

**ABORIGINAL** POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATION *and* TRAINING POLICY  
FRAMEWORK *and* ACTION PLAN

**2020** *Vision for the Future*





Photo courtesy of: Thompson Rivers University

## INTRODUCTION

Post-secondary education is key to unlocking the full potential of Aboriginal.<sup>1</sup> British Columbians and their communities, and to British Columbia's success as a province.

British Columbia faces a decade of economic change, with over a million new job openings. Due to changing demographics, a shortage of newly trained skilled workers in British Columbia's labour market is anticipated. First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are the fastest growing segment of British Columbia's population. Investing in post-secondary education and training for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples will help address forecast labour market shortages, position Aboriginal British Columbians to take advantage of the economic opportunities that exist in the province, and enhance their participation in the social, cultural and economic life of their communities, the province and global society. The benefits of post-secondary education accrue to individuals, communities and society, and are associated with

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1 "Aboriginal" and "First Nations, Métis and Inuit" are used interchangeably in this framework and are both used to be inclusive of all Aboriginal peoples in the province, whether or not they have status or have a connection to a particular community; recognizing that many peoples prefer the terms that are specific and traditional to their communities.





better labour market outcomes, better health outcomes, better outcomes for children, lower crime rates, and higher levels of civic participation.<sup>2</sup>

This *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Action Plan* outlines a plan for improving post-secondary opportunities and outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. It sets out a Vision, Principles and Goals, informed by evidence-based policies and leading practices, to address systemic barriers and support systemic institutional change to support Aboriginal learners. The Framework places an emphasis on several key program areas, but it is important to note the Framework is broad-based and encompasses all post-secondary education and training programs, including adult basic education, vocational, career, business, trades, undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Consistent with commitments made in the *New Relationship* document, the *Transformative Change Accord*, and the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*, this policy framework was developed by a working group of British Columbia's Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Partners, including the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, the Métis Nation BC, the First Nations Public Service, BC Colleges, BC Association of Universities and Institutes, and the Research Universities' Council of British Columbia.

## LEGAL CONTEXT

The Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) is responsible for the legislation under which the public post-secondary institutions operate including the *University Act*, *College and Institute Act*, *Royal Roads University Act*, and the *Thompson Rivers University Act*. AVED is also responsible for the *Private Career Training Institutions Act*, which regulates private career training institutions. In addition, AVED is responsible for the *Degree Authorization Act*, which establishes a quality assessment and approval process for all institutions wishing to grant degrees in the province.

Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act of 1867* provides the federal government with exclusive jurisdiction for "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians", while the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over education under section 93 of the same Act.

Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of 1982* states that the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed in which "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

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2 Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, "The Value of a Degree: Education, Employment and Earnings in Canada in The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada," Joseph Berger and Andrew Parkin, undated, Chapter 1.

Determining jurisdiction over Aboriginal adult and post-secondary education is complex. AVED is committed to engaging and working with the federal government regarding the respective roles, responsibilities and contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, the Government of Canada and the Province as they relate to support for students and for Aboriginal-controlled institutes.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA'S CONTINUING COMMITMENTS

*The NEW RELATIONSHIP was a vision document signed in 2005 between the provincial government and British Columbia First Nations. It lays the groundwork for developing a new government-to-government relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights.*

*The TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE ACCORD was signed in November 2005 by the Government of British Columbia, the First Nations Leadership Council, British Columbia First Nations and the Government of Canada. It is intended to implement commitments made in the New Relationship, specifically: “to achieve the goals of closing the social and economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians over the next 10 years ... and of establishing a new relationship based upon mutual respect and recognition.”*

*The MÉTIS NATION RELATIONSHIP ACCORD was signed in May 2006 by the Government of British Columbia and Métis Nation British Columbia. The Accord commits to working collaboratively to close the gap on the quality of life between Métis people and other British Columbians.*

*The British Columbia Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group's MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING was signed in March 2005. Members include the First Nations Summit, Assembly of First Nations, the United Native Nations Society, First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, the Métis Nation British Columbia, British Columbia Colleges, the British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities, the Research Universities' Council of British Columbia and provincial and federal ministries. The MOU commits to working collaboratively to improve post-secondary outcomes for Aboriginal learners by building on successes, identifying needs, and implementing strategies.*



Photo courtesy of: Thompson Rivers University

*“I think there’s a tremendous motivation to really make a difference in how universities can serve the Aboriginal students and their communities. That window of opportunity is helped by the economic opportunities that are coming.”*

– Dr. Alan Shaver  
President, Thompson Rivers University





## BACKGROUND ON ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Over the past 15 years, education and employment outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in British Columbia have improved significantly.

British Columbia's 25 public post-secondary institutions have increased programs and services for Aboriginal learners throughout the province, and have endeavoured to respond to and accommodate the needs of Aboriginal communities. There are now also approximately 40 Aboriginal-controlled institutes in the province, which deliver adult education and post-secondary programs and services, primarily on reserve.

In 1995, AVED developed the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, to increase participation, retention, and success in post-secondary education and training for Aboriginal people through three main strategies: strengthen public post-secondary institutions in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people; stabilize partnership agreements between public and Aboriginal-controlled institutes; and, provide for designation of Aboriginal-controlled institutes as public post-secondary institutions.

*The 1995 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework established the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology as British Columbia's public Aboriginal post-secondary institution. The 1995 policy also helped to develop and support Aboriginal Advisory Committees and Aboriginal Coordinators in public post-secondary institutions.*

*The provincial government's Aboriginal Special Projects Fund provided more than \$16 million in funding to 309 special projects benefiting over 6,500 Aboriginal learners from 2001-2009.*

*The 2007-2010 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy included:*

- » *Aboriginal Service Plans in 11 public post-secondary institutions in partnership with Aboriginal communities.*
- » *Aboriginal-targeted seats for Aboriginal learners in strategic program areas.*
- » *Scholarships and financial awards to support Aboriginal learners.*
- » *Gathering Places, culturally welcoming spaces, on 24 public post-secondary institution campuses.*
- » *Three Aboriginal Transitions Research projects that provide evidence for supporting learner transitions along the post-secondary education continuum.*
- » *Policy to increase Aboriginal representation on public institution governance bodies.*

In 2007, AVED implemented the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* (2007 Strategy), which committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal learners in terms of higher education and employment outcomes. An external evaluation of the 2007 Strategy was completed in April 2011 that incorporated input from over 800 individuals via an online survey, six regional sessions, and focus group meetings. The results of the evaluation have informed the development of this policy framework.



Photo courtesy of: North Island College

*"It's about finding yourself within an institution, empowering yourself and strengthening your identity and hopefully you can empower your people."*

**– Cole Sayers**  
Student, University of Victoria



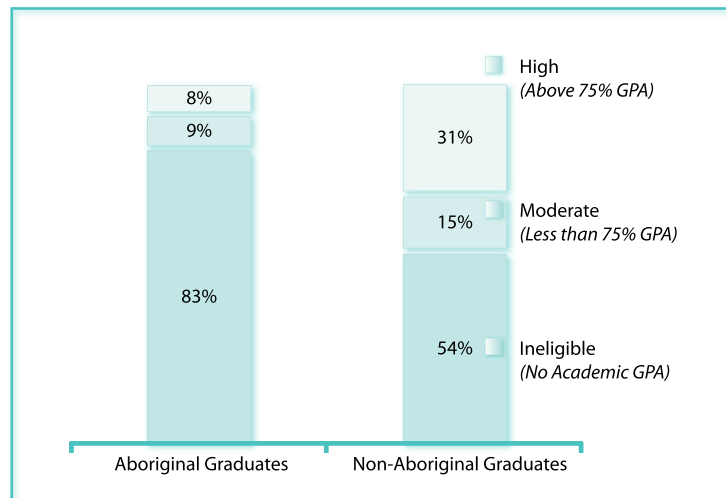
## CALL TO ACTION

While education and employment outcomes have improved over the last 15 years, more work remains to be done. The Aboriginal population in British Columbia is growing at more than triple the rate of the non-Aboriginal population and as a result is younger, with nearly 50 per cent under the age of 25. The Aboriginal population in British Columbia is diverse, with over 200 First Nations in addition to Métis and other Aboriginal populations. Over 60 per cent of the Indigenous languages in Canada are spoken in British Columbia. Sixty per cent of the Aboriginal population live in urban areas, 26 per cent live on reserve and 14 per cent live in rural areas. In contrast, 85 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population live in urban areas and only 15 per cent live in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

