Environmental Scan of Educational Models Supporting Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education

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INTRODUCTION

This paper responds to a call from the Quality Indigenous and Equity Branch Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in Canberra, Australia to provide a scan of literature on promising practices in Canadian post-secondary institutions (PSE) that improve access, retention, and success for Aboriginal students. At the postsecondary level, educational programming for Aboriginal students operates within the context of diverse but similar missions and goals as post-secondary education in Canada undergoes another transformation. What all Aboriginal programming shares is the intent to advocate for improved academic access, retention and success for their students. While Aboriginal post-secondary programming can be found currently in many, if not most, institutions of higher education, they differ in terms of the target groups (First Nations (Indians), Inuit, and Métis) served, the size of Aboriginal population served, funding levels, and programming approaches. They are also at different stages of development with some institutions having instituted Aboriginal programming more recently, while others have had over 30 years of growth. Those with a longer record have also gone through multiple stages since the early 70's when most Aboriginal programming at the post-secondary level emerged primarily with funds from the federal government. Strategies to increase the access and address the presence of Aboriginal people in post-secondary institutions include a broad range of initiatives that fall into one of six models: (1) assimilation and disenfranchisement, (2) Aboriginal Student Support Model, (3) Dual Programming Model, (4) Distributed Education Model, (5) Systemic Change Model, and (6) Aboriginal Community-Based Model. These models are often overlapping, although the difference in the models is in the lives of the students between a traumatic experience and a therapeutic experience.

This paper presents first an introduction to the Canadian context of Aboriginal education and postsecondary education outcomes achieved so far, followed by a discussion of various models for Aboriginal education adopted by PSE institutions, along with specific examples of these types of programming. The paper next provides a general discussion of promising practices adopted within these models that have been found to improve academic outcomes for Aboriginal students in Canada, and explores a resulting dilemma. The paper concludes with a review of promising practices, key themes arising in the contemporary context of Aboriginal education, new directions for the postsecondary education of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and consideration as how these might be replicable to other nations.

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THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA: FIRST NATION, MÉTIS AND INUIT

In Canada, three Aboriginal peoples are recognized by s. 35 in the *Constitution Act, 1982*: (First Nations) Indians, Métis, and Inuit. Some Aboriginal peoples of Canada hold treaty-based and/or Aboriginal rights,[1] but these vary from group to group and even within groups. Treaty-based rights and associated obligations on the part of the federal government directly and indirectly affect Aboriginal people's ability to participate in post-secondary education

The traditional lands of First Nations peoples cover all but the most northern and northeastern edges of the territories now occupied by Canada.[2] First Nations have a unique and special relationship with the Government of Canada. Based on treaties and other historic agreements, this relationship "is one of (negotiated agreement with a view toward) peaceful coexistence based on equitable sharing of lands and resources, and ultimately on respect, recognition, and enforcement of our respective right to govern ourselves" (Assembly of First Nations, Description of the AFN (webpage), n.d.).

First Nation peoples include individuals who are registered under the federal *Indian Act*, as "Status Indians". Status Indian people have rights and benefits that are not available to Non-Status or Métis people (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2011). To be eligible for Indian status, an individual must be able to provide evidence that they are descended from someone who, between 1850 and 1951, was identified as an Indian in government records. As will be discussed later in this paper, the *Indian Act* includes additional terms that further specify who can and cannot be registered as a Status Indian, as well as conditions under which an individual will lose their status.

Métis people arose as a distinct Nation following the advent of the fur trade in west central North America during the 18th century (Métis National Council, The Métis Nation (web page), n.d.). They are the mixed offspring of Indian women and European fur traders, who formed distinct communities and married among themselves. They emerged with their own unique culture, traditions, language, way of life, collective consciousness, and nationhood. Their homeland runs from Ontario through British Columbia and into the Northwest Territories and United

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1 Aboriginal rights reflect the traditional ways of life of a given people; they may preserve, for example, a group's right to hunt, fish and harvest in the traditional territories of their ancestors.

2The term "First Nation" came into common usage as a self-descriptor for Aboriginal people in the 1970s, in part to acknowledge the sovereignty of the more than 630 First Nations communities in Canada.

States. They were legally recognized by the Canadian government as Aboriginal people when the Canadian Constitution was repatriated in 1982.

Inuit people are an original people of the land now known as Canada, and occupy a vast traditional territory that stretches from Russia, across Alaska and the arctic regions Canada, to Greenland (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, n.d.). Although encounters between the Inuit and Europeans occurred as early as the 1500's, it was not until the mid-1900s (following a 1939 Supreme Court ruling that Inuit were the responsibility of the federal government) that the federal government became more active in the Canadian arctic (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, n.d.). Like the Métis, Inuit were legally recognized as Aboriginal people by the Canadian government with the 1982 repatriation of the Constitution.

The term "Indigenous" refers broadly to the international context, and includes all peoples who have the following characteristics:

> a) priority of time, with respect to the occupation and use of a specific territory; b) the voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness, which may include the aspects of language, social organization, religion and spiritual values, modes of production, laws and institutions; c) self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups, or by State authorities, as a distinct collectivity; and d) an experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination, whether or not these conditions persist. (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 64)

THE STATE OF EDUCATION FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA

The latest available findings from Canada's national Census indicate that, between 2001 and 2006, the number of Aboriginal people who have completed a university degree has increased considerably (Statistics Canada, 2008). In 2001, 6% of Aboriginal people had a university degree (as compared to 20% in the non-Aboriginal population) and in 2006, 8% of Aboriginal people had a university degree (as compared to 23% in the non-Aboriginal population).

In terms of post-secondary completion rates for Aboriginal people, these numbers seem encouraging (a 33% increase from the 2001 base rate), but, as Statistics Canada notes in the report, over the same period, the gap between the percentages of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with university degrees has, in fact, widened. Additionally, as acknowledged in the notes accompanying the report, the Aboriginal population grew more quickly over this period than the non-Aboriginal population did. The relatively high (in comparison to the non-Aboriginal population) birth rates within the Aboriginal population may account for this, to some extent. A more important contributor to population growth during this period in terms of its influence on post-secondary participation and outcomes within the Aboriginal population,

however, is that "the fastest gain occurred among people who identified as Métis" (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census: Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census: Aboriginal population: The proportion of Aboriginal people with a university degree has grown, 2008). The number of people who identified as Métis in the Census nearly doubled between 1996 and 2006, even while the Métis fertility rate declined. Because of this, the substantial surge in the Métis-identified population has been attributed primarily to "cultural mobility", that is, a shift in how people see and report their cultural identity (Siggner & Associates, 2010). It is reasonable to assume, then, that the increased proportion of Métis-identified people within the Aboriginal-identified population may have some influence on levels of educational attainment within that population. Other data released by Statistics Canada that shows significant differences between educational attainment for Métis and First Nation and Inuit peoples supports this hypothesis is discussed in the paragraphs below.

As noted above, educational attainment levels for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identified populations vary dramatically. Figures 1 and 2 show educational attainment levels (as indicated by highest certificate, diploma or degree held) for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identified populations of Canada between the ages of 15 to 24 years. Aboriginal people in this age group are far more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to have not completed any certificate, diploma or degree program, including high school (Figure 1). Post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree completion rates for Aboriginal people in this age group are less than half that of their non-Aboriginal peers. Similarly, those who do complete post-secondary programs are for more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers are to have completed apprenticeship or trades, or other non-university certificates or diplomas and far less likely to have completed a university certificate, diploma or degree (Figure 2).
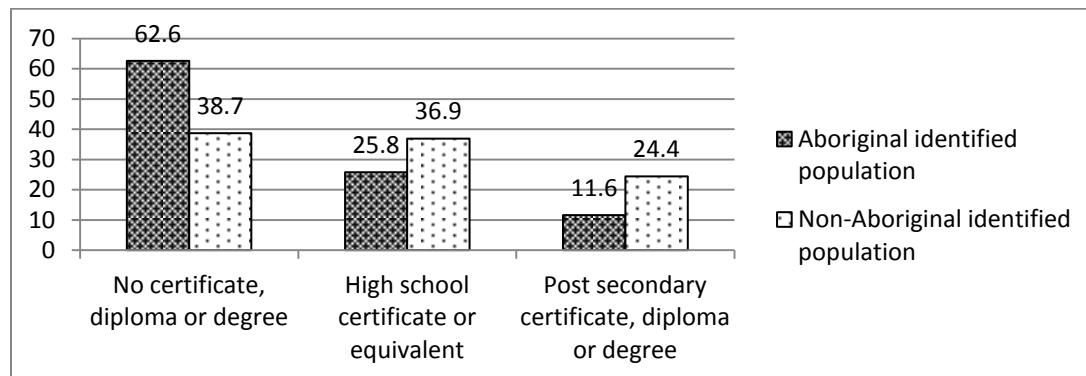
Figure 1. Educational attainment levels, as measured by highest certificate, diploma or degree held, for Aboriginal identified and non-Aboriginal identified populations in Canada, age 15 to 24 years, expressed as percentage of total population in this age group (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Identity, Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree,

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Major Field of Study - Classification of Instructional Programs, Area of Residence, Age Groups and Sex for the Population 15 Years & Over of Canada, Provinces & Territories, 2006 Census (table), 2008)

Figure 2. Highest postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree held for Aboriginal identified and non-Aboriginal identified populations in Canada, 15 to 24 years of age, expressed as percentage of total Aboriginal identified and non-Aboriginal identified population within age group holding post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Identity, Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree, Major Field of Study - Classification of Instructional Programs, Area of Residence, Age Groups and Sex for the Population 15 Years & Over of Canada, Provinces & Territories, 2006 Census (table), 2008).
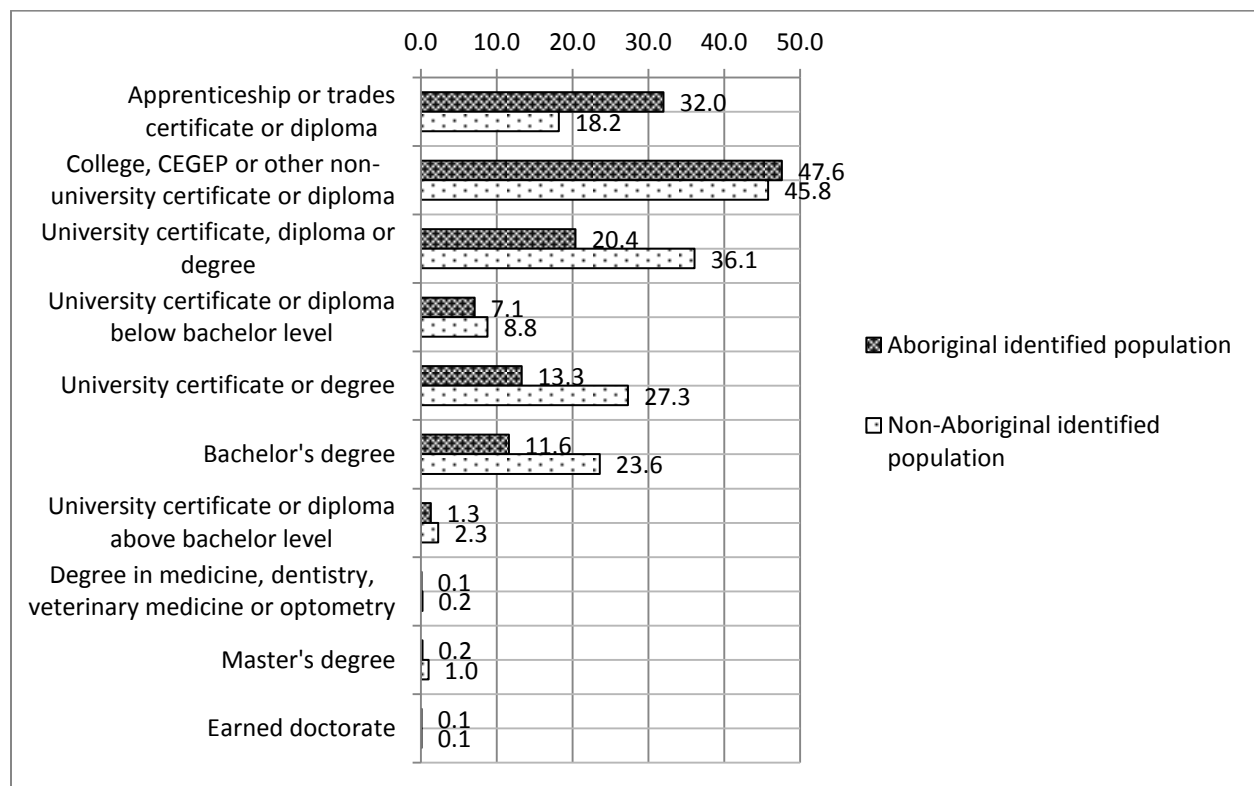
Data from the 2006 Census also shows that, for people between the ages of 35 to 44, the difference between the percentage of the Aboriginal population that has completed either a high school certificate or equivalent or a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree and that of the non-Aboriginal population is considerably less than it is in the 15 to 24 years age groups. This suggests that access to lifelong learning may make an important contribution to post-secondary completion for Aboriginal peoples.

