
BC Indigenous Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners

March 9, 2021

Videoconference

PARTICIPANTS:

BC Association of Institutes + Universities

- Ruth Wittenberg, President

BC Colleges

- Colin Ewart, President

Department of Indigenous Services Canada (DISC)

- Wendy Rogers, Director, Programs and Partnerships
- Alison Olney, Education Programs Manager
- Laura Langs, Education Programs Advisor

Economic and Social Development Canada

- Charan Bhullar, Manager

First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)

- Debbie Jeffrey, Executive Director
- Thane Bonar, Director, Communications and Policy
- Solomon Amoateng, Senior Policy Analyst, Post-Secondary Education and Training
- Jasper Cattell, Policy Analyst, Post-Secondary Education and Training

First Nations Public Service Secretariat

- Bernice Timmer, Manager, Planning and Policy

Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA)

- Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet, Chair
- Naomi Narcisse, Academic & Campus Coordinator, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Métis Nations of BC

- Jason Chan, Senior Director, Ministry of Employment and Skills Training and Post-Secondary Education

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST)

- Nicola Lemmer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Post-Secondary Policy and Programs and Division

- Monica Cox, Executive Director, Indigenous Policy and Engagement Branch
- Bryan Dreilich, Director, Post-Secondary Engagement and Partnerships, Indigenous Policy and Engagement
- Fiona Cubitt, Director, Policy and Planning, Indigenous Policy and Engagement Branch
- Naomi Adams, Senior Policy Analyst, Policy and Planning, Indigenous Policy and Engagement Branch
- Rochelle McLean, Policy Analyst, Indigenous Policy and Engagement Branch
- Nadaya Howells, Acting Manager, Indigenous Relations, Workforce Innovation and Division Responsible for Skills and Training

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR)

- Stephanie Gabel, Senior Advisor, Social/Economic Planning

North East Native Advancing Society (NENAS)

- Deanne McLeod, Executive Director

Research Universities' Council of BC (RUCBC)

- Jim Martell, Director

Service Canada

- Melanie Rai, Project Manager, Indigenous Services

FACILITATION:

- Judith Sayers, Chair
- Nicolas Mejia, FNESC Manager, Post-Secondary Education and Training, IAHLA/FNESC

1. Welcome and Review of Draft Agenda

The Partners reviewed and approved the Draft Agenda for the March 09, 2021 meeting.

2. Review of Draft Meeting Notes

The Draft Meeting Notes for the December 16, 2020 meeting were reviewed and approved.

3. COVID-19 Impacts and Response Roundtable

The Partners discussed the letter sent by Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer (PHO), on March 8, 2021, informing BC's public post-secondary institutions to prepare for a full return to on-campus education this September. AEST will be working with the Continuity of Learning Working Group to refresh the *COVID-19 Go-Forward Guidelines for B.C.'s Post-Secondary Sector*, based on the recommendations in the PHO's letter. FNEC and IAHLA noted that further discussion was necessary on accommodations for First Nations students who do not feel safe returning to in-person learning. AEST provided an overview of the results of its review of public post-secondary institutions' engagement with First Nations communities and institutes during the pandemic. It was reported that public post-secondary institutions have been connecting more with their neighboring First Nations communities than with Indigenous institutes. Public post-secondary institutions have also reported that Indigenous learners face greater challenges than non-Indigenous learners in accessing education remotely. AEST summaries of institutional reports will be shared with FNEC and IAHLA once they have validated by BC's public post-secondary institutions.

Action Item: In alignment with the draft comprehensive strategy for Indigenous post-secondary education (PSE) and training, develop a plan and/or initiatives for public post-secondary institutions to support Indigenous learners who face racism.

Action Item: AEST's Indigenous Policy and Engagement Branch to join FNEC, Ministry of Education and ISC tripartite COVID-19 response calls.

4. Declaration on the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)

The Partners discussed ongoing work related to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA). AEST has worked with Indigenous partners to provide recommendations on sections of the Action Plan relating to PSE. These have been submitted to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR). FNEC also submitted PSE recommendations for the Action Plan to MIRR through the First Nations Leadership Council. It is expected that a consultative draft will be made available in April, which AEST will share with Indigenous Partners and the Indigenous PSE and Training Partners' Policy Working Group. MIRR hopes that the final action plan will be completed by June.

AEST noted that MIRR will also be preparing the 2020/21 DRIPA Annual Report, to be completed by June. Additionally, AEST committed to engaging with partners when more information is available from MIRR. FNEC and IAHLA stressed the need for distinct, First Nations-led processes for First Nations-related aspects of the Action Plan and DRIPA implementation, together with capacity-building for Provincial ministries as part of the DRIPA implementation process.

5. Anti-Racism Discussion

FNEC and IAHLA stressed a need to take action on anti-Indigenous racism, and has called for an investigation similar to *In Plain Sight* on anti-Indigenous racism in the public education system. AEST has had preliminary discussions with staff at public post-secondary institutions on their anti-racism work. FNEC and IAHLA noted that First Nations experience and expertise is critical to the implementation of these recommendations.

Action Item: Invite Associate Deputy Minister Dawn Thomas to present on the *In Plain Sight* recommendations at a future PSE Partners meeting.

6. BC Human Rights Commissions Report on Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection

FNEC raised concerns regarding the lack of accurate, distinctions-based data on Indigenous populations, particularly in the case of children and youth who were formerly in care. AEST is working to provide more distinctions-based data in the *Aboriginal Learners in British Columbia's Public Post-Secondary System* report, and the Province is currently updating the Aboriginal administrative data standard. AEST agreed to provide further information at the next Partners' meeting on the implementation of the *Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in BC* report.

Action Item: AEST to provide further information on BC's response (processes and timelines) to the *Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in BC*.

7. Provincial Program and Initiatives Updates

a) Indigenous Skills Training

AEST confirmed that a total of \$39 million was allocated under the Indigenous Skills Training and Education program in 2020/21, including \$24 million from the base budget (\$12 million federal funding and \$12 million BC funding) and a \$15 million lift from BC's economic recovery plan. FNESC and IAHLA raised concerns about the amount of funding available per community and the lack of equitable, First Nations access to this funding.

b) Aboriginal Student Data Report

AEST provided an update on the Aboriginal Student Data Report. The Ministry is finalizing the new Aboriginal Student Data Report based on feedback from Indigenous partners and the PSE Partners.

c) Gathering of Indigenous Board Members

The second gathering of Indigenous Public Post-Secondary Board Members is scheduled for Friday, May 21, 2021. AEST is working with partners and Indigenous Board Members to develop the agenda, which will focus on DRIPA implementation in the PSE system. Presidents of public post-secondary institutions are not invited to this event but could be invited in future. Alternatively, another event could be organized, specific to presidents and other senior leaders of public institutions.

8. Future Meeting Dates

The Partners are scheduled to meet on the following dates:

- June 09, 2021
- September 08, 2021
- December 14, 2021.

9. Adjournment and Closing

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.