

Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education

***A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students,
Control of Indigenous Knowledge,
and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions***

An examination of government policy

By

The Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium

Published by

Canadian Race Relations Foundation

August 2005

Acknowledgments

Nia:wen and meegwetch to Karen J. Hill, David Anderson and Lu Ann Hill for sharing their knowledge and expertise and for their time and dedication in assisting with the completion of this study.

Nia:wen and meegwetch to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation for funding this research study.

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Chapter One: Overview

Aboriginal peoples¹ continue to reclaim their cultures and languages and require educational programs that are responsive to their worldviews, histories, contemporary circumstances, social systems, and knowledge systems. Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions have emerged in order to design, develop, and deliver educational programs that respond to the higher learning needs of Aboriginal persons.

Federal and provincial governments have not embraced this community-based Aboriginal development. Both the federal government and the government of Ontario have, to a certain extent, attempted to accommodate the special needs of Aboriginal students attending provincial colleges and universities by making funding available to these institutions to provide Aboriginal-specific programs and services. However, Aboriginal peoples are not content to remain consumers in the provincial education system. Ownership of traditional knowledge and application of appropriate methodologies and appropriate content are significant issues, and have driven Aboriginal communities to develop their own post-secondary institutions. These institutions are not formally recognized in federal or provincial law or policy as educational entities in the same manner as provincial colleges or universities, and operate on the periphery of the established education system in Canada.

This study examines the history and development of Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions and assesses how governments in Canada have responded to their development. It also examines major consequences of this lack of policy and legislative support by providing a comparison between Aboriginal institutions and provincial colleges and universities. Finally, because the issue affects Aboriginal institutions across

¹ In this paper, 'Aboriginal peoples' refers to Métis, Inuit, and First Nations peoples.

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Canada, recommendations for policy and legislative support for Aboriginal institutions are presented. This study also raises the question: ‘Does racism exist with respect to Canadian policy and legislative support for Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions?’

Chapter Two: Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Education can either be a tool for success or a tool for destruction. This study examines key events in the recorded history of Aboriginal education that have triggered a concentrated and consistent reaction from Aboriginal peoples to take continuous measures to design and develop an evolving and distinct education system to address the unique needs of Aboriginal peoples.

Education was one of the earliest means by which the Canadian government attempted to absorb and assimilate Aboriginal peoples into accepting the culture and educational practices of the dominant society. This study highlights some of the key events in the recorded history of Aboriginal education since European settlement and some of the outcomes resulting from colonial education systems.

The most notable practice employed for this purpose was the development of residential schools run primarily by various religious orders. The residential schools removed children from their communities, often leaving them unable to return home for a number of years. This social experiment inculcated Aboriginal children into Euro-Canadian religious values and social mores, including training in the Euro-Canadian understanding of the roles of men and women. Until 1951, the Indian Act of Canada forbade Aboriginal persons, defined as “Indian” for the purposes of the Act, from attending university unless they voluntarily relinquished their status as an Indian under a process called enfranchisement (The Indian Act, 1876).

A review of the history of Aboriginal education highlights the actions and involvement of non-Aboriginal peoples in education and the need of Aboriginal peoples to define their own vision and aspirations for education. It also demonstrates that since

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1972, Aboriginal peoples have consistently asserted their determination to regain control of their systems and institutions of education.

In 1969, the government of Canada tabled a White Paper document on the future of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Ottawa, 1996a). It essentially called for the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into the body politic, indistinguishable in law from the Canadian populace. This led to a massive mobilization of Aboriginal persons and the formation of numerous organizations dedicated to the recognition of Aboriginal rights and identity. In 1972, First Nations² in Canada joined together to issue a policy document entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education*, which demanded recognition of the right of Aboriginal people to educate their children (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). This call has subsequently been reaffirmed in great detail in numerous documents including, most notably, the Assembly of First Nations' *Tradition and Education: Toward a Vision of our Future* (1988), the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa, 1996a and 1996b), and the relatively recent *Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education* (Ottawa, 2002). Aboriginal peoples have been consistent in their demand for recognition of their education authority and control over the education of their children.

At every level – from early childhood to elementary, secondary, and post-secondary – Aboriginal peoples continue to develop and deliver education programs for their citizens with the understanding that “the Road to Knowledge is Eternal”³. The

² The term ‘First Nations’ refers to Indians and their communities.

³ This message was relayed by Eddie Benton Banai (2002) to his students in the Indigenous Knowledge/Philosophy Master’s degree program in which he is one of the lecturers. Mr.

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activities in which Aboriginal peoples have engaged include planning and administering elementary and secondary schools, developing immersion programs, providing early childhood education, partnering with mainstream colleges and universities, and ultimately, developing Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions to deliver adult and post-secondary education programs. At every level, Aboriginal peoples have had to struggle with federal and provincial laws, policies, and procedures that do not serve their interests. As Aboriginal communities develop the capacity and the institutions needed to control their own education, government policies and programs have not evolved to recognize the work accomplished and the economic benefit of Aboriginal institutions in Aboriginal communities across Canada. It is important to note that mainstream institutions across Canada are afforded economic benefits due to the lack of policy support for Aboriginal-controlled institutions.

By the mid-1970s, the number of Aboriginal persons attending post-secondary institutes began to rise dramatically across Turtle Island (North America). The response across Turtle Island varied. In Canada, the federal government (through the Department of Indian Affairs) provided grants to established post-secondary institutes to develop and deliver programs specifically for these students. Provincial funds were also made available to mainstream, established institutions to develop and deliver culturally sensitive programs for Aboriginal students. In the United States, post-secondary institutions also began to address the growing number of Aboriginal students and state

Benton-Banai describes this as a foundational philosophy of the Anishinaabe, in particular in their return to the language, philosophy, and traditions of the Anishinaabe.

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and federal funds were made available to assist these institutions in meeting the needs of Aboriginal students.

With the growing number of Aboriginal students came the need to control and deliver culturally appropriate programs to Aboriginal students. In the United States, the Tribal College movement began. In 1970, the Navajo Institute became one of the first Aboriginal institutions to deliver programs to its students. In Canada, Blue Quills First Nations College in Alberta, a former residential school, began to deliver programs for its students in 1971, responding to the need for local control of all Aboriginal education programs.

In the United States, there are now thirty-three Tribal Colleges, which are recognized through federal legislation as post-secondary institutions with the authority to grant certificates and two-year diplomas. In Canada, there are fifty Aboriginal post-secondary institutions; however, these institutions have not been afforded authority similar to that of their southern counterparts. Instead, current federal and provincial policies force Aboriginal institutions to partner with “recognized” mainstream post-secondary institutions in order to access funding and to ensure the credibility and portability of student credentials.

There are two primary questions that arise from this situation: (1) Why have Aboriginal post-secondary institutions not been recognized as having the right to grant diplomas, degrees, and certificates in their own right? and (2) Why won’t governments in Canada provide Aboriginal institutions with equitable access to funding?

Existing federal and provincial policies and funding programs provide some acknowledgment of the work of Aboriginal institutions, but also entrench them as

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second-class institutions. Only in the province of British Columbia has legislation been passed to recognize two Aboriginal institutions as having the authority to grant degrees and diplomas (British Columbia, 1985). The rest of Canada must move forward and develop legislation to enable all Aboriginal institutions to hold this same authority.

Research into these issues highlights the successes achieved by Aboriginal peoples that have exercised control over their own education systems from the elementary level through to Aboriginal owned and controlled post-secondary institutions. This study demonstrates some of the unique aspects of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, which differ significantly from the design and creation of mainstream post-secondary institutions. The ways in which Aboriginal institutions address the unique cultural, language, social, economic, and political needs of Aboriginal peoples evidences their successes in improving access, retention, and success rates of Aboriginal persons in post-secondary institutions.

This study demonstrates the extent of policy and legislative support for Aboriginal institutions, discusses policy limitations impacting the stability, growth, and continued development of Aboriginal institutions, and examines the consequences of the lack of policy support. Provincial and federal policy and legislative support for Aboriginal institutions from other jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan, British Columbia, the United States of America, and New Zealand provides examples of policy change that could occur to increase support for Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in Canada.

An examination and comparison of policy support for Ontario's mainstream post-secondary institutions in relation to the policy support for Aboriginal post-secondary institutions also operating in the province of Ontario demonstrates inequities in the

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system. For example, even when Aboriginal post-secondary institutions deliver mainstream programs, they are not eligible to receive direct operating grants that are available to mainstream post-secondary institutions for the same outcome. This brief example demonstrates how Aboriginal institutions are clearly disadvantaged by a lack of government support. This lack of policy support for Aboriginal institutions is discriminatory and creates barriers that have negative impacts on Aboriginal persons, communities, and Nations; ultimately, this impacts upon Canada's economy and labour market.

