

Supporting First Nation Education: Current Federal Approach & the Importance of Partnerships

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Objectives of the Presentation

1. Government of Canada's Current Approach

Working with First Nations to help ensure First Nation students receive a quality education that improves outcomes, while respecting First Nation control

2. Current Policy Challenges

Related to First Nation students living on reserve who attend provincial schools off reserve

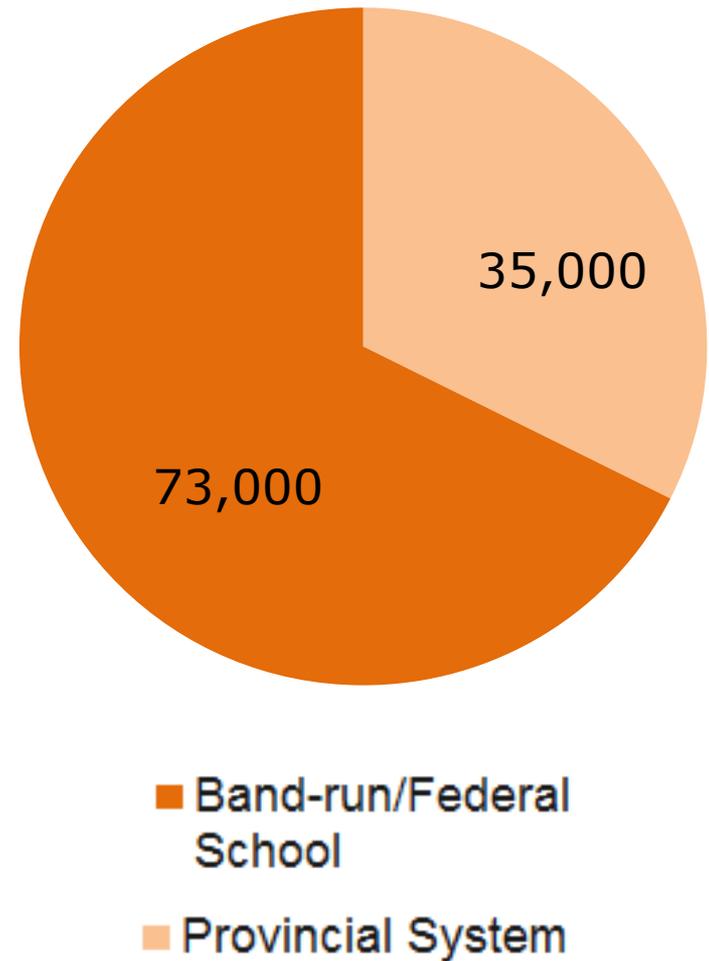
3. Best Practice Examples

Building and maintaining effective partnerships between provincial school boards and First Nations



Context

- INAC financially supports approximately 108,000 First Nation elementary and secondary students living on reserve, aged 4-21 years
- Approximately 35,000 First Nations students attend school in provincial education systems, based on tuition arrangements
- On average, provincial tuition costs account for about 1/3 of total INAC expenditures on First Nation education



Context

- Educational attainment among First Nation students is improving, but there remains an unacceptable outcome gap, as compared to the non-Indigenous population
- Only about 60% of First Nation people aged 25 to 64 have completed high school, and less than half have a post-secondary diploma or certificate
- In BC, according to Ministry of Education data the six-year high school completion rate for status on-reserve students is 53% compared to 86% for non-Aboriginal students
- Guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, we all need to work together to better serve First Nation students to overcome this educational attainment gap



Context

Section 35 of the Constitution

Recognizes and affirms the inherent and treaty rights of First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish and control their education systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

Among the 94 Calls to Action, many speak to the role of schools in advancing reconciliation and building better relations between Indigenous Peoples and other Canadians



Government of Canada's Current Approach

Working with First Nations to help ensure that First Nation students receive a quality education that improves outcomes, while respecting First Nations control of First Nations education



Recent Recommendations to the Government of Canada

Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015

- **Funding** - comparable funding between on- and off-reserve schools; statutory funding
- **Language and culture** - Support for culturally appropriate curricula, protection of Indigenous languages and the teaching of Indigenous languages as credit courses
- **Governance** - Enable parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability over education, "similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems"

Auditor General 2011

- Lack of clarity about **service levels**,
- Lack of a **legislative base**,
- Lack of an **appropriate funding mechanism**, and
- Lack of **organizations** to support local service delivery.