Though a greater number of Aboriginal learners are graduating from high school than ever before, only 54 per cent of Aboriginal learners in the public system graduate from high school within six years of entering Grade 8 compared to 83 per cent of non-Aboriginal learners.<sup>4</sup>

Fewer Aboriginal high school graduates (17 per cent) achieve academic prerequisites to attend university as is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: University Eligibility of High School Grads**



**Source:** BC Student Transitions Project: Educational Achievements of Aboriginal Students in BC (2009)

- 3 2006 Census of Canada. An “urban area” has a minimum population concentration of 1,000 persons and a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre. All territory outside urban areas is classified as rural or on reserve.
- 4 How Are We Doing Report, Ministry of Education, 2010/11.

A greater number of Aboriginal learners are participating in post-secondary education. In 2009/10, over 24,000 learners enrolled in BC's 25 public post-secondary institutions identified as Aboriginal. Approximately 5,000 of these were in short courses, under 15 days in length.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) reports that nearly 2,000 Aboriginal learners are enrolled in approximately 40 Aboriginal-controlled institutes in BC.<sup>6</sup>

The number of credentials awarded to Aboriginal students has also increased, as is illustrated in Figure 2. Despite these increases, the latest Census (2006) data reveals that a lower proportion of the Aboriginal population has completed college or university compared to the non-Aboriginal population. As illustrated in Figure 3 (see next page), the disparity is most evident at the university level where 7 per cent of Aboriginal people have a university credential, compared to 26 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. A higher proportion of the Aboriginal population has completed an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma than the non-Aboriginal population (15 per cent compared to 11 per cent).

**Figure 2: Post-Secondary Credentials Awarded to Aboriginal Students**

FISCAL YEAR:	2005/2006	Per cent	2009/2010	Per cent
<i>Developmental</i>	120	6	138	5
<i>Certificate</i>	1,064	51	1,421	54
<i>Diploma</i>	452	22	410	16
<i>Bachelor</i>	396	19	547	21
<i>Graduate or First Professional</i>	68	3	118	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2100</b>		<b>2634</b>	

As well, fewer male Aboriginal students are participating, a trend also observed in the non-Aboriginal population, though to a lesser degree. In 2009/10, the six-year high school graduation rate was 10 per cent lower for male Aboriginal students compared to female Aboriginal students,

5 The 21 institutions that report to the Ministry's Central Data Warehouse (all institutions with the exception of the four research-intensive universities) have for the past two years been reporting using the government wide Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard. This means that new students were able to indicate more detail about their Aboriginal identity on their application forms: of the 12,558 who have provided this detailed information, 10,678 identified as First Nations, 1,802 identified as Métis, 78 identified as Inuit.

6 This is an average aggregate number based on annual IAHLA member institute data collection research projects conducted over the past five years.



Photo courtesy of: Thompson Rivers University

*"If our First Nations are to advance themselves in this world we find ourselves in, it's going to be based on the education our people are able to obtain."*

– Chief Bob Chamberlin  
VP, Union of BC Indian Chiefs





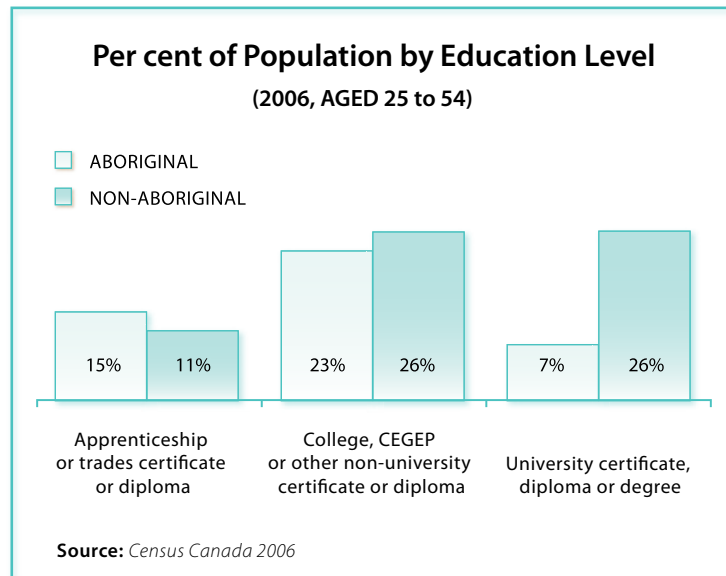


while the gender difference was only five per cent for the non-Aboriginal population.<sup>7</sup> At the post-secondary level, 60 per cent of Aboriginal students earning credentials were female in 2008 (57 per cent of non-Aboriginal students earning post-secondary credentials were female).<sup>8</sup>

Given even lower Grade 12 graduation rates in the past, there are also a large number of adults who are seeking to access post-secondary education in order to complete their Adult Dogwood diploma in order to access employment and post-secondary education and training.

Underlying these statistics are the social and economic factors known to undermine school success. For example, a 2007 report found that one in seven Aboriginal children had been in care at some point in their lives, compared to one in 50 non-Aboriginal children. Only 15.5 per cent of Aboriginal children in care graduated from high school, compared to 51 per cent of Aboriginal children who were not in care. Aboriginal children are also more likely to be identified as having special needs. Approximately 27 per cent of Aboriginal students who were not in care had special needs compared to 11 per cent of non-Aboriginal students not in care.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3: Per cent of Population by Education Level**



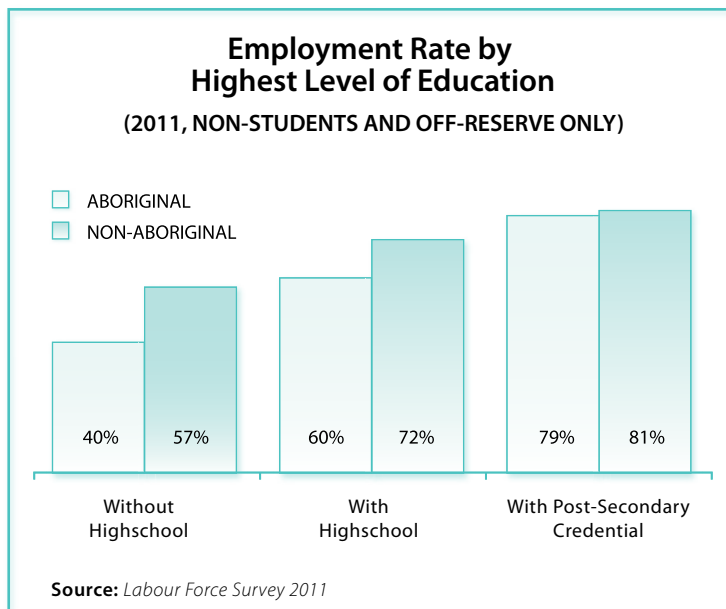
7 In 2009/10, 46 per cent of male Aboriginal students earned their British Columbia certificate of high school graduation within six years of entering Grade 8 compared to 56 per cent of female Aboriginal students; In contrast, 80 per cent of male non-Aboriginal students graduated within six years compared to 85 per cent of female non-Aboriginal students. Ministry of Education, 2009/10.