In addition to the differences between Aboriginal identified and non-Aboriginal identified populations, there are significant differences between the three distinct cultural groups that constitute Canada's Aboriginal population. In the data collected in the 2006 Census for the Aboriginal-identified population 15 to

24 years of age, a far greater proportion of the Métis identified population (49.0%) has completed a certificate, diploma or degree than that of the First Nation (31.6%) or Inuit (23.6%) populations (Figure 3). Similar differences exist with respect to high school certificate or equivalent (33.0%, 22.5% and 15.5% respectively) or a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree (16.0%, 9.1% and 8.0% respectively). Within the percentage of the population that has completed post-secondary programs, Métis-identified people are
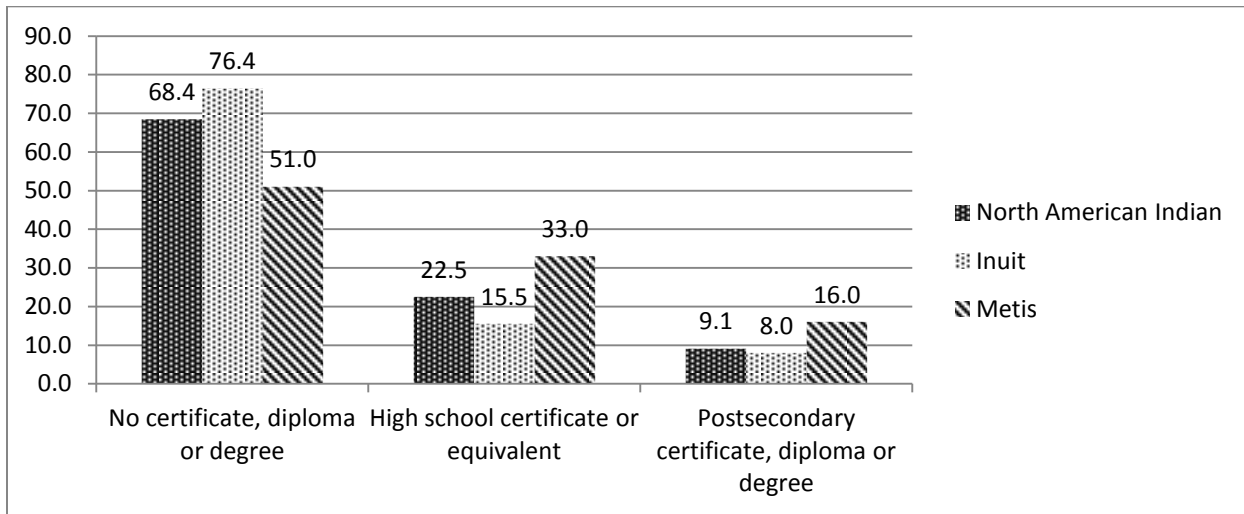
Figure 3. Highest certificate, diploma or degree for First Nation (North American Indian), Inuit and Métis identified populations15 to 24 years of age, expressed as percentage of total population in each group (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Identity, Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree, Major Field of Study - Classification of Instructional Programs, Area of Residence, Age Groups and Sex for the Population 15 Years & Over of Canada, Provinces & Territories, 2006 Census (table), 2008).

Figure 4. Highest postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree held for First Nation (North American Indian), Inuit and Métis identified populations in Canada, 15 to 24 years of age, expressed as percentage of total population within each group holding post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Identity, Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree, Major Field of Study - Classification of Instructional Programs, Area of Residence, Age Groups and Sex for the Population 15 Years & Over of Canada, Provinces & Territories, 2006 Census (table), 2008).

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Values shown on chart:

	Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	University certificate, diploma or degree
North American Indian	36.0	47.2	16.9
Inuit	39.1	49.1	11.8
Metis	27.4	47.9	24.7
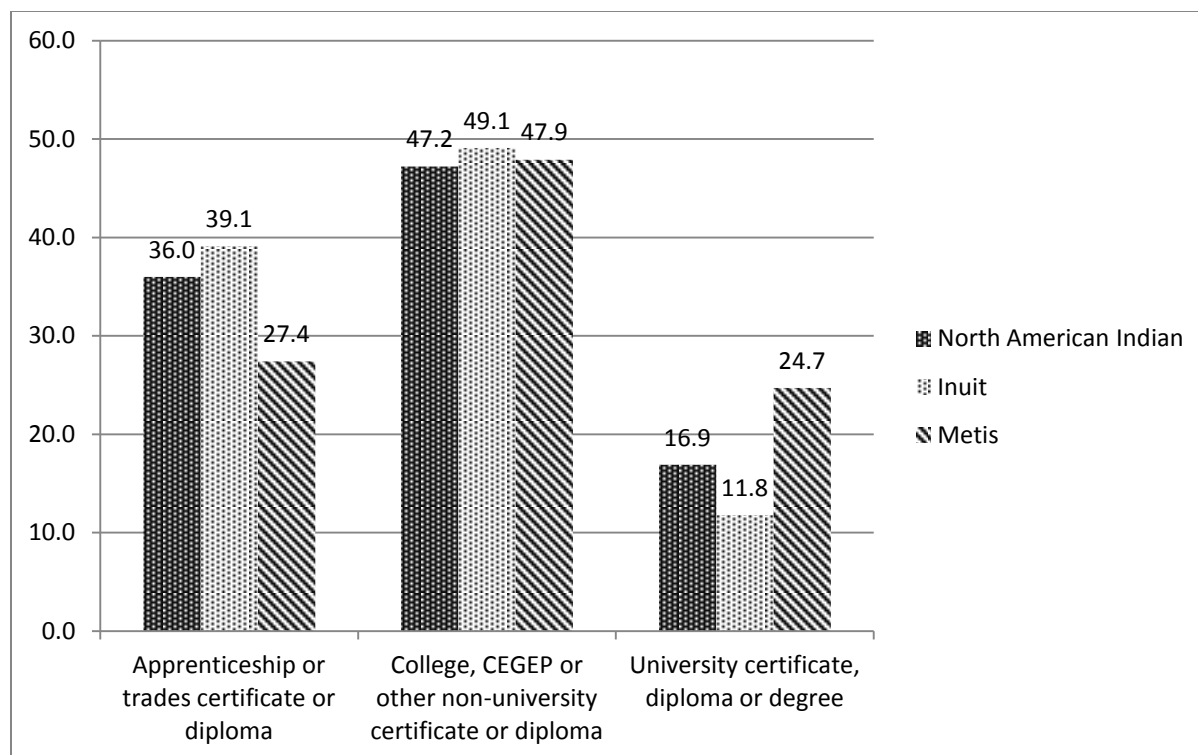
considerably more likely to have completed a university certificate, diploma or degree (Figure 4). Given that, at the end of this period, Métis people constituted one-third of the Aboriginal population in Canada, the striking differences between the highest levels of education completed within the Métis population and those within the First Nation and Inuit population, the overall improvements in highest levels of education completed within the Aboriginal population as a whole must be attributed, to some extent, to the sudden and substantial surge in the Métis population.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION OF CANADA

In the 2006 Census, 1,172,790 people in Canada identified as First Nation, Métis or Inuit, constituting 3.8% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census, 2009). Between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in the country increased by 45%, a rate almost six times faster than that of the non-Aboriginal population, and Canada is now second only to New Zealand in the proportion of indigenous people in its population. As already noted, the Métis population

grew far more quickly (91%) between 1996 and 2006 than the First Nation and Inuit populations and Métis people now account for one-third of the total Aboriginal population. First Nation people remain the largest group, constituting 60% of the Aboriginal population, and the Inuit population now account for 4% of the Aboriginal population. The growth of the Aboriginal population has been attributed to high birth rates and other demographic factors, as well as shifts in cultural identity.

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Aboriginal population of Canada reflect some of the sources of the barriers to post-secondary education for Aboriginal people, as well as the urgency of the need to improve access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal peoples. These include:

- **Population Distribution: Aboriginal people live in all regions of Canada, but the vast majority - eight of every ten Aboriginal people - live in the central and western provinces and territories. In the most northern territories of western Canada, Aboriginal people constitute as much as 85% of the total population. In the 2006 Census, 54% of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas, in comparison with 81% of non-Aboriginal people. While the proportion of the Aboriginal population that is urban is growing, Aboriginal people are far more likely than non-Aboriginal people to live in small urban centres and in rural areas.**
- **Age Characteristics: The Aboriginal population of Canada is much younger and growing more quickly than the non-Aboriginal population. Children and youth (aged 24 and under) make up nearly half (48%) of the Aboriginal population (as compared to 31% of the non-Aboriginal population) and the median age of the Aboriginal population is 27 years (as compared to 40 in the non-Aboriginal population). Population projections suggest that Aboriginal people will account for a growing proportion of the young adults in Canada and, similarly, should constitute an increasing proportion of new entrants in the labour force and the postsecondary system.**
- **Living Conditions: While the majority of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under (58%) lived with both parents, Aboriginal children are much more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to live with a lone parent of either sex, a grandparent or with another relative. Aboriginal children are also twice as likely as non-Aboriginal children to live in multiple-family households. Aboriginal people are four times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to live in crowded homes and three times as likely to live in a home that needs major repairs. Findings from the 2006 Census also indicate that Aboriginal people have less stability in their housing than non-Aboriginal people do.**

- **Economic Conditions: In 2005, the LICO or (as it is known popularly) poverty line in Canada for a single person with no dependants ranged from $14,303 (for those residing in a rural area) to $20,778 (in a large city). For a family of three (the average family size in Canada at that time), it ranged from $21,891 to $31,801. In that same year, the median and average incomes for the non-Aboriginal population sat comfortably at $25,979 and $35,934. For the Aboriginal population, however, the mean ($16,796) and average ($23,935) incomes were much lower, indicating that a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population was living at or near the poverty line. This was especially true for the First Nation population (where median income sat at $14,517 and average at $20,996) and the Inuit population (where median income was $16,969 and average $25,461). Métis people fared somewhat better, with a median income of $20,936 and an average income of $28,227 (Statistics Canada, Income Statistics in Constant (2005) Dollars, Age Groups, Aboriginal Identity, Registered Indian Status and Aboriginal Ancestry, Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree and Sex for the Population 15 Years and Over, 2008).**

Statistics related to labour force activity point to some of the reason for this disparity. The labour force participation rate for the Aboriginal population in Canada (63.1%) is close to that of the non-Aboriginal population (66.9%). However for the Aboriginal population as a whole, the employment rate (53.8%) reported from the 2006 Census is much lower (and even lower for the First Nation and Inuit populations, at 48.3% and 48.9%) than that of the non-Aboriginal population (62.7%) and the unemployment rate (14.8%) much higher (again, particularly with respect to the First Nation and Inuit populations, at 18.0% and 2.3%) than that of the non-Aboriginal population (6.3%) (Statistics Canada, Labour Force Activity, Aboriginal Identity, Age Groups, Sex and Area of Residence for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, 2008).

SIX MODELS OF ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN CANADA: 1867-2011

As noted, since the 70s when Aboriginal people have taken a substantial role in postsecondary education, educational success in terms of graduation at high school level have been on the rise. With more students graduating, Aboriginal students are enrolling in post-secondary programs at a substantially higher rate largely due to the increased local counseling in schools, local supports offered by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and lack of employment for youth after high school. While most post-secondary institutions are increasingly

committed to finding ways of helping Aboriginal students succeed, they have not kept pace with First Nations community-based programming or institutions in terms of how Aboriginal successes have been achieved. Students may be able to get accepted and find funds to go to colleges and universities, but it is their retention and continued success that is at risk. Overall retention and success rates for Aboriginal students remain much lower than those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The increasing number of Aboriginal graduates gives the impression that education outcomes are fast improving but severe limitations on this growth still exist (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2004).