Given the lack of policy support for Aboriginal institutions, these institutions will remain in a subservient position with respect to their interactions and negotiations with mainstream post-secondary institutions. Until this situation changes, Aboriginal peoples will continue to struggle and their success will continue to be limited by the lack of government support for the growth and development of Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions.

Chapter Three: History of Aboriginal Education

Aboriginal Education Prior to Confederation

Education was one of the earliest means by which the government of Canada attempted to assimilate Aboriginal peoples. An examination of the history of Indian residential schools reveals that as early as 1620, the first boarding schools for Indian youth were opened under French order (Ottawa, 2004c). By 1820-1840, religious groups ran church schools, usually in close proximity to Indian/First Nations communities. In 1847, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), under the Imperial Government, undertook research that became the model for future residential schools. Research by Egerton Ryerson (1847) recommended a focus on “domestic education and religious instruction for the Indian for nothing can be done to improve and elevate his character and condition without the aid of religious feeling....” (Ottawa, 2004c, p. 1). Between 1848-51, the DIA allotted property and built schools. By 1856, a shift in policy toward assimilation began. “DIA began to define its approach in the growing belief that adult Indians could not be changed, resulting in an emphasis upon education of children” (Ottawa, 2004c, p. 1).

Several generations of Indian children were forced to attend residential schools where they received, at best, a rudimentary education that did little to prepare them for meaningful roles in either mainstream Canadian or Aboriginal communities. In addition, “while it was not uncommon to hear some former students speak about the positive experiences in these institutions, their stories are overshadowed by disclosures of abuse, criminal convictions of perpetrators and the findings of various studies ... which tell of the tragic legacy” (Ottawa, 2004d, p. 1). While attending residential school, Aboriginal students were subjected to a mental and physical assault on their cultures, languages, and values. At no point throughout this shameful history is there any record to indicate that

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Aboriginal peoples were consulted in the development of schools and curriculum that would address their needs and aspirations.

Confederation’s Impact on Aboriginal Education

Section 91(24) of Canada’s Constitution Act (1867) gave Parliament jurisdiction to make laws over “Indians and lands reserved for Indians,” while section 93 states that the provinces have jurisdiction over education. Further, sections 114-123 of the Indian Act (1876) deal directly with Indian education, giving the federal government responsibility for providing for the education needs of Aboriginal peoples. Section 115 of the Indian Act states that “the Minister may a) provide for and make regulations with respect to standards for buildings, equipment, teaching, education, inspection....”

The federal government interprets the education sections of the Act very narrowly by claiming responsibility for education up to and including secondary education, but not post-secondary. In fact, the Indian Act makes no distinction between the various levels of education for Aboriginal persons. The federal government’s position is that post-secondary education falls under the constitutional mandate of the provinces. The provinces note that the federal government has responsibility for “Indians,” including the education of Indians. This situation results in a jurisdictional nightmare and ongoing jurisdictional debate with regard to the education of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

This split in authority gave rise to a federal government that implemented policies to control Aboriginal peoples by controlling the education of their youth. The federal government used residential schools, Indian agents, and a policy to eliminate Aboriginal languages to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into the mainstream of Canadian society.

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These efforts have had a devastating impact on Aboriginal communities, but have not accomplished their desired effect of assimilation.

Education During the Twentieth Century

The development of higher education for Aboriginal people, outlined in an Information brief developed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in 2000, revealed the following. In the 1950s, federal program support for Aboriginal post-secondary education was non-existent. During the 1960s, courses taught on reserve “largely ignored First Nations history, culture and values” (Ottawa, 2000, p. 1) and few communities had their own secondary schools. By the mid 1960s, and without federal policy, INAC provided funding to some two hundred status Indian students that were enrolled in post-secondary studies. By 1968, federal policy was passed introducing the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, which resulted in financial assistance for status Indian students pursuing post-secondary studies.

While federal support for post-secondary education was beginning to take shape, everything went into turmoil with the release of the 1969 White Paper policy, which sought to “eliminate the protection for reserve lands, to terminate the legal status of Indian peoples, and to have services delivered to them by provincial governments” (Ottawa, 1996a, p. 1). The White Paper policy served to rally Aboriginal peoples across Canada, who saw this as yet another step towards the Canadian government’s goal of eliminating Aboriginal peoples as identifiable nations.

Indian Control of Indian Education

Aboriginal peoples began to view control of education as pivotal in altering the federal government's course of absorption. This led to the National Indian Brotherhood's (now referred to as the Assembly of First Nations) development of the policy document, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972). This document reaffirmed that education for Aboriginal persons was the 'right' of Indian peoples, guaranteed through treaties with the Crown and the federal government and served notice that Aboriginal peoples would be resuming control over education. Further, *Indian Control of Indian Education* called for a shift to local Aboriginal control of an education system, which would "provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honored place in Indian tradition and culture" (p. 2). The federal government adopted *Indian Control of Indian Education* in 1973.

The *Indian Control of Indian Education* document has become the foundation for modern efforts of all First Nations communities and Aboriginal peoples to resume their authority over the education of their children and community members. This original policy statement is grounded in a bilingual and bicultural elementary education; however, with the growing Aboriginal population, and with the ongoing acknowledgment that "the Road to Knowledge is Eternal," Aboriginal communities have taken control of high school programs, adult education, training programs, and post-secondary programs.

In response to this document, the DIA adopted this policy and began to transfer administrative control of education programs to Aboriginal peoples. Local education authorities were developed, personnel became employees of the First Nations, schools were built and maintained by First Nations communities, and allowances were made to

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include, minimally, Aboriginal languages and cultures in the classrooms.

Limitations in DIA's commitment have resulted in the devolution of the administration of education from federal hands to Aboriginal communities, rather than truly transferring control. DIA has forced Aboriginal peoples to take over the administration of education services based on year-to-year funding. In addition, the funding formula used to support Aboriginal elementary schools was developed and based on student enrolment and has not changed since its inception in 1989. Finally, in order for schools on reserves to access provincial funding, the provincial curriculum must be delivered by provincially certified teachers.

Aboriginal Persons and Post-Secondary Education

Coinciding with these events was the rapid increase in the number of Aboriginal students accessing post-secondary education. This rapid increase in costs resulted in the federal government capping the amount of available funding in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program in 1989. This action caused yet another milestone in the history of education for Aboriginal students as it began to restrict the numbers of Aboriginal students that could attend post-secondary schools.

The amount of funding for Aboriginal education at all levels has not kept pace with enrolment levels, system changes, and needs. In fact, funding falls well short of the real need for things like curriculum revision/adaptation, instructional resources, student support, technology investments and maintenance, infrastructure costs, system planning, and more. *First Nations Educational Jurisdiction: National Background Paper*, released by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in 2001, describes the lack of policy support for

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First Nations education situation very succinctly: “To date the federal government has not dealt comprehensively with First Nations education through primary legislation; it has relied on the development of subordinate legislation authorized by Section 115 of the Indian Act” (Tremblay, 2001, p. 11).

Education development for Aboriginal students in the mainstream post-secondary system revealed that colleges and universities across Canada acknowledged this new influx of Aboriginal students and began offering specialized courses designed to attract Aboriginal students. Programs in Native Studies, which did not exist prior to the 1970s, became available in several institutions. In Ontario, Trent University developed a Native Studies program that has now become a world leader in this field. Other post-secondary institutions developed programs specifically for Aboriginal teachers and social workers, while some developed preparation programs to better prepare Aboriginal students for studies in those particular institutions. These initiatives were designed to increase the number of Aboriginal students attending these specific institutions and to improve the relationship between mainstream institutions and Aboriginal communities.

In the western provinces, several post-secondary institutions also responded to the influx of Aboriginal students. In Manitoba, Brandon University began a teacher education program designed for Aboriginal persons. The University of Regina, in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan First Nations, established the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. The University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University in Vancouver both established Native Studies programs that continue today.

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Through a component of the Post-secondary Student Support Program, federal funds were made available directly to mainstream post-secondary institutions to assist in the design and development of programs for Aboriginal students. This national initiative, also created in 1989, was the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP).

Within established mainstream institutions, issues of cultural awareness, ownership of intellectual property, and accountability to Aboriginal peoples grew. In terms of cultural awareness, many institutions provided a space for Aboriginal programs and special programs for Aboriginal students; however, the main body of the institution was generally unaffected or unaware of the presence of Aboriginal persons, their philosophy, or their way of being. Students on the main campus of most mainstream institutions were not informed or enlightened by the presence of Aboriginal students and programs.

Accountability to Aboriginal Peoples

The provision of education for Aboriginal persons within mainstream institutions gave rise to a host of implications that Aboriginal communities continue to struggle with today. The use of Indigenous knowledge is one example. Indigenous knowledge is specific to Indigenous people, and questions of cultural appropriation, cultural domination, and ownership of Indigenous knowledge has been an issue from the early days of Native Studies programs. As elders and keepers of knowledge were invited into these mainstream institutions, the institutions asserted control, dominating Indigenous knowledge, and taking measures to validate the knowledge of elders in western terms.