8 British Columbia Student Transitions Project, 2010.

9 Office of the Provincial Health Officer, "Pathways to Health and Healing", 2007, p.58-61.

The Aboriginal population is also less likely to be participating in the labour force. The 2011 Labour Force Survey, which only includes the off-reserve population, found that the employment rate of the Aboriginal population was 13 per cent lower than the non-Aboriginal population (58 per cent vs. 71 per cent). The unemployment rate of the Aboriginal population was more than twice as high as the non-Aboriginal population (14 per cent vs. seven per cent). However, the data confirms the positive correlation between employment rate and highest level of education. As Figure 4 illustrates, when employment rates are compared between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations with higher levels of education, differences in labour market participation largely disappear. Furthermore, Aboriginal women with a university degree earn more, on average, than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 4: Employment Rate by Highest Level of Education**



Although improvements have been made, Aboriginal learners continue to face barriers in accessing and completing post-secondary education. While the statistics in Figure 3 (see previous page) show that the greatest disparity exists in relation to undergraduate and graduate degree programs, there is a huge need across the whole spectrum of post-secondary education and training, including literacy and adult basic education, vocational, career,

10 An Aboriginal woman with a bachelor's degree earns \$2,471 more per year than a non-Aboriginal woman with the same level of education, while an Aboriginal woman with a master's degree earns \$4,521 more on average than her non-Aboriginal counterparts. This trend is not repeated among Aboriginal men with a bachelor's degree, who on average earn \$3,667 less than non-Aboriginal men with the same education level. "The Income Gap Between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada," Daniel Wilson and David Macdonald, April 8, 2010, p. 21.



Photo courtesy of: North Island College





business, trades, certificate, diploma, as well as undergraduate and graduate degree programs. In addition, it is important to note that progression builds on earlier success, including in K–12.

Investments in Aboriginal learners' post-secondary education are proven to have a significant positive impact on labour force participation, as well as other economic and social outcomes. As British Columbia faces an era of labour market shortages, support for the post-secondary education of the fastest growing segment of the population is a wise investment in British Columbia's future.

Greater participation and increased presence of Aboriginal people within post-secondary education benefits the post-secondary education system itself. Aboriginal faculty, staff and administration continue to provide additional supports to Aboriginal learners and have helped promote understanding of Aboriginal cultures, values and worldviews.

Through shared responsibility, partnerships and reconciliation efforts, enhanced education outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples will make for a stronger and more productive province and a place where everyone can fully participate in a prosperous economy and civil society.

## VISION

Aboriginal learners succeed in an integrated, relevant, and effective British Columbia post-secondary education system that enhances their participation in the social, cultural and economic life of their communities, the province, and global society.

## CONTINUING COMMITMENTS

The framework recognizes the commitments previously made by the Government of British Columbia, First Nations, and the Métis Nation BC, including:

- A **New Relationship** between the provincial government and First Nations that is government-to-government and is based on respect, recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights.
- The **Transformative Change Accord** signed in November 2005 by the Government of British Columbia, British Columbia First Nations and the Government of Canada, “to achieve the goals of closing the social and economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians over the next 10 years ... and of establishing a new relationship based upon mutual respect and recognition.”
- The **Métis Nation Relationship Accord** signed in May 2006 by the Government of British Columbia and the Métis Nation of British Columbia, to work towards closing the gap on the quality of life between Métis people and other British Columbians.

The framework also builds on commitments made by Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners in 2005. The Partners – consisting of the First Nations Summit, the Assembly of First Nations, Métis Nation BC, the United Native Nations Society, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, BC Colleges, BC Association of Institutes and Universities, and the Research Universities’ Council of BC – committed in the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training to improve levels of participation and success for Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training in British Columbia.



Photo courtesy of: Thompson Rivers University



## PRINCIPLES

The framework will be guided by the following principles:

1. Recognition and support for the right of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to self-determination and the role of post-secondary education in facilitating and supporting self-determination.
2. An acknowledgement of and respect for the diverse histories, languages, cultures, values, ways of knowing, and knowledge systems of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, the importance of place and land-based rights to First Nations, and recognition that the post-secondary system has a role in sharing this understanding with all British Columbians.
3. An affirmation that First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages and cultures are critical components of quality educational programming and are essential to support the success of Aboriginal learners.
4. Recognition that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are in the best position to inform the development of and decision-making around post-secondary education programs, policies and services for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, working collaboratively within existing governance structures.
5. A commitment to develop respectful and ethical educational and research protocols and guidelines for addressing First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge systems, language, and culture.
6. A commitment to informed leadership and governance, shared responsibility, respectful relationships, and accountability for measurable outcomes in relation to Aboriginal learner success and systemic change within public post-secondary institutions.
7. Recognition of the unique, vital and complementary roles of Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes and public post-secondary institutions in serving the needs of Aboriginal learners.
8. Support for successful transitions for Aboriginal learners throughout the lifelong learning continuum, and between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes.
9. Support for innovative and flexible approaches to meet the needs of the diversity of Aboriginal learners in British Columbia's post-secondary education system.
10. Recognition that the work needed to achieve systemic change is significant and will take time, thus long term investments are required to ensure programs, policies and services that meet the needs of Aboriginal learners are systemic, strategic and sustainable.

**SOCIAL, CULTURAL  
AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

*Aboriginal learners succeed in an integrated, relevant, and effective British Columbia post-secondary education system that enhances their participation in the social, cultural and economic life of their communities, the province, and global society*

**GOAL 1**

*Systemic change means that the public post-secondary education system is relevant, responsive, respectful and receptive to Aboriginal learners and communities*

**GOAL 2**

*Community-based delivery of programs is supported through partnerships between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes and communities*

**GOAL 3**

*Financial barriers to accessing and completing post-secondary education and training are reduced for Aboriginal learners*

**GOAL 4**

*Aboriginal learners transition seamlessly from K-12 to post-secondary education*

**GOAL 5**

*Continuous improvement is based on research, data-tracking and sharing of leading practices*

*Culturally Relevant Programs, Information and Services developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Communities and Organizations*



## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, AND OUTCOMES

The following goals, objectives and actions have been identified as key elements for improving post-secondary outcomes for British Columbia's Aboriginal learners. The goals support the long-term vision. Common themes woven throughout these goals are the importance of partnerships and Aboriginal cultures and languages. The objectives indicate the action needed to achieve the desired outcomes. The identified actions are meant as a starting point only. The goals, objectives and actions are limited to the mandate of post-secondary education, but align with other provincial initiatives underway, including *Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020*, the *BC Jobs Plan*, and other federal, provincial and Aboriginal initiatives.



The framework aims to achieve the following long-term outcomes by the year 2020:

1. Increase the number of credentials<sup>11</sup> awarded to Aboriginal learners by 75 per cent (from 2,634 in 2010/11 to 4,609 in 2020/21);
2. Increase the percentage of Aboriginal youth making the transition from K–12 to post-secondary education to 90 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

**GOAL 1:** *Systemic change means that the public post-secondary education system is relevant, responsive, respectful and receptive to Aboriginal learners and communities and relationships between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities are based on mutual respect.*

**OBJECTIVE 1.1:** *Aboriginal voice is an integral part of the public post-secondary education system.* (Links to principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10)

Emerging institutional practices over the last 10 years in Aboriginal post-secondary education in British Columbia have seen an increase in Aboriginal representation in governance, faculty and administration.

Increasing Aboriginal voice, advice and decision-making can assist public institutions in developing more culturally relevant and responsive policies, programs and services for Aboriginal learners, while also enriching post-secondary education by recognizing and respecting Aboriginal knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

The Ministry's 1995 Aboriginal Policy Framework encouraged institutions to increase Aboriginal voice, by establishing Aboriginal advisory councils and supporting Aboriginal coordinator positions, for example.

The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* indicated that many public institutions have implemented a number of measures to strengthen Aboriginal voice. These measures extend beyond representation on public institutions' boards to include other institutional governance bodies, Aboriginal advisory committees, community "boards", and Elders groups.