1. Assimilation and Enfranchisement Model

Throughout much of the history of education in Canada, government policy and actions have made education, in essence, a threat to the cultural identity of Aboriginal peoples. In 1857, the Province of Canada passed the *Civilization Act*. The stated purpose and goal of the Act was to "civilize" the Indian, remove all legal distinctions between them and other Canadians, and integrate them as individuals into provincial society. The Act stated that Indians would not be provided any of the rights and privileges of citizenship accorded to European Canadians "unless they could read and write either English or French, be free of debt and be of 'good moral character'" (Kulchyski, 2007, p. 55).

Following the creation of the federal government in 1867, which was given authority over Indians and lands reserved for Indians, formal education was the chosen instrument for the assimilation and absorption Indians to British culture (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005; R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2004; Orr, Roberts, & Ross, 2008; Battiste, Treaties and First Nations (unpublished report), 2006; Kirkness, 1999; Price & Burtch, 2010). This became the first model, called the assimilation and disenfranchisement model, of post-secondary education. In 1868, the first federal parliamentary Act concerning its constitutional authority over Indians authorized the Governor General to use trust money from the sale of Indian lands to support schools that provided education to Indians. Soon after, the federal government passed an Act that, established processes and legal conditions by which Indians would cease being Indians and become *enfranchised* citizens. Federal *Indian Act* declared that any status Indians, who joined a profession or attended postsecondary education, would lose their status and could no longer live on a reserve (*Indian Act*, 1876, S.C. 1876, c.18, s. 86(1)). Any Indian person who proceeded beyond the level of Grade 8 was – voluntarily or involuntarily - "enfranchised". The provisions that forced Aboriginal people to surrender their Indian status if they pursued higher education were not removed from the *Indian Act* until 1951 (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005), creating a chilly climate for further education for most Aboriginal peoples.

In the *Indian Act,* the federal bureaucracy arrogated control of primary and secondary education for all status Indian children living on reserves. To speed

the goal of assimilation, First Nation children were recruited to attend mission schools or Indian residential schools run by various religious groups and schooling was made mandatory. When school attendance became mandatory, Aboriginal children were removed from their families and placed in residential schools, typically located far from their home communities. Overall, about 130 schools were supported financially by the federal government, and operated primarily by churches in every territory and province except Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. At its peak in 1930, there were 80 residential schools in Canada, with over 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children having been removed from their communities to attend residential schools (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011).

At the residential schools, the children were subjected to a severe regimen of aggressive assimilation. They were separated by age groups and gender, thus from other family members, forbidden to speak their ancestral languages, wear their traditional clothing or hair styles, participate in traditional ceremonies or, present any other recognizable expression of the traditional cultures or ways of being of their people. They were required to contribute their labour to maintain the schools and typically spent no more than half of each day in the classroom. What little instruction they received at the schools was not enough to prepare them to integrate into Anglo-European culture, but more than enough (in the form of mandatory religious and vocational training) to ensure that they felt disconnected from their families, home communities and from their own identities.

In 1894, the *Indian Act* was revised to extend the bureaucracy's ability to force First Nation children to attend primary or secondary school (Henderson, 1995). Over the next sixty years, the federal bureaucracy further refined its agenda over First Nation and Métis students "by controlling the [primary and secondary] education of their youth" (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005, p. 15). In 1951, the federal Parliament terminated the authority of local Chiefs and Council to establish rules or regulations in regards to the formal education of their people, and, in their place, the federal bureaucracy was authorized to establish agreements with provincial or territorial governments for the education of Indian children. This would include some post-secondary education.

The enfranchisement model was a failure in terms of motivating or stimulating Indians to leave their homes, families or communities for education. It became a dark period of neglect and marginalization. However, the federal bureaucracy continued its policy of assimilation for what they perceived were deficient peoples.

Between 1894 and 1996, when the last residential school in Canada closed, generations of Aboriginal children were debilitated, devastated, and disaffected. The losses incurred through that experience are still felt today. In the

early years of the residential school system, as many as half the children sent to the schools did not survive their education, dying of tuberculosis, smallpox, other diseases, from attempting to run away, or, as some have suggested, loneliness. Survivors of the residential school system have revealed that extensive physical, mental, spiritual and sexual abuse were commonplace at the schools. Families and communities lost their children and children lost their families and their communities. They lost their languages, their culture, their sense of self, the experience of being the beloved child of a parent, and the experience of growing up as someone who belonged in and was valued by their community. They were poorly prepared for adulthood, and when children were finally able to leave the schools and return home, they often struggled with multiple layers of success and failure to find a safe, secure, nourishing place in their families and communities. These experiences reverberated intergenerationally, with impacts that have trickled down from the residential school survivors through their children and grandchildren to affect many others who never attended the schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2011). Today, Aboriginal individuals, families, communities and Nations are still working to heal from the intergenerational trauma inflicted by the residential schools. For many in the Aboriginal community, a legacy of this historic experience is lingering distrust of formal education (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2004; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009; Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010) and lost capacity in terms of Aboriginal languages, ceremonies that lift their spirits, literacy, ability to bond with others, and life-long learning, as well as losses to academic preparation, goal setting, role models, and ability to connect with schools, schooling, and formalized learning.

2. Student Support Model

Before the late 1960s, the barriers to Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education were largely overwhelming. Canada's federal government did not allocate resources specifically for First Nations and Inuit peoples' post-secondary education needs until the late 60s (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000). In 1968, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) first allocated funding to provide financial assistance to Status Indians and Inuit for technical, vocational, college and university training and in the 1970s, AANDC began to fund Indian students for post-secondary education in the provinces. The bureaucracy asserted that postsecondary education for Indians was a privilege and not obligatory under the treaties. Post-secondary funding for Indians thus has been issued as a policy under the federal government and persistently contested by First Nations leadership.

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By the mid-1960s, approximately 200 Status Indians were enrolled at Canadian colleges and universities. By the mid-1970s, the number of Aboriginal people in post-secondary programs began to rise dramatically. After the federal government accepted the First Nations bid for Indian Control of Indian Education in 1973, the federal government began providing grants to existing post-secondary institutions to deliver programs that targeted Aboriginal students' capacity building in areas of teacher training, social work, and law. During this time, some incentive monies were added to the student allotments for their continuing into graduate education. The provincial government has responsibility for provincial education of its citizens, and has contributed to the education of Métis people through the Saskatchewan Urban Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). With money flowing, many universities were quick to pick up on these programs and to make them run parallel to their own programs. At the same time, First Nation leaders and educators recognized the need to act quickly to gain control of post-secondary education for First Nation students. In 1971, Blue Quills First Nations College in Alberta was the first to begin program delivery as a community controlled First Nations institution of higher learning. This was followed by many other First Nations communities turning over old Indian residential school buildings into colleges.

The First Nation Student Support Model focuses on providing supports that address specific needs of entering and continuing Aboriginal students, operating on the assumption that this, in turn, will support improved academic outcomes for these students. This includes supporting students' need to connect with their own culture, to the extent that institutions were willing to accommodate. Typically, Student Support models operate within the context of the conventional Eurocentric educational models that prevail in post-secondary institutions in Canada, with the expectation that these supports will transform students' deficiencies into competencies and successful completion. Supports provided through this model often focus on students' community context, bringing Aboriginal Elders, ceremonies, rituals, and cultural activities into the institution.

The First Nation Student Support Model as an 'add-and-stir' variety of programming predominates in post-secondary institutions in Canada. In this model, Aboriginal content and programming are added, leaving all other aspects of the institution the same. Since the early 1970's, when multi-cultural education came into vogue, post-secondary institutions have looked for ways to find federal or provincial funds to bring diverse cultures and marginalized communities into campus life. At some institutions, Aboriginal students are able to access to socio-cultural, linguistic, or spiritual supports. Other institutions have introduced supports that help Aboriginal students build skills they may need to succeed as students, including access to counselling, tutoring, or literacy training, and other activities for which institutions may be able to secure funding

from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The Support model also encompasses activities such as active recruitment of Aboriginal faculty and staff, Aboriginal student centres or houses, study labs or lounges, childcare, Elders in residence, peer mentoring, and scholarship or bursary programs targeting Aboriginal students with financial needs.

Most post-secondary institutions have formalized partnerships at the high school level to help prepare students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, for the transition to the life of as a post-secondary student. While these activities have helped to generate some success in some areas for Aboriginal students, the model suffers overall in that it does not address systemic issues that are deeply embedded in Eurocentric higher education system and that have marginalized both the histories and present-day experiences of Aboriginal people and Nations. The Aboriginal Student Support Model focuses on Aboriginal students, thus builds on a deficit theory of Aboriginal students' learning, enabling them to develop skills and competencies in culturally contextualized learning environments. Institutions that adopt this model may mix Aboriginal culture into the learning environment but, in all other ways, the institution remains the same. These institutions rarely move beyond targeted Aboriginal program and do not address students' preconceived beliefs, values, and attitudes that foster an unsafe classroom environment for Aboriginal students in them or address the privileging of western and colonial knowledges and languages, instructors' limited knowledge of Aboriginal histories and contexts, and insensitivities that may arise in classrooms about Aboriginal peoples' contemporary contexts (developed within colonialism and Eurocentric superiority). Without this, Aboriginal students often stay marginalized in specific areas of study where Aboriginal faculty members reside or where Aboriginal courses are available and the sensitivities of Aboriginal people are addressed.

3. Dual Programming Model

The Dual Programming Model of Aboriginal education resembles aspects of the student support model but differs in that it acknowledges the systemic barriers and cultural discrimination within the education systems. Since 1973, when First Nations peoples called for Indian Control of Indian Education (NBI), the bureaucracy has allocated funding to support participation in specific professional disciplines. This funding has enabled the development, at several Canadian post-secondary institutions, of cohort-type programs within Native Studies, education, law, nursing, social work and other faculties that are amenable to change. Aboriginal content is integrated into specific academic areas, providing a conceived program that transitions students into the university, introduces a cultural component into the academic program, offers support services, and produces Aboriginal graduates who may or may not have had classes with other non-Aboriginal students. A cohort model typically can be easily adapted for in-community delivery, enabling students to take classes in or

near their communities or to integrate work-experience activities into their academic programs.

5. Systemic Change Model

The Systemic Change Model seeks to generate a more comprehensive inclusion of Aboriginal content throughout the post-secondary institutions that have adopted it, as well as recognizing that non-Aboriginal faculty, students and staff have a role in affecting Aboriginal student outcomes. This model has found ways to introduce Aboriginal knowledge, language, perspectives, content and curricula into some or all level of post-secondary education. While still in its infancy of development, this model slowly has been evolving as a response to constitutional reform in 1982, and the transforming relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government m (Battiste, Constitutional Reconciliation of Education for Aboriginal Peoples, 2008; Battiste, Treaties and First Nations (unpublished report), 2006). With the *Constitution Act, 1982*, Canada repatriated its Constitution from United Kingdom and further established the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In Section 35, the *Constitution Act* recognizes and affirms both existing Aboriginal rights (to maintain activities, practices and traditions that are integral to the distinct and diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada), and existing and future treaty rights. It provides protection of Aboriginal title, and the use of land for traditional practices. Section 52 establishes that Aboriginal and treaty rights were part of the supreme law in Canada and that all federal and provincial statutes to be valid must be consistent with these rights.

Subsequent decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada have affirmed and clarified the implications of Sections 35 and 52. The Supreme Court has held that it is no longer acceptable to be bound by judicial biases and prejudice of previous eras, and that Aboriginal rights and First Nation treaties should be construed liberally and resolved in favour of Aboriginal peoples. This applied to the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to educate their young (*R. v. Côté*, [1996] 3 S.C.R. 139 at para. 56) and the various provisions in the treaties for the education of the young. Prior to constitutional reform, the federal and provincial statutes regarding education had ignored these aboriginal and treaty rights.

