
BC Indigenous Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners

September 8, 2021

PARTICIPANTS:

Association of BC Deans of Education

- Dr Jan Hare

BC Aboriginal Training and Employment Members

- Deanne McLeod, Executive Director, North East Native Advancing Society (NENAS)

BC Association of Institutes and Universities

- Ruth Wittenberg, President

Department of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)

- Laura Langs, Education Programs Advisor

First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)

- Marlene Erickson, Vice President
- Thane Bonar, Director, Communications and Policy
- Jasper Gogol-Sicklen, Administrative Assistant, Communications & Policy

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

- Sara Bergen, Director, Adult Education, Post-Secondary Programs Branch
- Janet Hanuse, Director, Indigenous Programs, Indigenous Skills Training and Partnerships Branch
- Monique Lacerte, Director, Indigenous Engagement and Partnerships, 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

Ministry of Education

- Nicole Ryan, Acting Director, Indigenous Education

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR)

- Stephanie Gabel, Senior Advisor, Social/Economic Planning

Research Universities' Council of BC (RUCBC)

- Jim Martell, Director

Service Canada

- Linda Dozie, Senior Program Development Officer, Indigenous Programs

FACILITATION:

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

GUEST:

Ministry of Health

- Dawn Thomas, Associate Deputy Minister, Indigenous Health
 - Kaz McKenzie, Director, Research and Policy, Indigenous Health
 - Diana Clarke, Director, Cultural Safety and Humility, Indigenous Health
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1. Welcome and Introductions

The Indigenous Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners (the Partners) reviewed the Draft Agenda for the September 9, 2021 meeting. It was suggested that the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (AEST) provide updates on the Aboriginal Learners in British Columbia's Public Post-Secondary System Report and the Indigenous Policy Working Group at the end of the meeting. The Draft Agenda was approved.

2. Review of Draft Meeting Notes

The Draft Meeting Notes for the June 6, 2021 meeting were reviewed and approved by the Partners.

3. BC's Response to *In Plain Sight*

Dawn Thomas, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health, presented on the *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in BC Health Care* report. She noted that the report had found evidence of extensive anti-Indigenous racism in the BC public health system, and that its authors had identified twenty-four recommendations to address these challenges, several of which are directly relevant to the post-secondary system.

A roundtable of questions and answers was held. The Partners raised concerns regarding what accountability mechanisms will be put in place, and the engagement required for Joint Degrees programs. Partners voiced the importance of working with the Partners Table to implement recommendations and the need to develop accountability mechanisms for the post-secondary system. The need for more Indigenous representation at senior levels of government, including in AEST and the Ministry of Education, was highlighted. There was also discussion about the need to work with rights-holders in order to implement the Report's recommendations. Dawn Thomas expressed that she and her team would like to come back at a future date to provide further updates on the work and clarify her Office's relationship with the Partners Table.

1. Updates on *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* Implementation

The Partners discussed ongoing work related to the implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act). AEST informed the Partners that the deadline for engagement on the Consultative Draft Action Plan has been extended to September 15, 2021. AEST will review the feedback related to actions the Ministry is responsible for and provide recommended revisions to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), which is facilitating the development of the province-wide action plan.

Partners expressed concerns regarding timelines for finalizing the Action Plan, unilateral changes made by the Province, and the process for ensuring that the voice and concerns of rights-holders are prioritized in the Action Plan. The Ministry noted that the Action Plan is provincial and the process to develop the action plan is being led by MIRR. AEST staff noted that they will lead the process to review and propose revisions on actions that fall within AEST's area of responsibility. AEST will explore sharing a draft of the action plan as soon as possible, potentially in December if it is available, and inviting MIRR colleagues to provide an update on the Declaration Act and address any questions regarding the process.

2. Draft *Indigenous Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Engagement Plan*

AEST provided an update on the development of the *Indigenous Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Policy Framework* (Policy Framework) and sought feedback on the draft engagement plan. AEST informed the Partners that they have been updating the draft Policy Framework to align with draft actions in the *Declaration Act* Action Plan, existing provincial government commitments, as well as other shifts over the past year (such as the *In Plain Sight* Report). AEST will share the revised draft with the Policy Working Group for review, and then intends to conduct engagement in the fall/early winter. The new Policy Framework is structured to be consistent with DRIPA and other Provincial commitments. Partners noted that the Policy Framework is an important document for the post-secondary system, and needs to align with the First Nations Post-Secondary Education Tripartite Model that is under development.

3. Provincial Program and Initiatives Updates

a) Aboriginal Service Plan

AEST updated the Partners on its plans to revise and expand the Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) program. Over the summer the Ministry met students, staff and leaders at post-secondary institutions, as well as staff and members of FNEC, IAHLA, and MNBC, as well as circulating an online survey to gather feedback to inform the future of the program. Based on this feedback, AEST staff are developing a reconceptualised ASP program and will work with partners to validate the new approach in the fall, with the intention of implementing the program in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Several PSE Partners expressed concerns with the existing approach to the ASP, recommending that a fundamental shift is needed to support the vision for joint decision-making under DRIPA, and underscored that a new approach must ensure accountability and transparency to First Nations, Indigenous institutes and Métis communities. FNEC and IAHLA noted that they would not support an expansion of ASP, without AEST first committing to ongoing, core funding for First Nations-mandated institutes.

b) Funding for Indigenous Institutes

AEST provided an update on the \$4.75M of funding allocated to support Indigenous Institutes. \$4M of this funding is being administered by FNEC, working with IAHLA, to provide core funding for 10 First Nations-mandated institutes. The other \$750,000 is being administered by AEST for capacity building for a further 9 IAHLA institutes, of which 6 have now received funding.

c) Indigenous Skills Training

AEST noted that the Ministry is working with Indigenous communities, including First Nations and MNBC, to ensure they have access to community-based training and post-secondary education. This year's budget includes \$24 million and a \$15 million funding lift from British Columbia's COVID Economic Recovery funding.

4. Federal Programs and Initiatives Update

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) reported that they have a new Regional Director General for Grants and Contribution, and that the Department is continuing to administer funding committed in Budget in 2021 to address challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. FNEC and IAHLA are administering emergency COVID-19 funding flowing through the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program (PSPP). FNEC and IAHLA expressed appreciation for this funding and noted that its provision to FNEC and IAHLA is consistent with the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education.

5. COVID-19 Impacts and Response Roundtable

AEST reported that the Return to Campus Guidelines will be updated to reflect the new Public Health Officer (PHO) orders released on September 2, 2021, which extended the provincial mask mandate to include all indoor spaces and made vaccine requirements for the access of certain indoor public spaces. Post-secondary institutions may set their own additional requirements and some are delivering courses under a hybrid (in-person/ online) model. The Guidelines will continue to be updated as the COVID situation evolves. AEST also noted that wildfires in British Columbia have further impacted post-secondary delivery. FNEC and IAHLA called on the Province and public post-secondary institutions to work jointly with those First Nations communities that are closed or in states of emergency to provide accommodations for their students and ensure that they have the supports necessary to continue to access post-secondary education and training.

6. Other

7. Adjournment and Closing

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.