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11 Includes the following credentials awarded by public post-secondary institutions: Doctorate, Master's Degrees, First Professional Degrees, Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates, Post-Degree Diplomas, Post-Degree Certificates, Diplomas, Associate Degrees, Advanced Diplomas, Certificates and Advanced Certificates. Apprenticeship completions by self-identified Aboriginal people will be included as part of the implementation of the strategy, with methodologies to be developed.

12 Target from *Skills for Growth*; measured by the five-year cumulative delayed-entry transition rate after high school graduation.

13 Council of Ministers of Education Canada, "A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions by Aboriginal People from K–12 to Postsecondary Education," 2010, p. 56



Photo courtesy of: University of Northern British Columbia







Increasing Aboriginal voice and presence at all levels in public post-secondary institutions provides more opportunity for shared learning and understanding about Aboriginal perspectives, laying the groundwork for systemic changes to institutional policy, programs, curriculum, and services.

The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* recommended that future policy should retain the goal of enhancing Aboriginal representation on institutional governance bodies with the view to increasing representation across the system. It also recommended that this policy be broadened beyond the board level to ensure there is a strong Aboriginal voice in establishing public post-secondary institutional direction. One of the ways of enhancing Aboriginal voice in the public post-secondary system is to have more Aboriginal faculty and staff, which in turn relies on ensuring that more Aboriginal students are supported to enter graduate studies.

### **Actions**

1. Work with public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations to increase Aboriginal voice in institutional governance and leadership by:
  - Working with Aboriginal partners to build awareness in communities of public post-secondary institution board opportunities;
  - Appointing Aboriginal people to public post-secondary institution boards;
  - Working with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to develop leading practices for Aboriginal Advisory Councils.
2. Provide financial support to Aboriginal graduate students through the Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society.
3. Continue to support the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Coordinators to meet to share leading practices regarding supports for Aboriginal learners.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Number of appointments of Aboriginal people to public post-secondary institution boards is increased.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Baseline as at February 2012: 11 institutions have Aboriginal representation on their boards of governors.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- At least 90 per cent of public post-secondary institutions have Aboriginal representation on boards of governors.
- The number of Aboriginal learners enrolled in graduate programs is increased.<sup>15</sup>
- Aboriginal people are more broadly represented in faculty and administration.

### **Long-Term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2: Public post-secondary institutions work in partnership and collaboration with Aboriginal communities, organizations and institutes to create the systemic change needed for public post-secondary institutions to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' success.**

*(Links to principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10)*

British Columbia's public post-secondary system, like other post-secondary systems in Canada, is based on European models of higher education that are not congruent with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' history, cultures, and ways of knowing. Systemic change is needed to ensure that today's public post-secondary system is reflective of the diversity of British Columbia's population and, in particular, Canada's First Peoples. Systemic change goes beyond building new systems and operational work roles and responsibilities. It requires change in organizational culture, values and beliefs.



*Photo courtesy of: North Island College*

15 Baseline: 650 Aboriginal students enrolled in graduate level programs.  
Source: Student Transitions Project, Fall 2010 submission.

*“Selecting and legitimating curricular knowledge are issues based on power, voice, and agency that require Aboriginal people to be participating in all aspects of curriculum development, deciding on the knowledge to be included in the curriculum, and in what languages the curriculum is to be delivered. This requires new skills and knowledge to bring Aboriginal people into these participatory realms as well as power changes to systems in policy making.”*

**Source:** Marie Battiste, “State of Aboriginal Learning: Background Paper for the National Dialogue on Aboriginal Learning,” (2005).





Inclusion of Aboriginal community is key to ensuring active participation and ownership in effecting the required change. In order to create systemic change, public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities will need to work in partnership, in relationships based on mutual respect, to identify opportunities and to ensure that First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge systems, language and culture are respected in research and curriculum change processes.<sup>16</sup> As well, public post-secondary institutions play an integral role in improving all British Columbians' understanding of Aboriginal people, helping Aboriginal learners to succeed in post-secondary and enriching all British Columbians' understanding of their province. The First Nations Education Steering Committee has played a leadership role in advocating for systemic change and is a key partner in these efforts.

The Aboriginal Service Plan initiative was one of the key actions under the 2007 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy, with the intent of supporting this systemic change. The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* found that significant progress has been made in increasing access, retention, transition and completion opportunities for Aboriginal learners; improving receptivity and relevance of post-secondary institutions and programs for Aboriginal learners; and strengthening partnerships and collaboration in Aboriginal post-secondary education.

In collaboration with Aboriginal communities, organizations and institutes, post-secondary institutions are developing and delivering culturally relevant supports, programs and courses that better meet Aboriginal learners' education and employment goals. Aboriginal languages are foundational components of Aboriginal cultures and require significant support. Some of the most successful initiatives identified include Elders-in-Residence programs; cultural events, feasts, celebrations and Aboriginal speakers; partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations; recruitment processes; academic planning; development of Aboriginal curriculum and courses; community-based education and bridging programs; and support services.

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16 A framework for the ethical conduct of research involving Aboriginal peoples has been developed to guide research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada. See the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans 2 - Chapter 9 "Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada." <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter9-chapitre9/>

The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* found that these initiatives should be continued, enhanced and shared. Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of these initiatives is important for accountability not only to AVED, but also to Aboriginal communities.

Another key element of the 2007 Strategy was the establishment of Aboriginal Gathering Places. The Gathering Places initiative provided capital funding support to assist public post-secondary institutions in developing infrastructure that reflects Aboriginal cultures and traditions. This initiative was intended to provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal learners and decrease their sense of isolation.

The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* also indicated that the establishment of Gathering Places on the campuses of British Columbia's post-secondary institutions has been a very positive development with respondents consistently identifying Gathering Places as one of the most important symbols of positive change at public post-secondary institutions.

Lack of affordable family housing can affect Aboriginal learners' access and retention in post-secondary education. The difficulty of finding housing, particularly affordable family housing, is cited in the literature as a significant barrier for Aboriginal learners.<sup>17</sup> Rural institutions and those in smaller urban areas serve a high proportion of Aboriginal learners, many coming from on-reserve communities, who often need to relocate. The provincial government is working in partnership with Aboriginal people and organizations such as the Aboriginal Housing Management Association to build and manage affordable housing. Funding has been committed through the Aboriginal Housing Initiative to create culturally appropriate housing in predominantly urban and off-reserve communities.

*A range of measures is required to enhance the responsiveness of the post-secondary education system to the needs of Aboriginal learners, including culturally appropriate courses and programs developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities to meet Aboriginal learning and employment needs; Aboriginal faculty, teaching and learning practice; partnerships with Aboriginal organizations and learning institutions; and the creation of an institutional climate where Aboriginal learners are welcomed, respected and valued. Initiatives need to be designed and implemented in partnerships with Aboriginal organizations, communities and learners, if they are to have maximum benefit.*

**Source:** Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Statistics Canada (2010).

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17 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2010, pp. 39, 40, 59- 60.





### **Actions**

1. Phase in the implementation of Aboriginal Service Plans in all public post-secondary institutions, ensuring that the Aboriginal Service Plans are developed, maintained and monitored on an ongoing basis in partnership and collaboration with Aboriginal communities, organizations and institutes in order to:
  - increase access and success, including programming delivered in Aboriginal communities;
  - increase the receptivity and relevance of post-secondary programming and services; and
  - strengthen partnerships and collaboration.
2. Ensure that capital projects at public post-secondary institution campuses consider the need for culturally welcoming places for Aboriginal learners and that Aboriginal learners and communities are involved in the design and use of these places.
3. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to develop and share leading practices regarding the use of Aboriginal Gathering Places.
4. Support student housing projects at public post-secondary institutions with an emphasis on serving Aboriginal learners and their families.
5. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to develop and share leading practices regarding student housing for Aboriginal learners and families.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Aboriginal Service Plans continue in 11 public post-secondary institutions at which they were piloted and are developed, maintained and monitored on an ongoing basis in partnership with Aboriginal communities, organizations and institutes.
- Culturally welcoming spaces reduce a sense of isolation and alienation.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Aboriginal Service Plans are implemented in a greater number of public post-secondary institutions and developed in partnership and collaboration with Aboriginal communities, organizations and institutes.
- Protocols and guidelines for researching and sharing Aboriginal history, culture and knowledge are developed and shared.
- All public post-secondary institution campuses have culturally welcoming spaces for Aboriginal learners.
- Housing spaces available to Aboriginal learners attending public post-secondary institutions increase.

