

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan

Strategic Context

The Government of British Columbia is forging a new government-to-government relationship with Aboriginal people based on reconciliation, recognition and respect. This **New Relationship** will reshape our social and economic landscape and create a more inclusive and prosperous future for all British Columbians. A key piece of the New Relationship is the engagement of Aboriginal people and communities in the planning of social and economic policy and programs that shape their lives and choices.

In November 2005 the Province, the Federal Government, and the Leadership Council representing the First Nations of British Columbia signed the Transformative Change Accord to: close the social and economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians, reconcile Aboriginal rights and title with those of the Crown, and establish a new relationship based upon mutual respect and recognition.

A new shared path will provide opportunity for institutions and communities to come together as partners and actively engage in the transformative change of Aboriginal post-secondary education. It calls for a new focus on opportunities for the future and a commitment to collaboration and change.

The Aboriginal post-secondary education strategy will fulfill the post-secondary component of the Transformative Change Accord. As part of this partnership, key Aboriginal groups, through the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training (MOU) Partners, provide advice and direction to enhance coordination of initiatives. Aboriginal organizations and communities work collaboratively with public post secondary institutions in developing and implementing Aboriginal Service Plans and Aboriginal Special Projects initiatives. Representatives from Aboriginal groups participate in working groups and policy tables (e.g., performance indicators). In addition specific accountabilities will be agreed upon with Aboriginal communities participating in capacity building initiatives, and private Aboriginal institutions engaged in affiliation agreements.

Success of the Aboriginal Post Secondary Strategy and Action Plan will be monitored as follows:

- Aboriginal student enrolment and percentage of overall student enrollment in post-secondary education;
- Highest level of education attained and number of credentials issued to Aboriginal students on an annual basis; and,
- A range of performance indicators will be developed in collaboration with the MOU Partners, which includes key Aboriginal organizations and governments, relevant Ministries, public and private post secondary institution representatives and the federal government.

Vision: Aboriginal post-secondary education outcomes are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal learners, and that public institutions and Aboriginal organizations and institutions play appropriate roles and are supported by the combined resources of the federal and provincial governments.

Goal 1: Close the educational gap for Aboriginal learners.

Objectives:

- Increase the access, retention, completion and transitions opportunities for Aboriginal learners.
- Increase the receptivity and relevance of post-secondary institutions and programs for Aboriginal learners.
- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration in Aboriginal post-secondary education.

Goal 2: Effective and accountable programs and services implementation and delivery.

Objectives:

- Ensure effective measurement and progress monitoring.

Background:

Demographic trends/research:

- The Aboriginal population is growing at a faster pace than the non-aboriginal population.
- The number of Aboriginal students enrolled in public post-secondary institutions is gradually increasing.
- Over the past six years, the percentage of Aboriginal students receiving a British Columbia Certificate of Graduation from a public school has increased.
- Despite these improvements, 4 out of 10 Aboriginal people in British Columbia complete post-secondary education compared to 6 out of 10 non-aboriginal students.
- A non-aboriginal person is five times more likely to have a university degree than an Aboriginal person living on reserve and almost three times more likely than an Aboriginal person living off reserve.
- British Columbia's off-reserve Aboriginal labour force faces high unemployment; nearly three times that of the non-aboriginal population.
- When employment rates are compared between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people who have the same levels of education, differences in labour market outcomes largely disappear.

Consultation to date:

- February 2004 – First Annual Forum Regarding Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training.

- March 2005 – Second Annual Forum Regarding Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training.
- Review of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies & Review of Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (2005).
- 2006 – Third Annual Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forum—Moving Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forward, Developing a Strategy.

What we've heard:

Through this consultation, partners identified that Aboriginal learners face major challenges that influence their decision to participate, persist and complete post-secondary education.

