

The BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners continue to meet quarterly to work collaboratively on common issues concerning Aboriginal post-secondary learners.

BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners October 3rd Call to Action Meeting.

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 improved access to 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.

The Partners invited senior management and key leaders to the Call to Action meeting to explore strategies and seek funding commitments to move the Partners' Key Priorities forward.

As a result, the following initiatives received support and funding for this fiscal year:

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 delivery 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 institutions soon.

A Funding Web Portal

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 for Aboriginal students.

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

The Partners


MoU Signatories

First Nations Education Steering Committee
First Nations Summit
Strategic Action Committee
Métis Nation BC
United Native Nations Society
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
Ministry of Advanced Education - Aboriginal Programs
University Presidents' Council of BC
University College Presidents
British Columbia College Presidents
Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association

Members

BC AHRDA Society
Ministry of Education – Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch
Ministry of Economic Development
Service Canada
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

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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 now intends to make this information available through a web portal. The Working Group, working with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), will explore the development and hosting of Phase One of this site, and it is hoped that the initiative will be launched by the spring of 2008.

Funding for Phase Two, which is planned as an interactive student mentoring site, will be sought in the new year.

Promoting Dialogue on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Issues

On November 21, 2007, over 130 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*. Jointly hosted by the Ministry of Advanced Education and 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 for a Dialogue on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education 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.

Data Working Group

The Data Working Group is continuing to support an Aboriginal standard data collection initiative that involves encouraging all public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia to adopt a provincial-government endorsed Aboriginal data collection standard. This will allow for the Ministry of Advanced Education to more accurately determine the number of self-identifying Aboriginal learners in the public post-secondary system. The Ministry will be meeting with various institution stakeholders over the next year in an effort to have institutions adopt the new standard.

The Data Working Group also continues to provide advice on an Aboriginal post-secondary indicator report that is being drafted by the Ministry of Advanced Education. This report is expected to be finalized in spring of 2008.

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 the participants to join in dialogue about the strengths and challenges of Aboriginal controlled institutions in BC, as well as possibilities for more effective partnerships with the public post-secondary education sector. The breakout topics included:

- Accreditation/Articulation and Transferability
- Aboriginal Control/Jurisdiction
- Unique Role of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions
- Building Indigenous Principles/Indigenous Knowledge
- Curriculum Development/Ownership and Research
- Relationship Building and partnerships

The Forum also included Aboriginal Service Plans – Shared Practices and Student Perspectives on Success and Attainment.

The summary of the Forum will be available early in the new year at <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/>

English 12 First Peoples

This school year, a new Grade 12 course is being piloted in BC classrooms that offers students a new opportunity to explore world views of First Peoples. English 12 First Peoples, a course for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, is the academic equivalent of English 12 and satisfies the Grade 12 Language Arts graduation requirements. The course is one of the major accomplishments of the education jurisdiction negotiations undertaken by BC First Nations in coordination with the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

The course focuses on the experiences, values, beliefs, and lived realities of First Peoples as evidenced in various forms of text—including oral story, speech, poetry, dramatic work, dance, song, film, and prose (non-fiction and fiction).

More than just bringing First Nations literature into the regular English 12 course, this course is designed as a learning experience infused with First Nations pedagogical philosophies and highlighting British Columbia-based content and local authors in addition to First Peoples authors worldwide.

Because the ownership and knowledge of many authentic oral texts lies exclusively within local First Peoples' communities, effective implementation of English 12 First Peoples will involve the establishment of connections between the classroom and First Peoples' communities or organizations.

Work is ongoing to ensure articulation and provincial wide recognition/transferability of this course.

Key Priorities *(rev. June 9/06)*

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

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

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

- a reasonable level of funding for Aboriginal student support, including daycare, transport, tutoring, etc.;
- a greater level of funding for institutional support for Aboriginal learners;
- the availability of mentors and role models, including Elders in Residence;

- increased student support services for Aboriginal students;
- the hiring of Aboriginal individuals as faculty, staff; and other positions of influence within the system;
- the development of more Aboriginal-specific content for the Aboriginal post-secondary curriculum, including Métis content;

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

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

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

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

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

The Partners commit to review and revise these Key Priorities on an ongoing basis.