In the context of the constitutional reform and subsequent Supreme Court decisions affirming aboriginal and treaty rights, the education of Aboriginal people involves both Aboriginal rights (including the customary right of Aboriginal parents to educate their children) and treaty rights (the Crown's commitments to provide schools, equipment, teachers and instruction in various treaties). Consequently, in 1988, the bureaucracy initiated the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP), which provided support to post-secondary institutions in the provinces to develop and deliver post-secondary programs designed for First Nation students. In 1989, it established what is now known as the Post-

Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), a more comprehensive funding program that provides funding for all levels of post-secondary education to Status Indians and Inuit students. Funding available through PSSSP includes tuition support, travel support (for students who must leave their home communities to attend post-secondary programs), book allowance, and support for living expenses. AANDC also provides financial support to Status Indian and Inuit students enrolled in University and College Entrance Preparation (UCEP) programs, designed to enable students to attain academic levels required for other degree and diploma programs.

The constitutional reform requires faculty and staff, and professional training in the university community, to understand Aboriginal knowledge as the source of Aboriginal and treaty rights. While relatively few institutions in Canada have adopted this model, however, interest is growing. Post-secondary institutions that previously could be considered conventionally Eurocentric are increasingly aware of the importance of diverse knowledge systems and inclusiveness, and recognizing that this cannot be achieved by simply lodging add-on programming in Aboriginal-specific programs to Eurocentric departments or disciplinary units. The whole institution must take responsibility for creating change in respecting and comprehending knowledge systems. By doing so, post-secondary institutions become accessible to – and capable of meeting the needs of – an increasingly diverse student body.

Many of the institutions adopting the Systemic model also maintain activities and initiatives established earlier to support Aboriginal student success so that, for example, even while dual programming may continue to exist in education, nursing, law or social work faculties, all departments and the university as a whole are now encouraged to change recruitment activities, curriculum, scholarships and bursaries, and other forms of student support to ensure that Aboriginal students have meaningful opportunities to participate and succeed in all programming. Institutions may also advance anti-racist/anti-oppression training for students, and professional and curriculum development for staff. These actions engage the whole institution in rethinking white privileges and exploring ways to undo notions of Aboriginal deficiency and dependency. Going beyond simple changes to the ways in which the institutions interact with Aboriginal students and, instead, making significant systemic changes at all levels of the institutions is critical to the success of all students.

In many post-secondary institutions, in the last decade a growing interest among some faculty in anti-racist and anti-oppressive education has fostered a progressive outlook toward what Aboriginal education should include. Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, culturalist policies toward Aboriginal peoples, racism, assumptions of white superiority, assimilation, integration as a one way street, all have illustrated that Aboriginal education cannot be just for Aboriginal students, but that an education that fosters an awareness of white dominance,

hegemony, power, patriarchy, homophobia, control and internalized racism, low self-esteem and self-concept, collective anomie, nihilism, and cyclical violence require a different kind of education for white majority students as well as Aboriginal or marginalized students. As such, anti-racist and anti-oppressive education is a leading method for achieving a balanced awareness among students. At the University of Saskatchewan, as in other universities across Canada such as University of Manitoba, University of Regina, Ontario Institute of Study of Education, antiracist education has been met with resistance and backlash (St. Denis & Schick, 2003). After 15 years of on-going efforts to educate white students, there is currently a new movement toward change as Student Teachers Against Racism Society (STARS) is making inroads toward being an informal support group for all teacher candidates at the U of S to learn about these dominance and power issues.

In the Dual model, post-secondary structure, disciplines, and faculty knowledge change only for the students who participate in the programs. Things remain the same for all other students. A problem that emerged soon after post-secondary institutions began incorporating the Dual model is that students who graduate from these programs are often subjected to suggestions or assertions that their programs were inferior to the conventional programs, despite the fact that most have had to follow the prescribed curriculum as others had with some minor cultural content added, as well as opportunities to work in Aboriginal communities. This stigma continues. The cohort model has been particularly successful in training Aboriginal teachers and social workers in Canada. For example, more than 1500 Aboriginal teachers have been trained in Saskatchewan using this model.

While Systemic Change Models are currently pursued at some institutions, there is still much work to be done in terms of how these are being implemented. Unlike the community-based models, conventional provincially-funded institutions are seeking to have colleges and units take responsibility for improving outcomes for Aboriginal students as undergraduate and graduate studies by many diverse means, including engaging Aboriginal communities, integrating Aboriginal content in their curricula, providing scholarships, mentoring, recruitment plans, monitoring indicators of success, hiring Aboriginal faculty and staff and Elders in Residence, and many other initiatives meant to improve the successes of Aboriginal students. The core governance may also include special seats in the Board of Governors for Aboriginal representatives, and designated key positions, such as a Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal issues at the University of Saskatchewan, an Associate Dean in the College of Education at University of British Columbia, a President's Advisory Council on Indigenous Education at University of Victoria, and Aboriginal representation in senior management and a First Nations University-wide

Strategic Plan (including Aboriginal representation in senior management) at Simon Fraser University.

6. Distributive Educational Model

The Distributed Education Model has been used to provide in-community, on-line and web-based conference distance education to remote areas, enabling students to receive an education without leaving their jobs or their home communities. Many First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities are in rural areas at some great distances from urban centres and universities. The strength of these initiatives has largely depended on the technologies available to the institutions and to the communities receiving education. Under the funding of the Canadian Council on Learning and the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge, leaders in technology and learning the Genesis Group conducted a study of promising practices in technology and learning. Their list includes elementary and adult learning initiatives, but what is important to postsecondary institutions is what they considered to be the key principles and criteria for identifying promising practices associated with technology and learning. Both the principles and criteria for selecting promising practices in technology are informative to fashioning distributed education models using technologies in Aboriginal communities:

Principles:

- **Local measurement and decision-making.**
- **Learning is guided and directed by a vital and active community.**
- **Respect of the whole person who is part of family, community, and Nation is demonstrated.**
- **Holistic approach is used.**
- **Informal learning is valued over structured and formal learning.**
- **Exposure to culturally sensitive learning environments emphasizing pride, identity, Aboriginal language and cultural knowledge.**
- **Working with Elders, languages specialists, traditional teachers and parents.**
- **Storytelling.**
- **Innovative cultural programming.**
- **Access to local education rather than having to leave community and home.**
- **Relevance to work and application.**
- **Flexible and community-based approaches.**
- **Blocked times of learning with acceptance of blocked time away from "school".**
- **Being able to maintain a work schedule while learning.**

- **Aboriginal teachers using Aboriginal language with a community focus (not canned or rote).**
- **The more Aboriginal language speakers there are, the more successful youth are at learning and practicing language.**
- **Bilingual learning – both English and Aboriginal experiences.**
- **Distinct language and culture classes.**
- **Family and community support is crucial.**
- **Family members are the first teachers and the primary educators for sharing traditions and beliefs.**
- **A family engaged in the learning process as well as Chief and Council support.**
- **School administration must be approachable and continue to "reach out" to families even if the response is limited.**
- **Offer full participation in social, economic, political and education advancement.**
- **Activities that contribute to free choice of where to work and live**

Criteria for success models:

- **Verify that the learning technology in the example functions in one or more of the following ways: as a tool for accessing formal education opportunities; as a place to maintain and revitalize cultures; to promote Aboriginal political goals; to promote intercultural dialogue with the mainstream community to build community and social well-being**
- **Aboriginal learners are benefitting from the learning technologies being used based on their communications and learning preferences.**
- **Aboriginal peoples are utilizing the technology in a manner that suits their needs and empowers them.**
- **Aboriginal learners are able to continuously benefit from their experience with information and other peoples in technological environments that routinely may include computers, Internet, instant communication and multimedia resources.**
- **The example supports a multi-dimensional view of learning by providing more than information and data alone.**
- **Aboriginal youth who are open to the possibilities of e-learning are well represented in the example.**

- **Elders have been involved in the development of learning materials used in the example.**
- **The example delivers practical, employment-related skills to male in remote Aboriginal communities.**
- **What does the learning technology enhance or intensify?**
- **What does the technology render obsolete or displace?**
- **What does the technology retrieve that was previously obsolete?**
- **Is the program restricted to "Aboriginal content"?**
- **Does the program transmit Elders' knowledge/indigenous knowledge?**
- **Does the program transmit Aboriginal language/history/culture?**
- **Are there personal stories of successful learning?**
- **Is affordable and available in-home access to high-speed Internet available to Aboriginal learners? (Genesis Group, n.d, on line at http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/aboutccl/knowledgecentres/AboriginalLearning/Themes/AnimationThemeBundle6-BestPractices.html)**

7. Indigenous Community-Based Model

The Indigenous Community-Based Model operates within Aboriginal communities or target group areas, emerges from Aboriginal knowledge, consciousness, aboriginal and treaty rights, and identity, and incorporates an Aboriginal governance model. It recognizes that post-secondary institutions that are locally owned, developed, inspired, and delivered have the greatest potential of meeting the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Indigenous community-based institutions draw on and build local capacity, maximizing opportunities for the later (rather than 'top down) transfer of knowledge and skills. These institutions involve students, families, Elders and others to create an enhanced sense of community ownership over learning (Fulford, 2007). Programming at these institutions typically draws on local languages, cultures, spirituality, knowledge and learning frameworks, and creativity to generate a learning environment that engages students and provides an empowering balance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and understanding.

Typically, these institutions will have a strong governance structure that draws from their communities, and elders will have a significant role in all aspects of programming. The programs emphasize learners' personal, spiritual, physical, social and, of course, academic transformation, using holistic approaches to measure and assess students' progress and accomplishments. Embracing a learner's personal holistic needs (which, in turn, means recognizing the socio-historic, racialized, economic and political context in which they live, along with the effects this context may have on their self-concept, identity, self-esteem,

and relationships with others) prepares them to learn more effectively and prepares the institution to teach more effectively.

The section below provides examples of programming and other activities at post-secondary institutions in Canada that exemplify each of the five models presented here.

EXEMPLARY PRACTICES AND MODELS: 1973-2011

Aboriginal Student Support Model

The Aboriginal Student Support Model provides the framework for a broad range of activities and approaches. Outreach, mentoring and other activities may begin to encourage and prepare Aboriginal children and youth to participate in post-secondary education while they are still in the K-12 system. Other activities occur on campus, focusing on the transition or integration of Aboriginal post-secondary students into campus life or building personal skills or capacity that will support their ability to succeed academically.

Building the Skills and Capacity of Potential or Existing Post-Secondary Students

At Northern College in Ontario, the Admissions Officer, Recruitment/ Liaison Officer and Second Career Specialist work together to provide a first point of contact service for Aboriginal students. Those requiring assistance can be walked through, providing an opportunity to discuss any missing admission requirements and propose options in a timely manner, so that applicants can meet requirements through upgrading, adult education centres, high schools, independent learning centres, etc. In conjunction with the Admissions office, Native Student Advisors make Aboriginal applicants aware of the services available to them at the college. These include cultural centres in campus communities, a Native Student Association, Northern College Aboriginal Council on Education, Student Success Centres and peer tutoring. Prospective students can visit one of the Northern College campuses and a team of faculty travel to northern communities to tell students about their programs (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010).

Each summer, the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan offers an eight week-program for Aboriginal students provisionally accepted to law schools throughout Canada. The program focuses on advancing analytic and academic skills in reading, writing, and problem solving, and introduces students to the process, substance and demands of first year law school. Each year, as many as 40 Aboriginal students participate. The program has been very successful, with about 85% of the participants who are recommended for

admission completing their law degrees (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009).

On-Campus Access to Culture-Based Supports

The University of British Columbia's First Nation Longhouse is an on-campus facility, designed to serve as a home-away-from-home for Aboriginal students. Services available at the Longhouse include a Coordinator of Student Services, personal counselling, a computer centre, subsidized childcare, an Aboriginal library, social activities, Elders' programs, and graduation programs. The Longhouse also hosts several Aboriginal education programs, as well as the Institute of Aboriginal Health (Orr, Roberts, & Ross, 2008; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009).

Addressing Financial Need

From 1998 to 2008, the federal government provided funding to support post-secondary education to the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, which provided scholarships and conducted research into post-secondary access. Aboriginal students were able to access as much as $3,000 each year to cover the costs of their education. With a change in government towards the end of this period, funding for this important source of financial support has not been renewed. It has been replaced by the Canadian Student Grants Program, which reaches more students, but provides a maximum grant of only $1250 per year.