Barriers include:

- **Low Student Transitions:** A significant percentage of the Aboriginal population does not complete high school and many who do complete high school lack the necessary prerequisites for university-track and vocational training courses/programs.
- **Appropriate Aboriginal Programming:** There are insufficient programs and courses at post-secondary institutions that are developed for Aboriginal learners or that incorporate aboriginal worldview in teaching pedagogies or curriculum. There is a need for language resources and programs to support the preservation of First Nations languages.
- **Student Service Gaps:** There are considerable gaps in culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal post-secondary learners, which inversely correlate to Aboriginal participation, retention and overall success.
- **Aboriginal Involvement in Decision Making:** There is a need to increase Aboriginal involvement in institutional and educational planning and decision-making process.
- **Appropriate Role Models:** Post-secondary institutions are primarily comprised of non-Aboriginal faculty and staff, many of whom have a limited understanding of Aboriginal needs.
- **Discrimination:** Social, cultural and racial discrimination continues to persist in the education system resulting in feelings of alienation and exclusion for Aboriginal learners.
- **Geographical Barriers:** Aboriginal people in rural and remote communities have identified the need to access education in their communities and not leave for extended periods of study.
- **Need for Increased Partnership/Coordination Between Public Post-Secondary Institutions, Private Aboriginal institutions, Aboriginal Communities, Industry and Other Organizations:** Success in Aboriginal post-secondary education is greatly influenced by the role that Aboriginal communities and organizations play in the transitioning and bridging of students into public post-secondary institutions and the workforce. Collaboration between Aboriginal institutions, communities and public post-secondary institutions and industry will enhance opportunities for student success.

- **Need for Enhanced Data Collection and Tracking:** A major challenge in terms of research in the field of Aboriginal education is the lack of data on Aboriginal ancestry and post-secondary participation.
- **Limited Student Financial Assistance:** There is insufficient funding for Aboriginal post-secondary educational support. This lack of funding is increasingly becoming a barrier to Aboriginal student participation.

The Aboriginal community and post-secondary system are making great strides in increasing access and success for Aboriginal learners. A number of initiatives are underway in government, communities, and institutions across the province to effectively address these barriers. Examples of these accomplishments include:

- Since 2001, the Ministry of Advanced Education has funded 150 projects under the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund. More than 3,400 Aboriginal learners benefited from this program.
- According to the 2005 Jochen review, British Columbia's public post-secondary institutions key accomplishments include:
 - 26 institutions employ at least one Aboriginal Education Coordinator who provides support services to Aboriginal learners.
 - 25 institutions have Aboriginal Advisory Councils, which provide a link to Aboriginal communities.
 - One-third of post-secondary institutions have Aboriginal representation on institutional governance bodies.
 - 23 institutions have programs specifically designed for Aboriginal students.
 - 21 public post-secondary institutions have collaborated and entered into partnerships and/or affiliation agreements with Aboriginal communities and organizations, which reflect Aboriginal education and training priorities.
- 40 private Aboriginal education institutes in British Columbia offer preparatory or pre-requisite courses for post-secondary education or post-secondary education programs.
- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) continues to develop and implement strategies to improve success for Aboriginal post-secondary learners in British Columbia.
- In March 2005, a landmark Aboriginal Post-Secondary and Education and Training Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving key Aboriginal organizations, British Columbia's post-secondary institutions, the federal government, and FNESC was established to facilitate discussion about education matters.

To build on initiatives underway and enhance outcomes, the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) has developed a comprehensive strategy to ensure Aboriginal education outcomes are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal learners, and that public institutions and Aboriginal organizations and institutions play appropriate roles and are supported by the combined resources of the federal and provincial governments.

STRATEGIES and ACTIONS

Increase access, retention, and success for Aboriginal learners through implementation of Aboriginal Service Plans

In the New Relationship era, institutions and communities should engage one another to establish an agenda for Aboriginal post-secondary action. Aboriginal communities should have a role in shaping programs and services that address the academic, social, emotional, and cultural needs of learners.

Strategy and Actions:

The Ministry will implement Aboriginal Service Plans. An Aboriginal Service Plan is a three-year strategic plan developed by a community and institution that outlines goals for the regional Aboriginal learners in terms of access, participation, and success and outlines specific actions to be implemented to meet these goals. Actions may include the development or enhancement of programs, student support services, outreach activities, partnership agreements, alternative program delivery models, etc. Government will provide funding to support the development and implementation of Aboriginal Service Plans.

Institutions and communities can build on successes to:

- Increase the access, retention, completion and transitions opportunities for Aboriginal learners.
- Increase the receptivity and relevance of post-secondary institutions and programs for Aboriginal learners, including providing support for initiatives that address systemic barriers.
- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration in Aboriginal post-secondary education.

Reduce financial barriers through targeted scholarships for Aboriginal learners

Aboriginal learners face a number of financial barriers that impede their access to post-secondary education. The lack of reliable and sufficient student financial support adversely affects participation and retention of learners across the post-secondary education continuum¹.