### **Long-term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED: Perseverance and patience pays off



*Atoine Archie's first year of university was difficult, but he's proof that with the right guidance and support, and the drive to stay in school, you can turn things around.*

*Atoine is from the Canim Lake Band near 100 Mile House. After enjoying high school, he went straight into Thompson Rivers University—but struggled in all but one of his courses.*

*"I went in blind," says Atoine. "I didn't have any idea what going to university really meant, what programs were available, what the homework requirements would be, or even how to buy my own food and pay the rent."*

*He took a year off and worked.*

*"That convinced me that I didn't want to move dirt for the rest of my life and that I had to return to school."*

*This time he talked to an academic advisor and found a program that was well suited to his talents and ambitions – architectural and engineering technology.*

*After taking night school to pick up a couple of pre-requisite courses, he returned to TRU as a full-time student, completed six courses each semester for three years with A's and B's and earned his diploma. Along the way he was awarded a number of bursaries, and now he's continuing his education, working toward a bachelor of technology degree.*

*"It wasn't easy," says Atoine. "I lost an uncle and two cousins in my third year and faced some tough personal issues. But my professors worked with me to give me the time to fulfil my community obligations and complete all my exams and final reports."*

*Atoine is happy to see support for Aboriginal students growing at TRU, including the establishment of a peer mentoring program. Atoine is one of the inaugural mentors, helping students make a successful transition into university.*

*"... my professors worked with me to give me the time to fulfil my community obligations and complete all my exams and final reports."*



**GOAL 2:** *Community-based delivery of programs is supported through partnerships between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes and communities.*

**OBJECTIVE 2.1:** *British Columbia public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes and communities partner in the delivery of community-based programs for Aboriginal learners. (Links to principles 1-10)*

Aboriginal people living in rural and remote communities are frequently unable to access post-secondary education programs and services. Community-based, culturally accessible programming enhances education outcomes for Aboriginal learners. A 2009 Canadian Council on Learning study examining who is missing out on post-secondary education in Canada describes the multiple and overlapping barriers faced by Aboriginal learners. The summary report cites research identifying key factors for keeping Aboriginal learners engaged in education, including community relevance, cultural sensitivity, and community-based education and training.<sup>18</sup>

One effective delivery method for increasing access and providing more choice, flexibility and mobility for Aboriginal learners is distance and online learning. The Conference Board of Canada indicated that distance and online learning has the potential to help achieve education parity, by providing equality of access to education and minimizing distance as a barrier.<sup>19</sup> Many Aboriginal learners accessing programs in communities are older and have family and work responsibilities, making it difficult for them to relocate. Distance and online learning education programs provide students with the opportunity to take advantage of post-secondary studies from their home communities, including rural and remote areas. Blended delivery models that allow for use of technology supplemented with face-to-face delivery can be effective in meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners. Public post-secondary institutions often partner with Aboriginal institutes and communities to address Aboriginal learner needs.

The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* recommended that reciprocal, respectful and collaborative relationship-building, communication and partnership with Aboriginal communities and institutes should be part of the accountability requirements for public post-secondary institutions under any new Aboriginal post-secondary funding initiatives.

18 Canadian Council on Learning, "Lessons in Learning: Post-secondary Education in Canada: Who is Missing Out?" 2009.

19 Conference Board of Canada, "Optimizing the Effectiveness of E-Learning for First Nations," May 2010.

There is also a need to ensure that Aboriginal communities are able to participate in economic opportunities as they arise (e.g., new mines, liquefied natural gas developments) and community-based delivery of training, in partnership with Aboriginal communities and institutes, will be key to making this possible.

### **Actions**

1. Provide funding for partnerships between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes and communities to deliver programs in Aboriginal communities that meet community needs and position Aboriginal communities to take advantage of economic opportunities.
2. Support Aboriginal learners to access distance and online education opportunities in their communities.
3. Promote reciprocal partnerships<sup>20</sup> between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes and communities by sharing the Post-Secondary Education Partnership Agreement Toolkit developed by the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, the University of Victoria, and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology with both public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Initiatives to improve partnerships are implemented.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Aboriginal learners in rural and remote communities accessing post-secondary education and training programs increase.

### **Long-Term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.

### **OBJECTIVE 2.2: *Aboriginal institutes have a unique and critical role in British Columbia's post-secondary system to increase Aboriginal learner participation and completion in post-secondary education.***

*(Links to principles 1-10)*

Aboriginal institutes offer Aboriginal adult learners development in academic, personal, leadership, cultural, wisdom and vocational skills and play a key role in the revitalization of language and culture in Aboriginal communities. They are geographically located in remote, Coastal and Northern communities, throughout the province's interior, Vancouver Island as well as in urban centres. Aboriginal institutes are directed by community-driven,

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20 Reciprocal partnerships are respectful and mutually beneficial to both parties.



Photo courtesy of: University of Northern British Columbia

*Aboriginal students' engagement and outcomes improve when programs are concretely linked to their home communities.*

**Source:** *Canadian Council on Learning (2009).*







Aboriginal-controlled governance structures. They have also developed relationships with other Aboriginal organizations and with the broader post-secondary community, often helping students complete programs that increase their post-secondary preparedness. Some institutes offer certificates, diplomas and degrees in partnership with public post-secondary institutions. Aboriginal institutes also promote cultural learning; in particular, Elder support and cultural guidance are often embedded in the learning experience to an extent not found in mainstream institutions.<sup>21</sup>

Aboriginal institutes wish to collaborate with public institutions to develop respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships that will enhance Aboriginal learner mobility.

In 2008, the First Nations Education Steering Committee made a number of recommendations regarding Aboriginal institutes:

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** The Province of British Columbia should create policy and legislation that establishes a more integrated post-secondary education system in British Columbia by recognizing the unique and critical role of Aboriginal institutes.

**RECOMMENDATION #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.

**RECOMMENDATION #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.

**RECOMMENDATION #4:** Aboriginal representatives and the provincial government should engage the federal government in a review of the respective contributions and roles of Canada, British Columbia, and Aboriginal Nations within an integrated British Columbia post-secondary education system.

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21 "Aboriginal Controlled Post-Secondary Institutes in British Columbia: Issues, Costs and Benefits." Juniper Consulting, (November 2010), p. 18-19

**RECOMMENDATION #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.

**RECOMMENDATION #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.

**Source:** *First Nations Education Steering Committee, A Place for Aboriginal Institutes (2008)*

This policy framework recognizes the unique and critical role of Aboriginal institutes in British Columbia’s post-secondary system, and proposes to exempt on-reserve First Nations-controlled institutes from private career training legislation and support partnerships between public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and institutes to better serve Aboriginal learners. In addition, AVED recognizes the need to work with the Federal Government to explore more fully the respective roles of the Province, the Federal Government and Aboriginal nations as they relate to post-secondary education, including support for Aboriginal institutes.

In British Columbia, the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA) has authority under the *Private Career Training Institutions Act* to oversee regulation of private career training institutions including mandatory registration and voluntary accreditation of institutions that offer career training programs of 40 hours or longer and \$1,000 or more in tuition. Registered institutions pay into the Student Training Completion Fund (STCF) to ensure consumer protection for students. Aboriginal institutes offering career training programs meeting the above mentioned criteria are currently required to register with PCTIA.