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) is now the largest non-government funding source for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis post-secondary students across Canada. NAAF offers scholarships and bursaries for students in four major categories: Post-Secondary Education, Fine Arts Bursary Awards Program, Aboriginal Health Careers, and Oil & Gas Aboriginal Trades & Technology (National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, Building Brighter Futures, 2011). NAAF also supports an annual national recognition of Aboriginal leaders in 14 categories and hosts a televised gala to announce the awardees and their distinguished service. Among these are Aboriginal students, youth role models, and Elders who inspire and encourage Aboriginal youth to aspire to new heights.

Outreach in K-12 System and in Aboriginal Communities

The Native Ambassador Post-Secondary Initiative, a collaborative project of the University of Calgary, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and Mount Royal College in Alberta, visit Aboriginal youth in junior and high schools throughout the province, and offer campus tours for visiting schools. The Ambassadors provide positive role models, along with information on post-secondary

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education, to Aboriginal youth (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009).

CareerTrek, a joint program of the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg and Red River College in Manitoba works with students (beginning at age 10 and continuing until they are 18) and their families to provide opportunities that demonstrate the value of education, careers and lifelong learning (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009).

DUAL PROGRAMMING MODEL

Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs

Aboriginal students in northern Saskatchewan can complete undergraduate degrees in education through the University of Saskatchewan's Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP). With on-site instructors in the northern community of La Ronge, NORTEP offers nearly 600 university credit classes to students from 35 communities in the north. Over 80% of students who have gone through the program are employed as teachers or other educational professionals in the north and the program has resulted in an increase from 3% to 25% in the proportion of those teachers who are Aboriginal, along with a reduction in turnover from 75% to 25% (NORTEP-NORPAC, n.d.);

Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan urban centres can also access the Saskatchewan Urban Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), offered at campuses in three urban centres by the Gabriel Dumont Institute, in cooperation with the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and the provincial Ministry of Education. SUNTEP is a four-year, fully accredited Bachelor of Education program, provided in an environment that supports the identities, knowledges, and personal needs of Métis students. First Nations and Métis content is included in curriculum. Through both their academic work and alliances and work study activities in public schools, students connect with First Nations and Métis culture and languages, and access the supports they need to develop their inner potential (Gabriel Dumont Institute, n.d.).

Aboriginal teacher education programs are also found in nearly every province and territory of Canada, including New Brunswick (Micmac Maliseet Program at University of New Brunswick), Ontario (Native Teacher Education Program through Brock University and Lakehead University), Manitoba (Brandon Teacher Education Program and the Community-based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program at the University of Winnipeg), Alberta (Aboriginal Teacher Education at the University of Alberta), British Columbia (First Nations Teacher Education Program at University of British Columbia), Yukon (Yukon Native Teacher

Education Program through the Yukon College), and the Northwest Territories (NWT Teacher Education Program through the University of Northwest Territories Aurora College) (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009).

The *Native Access Program to Nursing* (NAPN) is a support and retention service for Aboriginal students in the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan. It provides support to students in undergraduate and graduate programs at the University of Saskatchewan campus, as well as the Nursing Division at the SIAST campuses in Kelsey and Wascana. The program offers students access to academic and personal advisors; access to Elders, cultural events, and culturally appropriate counselling; advocacy with housing, childcare and funding; tutoring, mentorship and role models; orientation activities and social activities; student lounge with computer and internet access; and research resources. When the program began in 1985, there was only one Aboriginal Registered Nurse in Saskatchewan. Since that time, NAPN has graduated more than 200 Aboriginal students in the nursing professions. The program takes responsibility for students it has recruited, ensuring they have the tools they need to succeed in their program. These include integrating learning in their home communities and making education accessible and appealing to these students. Program staff works to increase linkages between the college and other student services on campus to ensure that gaps and barriers to these services are addressed. Epistemological integration of Indigenous concepts are respectfully and appropriately intertwined throughout the curricula and ongoing formal opportunities for faculty and staff development are provided to help faculty to present concepts that may be foreign or unfamiliar to Aboriginal students in a way that makes the concepts relatable. They acknowledge that everyone is aware that they are all treaty people and promote what it means to be a treaty person. The College of Nursing has adopted the philosophy of "growing our own" and extended this concept to include the mentoring of Aboriginal students throughout their academic careers, with the ultimate goal being to encourage a student to complete a Masters and then a PhD in nursing and to consider joining the College as a faculty member. In addition to promoting Indigenous Engagement internally, the College of Nursing actively seeks out relationships and partnerships with other colleges, administrative units as well as external organizations. The goal of these partnerships is to find mutually beneficial ways to provide services, conduct research and promote cultural awareness of indigenous cultures (College of Nursing, 2010).

Toqwa'tu'kl Kjijitaqnn, the Integrated Science Program at Cape Breton, brings conventional scientific knowledge with scientific knowledge from Aboriginal cultures. The Program is an academic concentration within a four-year Bachelor of Science Community Studies degree. Customized science courses, identified with the Mi'kmaq word "MSIT" (meaning "everything together") were

developed as vehicles to implement an innovative education approach within the Integrative Science vision. The Program requires that students take eight MSIT courses over their four years. The courses emphasize our relationships with nature. The Program attempts to foster understanding of science through diverse means: MSIT science courses, applied science courses, scientific research and community intervention skills course, science opportunities as elective courses, and science experiences in the form of work placements. The MSIT courses use an approach that creates numerous and diverse out-of-doors learning experiences; involves community Elders, resource people, organizations, and workshops or other events, as appropriate; employs project-based learning using issues of interest to students and their communities; uses the growing body of literature on traditional ecological knowledge and other published information on Indigenous sciences; uses Aboriginal learning concepts and pedagogy, as appropriate; teaches in an integrated manner the major disciplines of Western natural sciences; employs an overall integrative framework' prepares for co-learning with students and communities; employs "Two-Eyed Seeing" as a guiding principle; and acknowledges and employs a conceptual framework involving pattern recognition, transformation, and expression as a way to come to understand how different cultures may shape and share their science stories. The two cohorts of students who, to date, have graduated from the program has been successfully placed in health and science related fields of work and in graduate studies (Orr, Roberts, & Ross, 2008; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009).

Brandon University in Manitoba offers a *First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling Degree*. The innovative program incorporates an interdisciplinary blend of Traditional Indigenous Teachings and Western counselling theories and skills. It uses a strengths-based approach, recognizing students' resilience, the history of their communities and Nations, and the tools, supports and resources they draw on to take care of themselves. The program offers a Peer Counsellor and an Elder-in-Residence, who provide ongoing support to students, important resources given that course content might stimulate or re-stimulate trauma (Brandon University, 2009).

Distributed Education Model

The Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, offers an *Integrated Master of Education, using a Land-Based Indigenous delivery model*. The degree program is designed for working professionals and includes four intensive land-based Institutes (held on Indigenous lands at various locations in North America), along with several on-line courses. Courses are taught by Aboriginal scholars who work from within an Indigenous paradigm. The first cohort of students began the program in the summer of 2009, with virtually all

students completing course work and graduating with an M.Ed. degree (College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, n.d.).

The *Nunavut Arctic College* serves the Nunavut region with programming on three campuses, including various community programs in 24 of Nunavut's 26 communities. Working in partnership with other post-secondary institutions, the College has a variety of credit-transfer arrangements. Students can earn certificates, diplomas, trade qualifications, and university –transferable credits in over 40 career-oriented programs, ranging from adult basic education and literacy through trades preparatory programs and language and cultural programs to Bachelor of Nursing and Masters of Education programs. Three-quarters of instruction is in Inuktitut and by Inuit staff, creating an empowering learning environment rooted in Inuit Culture.

The Sunchild E-learning Community, based in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, is an accredited grade 7-12 private school, capable of operating within a work environment and in overseas locations. Sunchild's mandate is to provide high-school education and post-secondary entrance requirements through an online community dedicated to excellence in education. Since 2000, nine corporations and 23 First Nation communities have been involved with the Sunchild E-Learning Community. The Sunchild model is based on teachers using synchronous technology to teach and interact with students. The program is conducive to meeting the needs of marginalized students because it is accessible, responsive, flexible and respectful of cultural differences (Canadian Council on Learning, Animation Theme Bundle 6: Technology and Learning - Best Practices (web page), n.d.).

Systemic Change Model

The Systemic Change Model seeks to generate change throughout an institution, through curriculum and educational practice through the culture and governance of the institution.

Northwest Community College (NWCC) in British Columbia held its first Challenging the Paradigm gathering in October 2009. The objective of the gathering was to open dialogue between educators and Aboriginal learners and it marked the start of a focused effort to transform the institution's culture and practice, and find ways to integrate Aboriginal and mainstream pedagogical paradigms. Since then, the institution has established working relationships with Aboriginal communities and organizations and strengthening their engagement with the college. The institution has organized cultural events on campus, provided support to staff in meeting their new pedagogical challenges, and introduced an approach that is based on respect for community values and needs and that brings community into the college. The

second phase of activities has focused on changing the culture of education at the college. In addition to these recent activities, NWCC has an even longer history of looking to the Aboriginal communities it serves for guidance and direction. The College's Board of Governors established the First Nations Council, as a way consult directly with First Nation communities in the college region, and gather feedback and direction for the college's strategic and operational planning. The First Nations Council has made policy recommendations focused on student advocacy, program promotion, curriculum design, cultural issues and content, program and education service evaluation. The Council assists Northwest Community College to strengthen relationships with First Nations communities in the region. Council members serve as liaisons and are accountable to their Bands, the Métis Council or First Nations organization. (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010).

In October 2003, the University of Saskatchewan put forward a document representing the university-wide consensus to "build on existing activities and forge new relationships with Aboriginal students, peoples, communities, educational institutions, and organizations" (p. 1) and to "signal to the University community (primarily to the colleges, departments, and major administrative units) institutional priorities and commitments related to Aboriginal initiatives on campus" (University of Saskatchewan, 2003, p. 2). The five targeted areas of development the University of Saskatchewan identified in the document include: Student Affairs; Academic Programs; Research Programs; Cultural Programs; and Community Outreach. In Section III. Research Programs of the document, the U of S indicates that "it will need to identify, with Aboriginal community leaders, a set of institutional level and/or college level research priorities which address problems of mutual interest" (p. 12). To this end, research with, and for, Aboriginal Peoples and communities are seen to require:

- **Research Protocols and Appropriate Ethical Guidelines;**
- **Working with Aboriginal Communities;**
- **Identifying and Working on Community Research Needs/Priorities; and**
- **Developing Research Units/Centres (p. 13).**

This document was directed to the entire university to attend to critical targeted areas. It was the first systemic effort across Canada to address Aboriginal education as an institutional priority. Since then the Aboriginal Foundation document is one of 10 foundations documents, and more recently in the third integrated plan of the university, Aboriginal engagement continues to be a priority. While each of the units are still fashioning out a variety of initiatives that draw from all the previously identified models, it is a systemic effort to improve recruitment, access, diversity, and needs of Aboriginal students across the entire university, with indicators for tracking success of the units in their chosen priority activities of the next five years. While no single approach is used in all the

colleges and units, and progress has been uneven across unit, the university continues to aim for Aboriginal students to be at the same level of representation in their population as is in the province. At present 15% of the province is Aboriginal and the Aboriginal student population in the University of Saskatchewan is currently at 8-9%. The U of S has set then the goal to have 3000 in 2020 (personal communication with President Peter MacKinnon). Key to the success of this goal is partnerships with Aboriginal communities. Several colleges have had a longer history with these initiatives, such as the Colleges of Education, Law, and Nursing all of which have multiple successes since the 70's. Added to the university is an Aboriginal Education Research Centre, Native Law Centre, and Native Access to Nursing, all centres that focus on recruiting Aboriginal faculty, centring Aboriginal perspectives and cultures from a strength based approach, and including Aboriginal histories, knowledge, learners, and antiracist education.

Thirty years ago one Mi'kmaq student came to *Cape Breton University (CBU)* facing monumental challenges. After 30 years of building collaborations and programming in both academic and support areas, CBU has graduated close to 500 Aboriginal graduates with 185 reported students in 2009 attending CBU from the five Mi'kmaq communities surrounding the island of Cape Breton. CBU has the strongest record in the Atlantic region of Canada of educating Aboriginal students successfully. The program has grown from once a Mi'kmaq Studies department that expanded to include a Mi'kmaq Resource Centre, which housed a small Mi'kmaq collection of books, materials and cultural artefacts with two computers. Today, the *Unama'ki* College leads postsecondary institutions in their successes. Named in Mi'kmaq, Mi'kmaq Espi Kina'matno'kuom, translated to "House of Learning" Unama'ki College provides Aboriginal students options and opportunities within vibrant programming. Many collaborations have made this college successful, but the ones with the local communities have been the most productive. In 1990, CBU in collaboration with Aboriginal communities developed an innovative university bridging programme in response to the needs of mature students with family commitments. Within 3 years close to 100 students, aged 18-55, were studying full-time in courses that were offered both in the communities and on campus.