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Institutions gained ownership of course outlines, resource materials, and other information that is based in Indigenous knowledge.

Accountability to Aboriginal communities was not evident at the outset. The mainstream established institutions held that they were the holders of knowledge, given their stature as recognized institutions of higher learning. In Ontario, the provincial government developed an Aboriginal Post-secondary Education and Training Strategy to ensure Aboriginal participation and decision-making within the structure of mainstream post-secondary institutions (Toronto, 1991). The Strategy, implemented in the early 1990s, supported the design, development, and delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal students. The proviso for accessing these funds was that each institution would strike a partnership with Aboriginal communities and organizations that had decision making capacity and direct access to the governing body of the institution. Through this process, the province ensured that Aboriginal voices would be heard within mainstream institutions, and thus provided an avenue for joint decision-making in programs and activity that affected Aboriginal students. The availability of this provincial fund also opened opportunities for administrators of Aboriginal institutions to access funding to support their program goals.

Other provincial policy frameworks, such as the *Aboriginal Education and Training Policy Framework* (1985) in British Columbia and the *Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act* (2000), which will be discussed later, are additional examples of how the provinces have attempted to address the education and training needs of Aboriginal peoples.

While federal and provincial initiatives have increased opportunities for

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Aboriginal students, programs in mainstream institutions have not been able to address the needs of all Aboriginal students. The distinct gap that arose between the need of the Aboriginal communities and their students and the initiatives provided by recognized mainstream institutions of higher learning was evident and increased over time.

Today, Aboriginal peoples are seeking policy support and adequate resources to design, develop, and deliver education programs and services to address their unique education and training needs. To address cultural needs, Aboriginal peoples have created programs and services at the elementary and secondary levels. In addition, a number of Aboriginal-controlled secondary schools were created, initially without federal funding assistance. Later, a number of Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions were established.

Currently, the need for funding to support the stability and continued growth of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions far exceeds available provincial and federal funding. The absence of policy support for Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions and the negative effects of the lack of funding required to support Aboriginal institutions continues to create quite a dilemma for Aboriginal peoples and governments. The extent of the need for post-secondary education by Aboriginal peoples coupled with the success achieved by Aboriginal post-secondary institutions cannot be disputed or denied, yet these institutions continue to operate without government policy or legislative support.

The Jurisdictional Debate

In order to critically examine this need for funding, one must consider the jurisdictional debate regarding education for Aboriginal persons. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada supports Aboriginal persons in enrolling in post-secondary programs and provides limited funding support for the delivery of some post-secondary programs. At the same time, the federal government contends that they do not have primary legislative responsibility for post-secondary education. In fact, Indian Affairs has repeatedly taken the position that post-secondary education for Aboriginal persons is a matter of social policy rather than a right. Indian Affairs also argues that as the provincial government is responsible for post-secondary education in Ontario, the province is responsible for the education of Aboriginal students. The Province of Ontario contends that Indian Affairs is responsible for the education of Aboriginal persons. While the jurisdictional debate continues, Aboriginal peoples continue to do the best they can in delivering educational programs that are required and demanded by their communities. The lack of adequate policy, legislative support, and resources leaves students paying the heaviest price. This long-standing jurisdictional debate is a constant struggle in the development and delivery of post-secondary programs and services to address educational needs identified by Aboriginal peoples.

Despite clear direction in Canada's Constitution that the provinces are responsible for providing education equally to all residents within their jurisdiction, the lack of clarity in terms of the application of provincial laws and standards, and the confusion created by this situation only heightens the lack of consistency and marginalization of Aboriginal-

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controlled and Aboriginal-based education systems. The AFN makes clear their position on the federal government's responsibility for Aboriginal education in the following statements:

The Crown owes a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations. This flows from its position as protector of our lands from non-Indian interference which can be traced to the Royal Proclamation of 1793...the Crown is to ensure that First Nations and treaty rights are fully recognized and respected ...This has been clearly embraced by the Supreme Court of Canada...enshrined in Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982...The Crown should be a zealous advocate and protector of the rights of First Nations and ...disclose to First Nations all information regarding the specific impact of policies and legislation. It further requires that the Crown not place itself in a conflict of interest situation with First Nations (Tremblay, 2001, p. 10).

This has essentially been the position of every First Nations political organization since they first began articulating policy positions on education.

In assessing the policy changes affecting the development of First Nations education, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) noted:

- Federal policy has been moving in the right direction since 1972, but federal authorities have failed to take decisive steps necessary to restore full control of education to Aboriginal peoples.
- Nearly 70% of Aboriginal education has been in the hands of provincial and territorial authorities, with few mechanisms for effective accountability to Aboriginal peoples and involvement of parents.
- Aboriginal peoples have been restricted in their efforts to implement curricula that would transmit their linguistic heritage to the next generation.
- Financial resources to reverse the impact of past policies have been inadequate (Ottawa, 1996b, p. 441).

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As long as the jurisdictional debate over post-secondary education for Aboriginal persons continues to be unsettled, there will continue to be a lack of policy support and adequate resources for Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary education. This situation will continue to influence already low attrition and participation rates as well as education attainment levels that lag far behind those of the non-Aboriginal populace.

A report entitled, *Best Practices in Enhancing Aboriginal Participation in Post Secondary Education: Canadian and International Perspectives*, by Malatest (2002) found that in all aspects of education the rate of attrition/drop-out is highest for Aboriginal students. The report confirmed that despite progress made in system changes, Aboriginal participation/enrolment in universities is very low, especially in math and science and the distribution of degrees, diplomas, and certifications among Aboriginal persons was disproportionately concentrated around education and the social sciences. The report also showed that the Canadian experience is mirrored across the globe with overall rates of education among Aboriginal peoples rising but nowhere approaching representative levels.

Conclusion

The education of Aboriginal peoples has been studied many times and many authors state that until progress is made in improving the overall life chances of Aboriginal persons, there will be little progress in the field of education, post secondary or otherwise. Aboriginal persons' distrust of mainstream provincially-run educational institutions and the legacy of residential schools are significant barriers that have resulted in the

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alienation of Aboriginal students who have been forced to accept a Euro-centric approach to their education. In addition, other barriers affecting Aboriginal participation in post-secondary studies include that family and community obligations make relocation to post-secondary institutions outside Aboriginal communities difficult and expensive and that students have been poorly prepared at the primary and secondary levels due to the lower quality of education afforded by inner city, on-reserve, and remote schools.

Although positive changes have been made in the development of education for Aboriginal peoples, there continues to be much work to be done to establish a cohesive partnership between governments and Aboriginal peoples to design and implement an educational system to address the desires and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples. In addition, a serious commitment on the part of government is required in order to address the unique cultural needs essential in developing an education system that will empower Aboriginal students to flourish and succeed.

Chapter Four: Development of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

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Development of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

Introduction

Aboriginal communities began to develop their own institutions of higher learning in the early 1970s as an alternative to established, mainstream institutions. Communities were concerned with appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and the maintenance of cultural traditions in education. To ensure and guarantee culturally appropriate materials and courses, and to better serve the needs of their communities, Aboriginal institutions of higher learning were formed. As an Aboriginal institution, there would be control over the design and delivery of programs that were culturally relevant and appropriate for the Aboriginal students that would be attending. Each Aboriginal institution established in its vision and mission statements the need to ensure that the Spirit of Aboriginal peoples would remain a major influence in the education of all students. Since the early 1970s, Aboriginal institutions have been influenced by local community members and have been offering a variety of programs for their community members.

Early Aboriginal Institutions

Among the first Aboriginal institutions to begin delivering culturally appropriate courses were Blue Quills First Nations College (1971) and Yellowhead Tribal College (1977), both located in Alberta. These institutions began by offering upgrading programs, adult-training programs, and other courses identified as pertinent by members of their communities. Institutional funding was directly available to these institutions – using federal training dollars, funds from secondary programs to offer upgrading and equivalency programs, and other revenue sources, these institutions were able to establish

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themselves as delivery agents. Ongoing program funds were secured as students were successfully graduating from these Aboriginal programs.

These Aboriginal institutions were created, directed by, and responsive to their respective communities, unlike mainstream post-secondary institutions that were established through federal or provincial legislation. Thus, Aboriginal institutions were created and continue to operate like publicly supported institutions but without policy support or adequate public funding.

Lack of Policy and Legislative Support

This lack of policy and legislative support impacts the creation of Aboriginal institutions in two very significant ways. Firstly, there is no regular source of adequate funding for day-to-day operations, program development, facilities, or infrastructure development. Secondly, Aboriginal institutions lack recognition from federal and provincial governments as having the authority to grant certificates, diplomas, and degrees; therefore, the credentials obtained by students attending Aboriginal institutions do not hold the same currency as credentials obtained in mainstream institutions. Student credentials are often not recognized by employers and are not necessarily portable within the mainstream system, with respect to credit or knowledge transfer.

Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

Another major development in terms of Aboriginal institutions came in Saskatchewan with the establishment of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), an institution devoted to teaching culturally appropriate courses. When the issue of **Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education: A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions**

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accreditation was raised, the SIFC was aligned with the University of Regina. Through this alliance, SIFC continues to be directed and accountable to the Saskatchewan Indian Nations and is able to offer culturally appropriate courses and programs. The alignment with the University of Regina results in the University granting all degrees and diplomas on behalf of the SIFC.

Of major significance is the fact that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada assisted in establishing SIFC by guaranteeing ongoing funds through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) to “maintain a university-level focus on research and development in Indian Education and to deliver special programs” (Ottawa, 2004a, p. 1). Since the beginning of this relationship, INAC has funded the SIFC, now called the First Nations University of Canada. This arrangement is unique in Canada and serves to acknowledge that INAC has a policy-based approach to funding Aboriginal institutions, even if the policy only applies to one institute. SFIC has also acquired accreditation recognition from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (cited in British Columbia, 1985). SFIC, now the First Nations University of Canada, has taken the most progressive steps in terms of receiving funding from both the provincial and federal governments.

The Rise of Aboriginal Institutions

In other provinces across Canada, Aboriginal institutions continued to be opened and operated by Aboriginal communities. By the mid-1980s, institutions had been established in Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Other institutions emerged in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Pressure came from these

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institutions to gain the ability to access funds available through a component of the federal PSSSP called the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP). In response to these requests, INAC continued to fund program delivery using the following definitions:

degree, diploma and certificate granting institutions which are recognized by a province and include educational institutions affiliated with, or delivering accredited post-secondary programs by arrangement with, a post-secondary institution... [and] Indian post-secondary institutions...which are governed by an Indian band council, an Indian tribal council, an Indian district Chiefs council, or an authority established by these councils and recognized by the department for purposes of the Indian Studies Support Program (Ottawa, 2004a, p. 3).

With the growing number of Aboriginal-controlled institutions that were being established, the dilemma faced by INAC was to either acknowledge the growing number of Aboriginal institutions and provide funding to both Aboriginal institutions and mainstream institutions or to establish general funding criteria that would serve both interests. The result was a directive to fund only those Aboriginal programs offered by Aboriginal institutions when they are degree, diploma, or certificate programs. As the Aboriginal institutes did not have degree granting authority, this meant that partnerships would have to be established with recognized institutions to ensure that funding would be made available. Despite this situation, Aboriginal institutions continued to expand the breadth of programs and services in response to community needs and continue to increase enrolment and provide Aboriginal learners with access to post-secondary education. The result has been more than twenty years of programming offered by Aboriginal institutions, but offered in partnership with “recognized degree-granting institutions.” This situation affects some fifty Aboriginal-owned and controlled institutions of higher learning in Canada.

Development of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

Contrary to popular belief, the provincial government is not the only level of government that can establish degree-granting authority. The federal government has established a precedent in this area. Queen's University, the Royal Military College, and McGill University each received their charters as post-secondary institutions from the federal government. The remaining post-secondary institutions across Canada have received their authority to grant degrees from provincial governments. Provinces hold the constitutional authority for education under the British North America (BNA) Act of 1867; however, the federal government has exercised its prerogative to grant federal charters to institutions of higher learning. Unfortunately, in the twenty-five year history of Aboriginal institutions, the federal government has yet to exercise its authority and grant a charter to any of the Aboriginal institutions.

Across Canada, only British Columbia and Saskatchewan have acknowledged the work of Aboriginal institutions and issued degree-granting authority. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies is chartered under provincial legislation (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act, 2000). In British Columbia, the College and Institute Act of 1995 has provided the authority to grant degrees to two Aboriginal Institutions, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the Institute of Indigenous Governance. In Ontario, the only policy support for Aboriginal post-secondary programming is the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Strategy*, which at the time of creation was understood by the participating parties to be “a short-term process that forms a small part of their efforts towards the long-term, education agenda... Native control of education for Native people” (Toronto, 1991, p. 2). Federal and provincial jurisdictions in Canada have taken minimal steps to honour and

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recognize the contribution of Aboriginal institutions in the delivery of higher education.

In the United States, Tribal colleges were established to provide locally controlled, culturally appropriate courses to their community members. The Navajo Tribal College was the first tribal college to be established (1968) and today there are thirty-four tribally controlled colleges operating in the United States (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2004). Federal legislation and a Presidential Order from President William Jefferson Clinton in 1998 have enabled Tribal colleges to offer certificate and diploma programs for their students. Federal funding is made available to these institutions as base funding; student tuition and other revenue sources are also collected.

The Unique Function of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

Aboriginal institutions have been developed to address the specific cultural, linguistic, intellectual, social, and economic needs and conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This is not, nor is it expected to be, a function of mainstream institutions. Aboriginal institutions are unique in what they do and in their approach to achieving their vision. This sets them apart from the mainstream institutions as mainstream institutions have been created to address the needs of all peoples within the general population. Through its work with Aboriginal institutions of higher learning, the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium has found features that distinguish Aboriginal institutions of higher learning from mainstream institutions. These include:

1. Boards directed and controlled by Aboriginal communities;

Development of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

2. Aboriginal faculty ensure a holistic approach to education (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual);
3. Infusion of First Nations history, culture, traditions, and values throughout the curriculum;
4. Methods of instruction that address Aboriginal learning styles;
5. Community involvement/integration of community throughout the educational process; linkages and referrals to various community organizations;
6. Aboriginal support staff ensures a focus on student support and the creation of student support networks;
7. Elder support, spiritual and traditional teachings;
8. Programs and services that instill recognition and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and history, recognition and respect for the land, environment, people and community; designed and delivered by Aboriginal peoples for Aboriginal peoples (i.e. the Indigenous Health Practitioner Program, Aboriginal Healing and Wellness, Cultural Interpretation); and
9. Program and service delivery in community based, culturally rich environments.

In Ontario, Aboriginal institutions have collectively educated over 27,000 students, experienced a 92% increase in enrolment over five years, and achieved 80% to 90% student success rates (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2004). These figures are indicative of Aboriginal institutions across Canada and in the United States. The success rate and the increase in enrolment figures are an indication of the value and the need for Aboriginal institutions.

Development of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

The range of programs offered by Aboriginal institutions in Ontario includes literacy, adult education and skills development, and alternative secondary school programs. As such, the programs address important education access and retention issues. The institutions also deliver a wide range of certificate, diploma, and degree programs, training, culture and language courses, and community workshops. The following list of programs provides a sample of the variety of courses offered by these institutions: Renewable Energies Diploma program; First Nations Media Diploma program; Mohawk and Ojibway language courses; Bachelor of Social Work; Bachelor of Education; Aviation; Nursing; Master's Program in Indigenous Philosophy; Public Administration Degree Program; Pipe Fitting; Welding; Horticulture; Paramedic Training; First Nations Principals Training; and support services for First Nations elementary and secondary education (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005b). The range in programming is indicative of the need for a variety of programs in order to address the capacity development of Aboriginal persons and their communities.

Development of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education: A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions

Chapter Five: Policy Support for Aboriginal Education Institutions

Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education: A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions

Introduction

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has developed one policy that directly affects First Nations students and Aboriginal institutions (Ottawa, 2004b). This policy is known as the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and has two components. One component supports First Nations students by providing funds for tuition, travel, and living accommodations; the other, the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) will be further explored below.

Indian Studies Support Program

The ISSP has two components: (1) supporting the development and delivery of programs specifically for First Nations students by other institutions and organizations and (2) providing ongoing support to one First Nations institution, the First Nations University of Canada, formerly known as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. The First Nations University of Canada is the only First Nations education institution in Canada that receives ongoing operational funding from the federal government. This policy and funding support is contingent upon its affiliation as a University College with the University of Regina. This affiliation provides provincial program recognition and shared funding support from the province of Saskatchewan. Funding support provided to the First Nations University of Canada is \$7 million per year.

The annual allocation of funding for the ISSP is a maximum of 12% of the national allocation for PSSSP. In Ontario alone, INAC reported that of the \$3.3 million available in the 2000-2001 fiscal year, 95% went to Aboriginal institutions and the remaining 5% was allocated to mainstream institutions. Requests for funding in Ontario

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in 1995-96 and 1996/97 were \$9.5 million and \$11.1 million respectively, thus indicating Aboriginal post-secondary institutions' high needs for funding (Ottawa, 2004a).

