opportunities for ceremonial and cultural events, as well as conferences and workshops for local First Nations and Aboriginal people from across the North. The Gathering Place has a fully equipped kitchen, is finished with

various types of wood, and houses a unique ventilation system designed to exhaust all smoke during traditional smudging ceremonies. The facility will be used by the UNBC First Nations Centre, faculty, staff, and the community.

- UNBC provides support and bridging options to Aboriginal students entering university studies, in order to increase the number of Aboriginal school teachers by assisting students with developing study skills and providing some courses required for the teacher education program.
- With respect to research, UNBC's Dr. Laurie Chan holds the BC Leadership Chair in Aboriginal Environmental Health and was granted \$11 million over ten years for the Aboriginal and Northern Health study, as well as \$100,000 a year ongoing for a network to improve health outcomes in First Nations communities by filling important gaps in research related to food, environment and health.



**BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education  
and Training Partners Group**

[www.fnesc.ca/programs/PSE and Training.php](http://www.fnesc.ca/programs/PSE%20and%20Training.php)

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