In 1998 Cape Breton University established the Mi'kmaq College Institute (MCI) with the goal to assist Aboriginal students at Cape Breton University with their scholastic and personal needs, as well as to provide educators and researchers a knowledge centre to create and share curricula, research and wisdom between faculty and Aboriginal communities. In 2001, Cape Breton University was awarded a prestigious Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science and leads the country in Integrative Science drawing on both Aboriginal and western scientific knowledges and world views, and has the first Aboriginal Science, or Integrated Science, degree in the world. Once only students in the

social sciences were getting degrees, now Aboriginal students are graduating with degrees in the sciences and moving into science professions. Near 30 years later, relationship building, program development, mutual commitment, collaboration and research have led to a trend of inter-generational graduates: grandparents, children, grandchildren all graduating within a few years of each other. Graduation ceremonies are held in the communities and serves to celebrate the commitment and the need for on-going partnership with the communities.

Cape Breton University believes that the development of any learning initiatives with and for Aboriginal people must be created with ethical principles of research involving Aboriginal communities. The development of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, a committee that now oversees the research proposals that are being conducted in Mi'kmaq territory, grew out of the concern about appropriative research that was taking away knowledge from communities for researchers' gain without concern or benefit returning to the community. As the communities are the intellectual custodians of Mi'kmaq knowledge, each prospective researcher must apply for approval when doing research involving Mi'kmaq participants and must abide by the Protocols when doing that research (Han Martin Associates, 2009).

Indigenous Community-Based Model

Post-secondary institutions that follow an Indigenous Community-Based Model operate within Aboriginal communities (rural or urban), come from an Aboriginal consciousness and identity, and incorporates Aboriginal governance model.

The *First Nations University of Canada* (FNUC, located in Saskatchewan) offers courses, programs and instructors, accredited by the University of Regina. FNUC provides academic programming through its Department of Professional Programs (Indigenous Education, Indian Social Work, Business and Public Administration, Health Sciences and Nursing) and through our Department of Interdisciplinary Programs (English, Indigenous Health Studies, Indian Communication Arts, Indian Fine Arts and Indian Art History, Indian Languages, Linguistics, Indigenous Studies, Environmental Health and Science, Resource and Environmental Studies). In addition to this, all University of Regina classes are open to FNUC students. Aboriginal perspectives are incorporated into all FNUC programs. Approximately one-half of FNUC faculty members are Aboriginal people. FNUC's Cooperative Education Program incorporates classroom theory and practice into real-life work environments, enabling students in degree-earning programs to alternate between academic studies and paid credit work-terms. FNUC programming is available at campuses in Regina, Saskatoon and Northern communities, with off-campus and community-based programs available to provincial, national and international locations. On-campus

programs and services include academic advising and registration, student support services, student lounges, cultural and traditional advising services with Elders, and a campus student association. In partnership with the University of Regina, FNUC also delivers workshops that educate community members about Aboriginal culture (First Nations University, n.d.; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009)

The *Institute of Indigenous Government* was established in 1991 by the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and is supported by funding from both the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada. The Institute is governed by a Board of Governors, formally appointed by the Province but with nominations from UBCIC. UBCIC also appoints an Elders Senate, which advises the Board. As an Indigenous-controlled post-secondary institution, its mission is to provide accredited post-secondary opportunities that will empower indigenous peoples to self-govern in ways that reflect Indigenous philosophy, values, and experiences. Student support includes resident Elders, Aboriginal counsellors, academic supports, library resources, and community-based courses. The Institute offers a broad range of programming, including Associate Degrees in Indigenous Governments Studies, an Associate Degree in Science for students interested in health and science careers, (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009)

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) was formed in 1983 by five First Nations bands in the interior of British Columbia. From its original location in a small rural centre, it has expanded dramatically, adding a second campus in Vancouver in 2007, and today delivering programming in more than 20 different BC First Nation communities. Nicola explores knowledge from an Aboriginal perspective and is committed to provide quality Aboriginal education that supports student success and community development. NVIT is a First Nation governed institution with educational programs and services that reflect Aboriginal perspectives, values, and beliefs. On-campus Elders provide guidance and support to staff and students, and the majority of staff members are Aboriginal. As an institution, NVIT has knowledge and expertise about Aboriginal present day and historic issues and offers a learning and work environment that allows the free expression and practice of Aboriginal values and ways. NVIT provides a comprehensive range of courses and programs that are relevant to Aboriginal people and communities, ranging from adult basic education through trades, academic and university transfer courses, collaborative degrees, community education, and continuing studies (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, 2011).Eleven community colleges located in communities throughout Alberta provide local based education providing in some of the following: training and certification in Aboriginal licensed practical nursing, Aboriginal teacher program and Teacher Assistant, Addictions Training

Certificate diploma, Aboriginal Employment Industry and Immigration Work Foundations Program Apprentice Programs, Adult literacy, Advanced Counsellor Training Certificate, Business Applications/Data Management, Certified Training Provider, CTS Legal Studies, Early Childhood Development, Education bachelors/masters, and Environmental programs. Each of the colleges prides themselves in providing high quality student services, and relevant education and grounding in the local culture, languages, and spirituality. Run by First Nations scholars at the senior levels, each of the institutes are unique in many ways to the local communities and engage in many local and national collaborations to make sure their students receive the best education for them, as well conduct research in areas such as health, education and social work.

Other Promising Initiatives

Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) Program is a province-wide educational intervention in British Columbia that aims to support the development of Aboriginal and Indigenous Ph.D. and Ed.D. credentialed people through meeting and mentoring among helping students feel a sense of strength of purpose and service to their communities by their own advancement. Hearing from current doctoral students and Indigenous scholars, they share their research interests and methodological or theoretical approaches while enhancing their skills, knowledge, research methodologies, and support for each other through shared knowledges. SAGE has helped increase the SAGE Program membership to approximately 325 Indigenous scholars, who are currently Ph.D. or Ed.D. credentialed, are enrolled in a doctoral program, or are potential doctoral students (Commodore, 2008 at http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/2008/03/01/providing-culturally-grounded-support-for-aboriginal-doctoral-students-in-british-columbia-the-sage-program/).

In the early 1980s, a group of First Nations and Métis graduates in masters and doctoral programs advanced the first Aboriginal controlled research journal called *MOKAKIT*, which held conferences and provided a peer review journal. Although MOKAKIT no longer exists, research journals are now available with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in governance positions or providing editorial leadership and helping to advance Aboriginal research and scholarship. The major journals are as follows:

Aboriginal graduates and professionals. Launched in May 2005, SAGE pod meetings have grown into once-a-month meetings providing opportunities for sharing one's experiences, learning about graduate school, as well as, meeting fellow colleagues from a variety of disciplines and institutions. The SAGE meetings have been successful in *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, at the

University of British Columbia, is published twice yearly: in spring/summer and in fall/winter.

- ***Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, at Brandon University is a highly recognized journal in the field of Native Studies. It comes out on a bi-annual basis, and publishes original research, which is refereed by peer review.**
- ***First Peoples Child and Family Review*, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, is an online journal that focuses primarily on First Nations and Aboriginal child welfare practices, policies, and research.**
- ***Indigenous Law Journal* at the University of Toronto is a student-run legal journal from the University of Toronto that exclusively publishes articles regarding Indigenous legal issues.**
- ***Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development,* Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) Resource Library maintains a collection of publications devoted to Aboriginal economic development.**
- ***Journal of Aboriginal Health,* National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO). Available free-of-charge on NAHO's web site, each issue of the Journal of Aboriginal Health includes in-depth analysis, original research, editorials and suggestions for further reading.**
- ***Native Studies Review*, University of Saskatchewan**
- **First Nations Perspectives: The Journal of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc., Manitoba First Nations Education Research Centre Inc.**
- **Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, Native Counselling Services of Alberta**
- **Canadian Native Law Reporter, Native Law Centre of Canada, University of Saskatchewan**

Ethics

The three federal funding agencies, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) – have formally adopted standards for ethics and all universities that seek funding must abide by these ethics. In 2003, following national consultation with individuals and groups, including Aboriginal peoples, the Tri-Council Agency created ethics relevant to Aboriginal research. Each university thus is required to abide by these ethics as well as their own institutional ethics, and sometimes other ethics requirements developed by professional organizations. Several Aboriginal organizations and communities have also issued their own ethics for researchers seeking to do research in their communities. All researchers thus

must do preliminary work to determine what ethics is required when doing their research, especially among Aboriginal communities. The Supreme Court has required further broad consultations with Aboriginal rights holders on issues related to their aboriginal or treaty rights. In 2004, a report to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research by researchers at the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre has provided an excellent review of literature and discussion of the principles and processes required for developing the engagement of Aboriginal peoples in research and protecting their interests and communities (Ermine & Sinclair, 2003).

THE DILEMMA

The achievement of these models creates a dilemma in post-secondary education. Today, approximately fifty Aboriginal post-secondary institutions exist in Canada. In general, their independence and programming is compromised by federal and provincial policies governing accreditation, governance, certification of degrees, etc. Ineligible for the direct operating grants available to post-secondary programs (even when they deliver the same programs), they must partner with existing post-secondary institution to access funding, to support their credibility, and to ensure portability of student credentials. An exception to this rule occurs in the Province of British Columbia, where legislation passed in 1985 authorizing two Aboriginal post-secondary institutions to grant degrees and diplomas. Under the umbrella of the First Nations and Adult and Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC) in Alberta, eleven of the First Nations institutes have created a unit to provide leadership, uphold standards of excellence, and lobby for funding and policies that support local community college initiatives. They have also partnered with other First Nations institutes across Canada to develop their own accreditation with the World's Indigenous Network of Higher Education (WINHEC).

As noted in AANDC's most recent evaluation of its Post-Secondary Education Program (which includes PSSSP, UCEP, and ISSP), federal funding for First Nations students in post-secondary education is unequal to other students, lags well behind what is needed, and the post-secondary gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are widening (INAC Audit and Evaluation Sector, 2010). The evaluation report includes the acknowledgement that:

[T]here is evidence to suggest that AANDC has not formalized its roles and responsibilities with regards to post-secondary education since it began providing bands with funding for the program, which has resulted in inequity of services to students and ensured AANDC's inability to measure meaningful outcomes at regional and national levels (INAC Audit and Evaluation Sector, 2010, p. iv).

 Evaluation findings also indicate that:

- **Education scores in First Nation and Inuit communities have improved very little, while marked improvements have occurred in other communities;**
- **While slightly more First Nation students enrol in university than in college, graduation rates are higher for those attending college;**
- **Unintended impacts from the PSE program have been both positive (greater feeling of confidence among students; students as positive role models for their communities) and negative (a "brain drain" in First Nation communities, as students who leave to attend post-secondary programs in urban communities typically do not return home);**
- **Some First Nations find it difficult to leverage resources within the existing system;**
- **The current approach to funding "results in allocations insufficient to meet the demands and is not reflective of actual costs" (INAC, 2010, p. 26); and**
- **Current reporting requirements impose a significant burden on First Nation and Inuit organizations. At the same time, AANDC lacks the internal capacity to aggregate and analyze collected data. This AANDC's ability to accurately report on results of activities.**

The evaluation recommendations call for AANDC to work "with meaningful input from First Nations education representatives" (p. 26) to 1) explore alternative approaches to post-secondary funding that will make the most of available resources and retain the principles of First Nations Control of First Nations Education and 2) clarify AANDC roles and responsibilities.