In response to a number of concerns raised by its member institutes, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association has recommended to AVED that Aboriginal institutes be exempted from registering with PCTIA. IAHLA has indicated that Aboriginal institutes differ from “private career training institutions” as they are not established as “for profit” entities and are usually directly or indirectly controlled by or mandated by a First Nation. As a result, the benefits to Aboriginal learners from registration with PCTIA are questionable. Quality of programming is ensured through partnerships between Aboriginal institutes and public post-secondary institutions. Exempting on-reserve First Nations institutes from the requirement to register with PCTIA would acknowledge First Nations governance of First Nations institutes.



Photo courtesy of: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

*Research into Canadian Aboriginal populations provided evidence that connected greater Indigenous control at the community with both better health and sustainable economic prosperity.*

**Source:** *Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services (2008).*





### **Actions**

1. Exempt on-reserve First Nations institutes from the *Private Career Training Institutions Act*.
2. Work with Aboriginal institutes and public post-secondary institutions to support effective models that ensure the recognition of program quality and transfer and articulation of courses and programs.
3. Work with the Federal Government to explore mechanisms to mutually support Aboriginal institutes.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- On reserve First Nations institutes are exempted from the *Private Career Training Institutions Act*.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Aboriginal learners are able to transfer seamlessly from Aboriginal institutes to public post-secondary institutions when they enroll in courses and programs that build on courses they have taken in Aboriginal institutes.
- Transferable courses from Aboriginal institutes to public post-secondary institutions increase in number.

### **Long-Term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.

### **OBJECTIVE 2.3: *Aboriginal adult education programs enable Aboriginal learners to transition to post-secondary education and employment.***

*(Links to principles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)*

Although a greater number of Aboriginal learners are graduating from high school than in the past, currently only 54 per cent of Aboriginal learners graduate from high school within six years of entering Grade 8. As a result, Aboriginal learners are over-represented in developmental (adult basic education) and non-credit programs in British Columbia's post-secondary system. Aboriginal learners in developmental programs tend to be in literacy level courses and tend to leave before completion.<sup>22</sup> Community-based delivery of programs and courses is key to the success of these learners. Their previous negative experiences in formal education and the residual impact of residential schools, make it necessary to provide learning opportunities in an environment that is supportive of all their needs in order to build confidence in their ability to succeed.

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22 The 2005 Adult Basic Education Outcomes Survey

There is a high percentage of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in British Columbia who have low literacy levels (50 per cent compared to 38 per cent for the total British Columbia population). As a result, there is a pressing need to target holistic literacy resources and programs to Aboriginal learners to improve access and transitions to higher education. Adult literacy is also linked to improved education outcomes for children and youth. Improving data, monitoring and reporting of student outcomes and progress has been identified as a key component in ensuring that programs are relevant and responsive to learner needs.

The landscape of Aboriginal adult education is complex. Multiple stakeholders and partners across sectors and jurisdictions develop policy, programs and services for adult learner transitions, including public post-secondary institutions, Aboriginal institutes, school districts, Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and urban, rural and remote Aboriginal organizations. Overlapping mandates and service provision make transitions for adult learners challenging to navigate.

### **Actions**

1. Continue to target Community Adult Literacy Program funding to Aboriginal learners.
2. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to complete an environmental scan of Aboriginal adult education programs, policies and services, and prepare a discussion paper that examines issues and opportunities.
3. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to support Aboriginal adult education program development and leading practices in assessment and benchmarking.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Community Adult Literacy Program continues to support Aboriginal learners.
- Environmental scan of Aboriginal adult education programs, policies and services is completed.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Issues and opportunities paper is completed.
- Aboriginal adult education assessment leading practices, tools and benchmarks are developed and utilized by partners.
- Aboriginal adult learners in literacy programs show skill gains as evidenced through culturally relevant assessment and benchmarks.

### **Long-Term Results by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.



Photo courtesy of: University of Northern British Columbia





## FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER: Learning leads educator back to Ahousaht

*"I always loved to learn but learning for me usually happened outside the classroom with my parents and my grandparents."*

*Lelaina has always loved learning. It just took a while for her to warm up to education in a classroom setting.*

*"As I was growing up, I didn't have a good relationship with school. I did it to pass time," she said during her recent valedictory address at Vancouver Island University, having just earned a Bachelor of Education degree.*

*"Now I'm a high school teacher in Ahousaht with more than 170 students," she proudly told graduating students and their families and friends.*

*Lelaina, a member of Hesquiaht First Nation, grew up in a reserve in Hot Springs Cove. "I always loved to learn but learning for me usually happened outside the classroom with my parents and my grandparents."*

*She attended high school in Ahousaht but felt disconnected. Her confidence began to grow 10 years ago when she took an English course through the Adult Basic Education program at VIU. She built relationships with classmates and had a very supportive adviser who listened and helped with challenges such as daycare.*

*Lelaina took additional ABE courses but admits she still wasn't sure about her educational career until she got into upper level courses.*

*"It was enjoyable to have conversations with classmates and teachers about what I was thinking and what they were thinking," noting that's when she really fell in love with school and set her sights on teaching in high school.*

*"It's come full circle -- I feel like I'm teaching students who are in the same situation I was in."*

*VIU Chancellor Shawn A-in-chut Atleo is thrilled that Lelaina has "gone home" with her teaching skills.*

*"I'm ecstatic not only for Lelaina, but for our region," said Atleo. "It's an overwhelming feeling of joy, of hope for our people, that Lelaina is teaching our kids."*

**GOAL 3: Financial barriers to accessing and completing post-secondary education and training are reduced for Aboriginal learners.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1: Financial supports to access and complete post-secondary education and training are available to Aboriginal learners who need them.** (Links to principles 2, 4, 8 and 9)

Aboriginal people not planning to go on to college indicate that financial barriers are the main deterrent to pursuing post-secondary studies.<sup>23</sup> There is evidence to suggest that Aboriginal learners are more debt averse as well as more likely to default on student loans.

Federal funding for First Nations students has been capped since 1996, and program and policy eligibility requirements can be limiting. There is significant unmet demand for post-secondary student support funding, which cannot be accommodated within the current federal budget allocation.

The LE,NONET Project found that bursary and emergency relief funding were essential to Aboriginal learners' success.<sup>24</sup> Many student respondents to the survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the LE,NONET Project said they would not have stayed in their post-secondary program if they had not received emergency relief funds and as a result, it should be seen as essential to supporting success.

As part of the 2007 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy, AVED provided funding for a \$10 million endowment to the Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society to establish the British Columbia Aboriginal Student Award.

**Actions**

1. Review student financial assistance policy with goal of providing more effective support to the Aboriginal learners.
2. Establish an Aboriginal Emergency Assistance Fund to provide emergency relief funds to Aboriginal learners attending British Columbia public post-secondary institutions.
3. Continue to build and support the British Columbia Aboriginal Student Award, which was established as an endowment by the Ministry and is administered by the Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society, and develop actions to encourage additional investment by industry.

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23 Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Millennium Research Note #2 (Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2005)

24 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2010, pp.58-60.





*The LE, NONET pilot project demonstrated that financial support for Aboriginal learners, provided in the context of a full range of supports, increased retention of Aboriginal learners at University of Victoria by 100 per cent, and reduced withdrawal rates by 67 per cent.*

4. Promote and raise awareness of financial support programs for Aboriginal post-secondary learners.
5. Continue to make the case that the federal government must improve post-secondary education funding for Aboriginal learners.

#### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Emergency Assistance Fund for Aboriginal learners is established.
- Review of student financial assistance policy is completed.
- The British Columbia Aboriginal Student Award is maintained and augmented as funding is available.
- Initiatives to promote awareness of financial assistance programs for Aboriginal learners are established.

#### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Retention of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary programs is increased.