National Panel on First Nations K-12 Education 2011

- Comprehensive education legislation
- **Statutory funding**
- Creation of a National Commission to oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of First Nations education
- Creation of a First Nation Education Centre of Excellence to aid coordination and research on First nation languages, culture and identity, curricula reforms, and training of teachers and principals
- Greater **support for regional First Nations education organizations**
- New common accountability and reporting framework

Senate Report 2011

- **Funding** - Opt-in legislation; statutory funding formula
- **Language and culture** - Funding for language preservation and revitalization, and culturally-relevant curriculum development



First Nation Control of First Nation Education

- First Nations first published the concept of “Indian Control of Indian Education” in 1972

The time has come for a radical change in Indian education. Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability.”

- First Nation control means that First Nations are able to exercise their inherent rights to education by developing their own policies and laws to provide linguistically and culturally-appropriate education that meets the individual and collective needs of their learners.
- AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly endorsed First Nation Control of First Nation Education as an AFN policy document in 2010.



First Nation Control of First Nation Education

- First Nations have long advocated for learning that is purposeful; holistic; lifelong; and affirms our own ways of knowing, cultural traditions and values.
- First Nation control of First Nation education is necessary, first and foremost, because First Nations will ensure that their children and youth will be provided with a quality education that is rooted in their vision of learning.
- The current collection of federal education policies and agreements does not support a 21st century education model, and has only ensured that approximately 1-in-3 First Nation students living on reserve graduate from high school.
- AFN estimates that, since 1995, current federal policies on First Nation education has led to more than 180,000 First Nation youth without a high school diploma.
- First Nations assert that greater control will improve both the quality of education their students receive and student outcomes, e.g. Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey in Nova Scotia, where graduation rates are now above 87%.



Key Issues the Government is Focused On

- **Need for significant investment:** building on federal funding increases from 2006 to 2014, which were largely through proposal-based investments, Budget 2016 is providing unprecedented new core investments in First Nation education.
- **Need to improve the way INAC funds First Nation education:** modernizing and simplifying funding mechanisms to better respond to actual cost drivers and to reduce the amount of funding that is proposal-based.
- **Need to continue supporting the institutional capacity of First Nation education organizations:** the ongoing development of aggregated service delivery models and strong First Nation-led institutions are essential to ensuring that all First Nation students receive a quality education



Key Developments 2015

November 2015 - Mandate letters to all Cabinet Ministers

No relationship is more important to me than the one with Indigenous Peoples. It is time for a renewed nation-to-nation relationship, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership – Prime Minister Trudeau

Specific commitments for Minister Carolyn Bennett:

- Establish a **new fiscal relationship** that lifts the 2% cap on annual funding increases and moves towards sufficient, predictable and sustained funding for First Nations communities.
- Make **significant new investments** in First Nation education to ensure that First Nation children on reserve receive a quality education while respecting the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education.

December 2015 – Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

The TRC has called upon the Government to act upon several education-specific recommendations.



Key Developments 2016

March 2016 – Budget 2016: \$8.4 billion in new investments for Indigenous communities, including \$2.6 billion over five years for First Nation education, beginning in 2016-17.

Investment Area	Objective	Funding
Addressing Immediate Funding Needs and Program Growth	To address immediate pressures experienced by First Nations (population increases, teacher salaries, transportation etc.)	\$747.6M over five years *including \$35.8M for 2016-17
Language and Culture	To improve effectiveness of classroom instruction through curriculum and language development	\$275M over five years *including \$55M in 2016-17
Special Needs Education	Funding for direct services to students and indirect activities that support effective delivery of services for high-cost special needs student body	\$577.5M over five years *including \$115.5M in 2016-17
Literacy and Numeracy	Increased funding for literacy and numeracy programs	\$100M over five years *including \$20M in 2016-17
Implementing Transformation	Includes funding for start-up costs, alternative education service delivery models and education systems transformation agreements	\$824.1M over five years *including up to \$46.6M in 2016-17
Innovation, Research, Measurement and Evaluation	To apply latest education innovations and measure/evaluate impact of policies on First Nation education	\$37.5M over five years *including \$7.5M in 2016-17
The Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative	Support the initiative's partnerships with First Nations to increase literacy rate of students	\$30M over five years *including \$6M in 2016-17

Key Developments 2016

March 2016 - Budget 2016 also committed nearly \$1 billion in additional funding for on-reserve education infrastructure, and funding to develop an Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework.