Strategy and Actions:

The Ministry will target provincial investment to Aboriginal scholarships to reduce barriers for learners. The Ministry will work through The MOU Partners Group to discuss federal and provincial policies and programs that support or impede learner access to student financial assistance.

- Establish an Aboriginal Scholarship Endowment.
- Provide funding support to the Chief Joe Matthias Scholarship.
- Target Alberta Centennial Scholarship to Aboriginal learners.
- Increase Adult Basic Education Student Financial Assistance.

¹ Post-secondary education continuum is defined as Adult Basic Education through graduate level programming.

- Work with partners to explore options for enhancing federal support for Aboriginal learners.

Increase participation in strategic program areas

Aboriginal learners are under-represented, particularly in key disciplines.

Strategy and Actions:

The Ministry will increase access, participation and completion rates for Aboriginal learners to help British Columbia address labour market shortages by targeting sections/classes for programs identified as key priorities (e.g., Health, Social Work, Business).

Support Aboriginal learner transition

Aboriginal learners are under-represented at various levels of the education system.

Strategy and Actions:

- Incorporate Aboriginal literacy into the Adult Literacy Plan.
- Support capacity building for First Nations near treaty.
- Link with the Graduate Student Strategy and recommend that institutions target graduate seats for Aboriginal learners across all faculties.
- Support province-wide transition projects.

Enhance opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be reflected within the infrastructure of institutions

Aboriginal learners often cannot see their culture reflected in the infrastructure of public post-secondary institutions. This contributes to learner isolation and lower retention rates.

Strategy and Actions:

The Ministry will provide financial support and explore public/private partnerships to assist public post-secondary institutions develop gathering places that reflect the cultural needs and characteristics of Aboriginal students, community, and traditions.

Increase the number of culturally relevant programs and services

One of the most prominent challenges influencing the participation and completion rates of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education is the number and quality of programs and services available to these learners that meet their cultural and learning needs.

Strategy and Actions:

The Ministry will continue to provide, and will augment, project-based funding that supports innovation in culturally-appropriate curriculum, program and service design and delivery.

- Continue, and augment, the Aboriginal Special Project Funding (ASPF), recognizing the importance of ASPF funding to the viability and longevity of post-secondary institutional program planning and implementation of programs and support services.
- Support for the development of language curriculum.
- Aboriginal Service Plans will also significantly address this objective.

Encourage Aboriginal representation on institutional governing bodies

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary education stakeholders have expressed the need for increased Aboriginal “voice” on decision-making bodies to ensure the interests and perspectives of Aboriginal learners and communities are reflected in post-secondary institutional planning, policies, practices and programming.

Strategy and Actions:

The Ministry will pursue the goal of appointing Aboriginals to public post-secondary institution boards through policy, and seeks to achieve this goal by encouraging all public post-secondary institutions to identify qualified Aboriginal candidates for appointments to vacant board positions.

Strengthen agreements and partnerships

In 1995, the Aboriginal Policy Framework was established to guide the development of post-secondary education and training strategies to increase access, participation, retention and success rates for Aboriginal learners and support capacity building toward self-government and the post-treaty environment and specified the requirements for a private Aboriginal institution to become a public institution. In 2004, revisions to the requirements were considered but no changes were finalized.

Campus 2020 is a forward looking province-wide review of the post-secondary system designed to guide Ministry direction and decisions up to the year 2020. Campus 2020 has undertaken a comprehensive consultation with Aboriginal stakeholder groups in the province.

Strategy and Actions:

- Encourage, and explore opportunities to improve affiliation agreements between public and private Aboriginal institutions.
- Encourage and strengthen partnerships between public institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations through Aboriginal Service Plans.
- Next steps regarding Ministry policy on Aboriginal institutions will be guided by Campus 2020 recommendations.
- Work with MOU partners to ensure ongoing communication, collaboration and advice.

A coordinated approach to closing the education gap is required.

Strategy and Actions:

- The Ministry will work through the MOU partners group and other Ministries to address provincial and federal government policies and initiatives as they pertain to Aboriginal post-secondary education.
- The Ministry will continue to support the New Relationship by working with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to ensure the benefits of government's Five Great Goals are realized by Aboriginal people.
- Over the next years, the Ministry will take steps to increase coordination, collaboration and integration of funding requests. One approach is to shift from funding many short term initiatives to funding a smaller number of large initiatives focusing on strategic priorities; for example, increased funding through the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund could be competitively allocated to support three or four major provincial priority projects.