#### **Long-term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.



## A PASSION FOR HELPING HIS COMMUNITY

### Scholarship helps medical student reach for dreams

*Kelsey Louie is working toward his dream job while giving back to his community.*

*Kelsey, who comes from the Sliammon First Nation Coast Salish peoples from just outside Powell River, is studying to be a physician. He is a recipient of a doctorate scholarship through the Irving K. Barber Society for his first year at UBC's medical program.*

*With future plans that include pursuing a career as an Aboriginal doctor, Kelsey has a true passion for medicine, along with a vision to help make Aboriginal communities stronger and healthier.*

*Having already had the opportunity to work in the community under a family doctor, learning how to effectively communicate with patients under their supervision and witnessing interactions in a real setting, he is enthusiastic and eager to learn more.*

*"It has truly been an amazing experience thus far, and I can't wait to see what my future educational journey holds."*

*He felt honoured to be selected to receive the scholarship and said that it helped him immensely during his first year of studies; without the financial support, he feels he would have had much more stress.*

*"The ongoing financial support from your organization to students like me helps to make our dreams become a reality. I am proud to be a recipient of your award, and thank you for the opportunities you provide to Aboriginal students in their pursuit of their academic dreams."*

*"I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the Irving K. Barber Society for their generosity in assisting me to fulfill a lifelong dream of becoming a physician. It is an honour to be selected amongst such a strong pool of candidates."*



*"... my professors worked with me to give me the time to fulfil my community obligations and complete all my exams and final reports."*







## **GOAL 4:** *Aboriginal learners transition seamlessly from K–12 to post-secondary education.*

### **OBJECTIVE 4.1:** *Teachers support Aboriginal learner success in the K–12 system.* (Links to principles 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9)

A number of complex factors influence the retention and success of Aboriginal learners in completing their Grade 12 Dogwood Diploma. The Ministry of Education has the lead and is working on systemic initiatives such as supporting the development and implementation of Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements.

Literature indicates that one of the key factors in determining educational outcomes is teacher effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> Aboriginal people are under-represented among the teaching profession resulting in few role models for Aboriginal learners and their parents in the public system.

The challenges of recruiting and retaining Aboriginal learners into teacher education programs are well understood. Financial barriers often prevent Aboriginal people from considering teacher education. Bursaries, awards, and any other financial incentives attract applicants.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to having more Aboriginal teachers, it is recognized that there is a need to ensure that all teachers are prepared to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. Beginning in September 2012, all teacher education programs must include three credits or the equivalent in studies in First Nations pedagogy and issues related to the historical and current context of First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Actions**

1. Increase the number of Aboriginal teachers for the elementary and secondary system through a new Aboriginal Teacher Education Award available to Aboriginal students enrolled in teacher education programs, including First Nations language teacher programs.
2. Work with First Nation and post-secondary partners to increase the number of First Nation language teachers.

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25 Alberta Education, “Promising Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education,” (2009).

26 “Tracking Education Career Path and Employment Status of BC Teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry and the BC Education System: Learning and Career Pathways,” Jo-Ann Archibald, V. Glickman, I. McKinnon, D. Gajdosik, M. Pidgeon, and M. Trache. 2005, p.14.

27 BC College of Teachers bylaw P5.C.03.1, continued under the *Teachers Act*.

3. Work with Aboriginal K–12 Partners and the Association of BC Deans of Education to support initiatives that better equip all teachers to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners in the K–12 system.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Financial assistance available for Aboriginal learners in teacher education programs is increased.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Aboriginal people with teaching credentials increase in number.
- First Nation language teachers increase in number.

### **Long-Term Outcomes by 2020**

- Ninety per cent of Aboriginal learners transition from K–12 to post-secondary education and training.

### **OBJECTIVE 4.2: *Aboriginal learners and their families have information and are better supported to make choices for their transition from K–12 to post-secondary and the labour market.*** (Links to principles 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

Aboriginal learners are less likely than non-Aboriginal learners to achieve their Grade 12 Dogwood with the required courses and grades for transition to post-secondary education, particularly at the university level. British Columbia is shifting to a knowledge-based economy that requires a highly skilled workforce. The latest projections suggest that approximately 78 per cent of job openings over the next decade will require a college diploma, trade certificate, university degree or higher.<sup>28</sup> Early career exploration and linking academic preparedness with labour market and occupational opportunities can assist Aboriginal learners, with support from their families, in making informed choices about K–12 courses, the necessary college and university prerequisites and career opportunities.<sup>29</sup>

Aboriginal learners, like other first generation post-secondary learners, may overestimate the overall costs and underestimate the benefits of post-secondary education. Providing Aboriginal learners with better information early on in K–12 should also have an impact on course selection in K–12 and readiness for post-secondary education.

Aboriginal K–12 and post-secondary partners, Bands and secondary school education counsellors and coordinators, families and communities can work together to share career and educational planning tools and resources that will support Aboriginal learners in making informed decisions. The growing gender gap between Aboriginal male and female students means that tools and resources need to consider the needs of male students in particular.

28 “Skills for Growth, British Columbia’s Labour Market Strategy to 2020.” p. 6.

29 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2010, p. 44.




Photo courtesy of: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

*High teacher expectations are a factor in learner success and schools in which Aboriginal learners enjoy a high rate of success are those with principals who actively promote strategies for maximizing the academic success of all their students, including successfully recruiting Aboriginal teachers and assistants.*

**Source:** Alberta Education (2008).





Aboriginal learners also benefit greatly from the support of mentors, including Elders and Peer Mentors, and Aboriginal youth mentoring programs for Aboriginal high school learners that focus on staying in school, goal setting and career planning. Peer mentoring relationships both in the K–12 and post-secondary systems combine social, cultural and educational activities.

### **Actions**

1. Work with the Ministry of Education and Aboriginal K–12 and post-secondary partners, Band Education and school education counsellors to provide K–12 students and their families in public and First Nation schools with career and educational planning tools and resources to enable them to make informed choices that will support their transition to post-secondary education and the labour market.
2. Promote existing leading practices in supporting K–12 to post-secondary transitions.
3. Work with Aboriginal K–12 and post-secondary partners to identify specific strategies to increase the number of Aboriginal males participating in post-secondary education.
4. Explore, share and promote opportunities for mentoring.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- New initiatives to support career and academic planning are developed.
- Leading practices in supporting transitions, including mentoring, are shared.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Aboriginal learners graduating from high school with the necessary prerequisites to transition into post-secondary education increase in number.

### **Long-Term Outcomes by 2020**

- Ninety per cent of Aboriginal learners transition from K–12 to post-secondary education and training.

## STUDENT PENS HOW-TO GUIDE Book of Advice Helps Ease the Transition to Post-Secondary

*Amy knows firsthand the challenges around attending a post-secondary institution for the first time, especially for Aboriginal students.*

*So when the Douglas student and member of the Nisga'a First Nation transferred to SFU, she wrote a guide to help other Aboriginal students in their transition to college or university.*

*Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit Connected: An Aboriginal Survival Guide to Post-Secondary offers First Nations students advice on everything from choosing the right school, to securing scholarships, to nutrition, to the importance of seeking out elders and mentors.*

*"Definitely one of the things that helped me was always looking to people who were older than me for answers," Amy remembers. "And I would ask questions of people I saw who were really successful in some way."*

*Now at UBC, Amy is working toward a PhD in education, with a specialization in Indigenous education. Her dissertation will explore early university promotion initiatives and high-school-to-university transition programs for Aboriginal youth. Her hope is to gain and share insights into how the university can be transformed to enhance Aboriginal high school to university pathways in a meaningful way.*

*"I want Aboriginal students to have smooth transitions, and I want them to see themselves reflected in post-secondary institutions."*

*Amy's also a new mom. Daughter Willow is still a baby, but Amy is already thinking about her education. She'd like to see more Indigenous knowledge infused into the curriculum, and has been working with UBC faculty and other graduate students to redesign teacher education programs to educate teachers about First Nations peoples, culture and knowledge.*

*"I want Willow to go to a school where she doesn't ever feel that a piece of her isn't being met within the curriculum. And that if there are questions she wants to ask, that there will be somebody there who, even if they don't know those answers, will work with her to find them out."*



*"I want Aboriginal students to have smooth transitions, and I want them to see themselves reflected in post-secondary institutions."*





**GOAL 5:** *Continuous improvement is based on research, data-tracking and sharing of leading practices.*

**OBJECTIVE 5.1:** *Sharing of leading practices creates an environment of informed leadership, effective practices and results in Aboriginal post-secondary education. (Links to principles 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10)*

By facilitating the sharing of leading practices and creating avenues for communication, government can assist in creating an environment of informed leadership, collaboration and reciprocal learning. For instance, the protection and propagation of Indigenous knowledge and culture is of vital importance to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and could be supported by developing and sharing leading practices for both curriculum and research. The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* indicated AVED could consider playing a stronger role in coordination, including ensuring that leading practices are shared with institutions through regional or provincial forums.