May 2016 – Government of Canada announces its full support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

July 2016 - New fiscal relationship MOU between INAC and the AFN; ongoing discussions aimed at establishing a framework agreement for ensuring sufficient, predictable and sustained funding for First Nation communities.

December 2016 – Prime Minister announces commitment to an Indigenous Languages and Culture Act with the goal of ensuring the preservation, protection, and revitalization of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit languages in Canada.



Key Developments 2017

January 2017 - New permanent bilateral mechanisms with Inuit, First Nations, and the Métis Nation:

- Create permanent bilateral mechanisms with the Assembly of First Nations, and First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the four Inuit Nunangat Regions, and the Métis National Council and its governing members, to develop policy on shared priorities, and monitor progress going forward.

February 2017 - Review of Laws and Policies related to Indigenous Peoples:

- A Working Group of Ministers is examining relevant federal laws, policies, and operational practices to help ensure the Crown is meeting its constitutional obligations with respect to Indigenous and treaty rights; adhering to international human rights standards, including UNDRIP, and supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.



Key Developments 2017

March 2017 - Budget 2017 has increased funding for Indigenous Post Secondary Education:

- \$90 million over two years to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and the University and College Entrance Preparation Program
- \$5 million per year for five years to Indspire, starting in 2017–18, conditional on \$3 million per year in matching funds.

The Government of Canada will also undertake a **comprehensive and collaborative review** with Indigenous partners of all current federal programs that support Indigenous students who wish to pursue post-secondary education.

Key issues of importance to First Nations include:

- Funding to address the demand for all First Nations learners eligible to attain post-secondary education.
- Funding to support First Nation-controlled post-secondary institutions



Engagement on First Nation Education

- INAC is working closely with various First Nation partners to implement an inclusive and comprehensive engagement process aimed at developing recommendations for strengthening First Nation education.
- This includes a series of joint activities with the Assembly of First Nations, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and the National Indian Education Council, as well as outreach, dialogue and technical discussions at the regional and local levels.

Community discussions

Technical task teams

Survey

Regional technical discussions

Leadership dialogue



Nov 2016 Dec 2016 Jan 2017 Feb 2017 Mar 2017 Apr 2017 May 2017 Jun 2017 Jul 2017 Aug 2017 Sep 2017



Joint Technical Task Teams

INAC and the Assembly of First Nations are convening a series of joint task teams and strategic discussions with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the National Indian Education Council on the following subjects:

1. Statutory Funding
2. Funding Mechanisms
3. Measurement and Mutual Accountability
4. Early Childhood
5. Post-Secondary Education



Supporting Regional Approaches for First Nation Education

There is no one-size fits all approach when it comes to First Nation education.

INAC continues to explore different types of regional education models with First Nation partners.



Self-Government Agreements

- The 1975 **James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement** provided for the establishment of the Cree and Kativik school board. Both operate under Quebec's jurisdiction, but possess dedicated budget allocations and special powers to ensure that educational programs are culturally relevant.
- The 1997 **Mi'kmaq education sectoral self-government agreement** in Nova Scotia includes 11 First Nations that are self-governing in respect to education. Working together through the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK), these First Nations collectively negotiate a common tuition rate for on-reserve students attending provincial schools, and work with the province to track and improve the success of First Nation students in provincial schools.
- The recent **Anishinabek Nation Education Agreement** in Ontario includes 14 First Nations that will also be self-governing in respect to education. They plan to work together through a new school-board type entity, the Kinoomaadziwin Education Body, to help ensure that member First Nations provide a quality education, and that students can transfer between the Anishinabek and the provincial education systems without academic penalty.