The funding system for post-secondary education for First Nation and Inuit people is inadequate for the task and demand. There is hope that AANDC will engage meaningfully First Nations education representatives to repair its Post-Secondary Education program funding. They have conducted many studies on educational reform. However, there are other problematic issues that present barriers for First Nation and Inuit students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009; Orr, Roberts, & Ross, 2008) that lie outside of the likely scope of activities recommended in the evaluation. For First Nation students, the funding distributed through AANDC is available only to registered members of a First Nation band (which excludes a large section of the population) and individuals who live off-reserve often have difficulty accessing it. AANDC provides PSE funding directly to First Nation communities, but, because the funding usually does not meet need or demand, First Nation communities must pick and choose who among their eligible learners will receive funding and who will not. Additionally, if a student can access this funding, which is often inadequate to meet their real-life needs, they are generally ineligible for other federal or provincial loans. Furthermore, even while funding allocated for this program has

increased, the increases have been capped at two percent since 1999, while universities continue to escalate their tuitions. As noted in another recent report:

The funding from AANDC, aimed specifically at helping Status Indian and Inuit students pay for their education, has not kept pace with demand, demographics or costs. The number of Aboriginal university students supported by AANDC fell from 26,493 in 1996-97 to 23,780 in 2006-07. According to the Assembly of First Nations, between 2001 and 2006, 10,588 qualified Status First Nations students were denied funding from the PSSSP (National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, Moving Forward: National Working Summit on Aboriginal Postsecondary Education, 2011, p. 23)

Cost is a major barrier to participation in post-secondary studies for all Aboriginal people (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010; Bear Spirit Consulting, 2007; Canadian Council on Learning, Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Who is missing out?, 2009; Environics Institute, 2010; Mendelson, Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada, 2006; R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2004). While First Nation students with status and band membership and Inuit may be able to access some funding from AANDC, Métis students and other Aboriginal students without status must rely entirely on their own resources, Canada Student Loans, or other bursaries, scholarships, loans and other types of funding. Aboriginal students are less likely to be able to access employment income, personal savings or family funds to support their education than non-Aboriginal students, Aboriginal students are also more likely than non-Aboriginal students to find it difficult to apply or qualify for loans and other funding, in part because of lack of information, but also because they are more likely to come from low income families or to have little experience with loans and other forms of credit.

In addition to the financial barriers that First Nation, Métis and Inuit students must negotiate individually, many post-secondary institutions do not receive adequate funding to meet Aboriginal post-secondary students' needs or aspirations. As noted in the evaluation report on AANDC's PSE programs, Aboriginal students are more likely to graduate from college programs than from university programs. However, colleges that provide Aboriginal programs and services face significant challenges with respect to current funding structures and sources (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010). These include: insufficient student-based funding (linked to the limited funding available through PSSSP); insufficient funding for programs and services developed to meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal learners; lack of financial assistance for students in adult upgrading or adult basic education; unstable or project-based funding; lack of funding for student supports at community-based programs; lack of or limited funding for rural Aboriginal programming; and standard funding models that do not fit institutions that serve small student groups. Colleges also face significant challenges with respect to funding

available through federal Aboriginal human resource development, skills training and employment programs, which link individuals' training needs to labour market demands. These challenges include lack of coordination among program funders; inclusion of support for programs that are too short and focused on direct employment; constraints on who may participate in programs; and restrictive or unnecessarily complex funding criteria.

Aboriginal post-secondary institutions share the same funding challenges as other colleges do, along with other challenges that relate specifically to their status as Aboriginal institutions (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009; Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010). To some extent, these challenges relate to jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial governments as to which level of government is responsible for funding post-secondary education. While the two levels of government argue about jurisdiction, Aboriginal post-secondary institutions must struggle to make do with what little they have – which can be surprisingly little. For example, in Ontario during 2007-2008, "Aboriginal post-secondary institutions received as little as $1,527 per student, as compared to an average of $9,669 per student in mainstream colleges and universities" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 29). When Aboriginal institutions partner with mainstream institutions (a necessity for most Aboriginal institutions that want to deliver credentialed programs), they do not receive operating grants to cover costs associated with these activities or funds from the tuition collected by mainstream institutions from Aboriginal students in those programs (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010). Aboriginal institutions may apply for ISSP funding to develop Aboriginal programs and services, but they face strong competition from mainstream institutions who may also apply. Most activities at Aboriginal institutions are subject to year-to-year funding structures. This limits the kind of programs they can offer and, in particular, makes it difficult for them to offer programs with a term greater than one year.

CONCLUSION

As we come to the end of this scan of literature regarding Canada's policies, and approach to postsecondary education at the federal and provincial levels aimed at First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, we the authors of this study are First Nations women who have benefitted by educational policies and outcomes that First Nations, federal and provincial education have provided. As well, though in different generations, we have been involved with the critique of the federal and provincial policies at different junctures, recognizing that the evolution of postsecondary education supports for Aboriginal students have not occurred smoothly and effectively without constant tension at some political level, nor has there been a consistent level of service through time. Much

experimentation has taken place with Aboriginal communities pressing for connections to the valued aspects of our languages, cultures and communities.

Eurocentric ideologies, policies, and practices that have evolved over time in education to the exclusion, marginalization, or fragmentation of Aboriginal content and perspectives in these institutions have not changed significantly in conventional public funded education, although human and civil rights, multiculturalism, feminism, equity, and notions of diversity have contributed to the evolution and to the incremental changes that have occurred in universities. As well, constitutional reform in Canada, the recognition and affirmation of aboriginal and treaty rights, the Supreme Court cases supporting aboriginal and treaty rights, the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the public attention to the histories of Aboriginal peoples through the Indian residential schools, the public government apology to the victims and families of these students, and the growing demographics of Aboriginal peoples have all contributed to the national conscience and emergent changes in postsecondary institutions.

With a growing critical mass of Aboriginal scholars, educators and leaders, Canada can no longer say it does not know what Aboriginal peoples want or need in terms of services to help improve education and how this can only be achieved with the cooperation, collaboration, partnerships and early engagement of Aboriginal peoples. In the early years, many initiatives have evolved without First Nations, Métis and Inuit community consultation and consent, such as the manner by the treaty commitments were instituted in federal day schools, later residential schools, and the manner by the which the federal government transferred its responsibilities under treaties to the provinces under tri-lateral arrangements that benefitted provinces, their infrastructures, and their institutional capacity building. Aboriginal education has always been about assimilation, marginal accommodation, integration, and more recently about diversity. In all these, improving the perceived deficiency among Aboriginal students so that they could compete more effectively with non-Aboriginals has been the vision of public schools, and not about how Aboriginal worldviews and cultures might take a rightful place beside other Canadian cultures. .

Canada has some of the highest levels of educational attainment and rates of participation in post-secondary education in the world (Canadian Council on Learning, Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Who is missing out?, 2009). While the nation as a whole can claim success in this area, the same is not true for Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) peoples in Canada. However, post-secondary participation rates and educational attainment levels are significantly lower for Aboriginal peoples in Canada when compared to the general population. This is in spite of the fact that, as reported in findings from an extensive national research project exploring the values, experiences, identities

and aspirations of Aboriginal people living in cities across Canada, Aboriginal people in Canada – and young Aboriginal people in particular - *want* to complete their education (Environics Institute, 2010) and they are committed to having education fulfill its promise (RCAP 1996).

The barriers to post-secondary participation and success for Aboriginal peoples in Canada are multilayered but connected and have been thoroughly documented (Canadian Council on Learning, Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Who is missing out?, 2009; R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2004; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Post-Secondary Education: In Support of First Nations and Inuit Students, 2009; Orr, Roberts, & Ross, 2008; Kirkness, 1999; Canadian Council on Learning;, 2006; Bear Spirit Consulting, 2007; Mendelson, Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada, 2006; Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, 2009). Rooted in historical experiences and in the socio-economic, cultural, geographic and demographic conditions in which Aboriginal people currently live, these barriers include both those that other aspiring students must negotiate and those that affect only Aboriginal students. Among the barriers for adult learners, George (2008) has noted the following:

- **historical (assimilation policies of education, particularly through but not limited to residential schools);**
- **geographic (many Aboriginal people live in remote and/or rural communities away from centres where secondary and post-secondary school programming takes place);**
- **cultural (practices in the institutional educational system differ from that Aboriginal culture, particularly in the non-recognition of the role of Spirit in learning);**
- **individual and personal barriers (finances, daycare, transportation, histories of trauma and competing priorities such as family, to name a few); and,**
- **systemic (racism, disparities in resources, as well as the policies and practices of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) which do not adequately address the high level of need in education) (p. 7-8).**

While addressed as systemic and cultural, language issues remain a continued area of difficulty for most Aboriginal students. Census Canada reported only 29% of the total population of Aboriginal peoples surveyed reported being able to carry on a conversation in an Aboriginal language (Ministry of Industry, 2001, p. 5). The Inuit were the most likely to have an Aboriginal language (73%), First Nations people living on reserve were more likely to be able to speak an Aboriginal language (55%), whereas only 11% of urban Aboriginal dwellers were able to carry a conversation in an Aboriginal language, and the Métis were

even less likely (9%) (Norris, p. 5). While Census data suggests that many Aboriginal-speaking communities might have since shifted to English, the shift for Aboriginal students has been with many varieties of English as a second language which continues to create difficulties in one's success in postsecondary education but also need to considered as core tools for supporting Indigenous identity and communities with those languages and their transition toward learning other forms of English (See *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, Volume 32, 2010 for special edition of Aboriginal Englishes and Education).

Aboriginal peoples in Canada have long addressed the need for improved education, despite the fact that their experiences with residential schools and other forms of education have not been positive. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 was one of the most well researched studies among Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and in it the Commissioners reaffirmed that while Aboriginal peoples experiences with schools and education have not been good, they were committed to making it live up to its promises for a better future. However, they reiterated that they were not willing to let education be an empty shell, but rather that it needed to be a reflection of the rich vibrant strength of their values, spiritualities, culture, languages, knowledges, and ways of life. Drawn from this foundation, then, Aboriginal students as lifelong learners might emerge inspired to nurture their learning spirits in education, professions and practices that would help the collective to grow. Such a vision has been the core of the Aboriginal renaissance that has been the foundation of community based postsecondary education models.

While Aboriginal visions have been articulated well over 30 years, public funded postsecondary institutions have been slow to change to accommodate these visions. As the Aboriginal population increases, however, the public is regularly reminded that if Aboriginal youth do not get educated and join the mainstream economy, the provinces face a possible onerous future of having a smaller number of people taking care of an ever-growing number of uneducated and unemployed people (CCL 2007). Hence, public post-secondary institutions are now attempting to deal with these new realizations.

As we have reviewed First Nations education, we found that Aboriginal education has changed in meaning and content significantly over time. Once it was about transforming Aboriginal students into 'successful' white models, complete with higher education credentials, and presumed liberation from oppressive reserve life, whether one wanted it or not when they were disenfranchised.

Aboriginal education was also once about Indian control of Indian education and the visions and aspirations that came from First Nations peoples. Today,

every university, college and institute in Canada has appropriated 'Aboriginal education', as a concept, to reflect any number of initiatives involving Aboriginal peoples, whether the communities are involved or not. Sometimes it is solely about Aboriginal students, sometimes about curricula, or support services, engaging Elders and community, or even Indigenous knowledges, but in all of them the primary objective continues to be aimed at Aboriginal students getting an education that is still largely been a Eurocentric one.

Eurocentrism is an ultra-theory that informs all other disciplines of knowledge, providing a centre and periphery by which the centre is privileged to define knowledge, knowing, and progress and distributes its ideologies, values, beliefs, taxonomies, epistemologies, methodologies, and axiologies to the periphery. In Canada, Eurocentrism remains the core of education, along with high levels of competition and hierarchy. Only marginally have Aboriginal peoples' respect for lifelong learning been appreciated or understood.

The path for change has been led in the last 25 years, first by the leadership and vision of First Nations peoples to reclaim their education based on principles guided by the communities, and guided by the languages, cultures and world views of their people and then after that by a renaissance of Indigenous scholars, teachers, leaders, who have survived the assimilative education and are pursuing the reclamation and revival of Indigenous peoples self-determination. Guided by the leadership that led to the long road to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous peoples now have their long articulated hopes, dreams and visions written in minimum standards for their self-determination as implemented in states' obligations in education, health, ethics, lands, and law. At least 145 countries have agreed to these.

Canada has had many successes compared to many other nations, yet it has and continues to have many failures as well. Educational funding for Aboriginal students remains far from adequate to cover real-life needs of Aboriginal students, a fact that stands in sharp contrast to the frequently heard racist assertions that 'Aboriginal students get a free education.' As a result, many students are not funded and post-secondary institutions have not addressed this gap in funding in any significant way.