<p>Effective planning based on system-wide data tracking and performance measures based on student success</p>

There is currently a lack of data and consistency in Aboriginal post-secondary education. There is a need for system-wide standards in data tracking and the development of performance measures beyond participation rate.

Strategy and Actions:

- Review current policy procedures with objective to develop and implement a standardized Aboriginal self-identity question for all public post-secondary institutions.
- Continue research on Aboriginal private institutions.
- Continue to enhance/expand the Student Transitions Project.
- Develop and implement Aboriginal Student Surveys.

As the Action Plan is implemented, there is a need to increase the level of performance information available to better monitor progress and to improve performance. Information will be produced regarding Aboriginal learners. Indicators to be monitored could include information such as:

- Participation rate: overall growth in enrolment, Aboriginal learners as percentage of total student population, regional rates, participation by program.
- Transition rate: number and rate of learners transitioning into post-secondary education from K-12 within one year of K-12 completion, rate of transition from Adult Basic Education to further post-secondary.
- Completion rate: completion of program (certificate, diploma, degree).
- Level of Credential awarded: number of learners in certificate, diploma, undergraduate, and graduate programs.

MINISTRY GOAL	MINISTRY OBJECTIVE	<p style="text-align: center;">APPENDIX STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*all actions are interconnected and meet various objectives</p>
Close the educational gap for Aboriginal learners	<p>A. Increase the access, retention, completion and transition opportunities for Aboriginal learners</p>	<p>Implement Phase I: Aboriginal Service Plans. Objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the number of Aboriginal students entering post-secondary education. ▪ Increase the number of students completing programs and the level of credentials awarded. ▪ Enhance the Indigenization of the academy. ▪ Increase choice and access by alternate program delivery including: community-based program delivery; on-line learning. Learning/connectivity/Broadband and interfacing with BCcampus. ▪ Increase programs and services for Aboriginal students including: Elders in Residence programs; Anti-racism policies and training; Aboriginal culture and content reflected in curricula; student support services (i.e., Coordinators, Counselors, and mentors) and early intervention; increase mentors and role models; outreach and public awareness. ▪ Increased partnerships between public and private institutions and Aboriginal communities.
		<p>Reduce Financial Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish an Aboriginal Scholarship Endowment. ▪ Provide funding support to the Chief Joe Mathias Scholarship. ▪ Target Alberta Centennial Scholarship to Aboriginal learners. ▪ Increase Adult Basic Education Student Financial Assistance. ▪ Work with partners to explore options for enhancing federal support for Aboriginal learners.
		<p>Increase Participation in Strategic Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access, participation and completion rates for Aboriginal learners to help British Columbia address labour market shortages by targeting sections/classes for programs identified as key priorities (e.g., Health, Business, Teacher Education).
		<p>Support Aboriginal Learner transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal literacy. • Capacity building for First Nations near treaty. • Link with Graduate Student Strategy. • Province-wide transition projects.
	<p>B. Increase the receptivity and relevance of post-secondary institutions and programs for Aboriginal learners</p>	<p>Gathering Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiatives to make the post secondary institutional environment more supportive by increasing the number of welcoming and gathering places at public institutions. ▪ Explore business and other government partnerships.
		<p>Expand Relevance of Programs and Receptivity of Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded Aboriginal Special Projects Fund. • Language Curriculum.
<p>Enhance Aboriginal Representation on Institutional Governance Bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement a policy-based approach to enhance Aboriginal participation in decision-making processes and representation on institutional governance bodies. 		
<p>C. Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration in Aboriginal post-secondary education</p>	<p>Strengthened Agreements and Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage and explore opportunities to improve affiliation agreements between public and private Aboriginal institutions. ▪ Encourage and strengthen partnerships between public institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations through Aboriginal Service Plans. ▪ Revise Ministry policy regarding Aboriginal institutions based on Campus 2020 recommendations. ▪ Continue to work with MOU partners and other ministries to ensure ongoing communication, collaboration and advice. 	
Effective and accountable programs and services implementation and delivery	<p>D. Ensure effective measurement and progress monitoring</p>	<p>System-wide Data Tracking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop system-wide standard for data collection and tracking. ▪ Effective strategic planning and program management based on reliable data tracking. ▪ Develop inventory of institutional Aboriginal support services, Aboriginal programs, and relevant institutional/community data. <p>Performance Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop new performance indicators based on Aboriginal achievement.