First Nation School Boards

- In several regions, First Nations are working to aggregate service delivery through a First Nation-controlled school board
- In September 2017, 10 First Nations in Manitoba will be served by a new **Manitoba First Nations School System**, which will serve approximately 1,700 students attending both on-reserve and off-reserve schools
- This new school system will benefit from a new, formula-based funding allocation to ensure it can operate at or beyond the standards of provincial school divisions
- It will also be able to manage and re-direct financial and human resources across its network of schools to address needs and priorities and to achieve economies of scale.
- For more information: <http://mfnerc.org/media-room/>

Tripartite Education Framework Agreement in BC

- 2012 agreement between Canada, BC, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee aimed at improving achievement rates for First Nation students
- BC and FNEESC have developed a collaborative partnership on educational initiatives, which respects the integrity of the commitment to establish a new relationship

Accomplishments:

- Flexible funding model for First Nations schools, based on provincial education funding formula, with specific adaptations
- Provides dedicated, stable funding that allows for more effective planning and continuity of core and second level support
- TEFA handbook and estimator tool
- Availability of status on-reserve data
- Sharing resources and expertise and extending relevant services between First Nations and public education systems
- Commits Canada and BC to consult on legislation or policy changes that impact First Nations education.



Current Policy Challenges

Related to First Nation students living on reserve who attend provincial schools off reserve



Challenges and Advancements

- Many First Nation students living on-reserve will transition between on-reserve and off-reserve schools during their elementary and secondary education, with many completing their schooling in a provincial system
- We know that First Nation students continue to face issues and challenges in this transition between school systems
- And while many challenges still remain, there have been several recent advancements that are improving the quality of education First Nation students receive



Challenges in BC

Low Achievement

- In BC, there remains persistent education outcome gap between status on-reserve First Nation students status and other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students:
- In British Columbia, Ministry of Education data shows:
 - the status on-reserve graduation rate is 53%, compared to the Aboriginal graduation rate of 64% and the non-Aboriginal graduation rate of 86%.
 - the graduation rate of Aboriginal children in care is 38%.
 - 4.9% of Aboriginal students are in alternate education compared to 0.9% of non-Aboriginal students. Approximately 41% of students in alternate education are Aboriginal.
 - The Ministry recognizes that these figures represent a failure of the education system to meet student needs, not a failure of First Nation students to succeed



Challenges in BC

Lack of Tuition Agreements/LEAs

- Approximately 9,000 on-reserve students attend public schools in BC and pay provincial tuition
- 75 First Nations currently do not have local education agreements (LEAs) with their respective school districts. This is unacceptable, given the poor results.
- These agreements are necessary in order to set out accountabilities and expectations related to the purchase of education for on-reserve students attending public schools.

Racism

- First Nation students continue to face racism in the school system and in BC, this has been identified by an audit of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and joint research by FNEESC and the Ministry of Education.
- The OAG found that in many cases racism can take the form of educators having low expectations for students based on preconceptions or biases stemming from social attitudes.



Challenges in BC

First Nation Languages

- First Nation languages are not properly supported by existing policy and funding frameworks, and there is urgent need to protect and preserve them as founding languages
- Limited number of fluent and certified First Nation language teachers
- This means there is limited access to First Nation students in BC to receive education programs in their ancestral language

Transportation

- Transportation issues are a major barrier to First Nation students accessing education and achieving success in BC and many other communities across Canada
- In some cases school districts are not providing bus services, there is no transportation available for courses and activities outside school hours, students face long commute times, and pick or drop-off locations are unsafe.
- The BC OAG acknowledged that transportation is a complex shared accountability between First Nations and school districts, but “complex accountabilities should not impact student access to education”



Advancements in BC

Codified Roles and Responsibilities

- Through a number of protocols and agreements including TEFA and the BC-FNESC Protocol, roles and responsibilities have been set out formally between the parties.
- Mutual goals and accountabilities are set out in the respective agreements, along with work plans.

Access to Data

- More so than ever before, the province, First Nations, school districts and other partners have access to meaningful, accurate, and relevant data to inform decision making.
- This includes *How Are we Doing*, a comprehensive annual report from the Ministry of Education on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the public and independent K-12 system. It looks at FSA results, graduation rates, required examination results and much more.
- Recently the Minister of Education committed to making available to First Nations annual community-level reports.



Advancements in BC

BCHRT hiring exemptions

- First Nation students must see themselves reflected and have role models at all levels of the education system.
- One way of moving towards this is through Human Rights Tribunal hiring exemptions.
- 21 school districts in BC have hiring exemptions for Aboriginal peoples for various staff positions--more are needed.