It is important to note that the PSSSP program was capped in 1989, thereby limiting the amount of programming that could be supported. The Assembly of First Nations estimated that 10,000 students could not access PSSSP support in 2003-04 (2004). Any attempt by First Nations to increase the ISSP allocation would result in even fewer students being supported under PSSSP.

The Indian Studies Support Program is administered on a year-to-year basis through a proposal process. This process continues to pose challenges for Aboriginal institutions with respect to delivering multi-year programs, securing and maintaining qualified staff, addressing the bureaucracy of proposals and reports, and realizing long-term or future planning. In one particular instance, INAC negotiated a multi-year funding agreement with First Nations Technical Institute, a First Nations-controlled institution based in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. However, in 2004, INAC's spending authorities determined that it did not have the authority to enter into multi-year sector specific agreements and took measures to revert back to a proposal driven allocation process. The change in administration of ISSP has had a devastating impact on the operations of First Nations Technical Institute, despite the success achieved by this institution over the past twenty years, including a world-wide reputation for leadership in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. This administrative change has threatened possible closure of the institution.

Ontario Provincial Policies

On the provincial side, Ontario developed the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Strategy* (AETS) in 1991. Created as a five-year initiative, AETS was established to demonstrate a commitment to addressing the unique needs of First Nations peoples in post-secondary education. First Nations leaders and organizations welcomed the support provided by the creation of the Strategy. In fact, the Strategy document states that participating First Nations organizations have “stressed that the strategy process was only a short-term process that formed a small component of their efforts towards their long-term, educational agenda: Native control of Native education, including the establishment and funding of Native postsecondary institutions” (Toronto, 1991, p. 2).

The goals of the Strategy are to: “increase Native participation and completion rates in university and college programs; increase the sensitivity and awareness of postsecondary institutions to Native culture and issues; and increase the extent and participation of Native people in decisions affecting Native postsecondary education” (Toronto, 1991, p. 2). According to a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities document that is distributed each year to members of the Proposal Selection Committee, one criterion that Aboriginal institutions must meet to access Strategy funding is to “have a formal agreement in place between the institution and the college/university for each project or program, outlining financial and academic details of the agreement” (p. 2). This resulted in the creation of what became commonly known as Aboriginal Education Councils (AECs). These Councils were required to demonstrate decision making capacity and direct access to the governing body of the institution on all matters that related to Aboriginal education. Furthermore, they also had to demonstrate that their

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action plans had the support and approval of the governing body of the mainstream institution.

A review of the Strategy, conducted in 1996 by Devlin and Associates, revealed its success: twenty-seven Aboriginal counsellors were funded at twenty-one institutions; over four years (1991-1995), Aboriginal student enrolment grew 43%; Deans of Aboriginal education increased from two to six; language programs were developed; several programs were being delivered via distance delivery and in Aboriginal communities – in 1995, twenty students graduated with Ontario Teacher's certificates in Moose Factory; twenty colleges have an Aboriginal person on the Board of Directors; among other successes (Devlin and Associates Incorporated, 1996, p. 18-25). Prior to the creation of the Strategy, few programs existed to address the specific needs of First Nations; today, thirty mainstream institutions in Ontario provide programs and services for First Nations students.

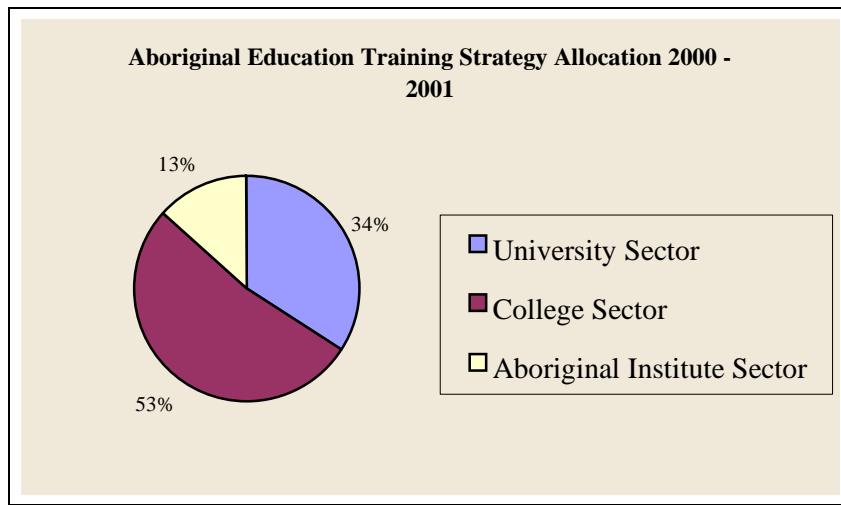
The success of the Strategy with respect to outcomes for First Nations students cannot be disputed and as the five-year Strategy came to an end, the province of Ontario agreed to continue to support the Strategy goals with an annual allocation of \$6 million. Unfortunately, over time and with changes in the way in which the Ministry allocates the funding, the original intent of the Strategy is not the current reality. Of the \$6 million, \$5.2 million is allocated to mainstream colleges and universities as a regularized fixed share fund, providing a source of stable funding for mainstream institutions to maintain Aboriginal programs. Mainstream institutions can apply for new strategy funding to support new program development and delivery, student support services, and designed Aboriginal-specific programming.

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Policy Support for Aboriginal Education Institutions

Opportunities that exist under the Strategy do not exist for Aboriginal-controlled institutions. In fact, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities designed separate program guidelines specifically for Aboriginal institutions. These guidelines state that Aboriginal institutions can only apply for funding to support program development and delivery and at one time, funding was capped at \$50,000 per proposal. Currently, of the \$6 million fund, only \$800,000 is made available to Aboriginal institutions through an annual proposal process, while mainstream institutions are provided a fixed share fund with regular annual allocations.

Although the Strategy was intended to be a short-term measure to address the long-term goals of funding Aboriginal institutions, the following chart displays the allocation funding to colleges, universities, and Aboriginal institutions, as reported by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in 2000-2001.



Strategy funding made available to Aboriginal institutions in partnership with mainstream colleges and universities continues to remain at the \$800,000 in 2004-2005 (13% of the total funding for Aboriginal programs and services for Aboriginal people).

Policies in Other Jurisdictions

An examination of policy support for Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions in other jurisdictions revealed the following. British Columbia created the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (1985) to: increase participation and success rates of Aboriginal peoples in post-secondary; support capacity building; establish a long-term plan for Aboriginal peoples to acquire knowledge and skills; and to secure the commitment of the federal government for post-secondary for Aboriginal people. The policy acknowledges that the public post-secondary system cannot address the specific needs of all Aboriginal learners and in doing so, provides provincial recognition and funding for two Aboriginal institutes. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the Institute of Indigenous Government are provincially recognized as public post-secondary institutions with the power to grant certificates, diplomas, and degrees and to receive funding in the same manner and at the same levels as mainstream post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

In addition to the federal and provincial support for the First Nations University of Canada, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), a First Nations-controlled institution, is provincially-recognized by the province of Saskatchewan to issue diplomas and certificates, provide adult education and post-secondary programs, and negotiate agreements with agencies to achieve its objectives (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act, 2000).

In the United States, President William Jefferson Clinton signed an Executive Order in 1996 to support Tribal Colleges and Universities. The Presidential Order states

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that each agency of the federal government must develop and implement a three-year plan “to increase the capacity of Tribal Colleges to compete effectively for any available grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and any other Federal resources” (Executive Order No. 13270 (2002), p. 2). This Presidential Order ensures “direct accountability at the highest levels of the Federal Government” (p. 1), providing assurances that positive measures will occur to address the education and training needs of First Nations. To further enhance federal support for Tribal Colleges and Universities in the United States, the Executive Order signed by President George Bush in 2004 states, “to seek ways to develop and enhance the capacity of tribal governments, tribal universities and colleges, and schools and educational programs servicing American Indian and Alaska Native students and communities to carry out, disseminate, and implement education research, as well as to develop related partnerships or collaborations with non-tribal universities, colleges and research organizations” (Executive Order No. 13336 (2004), p. 3).

New Zealand passed the *Education Amendment Act* in 1990, which defines institutions of higher learning:

A Wanaga is characterised by teaching and research that maintains, advances and disseminates knowledge and develops intellectual independence and assists the application of knowledge regarding ahuatanga Maori (Maori tradition) according to tikanga Maori (Maori custom) (Coxhead, Royal, Stephens, and Hirini, 2002, p. 1).

This recognition of Wanaga in the Act means that it “would be treated in the same way at least for funding purposes and on the same basis as polytechnics and universities” in New Zealand (Coxhead et al., 2002, p. 6). Following the establishment of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Wanaga was successful at having its degree programs approved.

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Conclusion

A variety of models exist that demonstrate policy and legislative support for Aboriginal-owned and controlled institutions of higher learning. There also continues to be much work to be done to recognize the advancement and accomplishments made by Aboriginal peoples in higher learning and to ensure the provision of policy and funding support to address the education needs expressed by Aboriginal peoples.