**Actions**

1. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary education partners to facilitate the sharing of leading practices, research, information, and events to support Aboriginal learner success via the AVED website, social media, Aboriginal and post-secondary communication networks, and by hosting an annual forum.
2. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to develop and share protocols and guidelines for researching and sharing Aboriginal history, culture and knowledge.

**Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Coordinated strategy ensures that institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations have the information to make well-informed decisions for program and service development.

**Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal-controlled institutes are implementing policies, programs and services based on leading practices.

**Long-term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.



**OBJECTIVE 5.2: Governments, Aboriginal institutes and public post-secondary institutions make evidence-based decisions with respect to Aboriginal post-secondary education.**

*(Links to principles 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10)*

There is a need to increase the amount of consistent, accurate and reliable data relating to Aboriginal post-secondary education so that governments, post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal institutes can work together to improve policy decisions and determine the effectiveness of various actions over the short, medium and long-term.

In 2008, AVED worked with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Partners Data Working Group and the Post-Secondary Application Service of British Columbia (PASBC) to implement a system-wide standard for Aboriginal data collection.<sup>30</sup>

The Student Transitions Project (STP) is a collaborative effort of British Columbia's education ministries, public post-secondary institutions and school districts. STP links data about students in the British Columbia public post-secondary education system with information from their years in kindergarten to grade 12 using the unique nine-digit personal education numbers (PENs) assigned to every student entering the British Columbia education system. Information from STP helps school districts, post-secondary institutions and government plan and manage programs to increase student success.

The *2007 Strategy Evaluation* recommends that comprehensive and consistent evaluation and reporting requirements be identified from the outset of projects and monitored more closely throughout the duration of the project and that ongoing analysis be built into the process so that funding is directed to projects that are demonstrating success. Reporting should include documentation of resources shared with Aboriginal partners and more detailed evidence of respectful, collaborative and productive partnerships and relationship-building with Aboriginal communities, including urban Aboriginal populations, and Aboriginal institutes.


*Any process to redefine how success is measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis learning should identify the partners needed to address data gaps and challenges, foster a dialogue on data gaps and challenges in measuring Aboriginal learning, develop comprehensive information and data strategies to fill the data gaps on Aboriginal learning.*

**Source:** *Canadian Council on Learning (2007).*

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30 Government of British Columbia, "Government Standard for Aboriginal Data," March 2007. Available at: [http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/local/cio/standards/documents/standards/aboriginal\\_administrative\\_data\\_standards.pdf](http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/local/cio/standards/documents/standards/aboriginal_administrative_data_standards.pdf).





Factors affecting Aboriginal learners' access to post-secondary education include a lack of information about which approaches are most effective in increasing enrolment in and completion of post-secondary education. New initiatives should be tied to research and incorporate Aboriginal and mainstream definitions of success.<sup>31</sup>

### **Actions**

1. Work with Aboriginal post-secondary partners to report accurately and regularly on post-secondary education and training progress and outcomes, including the results and outcomes contained in this framework.
2. Develop an "Aboriginal Institutes Identifier" that will allow the use of Personal Education Numbers to identify learners enrolled in programs delivered in partnership with Aboriginal institutes, in order to better understand and respond to learner pathways.
3. Undertake research, in partnership with public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities and institutes, to test leading practices in Aboriginal post-secondary education, beginning with K–12 to post-secondary and post-secondary to labour market transition points.

### **Short-Term Results by 2013**

- Regular reports on progress are implemented.
- Learners enrolled in programs delivered in partnership with Aboriginal institutes are identified.

### **Medium-Term Results by 2016**

- Data quality is sufficient to make well informed decisions and provide meaningful reporting and accountability on progress.
- Evidence-based research is available and utilized by governments, Aboriginal communities and institutes and public post-secondary institutions.

### **Long-term Outcomes by 2020**

- Credentials awarded to Aboriginal learners increase by 75 per cent.

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31 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2010, p. 37

## THE PATH AHEAD

This Framework sets out important goals, objectives and actions to make certain that Aboriginal learners succeed in an integrated, relevant, and effective British Columbia post-secondary education system that enhances their participation in the social, cultural and economic life of their communities, the province, and global society. It is widely recognized that investments in education pay substantial economic and social dividends for individuals, communities, and nations. This is particularly true for Aboriginal peoples who will make up an increasing proportion of British Columbia's population in coming years.

As British Columbia faces a decade of economic change, post-secondary education and training for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples will help address anticipated labour market shortages and position Aboriginal British Columbians to take advantage of the economic opportunities that exist in the province.

Their achievements, however, will require the coordinated efforts from provincial and federal governments, Aboriginal communities, institutes and organizations, public post-secondary institutions and the communities they serve.

The Framework and its actions will ensure that Aboriginal people are comfortable coming to, and are supported to be successful in, BC's public post-secondary institutions. It focuses on the importance of community-based delivery of programs and services to ensure Aboriginal communities are positioned to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. It recognizes the important role of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes in providing access to education and training in communities and assisting learners to transition into further education, training and employment. Lastly, it works to remove financial barriers that are preventing Aboriginal people from accessing post-secondary education and training, so that learners can seamlessly transition from K–12 to post-secondary and into the labour market.

These actions will lead to enhanced education and training outcomes and by extension social, cultural and economic well-being, not only for Aboriginal peoples, but for all British Columbians.

The province is committed to ongoing engagement of Aboriginal partners to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are reflected in the design and implementation of post-secondary policy, programs and services. The province and its partners will develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to report on progress towards the goals and outcomes set out to 2020 in the Framework.

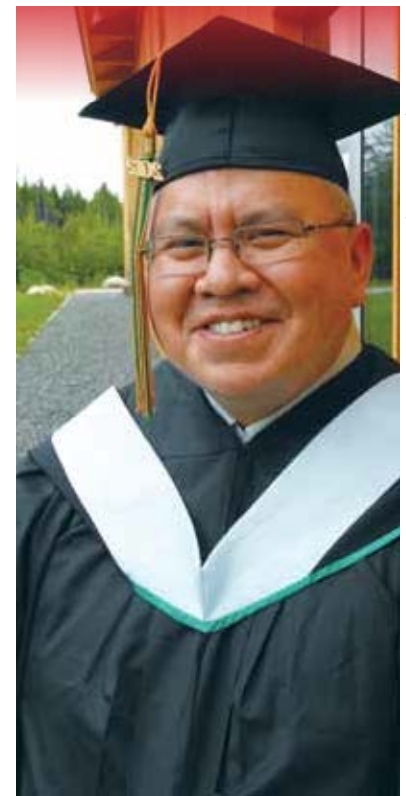


Photo courtesy of: University of Northern British Columbia







*“It’s the very first time in 30 years now that I’ve been involved in education that I’ve seen a document that actually has strategies to move forward and to empower Aboriginal students and communities. When we empower Aboriginal students and communities, we empower all of B.C. and all of Canada.”*

– **Deanna Nyce**, *President and CEO*  
*Wilp Wilx’oskwhl Nisga’a Institute*



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