School Completion Certificates

- In part related to the racism of low expectations, First Nation students are much more likely to leave high school without the prerequisites to go on to further education.
- In February 2017, the BC Minister of Education announced that BC public schools will no longer be allowed to issue School Completion Certificates to students unless they are classified as students with special needs and have an Individual Education Plan.



Tripartite Collaboration

The INAC Education Partnership Program supports the establishment and advancement of formal partnership arrangements that aim to develop practical working relationships between First Nation educators and schools and provincial education systems. There are currently 11 Education Tripartite Partnership Agreements across Canada.

Council of Yukon First Nations MOU (2013)

Alberta Treaty 6,7 and 8 MOU (2010)

Manitoba First Nations Letter of Understanding (2009)

First Nation Education Council Quebec MOU (2012) and Tshakapesh Institute MOU (2016)

Tripartite education agreement with the Labrador Innu Nations (2015)

Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island MOU (2010)

British Columbia Tripartite Education Framework Agreement (2012)

Saskatoon Tribal Council MOU (2010)

Nishnawbe Aski Nation MOU (2013) and Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians MOU (2016)

New Brunswick First Nations MOU (2008)

An Agreement with respect to Mi'kmaq Education in Nova Scotia (1997)

Best Practice Examples

Building and maintaining effective
partnerships between provincial school
boards and First Nations



Partnering with First Nations: Best Practices

Strong partnerships between First Nations and provincial school boards can be beneficial for all involved.

- In Manitoba, **Waywayseecappo** has a strong partnership agreement with the Park West School Division under which Waywayseecappo staff receive comprehensive professional development provincially-comparable salaries and benefits.
- In BC, the **Sea to Sky District** is effectively working in partnership with the Squamish Nation to integrate local First Nation practices and values into an Indigenous-focused program.
- In Saskatchewan, **Whitecap Dakota First Nation** has partnered with Saskatoon Public Schools to coordinate the operation of an on-reserve kindergarten to grade 4 school, and an off-reserve grade 5 to 8 school.
- In PEI, the **Indigenous Education Committee** is composed of First Nations, provincial and federal representatives, who work together to identify the gaps that currently exist for Indigenous learners on and off reserve.



BC Agreements

In addition to TEFA, First Nations, school districts, BC, Canada and other parties have entered a variety of other agreements, including:

BC-FNESC Protocol:

- This protocol confirms the ongoing relationship between BC and FNESC and formalizes an effective bilateral process to assist the parties to improve educational outcomes of First Nation students through collaborative efforts
- Establishes regular meetings between FNESC and Ministry staff, the Deputy Minister, and the Minister, as well as the development of a joint work plan.

First Nations Education Jurisdiction

- Agreements between FNESC, BC and Canada as well as accompanying legislation
- Recognizes First Nation jurisdiction over education
- Implementation negotiations underway with 13 First Nations, with another 54 interested



BC Agreements

Local Education Agreements (LEAs):

- LEAs represent a mechanism for promoting greater and more meaningful First Nation involvement in the public education system, and for formalizing a mutual commitment to improving levels of achievement by First Nation learners
- While many First Nations in BC have LEAs, unfortunately there are currently 75 communities sending students into provincial schools without the benefit of an LEA.
- FNEESC recommends that BC and Canada, in partnership with FNEESC, create a strategy and relevant policies to support the development and implementation of effective LEAs and provide timely access to community-specific data.

MOU on K-12 Aboriginal Education:

- Signed by key stakeholders and partners in Aboriginal education.
- The signatories acknowledge that Aboriginal learners are not experiencing school success in BC and state their intention to work together to improve school success for Aboriginal learners in BC.
- The partners have set goals, objectives, and a work plan.



Conclusion

- Canada and First Nations are working together to advance and implement Canada's commitments and develop successful First Nations-controlled, regionally-based education models.
- With nearly 35,000 First Nations students attending provincial schools across Canada, provincial school boards have an important role to play in supporting First Nation student success.
- It is critical that First Nations play a lead role in the education of their children, which means school districts working in meaningful partnerships with local First Nations.
- By working together to improve both the on-reserve and off-reserve education experience of First Nation students, we can all support improved outcomes and reconciliation.

Education is what got us here and education is what will get us out – Senator Murray Sinclair.