Chapter Six: Consequences of the Lack of Policy Support

Consequences of the Lack of Policy Support

Introduction

The lack of policy support for Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions negatively impacts local institutional autonomy, intellectual property rights, access to funding, relations with mainstream institutions, institutional credibility, program recognition, student credentials, and access to employment. The lack of policy support for Aboriginal institutions is a blatant display of paternalism and exposes the discriminatory practices that exist between Aboriginal and mainstream institutions.

Local Institutional Autonomy

Local control and autonomy of individual Aboriginal institutions provides them the opportunity and flexibility to design and deliver programs based on Aboriginal processes and standards. In large part, their successes in addressing the diverse education and training needs identified by their respective supporting communities have been due to holding local autonomy. This cannot be accomplished if Aboriginal institutions are expected to comply with provincial or federal policy guidelines.

Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual property rights and the protection of Indigenous knowledge are affected by lack of institutional recognition. Aboriginal institutions have partnered with mainstream institutions to develop and deliver culturally relevant and accredited curriculum, which should be a positive situation for both mainstream institutions and Aboriginal peoples. However, Aboriginal institutions have experienced the need to pay the mainstream institution for use of jointly developed curriculum. More importantly, the loss of control

Consequences of the Lack of Policy Support

of the history, language, and cultural knowledge of Aboriginal peoples is a huge price to pay for the partnership and is a direct attack on the self-esteem of Aboriginal persons. This need for program ownership and relevant programming that addresses the lack of access to appropriate post-secondary education fuelled the desire for community-based post-secondary development. Aboriginal peoples would like to be able to offer programming that doesn't require 'approval and consent' or management and ownership by organizations other than those Aboriginal persons and communities for whom the program was designed.

Access to Funding

As there are no policies in place to ensure ongoing and adequate access to funding, the stability, growth, development, and autonomy of Aboriginal institutions are continually challenged. This lack of adequate funding results in challenges in attracting and keeping qualified faculty and staff; limits the breadth of programs and support services that can be offered; threatens multi-year programs; and continuously places undue hardship and an extremely heavy burden on the limited human and financial resources available to Aboriginal institutions.

At the present time, there is no source of adequate funding to support Aboriginal institutions, while mainstream institutions enjoy policy and legislative support for ongoing annual secure operating grant funding, as well as a host of special purpose and infrastructure grants. Aboriginal institutions are not eligible for any provincial funding grants, with the exception of the funds made available through the AETS.

Relations with Mainstream Institutions

Aboriginal institutions must partner with a mainstream institution in order to access provincial funding under the Strategy; even so, there are still no guarantees that funding will be awarded. To further complicate the funding issue, when an Aboriginal institution becomes successful at securing Strategy funding for a project or program, the Ministry flows the funding through the mainstream partner college or university rather than directly to the Aboriginal institution. As with any partnership, costs are incurred to establish and maintain the partnership, whether this means shared decision-making, shared human resources, in-kind contributions, or other real costs. The success of the partnership continues to remain contingent upon the experience and knowledge of the negotiator representing the Aboriginal institution and the willingness of the mainstream partner. For mainstream partner institutions, they stand to gain revenue based on the fact that Aboriginal institutions cannot access the fund without their help. As one might imagine, these forced partnerships have placed Aboriginal institutions in a clearly disadvantaged and subservient position; as a result, Aboriginal institutions have been taken advantage of.

In examining documents distributed by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that provide information for mainstream institutions and partnerships with Aboriginal institutions in Ontario as well as AIC data files, the following was found:

- As mainstream post-secondary institutions are provincially recognized, they receive annual operating grants based on student enrolment. Through partnerships with Aboriginal institutions, mainstream institutions include the

Consequences of the Lack of Policy Support

enrolment of students attending programs in Aboriginal institutions for the calculation and receipt of annual provincial operating grant funding.

- Most mainstream institutions that deliver programs for Aboriginal students receive annual grants (fixed share) through the AETS fund.
- Many mainstream institutions charge Aboriginal institutions administrative and other fees for elements of the partnership, thus giving them access to Strategy funding that is set aside for Aboriginal institutions. Items that mainstream institutions have charged Aboriginal institutions have included: charges for the program or course credential; instructors; instructor travel; project supervision; textbooks and resources; student support services; technical support services (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005a).
- Mainstream institutions that receive tuition funding through partnerships with Aboriginal institutions for students attending programs delivered at Aboriginal institutions and are under no obligation to forward this revenue to the Aboriginal institution (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005a).

Aboriginal institutions have reported that securing partnerships with mainstream institutions has resulted in high levels of frustration, a lack of mutual respect, and processes that are extremely time consuming. Not only are mutually acceptable partnerships difficult to secure, the process is an infringement on the right of Aboriginal peoples to define, develop, and deliver their own education programs and services. When these negative outcomes are added to the loss of control of intellectual property, it becomes clear that Aboriginal institutions are paying a steep price for access to a minimal amount of provincial funding.

Consequences of the Lack of Policy Support

Forced partnerships are not only required for access to funding. Mainstream institutions have the recognized authority to grant certificates, diplomas, and degrees, while Aboriginal institutions do not. In the absence of that recognized authority, Aboriginal institutions approach mainstream institutions in hopes that they are prepared to share that privilege. While it may be financially attractive to partner with the closest mainstream college or university, representatives of Aboriginal institutions in Ontario have been known to travel across and outside of the province in search of good partner institutions. Due to Ontario's program approval process, partnerships must occur on a program-to-program and institution-to-institution basis.

Institutional Credibility

Mainstream institutions have also been known to change the terms of the partnership mid-program. For example, a mainstream partner agreed to a 15% administration charge when the agreement was made but later changed the required administration fee to 30%. Given limited program funding, this change in the terms of the agreement significantly impacted the program. This situation forced the Aboriginal institution to pay the fee and ensure the delivery of the program outcomes so as not to damage the institution's credibility. Although the negotiation of partnerships between mainstream and Aboriginal institutions has caused much hardship for Aboriginal institutions, the terms and conditions of these partnerships are improving. Policy and legislation could provide Aboriginal institutions with the credibility to level the playing field with respect to relations with mainstream institutions.

Program Recognition, Student Credentials, and Access to Employment

With respect to program recognition and student credentials, until such time as Aboriginal institutions have acquired recognition by the general public and employers through demonstrated success in delivering quality programs that produce highly educated and skilled graduates, the recognition obtained through association of the mainstream partner provides credibility to the institution. Association with mainstream partner institutions lends recognition to the graduating students' credentials, which is useful in securing employment and ensuring portability/transfer of the credential within the mainstream post-secondary system. Holding recognized authority to grant certificates, diplomas, and degrees would mean that Aboriginal institutions would not need to partner with mainstream institutions. This would support the effective use of limited resources and would increase the portability of credentials, which would assist students in gaining employment.

Consequences of the Lack of Policy Support

Chapter Seven: A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario

A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario

Program and Credentials Recognition

Policy and legislative support for Ontario's post-secondary institutions provides institutional and program recognition, which also results in funding. The government of Ontario provides recognition to mainstream colleges and universities through charters and acts that define their authorities, powers, and responsibilities for the provision of education programs and services. College charters and acts provide mainstream institutions with the authority to grant certificates, diplomas, and degrees that are recognized in the province of Ontario and elsewhere. Furthermore, Ontario's provincially supported colleges and universities are provided with government funding to cover the costs of doing business.

First Nations institutions are not provincially recognized in the same manner as mainstream institutions. First Nations institutions do not have the authority to grant their own certificates, diplomas, and degrees, which means that credentials received by students attending programs in First Nations institutions do not hold the same currency as credentials from mainstream institutions (especially with respect to access to employment). Credentials received by students attending First Nations institutions are also not portable within the mainstream post-secondary system. In order to ensure broad recognition of student credentials, First Nations institutions must create partnerships with mainstream institutions.

Access to Provincial Funding

The lack of policy and legislative recognition for First Nations institutions not only impacts program delivery and student credentials, it also means that these institutions do

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A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario

not have access to the public funding that is available to mainstream post-secondary institutions. Ontario's publicly supported post-secondary institutions are eligible to receive regularized and ongoing funding. The extent of provincial funding support for colleges and universities begins with the allocation of annual general operating grants. Funding information provided to the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) in a presentation delivered in 2003 included the following information. With respect to university funding:

- Universities obtain their operating funding through various sources including: federal and provincial governments; student fees; sales of services and products; private donations; investment income; separate research; and capital grants.
- Factors considered in determining the university allocation include enrolment pressures and government priorities, which are balanced against other budget pressures.
- Each university receives a fixed share of total revenue allocated by the government to the university system for Basic Operating Grants each year.
- Components of base provincial operating grant include basic operations; enrolment expansion; performance funding; special purpose grants; mission related grants; institution specific grants; and additional grants.
- Basic Operating Grants constitute 82% of MTCU's total grants to universities (\$1.54 billion in 2002-2003).