Educators and other staff members at post-secondary institutions need to develop knowledge/skills (in areas such as history, Aboriginal learners, antiracism, the integration of Indigenous knowledge into curriculum and Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning styles into teaching practice) that will develop their own cultural capacity; without this, post-secondary institutions will continue to lag behind in their ability to provide Aboriginal learners with a high quality educational experience and a safe learning environment where students can work in any field without racism.

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Should Australia decide to build new educational initiatives following upon Canada's models to create more equitable outcomes for Aborigines in Australia, it is imperative that they first and foremost develop partnerships and dialogues with the Aboriginal people themselves to learn what they desire of education and what aspects of their own cultures, languages, knowledges, ways of life, and spirituality they would want to have included in institutions. Some of that work has already begun in Australia with the work of Sheehan (2004), Yankataporta (2010), McAllen (2010) and Nakata (2009).

Institutionalized education is not lifelong learning and it is lifelong learning that Aboriginal people in Canada have declared is their goal (CCL 2007). It is learning not just among their youth, but for all ages-- to find happiness, contentment, and purpose in living a life of learning, sharing, productive use of one's time and energy, communally engaged, appreciating the wealth in their own and other's prior knowledge and languages, and their capacity to pass that on to other generations.

Many educational theorists have researched Aboriginal pedagogies and androgies and what has been found is that for Aboriginal people who have been disenfranchised by education, abused and traumatized by assimilative education and white presumptions of superiority, culturally relevant education curricula, decolonizing narratives that counter the dominant paradigms, supportive services and accepting professionals working with them is a welcomed relief from the past and is a stepping stone to other kinds of programmatic changes. Having colleagues and other students who understand Aboriginal histories and their own historic complicities with white privilege in antiracist education are important fundamental foundations for them as well. For those who have strong family linkages to ancestral languages and histories, ceremonies and traditions, a culturally responsive curriculum that includes Indigenous knowledge is not as necessary for them to be connected to their learning spirit, but it does not hurt either (Kanu, 2005). Indigenous knowledge and education is a new foundation on which principles for living peacefully, sustainably, and in relation to their ecology are developed and nourished among all students.

What we have since come to understand is that being an Indian under the patriarchal arm of federal and provincial policy is just one of the many oppressive elements that we had to overcome. Being poor, brown, with children, having survived or lived through residential schools abuses as cyclical layers of oppression, poverty or by a Eurocentric oppressive social system, urban or reserve violence that left so many scars, traumas, fears, and limitations on the individual as to make education only one of the many hurdles that one had to overcome. Current numbers of those successful in the current education systems is growing, but considering the number left behind as the majority of early leavers reveals a picture of Canada that as bleak as those in comparison to

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Third World countries. While First Nations schools have been able to demonstrate their successes by the numbers of students who have graduated since the early 1970s and are seeking to attend postsecondary institutions, they are largely underfunded compared to provinces.

Since 1973 when First Nations issued their demand to take over control of their own education in the manner by which they hoped for, First Nations education and successes have been on the rise. Today under a Conservative government, First Nations are battling to get support to correct not just their education but their economies and health and justice systems. Racism is not a thing of the past, but rather is the defining relationship with non-Aboriginal peoples across Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2007 issued an apology to Aboriginal student survivors of the Indian Residential Schools, and issued a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the abuses of the past and present. Then in 2010 at the G20 Summit, he asserted that Canada had no experience with colonialism.

SUMMARY OF PROMISING PRACTICES

Societal

> "According to Malatest (2002), the single most fundamental key requirement for successful Aboriginal post-secondary education strategies is for government and the public to have "an understanding of Aboriginal people." This includes a true understanding of the historic and social factors in which Aboriginal people live in order to appreciate not only the challenges faced but, more importantly, their value-based epistemological perspective (i.e. their way of knowing, seeing, and doing in the world). The fundamental and leading strategies presented to date for meaningful and successful strategies come from an Aboriginal perspective (e.g. RCAP recommendations, Aboriginal literature including that of the AFN and FNESC in BC, and Aboriginal educators). These perspectives need to be understood and reflected in post-secondary education (Human Capital Strategies, 2005, p. 28)"

Institutional

- **Comprehensive planning at the institution level with a strategic approach to short and long-term priorities in Aboriginal education, recruitment, retention, academic success, as well as institutional transformations at the curricula and faculty capacity development are innovative foundations being developed for Aboriginal education in Canadian institutions.**
- **Indigenous support initiatives in institutions need to be appropriately resourced with funding to cover core operating costs, and costs associated**

with capacity development of staff professional development, governance oversight, administration, and curriculum and program development.

- **Institutional commitment is demonstrated in Indigenous representation on board of governance, funding administrative units and staff to support Indigenous initiatives and engagement, and institutional delivery of services and academic programming for Aboriginal students.**
- **Institutions that start early developing a system to monitor completion rates are successful in keeping track of both graduates of the programs and those who leave the program (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007)**
- **Data on completion rates aides program administrators, instructors, and community members to enhance learning programs that are accountable to the expectations of the local people**

Community

- **Institutions need to incorporate an explicit, on-going, consultation and communication strategy with local community leaders, stakeholders, and students to identify priorities, gaps, issues, proposals, and implementation strategies.**
- **Community engagement is large enough to warrant specialized staff in institutions such as Special Advisor to the President (University of Saskatchewan), or Associate Dean of Aboriginal Initiatives (University of British Columbia).**
- **Institutions need to view the experience of education 'through the eyes of Aboriginal peoples', which explains alienation, frustration, and barriers of education in very different but legitimate ways (BC 2005).**

Faculty

- **Regular and relevant professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on Indigenous histories, contemporary issues, local contexts, learners, and antiracism.**
- **Indigenous faculty needs to be in all departments and units and not isolated in certain departments, and if those faculty are not available then the institution should be trying to cultivate them by encouraging non-traditional units to actively recruit for masters and Ph.D. programs.**

Elders

- **Elders in Aboriginal communities are knowledge keepers or cultural advisors who not only have knowledge of community and ancestral**

traditions but also embody them in their beliefs, values, attitudes and teachings that help to effect positive change (Hatala, 2010).
- **Elders are identified differently in each community and each community must be consulted for those who serve and operates as role models in their community context.**
- **Adequate resourcing for Elders (paid full time or honoraria appropriate to time and expertise) demonstrates respect for Elders' expertise and generates needed resources for their continued life improvement.**

Learners

- **Undergraduate and graduate students in Master's and Doctoral programs benefit from cohort or small critical mass of students who can be mentored by the older generation of successful Indigenous master or doctoral professionals such as the SAGE group in British Columbia.**
- **Programs that offer students assistance in their transition from one learning environment to another allow them to build skills and confidence. Part of this process involves self-development through linguistic, cultural, historical and spiritual teaching and learning.**
- **Programs that draw on local languages, cultures, knowledge, Elders, problem solving, creativity, Indigenous science and humanities learning frameworks create engaged learning and build on the cognitive learning frameworks of Indigenous people and provide students with a balanced perspective, as well as emphasizes learners' personal, spiritual, physical, and social transformation as much as the development of their minds in the learning environment.**
- **Programs that ensure that the personal learner's holistic needs are embraced make students better prepared to learn more effectively. This includes the recognition of the socio-historic, racialized, economic and political context in which Indigenous people live and the effects these occurrences on their self-concept, identity, self-esteem, and relationships with others.**

Community ownership over learning

- **Programs that are locally owned, developed and inspired draw on the involvement of families, parents, and elders and programs that seek local community, parents and elders input are able to create a sense of community ownership over learning (Fulford, 2007)**

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- **Programs that draw on local languages, cultures, knowledge, Elders, problem solving, creativity, Indigenous science and humanities learning frameworks create engaged learning and build on the cognitive learning frameworks of Indigenous people and provide students with a balanced perspective**

Student Supports

- **In order for all Indigenous students to succeed, institutions must recognize that all Indigenous learners are not the same, have different life and cultural experiences, start postsecondary education from differing starting points, and thus have different needs and will respond differently to services offered.**
- **Racism is habituated attitudes, values, beliefs, habits and discourses that reveal assumptions about others that have been learned in family and community contexts about self and others. Racism in classrooms produce unsafe learning environments for marginalized and diminished groups who are silenced by privileged dominant racist voices.**
- **While community-based learning and dual programming have been largely successful, it does limit the amount of learning that Indigenous and non-Indigenous students have together. It is important that all students need opportunities to learn together, when it can be done in a respectful manner and when students are provided with the basics of antiracist anti-oppressive communication strategies.**
- **Student-based learning opportunities that develop their identities, includes respectful cultural activities and practices, draw on their strengths, help with new skills and knowledge transfer related to courses, respect students as belonging to larger collectivities, engage local Indigenous communities, support students with the financial means to complete their education, and build relationships with the land, the people and the faculty and staff are seen as best practices among Indigenous programs (Lenonet, UVic).**
- **Most student successes are found among the mature student population who are more settled, have raised children, and are ready to learn; however, the curriculum must be modified to incorporate adult learning practices and cultural relevance.**

Funding

- **Financial aid for Indigenous students must meet the real-life needs of students and acknowledge their social realities and the contexts in which**

they would have to live, such as urban high rent areas, child care, spousal support, etc.

- **Having supportive financial staff members who help students with the process of applications, and more importantly make them feel supported and worthy of institutional support are important factors in getting students the funds to stay in school (AAUC 2010).**

Indigenous Knowledge

- **Faculty need a comprehensive plan for developing IK friendly curricula and pedagogy that includes resourcing, incentives of recognition for furthering IK, and explicit consultation and communication strategy.**
- **Faculty need instructional support for animating Indigenous knowledge through professional development that explicitly offers why (philosophy) how (methods), what (content), and where (community) (Kovach, n.d.).**

Research Ethics

- **Canada has established national research ethics standards and protocols for working with Indigenous communities (SSHRC, NSERC), knowledges, and individuals. As well, local communities have also created their own research ethics with local governance of them (Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch, Kahnawake Code of Research Ethics). Researchers must be encouraged to investigate not only university and organizational ethics but community ethics boards as well.**

Researching success

- **Measuring student outcomes based on grades, attendance, completion rates are limited in that these are deficit based than strength based and do not account for social, economic and political factors. Holistic models of success that provide multi-layered dimensions for monitoring progress are needed such as the models created by the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and Canadian Council on Learning.**
- **The voices of students and using their definitions of success are important to any study of their progress.**
- **Limited data is available on Indigenous students, their funding sources, how they pay for their education, the barriers to education, and dropout and withdrawal causes. Each institution needs to improve their data collection and need to find ways to improve communication of that data across institutions and community organizations.**

Relationship and community building

- **Increasing relationships with communities, elders, and community organizations is about animating an active sense of belonging to a collectivity that is welcoming, safe and inclusive.**

Indigenous identity development

- **Having a cultural community to which one is connected provides for the continuing sense of belonging and identity development that students require to maintain their inner sense of self and feelings of being grounded.**

Cultural Relevance

- **Every institution is a cultural space and making it explicitly Indigenous makes it a welcoming place for Indigenous students to feel connected and able to share their own stories and cultural teachings in a safe, inclusive environment.**
- **Native Studies has been the starting point for other institutional academic programming, but Native Studies continues to draw interest from many sectors of the academic community and is a core required course for some teacher training programs.**

Space

- **Institutions need to help Indigenous students feel welcome with providing their own space or house or building for meeting, ceremonies, and cultural activities, as well as having their own graduation ceremonies with their families and communities.**

Libraries

- **More universities are bringing their Indigenous resource collections on line and more accessible for students, such as the U of S iPortal. Graduate Studies**
- **Graduate programs (masters and doctoral degrees) are ways to cultivate a critical mass of academics for universities and Aboriginal participation in these programs is growing across Canada. With new ways to earn degrees, such as course-based masters or land-based programs that are delivered in the communities and draw on Indigenous knowledges and methodologies, students are able to learn new skills and develop confidence to accelerate their studies at other levels. Being able to do research at the doctoral level**

using one's own language and reporting in one's own language is an innovation that was first implemented at York University.

Transitions

- **Universities need to work with the Ministries delivering K-12 education and communities to help transition students effectively from one system to another and then to work.**

Technology and Learning

- **Students in remote areas and rural communities need a combination of technology assisted learning to access to delivery of academic programs and services in their communities. However, the same advocates stress that e-learning may complement, but not replace, face-to-face instruction.**

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