Basic operating grant funding supports instruction, research, academic support services, libraries, computing, student services, community service, administration, plant maintenance, and other operating expenditures. This funding is allocated as a fixed share

A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario

grant provided to universities annually, based on average student enrolment. Although the provincial government places limitations on the use of basic operating grants to universities for items such as sponsored or contract research, interest payments on debts, etc., provincial funding provides substantial support towards the operation and maintenance of provincially recognized universities.

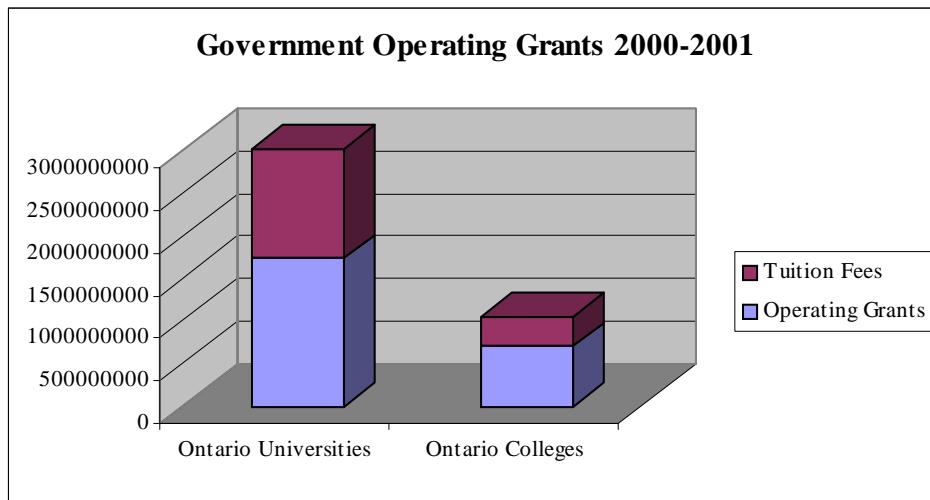
With respect to funding support for Ontario's provincially recognized colleges, the Ministry funding parameters, according to Ministry guideline documents, are outlined below:

- The theory used to develop program funding parameters uses basic principles, program weights, program funding units, and program funding parameters.
- Data used in calculating the parameters of program funding includes program delivery information, student teacher ratios, non-teaching expenditures, existing MCU codes, and implicit section size.

The college funding formula is then applied to determine the annual grant allocation or basic operating grant to a given college.

The following chart illustrates the amount of operating grant funding, combined with the other major source of revenue, tuition, for Ontario's twenty-five (25) colleges and eighteen (18) universities in 2000-2001.

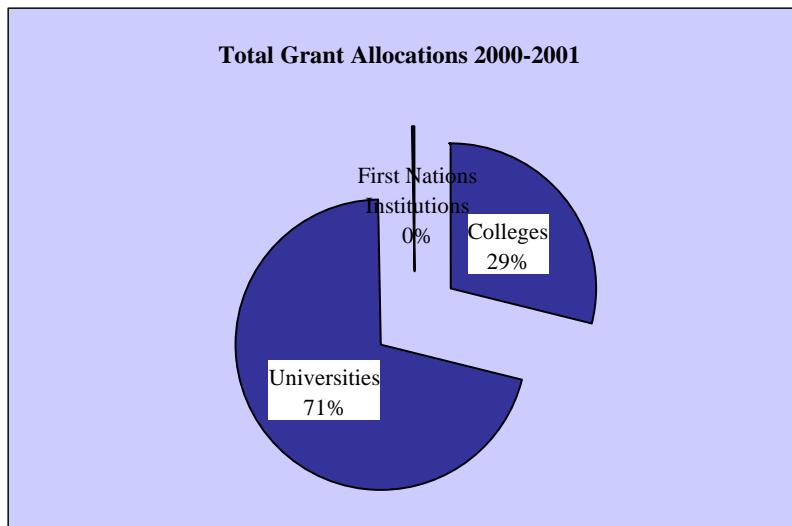
A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario



Universities received \$1.7 billion in operating grants and \$1.2 million from tuition fees, for a total operating revenue of \$2.9 billion for 2000-2001. Colleges received \$705 million from operating grants, and \$335 million from tuition fees, for a total operating revenue of \$1.04 billion. In addition to operating grants, the province regularly allocates special grant funding to support government priorities and other grants to support the provision and maintenance of state of the art facilities and equipment.

In contrast, the financial situation for First Nations-owned and controlled post-secondary institutes is actually quite bleak. There is no provincial policy or legislative recognition to support the creation, growth, and development of First Nations institutions. The absence of provincial recognition also means that First Nations institutions are not eligible to receive provincial operating grant funding to address the operational costs of running these institutions. The following chart depicts the allocation of provincial operating grant funding for the 2000-2001 fiscal year for each of the three sectors of post-secondary institutions in Ontario.

A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario



The total provincial operating grant funds are distributed as follows: 71% goes to the university sector; mainstream colleges capture 29%; and First Nations institutions, classified as ineligible institutions, receive 0% of the overall operating grant funding.

The only provincial policy and funding support available to First Nations institutions in Ontario rests within the confines of the AETS. There are two separate sets of guidelines and allocation methods for the use of Strategy funds. Mainstream institutions receive annual fixed allocations based on projected work plans, which allows them the opportunity to develop and plan how they will use the regularized funding. First Nations institutions are not afforded that same luxury. First Nations institutions must apply for funding through an annual proposal-based process. In addition, First Nations institutions are limited to using AETS funding for program development and delivery; mainstream institutions can use the funding for administrative and support services in addition to program development and delivery. Current AETS funding levels cannot address the level of funding required for basic services, such as student support services (academic and other), classroom library resources, registration and administration

A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario

services, student access to computers and the internet, instructor support, long-term planning, and infrastructure costs (i.e. equipment, furnishings, facilities maintenance) in First Nations institutions.

While this research study does not detail infrastructure and other provincial grants provided to Ontario's provincially assisted colleges and universities, it is important to note that there is no infrastructure, building, or maintenance funding available for First Nations institutions from any source.

Private Sector Support

Another important source of revenue for Ontario's mainstream colleges and (more importantly) universities is the private sector. Private sector support for First Nations institutions is virtually non-existent due to perceptions that are far from the reality. The general population is aware that the federal government has a responsibility toward First Nations peoples and there is no questioning the fact that the federal government does provide funding for the education of First Nations persons. However, the perception held by many is that the federal government provides ample and adequate funding for the education of First Nations people, which is simply not the case. Furthermore, many private sector funding agencies will only support accredited programming. First Nations institutions end up in the undesirable position of lacking enough funding to market their programs and achievements in order to obtain accreditation and therefore the recognition required to access private sector funding.

A Comparison with Provincial Colleges and Universities in Ontario

Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education: A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions

Chapter Eight: Evolution of a Distinct System of Education – An Aboriginal Education System

Evolution of an Aboriginal Education System

Introduction

The community response to years of a colonized education imposed on Aboriginal peoples has been the gradual control and design of an education system that begins with Aboriginal languages, culture, and traditions. Following the National Indian Brotherhood's policy statement on *Indian Control of Indian Education* in 1972, Aboriginal peoples have accepted the challenge of educating their peoples for participation in the world today *as Aboriginal Peoples*. Every community across Turtle Island (North America) is engaged in a process of cultural revival, language renewal, and the acquisition of contemporary skills to engage meaningfully in the challenges of the global economy.

The Movement Towards First Nations Schools

Initially, INAC only transferred administration of program funding for elementary education to local control. INAC has been reluctant to accept Indigenous ways of education, starting with immersion programs and the development of curriculum based on Indigenous ways of knowing and thought. Instead, INAC has insisted and maintained a system of education based on provincial curriculum. While the provincial curriculum may be appropriate for the mainstream population, the expectations and content do not address Indigenous and Aboriginal history, literacy, or knowledge. Over the past thirty years, many First Nations schools have slowly moved away from adopting the provincial curriculum and are engaged in the creation of a truly First Nations Education System. Across Canada, the Mi'qmak in New Brunswick, the Haudenosaunee at Six Nations, and the Anishinaabe in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, to name a few, have engaged in immersion

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programs and other elementary and secondary programs that are unique to Aboriginal peoples. These programs are founded on traditional knowledge and ways of thinking. Students who attend these programs are provided with a strong foundation in their self-identity and cultural history.

The movement to extend control over curriculum and provide appropriate courses and programs for their community members has been led by First Nations institutions across Canada. As mainstream institutions have adopted programs to accept Aboriginal students and created fields of study to attract Aboriginal students, First Nations institutions have quietly grown in their ability to design and deliver programs that are requested and necessary for their communities.

Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing segment of the population in Canada. Recent data from Statistics Canada shows that there is a large increase in the number of Aboriginal persons between the ages of 15 and 35 (Ottawa, 2001). As this is the fastest growing segment of the Aboriginal population, steps must be taken to ensure that each student has access to a quality education program. First Nations institutions continue to develop and deliver programs that are meeting the needs of their students. The issue of degree-granting authority remains a critical issue in terms of recognizing the work that has been accomplished as well as honouring First Nations post-secondary institutions as a distinct model of education.

As the number of First Nations controlled institutions grew, so did the complexity of the programs being offered. In an effort to consolidate the work of the individual institutions, collectives were formed across Canada. In Ontario, representatives of Aboriginal post-secondary education and training institutions established the Aboriginal

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Institutes' Consortium (AIC) in 1994 to address common issues. The Consortium represents a membership of eight Aboriginal post-secondary education and training institutes located throughout Ontario. The vision of the consortium "is that Aboriginal owned, operated and controlled member institutes are funded and recognized in meeting the needs of First Nations people" (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2004, p. 3). The Consortium is committed to "advanc[ing] the development and operation of autonomous, Indigenous - controlled learning institutions thereby providing a foundation for the balanced physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of our people and the social, political, economic and cultural revitalization of our nations" (p. 3).

In western Canada, the First Nations Adult and Higher Learning Consortium was formed in Calgary in 1994 and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association was formed in British Columbia in 1995. At the national level, the National Association of Indigenous Institutions of Higher Education was incorporated in 2001 (National Association of Indigenous Institutions of Higher Education, 2004). In the United States, a similar organization, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium was established in 1972. The purpose of these consortia continues to be to seek recognition and resourcing for First Nations institutions in order to bring excellence in First Nations post-secondary education to all communities. Member institutions are community-based and represent the urban and on-reserve population.

Federal policy has failed to recognize First Nations institutions as a distinct and legitimate process of education programming. Instead, the federal approach is one that encourages a paternal relationship under the realm of a provincial college or university. This approach is at best colonial in nature. The reluctance on the part of federal officials

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to recognize the work accomplished by First Nations institutions across Canada is unfathomable.

The Work of First Nations Institutions

The legacy of First Nations institutions is to work with students who have been subjected to colonialist policies, who have been shamed by teachers and an education system that fails to accommodate First Nations ways of learning and knowing, and who have suffered indignities to their self-worth and self-identity, and who are now finding their way on the “Road to knowledge that is Eternal” through local First Nations institutions. What is missing is the recognition from government, other institutions, and the Canadian public that First Nations education programs, from preschool, through elementary and secondary school, to post-secondary school, comprises a First Nations Education System with specific educational goals and objectives and curriculum that recognizes all learners.

Established institutions argue recognizable standards must be established for the transfer of credits from one system to the other. When institutions are partnered, this issue becomes redundant because credibility and transferability of courses and credit lies with the “established institution” and the role of the First Nations institution is to provide community-based content and support for the students. First Nations institutions have made every effort to be recognized by governments and mainstream institutions. In 1997, the Assembly of First Nations passed a resolution to establish a First Nations Accreditation Board that would examine Aboriginal institutions and provide guidelines for programs and courses. In 2002, the Alberta government identified the First Nations Accreditation Board as a partner to “establish criteria for the designation and/or

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recognition of independent First Nations, Métis and Inuit controlled post-secondary institutions” (Alberta, 2002, p. 29). The need to establish Standards of Practice is being addressed at each level by First Nations institutions.

The United Nations has acknowledged the need for Indigenous people to control and develop their own institutions that respect language and indigenous knowledge through a resolution. This resolution, Article 15 of the United Nations Declaration (1994), supports Aboriginal interests in the delivery of their own education systems by stating:

... All indigenous peoples also have ...the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1994, Article 15).

Internationally, Indigenous institutes have gathered over the past fourteen years at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, most recently in Morley, Alberta (2002), where the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium was established. The goals of the World Consortium are to:

1. Accelerate the articulation of Indigenous epistemology (ways of knowing, education, philosophy, and research);
2. Protect and enhance Indigenous spiritual beliefs, culture, and languages through higher education;
3. Advance the social, economical, and political status of Indigenous Peoples that contribute to the well-being of indigenous communities through higher education;

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4. Create an accreditation body for indigenous education initiatives and systems that identify common criteria, practices, and principles by which Indigenous Peoples live;
5. Recognize the significance of Indigenous education;
6. Create a global network for sharing knowledge through exchange forums and state of the art technology; and
7. Recognize the educational rights of Indigenous Peoples (World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, 2002, p. 20).

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Chapter Nine: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Aboriginal peoples are developing a distinct education system that meets their cultural, linguistic, and social needs. In response to this growth, provincial and federal governments provide limited recognition and funding for Aboriginal institutions. The discrepancies in governmental recognition and treatment of Aboriginal institutions in relation to mainstream institutions are the federal and provincial governments' ways of limiting the success achieved by Aboriginal institutions. One would think that governments would appreciate and support the economic benefits resulting from the success of Aboriginal institutions but instead, they respond with interim and incomplete measures. Hence, full recognition and support of First Nations institutions continues to be required.

Recognition and Transferability

The struggle lies not in the delivery of First Nations programs, but in obtaining recognition and credit transferability in the same manner that is afforded provincial institutions. First Nations institutions have developed a sophisticated network of programs and courses designed for First Nations and Aboriginal students, courses that meet all the “established” criteria for graduation and the receipt of a diploma. The authority to grant their own degrees and certificates, based on standards and program criteria, has only been granted to a limited number of First Nations institutions across Canada. It is imperative that ALL First Nations-controlled post-secondary institutions be given this same recognition.

Access to Public Funding

In addition, access to public funding for the ongoing operation of First Nations institutions must be made available immediately. Provincial and federal governments already recognize First Nations institutions in their funding policies, but limit this funding to partnerships with established institutions. The beneficiary of this arrangement is clearly the “established” institution, which receives additional funds from provincial sources, while First Nations institutions have access to very limited financing. The road towards public funding has already been paved by provincial governments in British Columbia and Alberta, which fund a small number of Aboriginal institutions, and INAC (federally), which continues to support the First Nations University of Canada. In other jurisdictions, public funding is available as a small token of the funding that is available.

Consistent program funding specific to Aboriginal institutions is required to provide a basis for core funding similar to the support provided to mainstream institutions. Consistent funding for capital facilities, maintenance and upgrades, and research funding is also required for Aboriginal institutions. Stop the discriminatory practices and approaches to recognition and support for post-secondary institutions in Canada!

Recommendations

Based on the research presented, it is recommended that:

1. The government of Canada recognize, through legislation, Aboriginal post-secondary institutions as having the authority to grant degrees, diplomas, and certificates.
2. The government of Canada, provincial governments, and representatives of Aboriginal institutions work collaboratively to ensure that Aboriginal institutions have access to sustainable funding in a similar manner to funding provided to recognized mainstream institutions (i.e. operating grants, special grants intended to address specific needs, infrastructure development, capital grants).
3. A process be established in each province to enable the transfer of credits earned in Aboriginal institutions with recognized mainstream institutions and vice-versa.
4. The government of Canada undertake immediate measures to significantly increase the amount of funding available to First Nations students under the national Post-Secondary Student Support Services Program, which would address the number of First Nations students who express a desire to pursue post-secondary education. Funding levels must reflect the costs of attending post-secondary institutions, as identified by the provinces.
5. The government of Canada and the provinces provide adequate funding to Aboriginal institutions in order to ensure Aboriginal students have the necessary supports to realize post-secondary education as a viable option for their futures. Access to supports such as child care, student housing, computer hardware and

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- software, text books, and transportation will significantly reduce student barriers to enrolling in post-secondary programs.
6. The government of Canada and the provinces ensure specialized funding is made available to Aboriginal institutions to address language issues and language preservation in post-secondary education (i.e. language programs, English as a second language, interpretation and translation costs in the development of curriculum and curriculum resources).
 7. The government of Canada and the provinces ensure that specialized funding is made available to Aboriginal institutions for comprehensive student services to support the recruitment, retention, and success of Aboriginal students in post-secondary programs. Funding is required for preparatory programs, tutoring and mentoring, counselling services, elder support, and other areas.
 8. The government of Canada and the provinces provide annual funding to Aboriginal institutions to develop the research capacity of the institute and Aboriginal communities. Ongoing funding is required for curriculum and resource development, as well as to address community health, environmental, social, economic, and political issues.
 9. Formal processes be developed between the government of Canada, the provinces, and Aboriginal peoples in order to develop policy and legislative support for education. Education for Aboriginal peoples must reflect Aboriginal realities, visions, and aspirations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

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