



Association of Canadian  
Community Colleges



## Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities

### 2010 Environmental Scan

### Trends, Programs, Services, Partnerships, Challenges and Lessons Learned



November 2010

# Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities

## Executive Summary

Trends in post-secondary education participation in Canada continue to show that Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> people rely significantly on Canada's publicly-funded colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps, and universities with a college mandate (hereinafter referred to as "colleges"). ACCC is the national voluntary membership association which serves Canada's publicly-funded colleges and informs and advises various levels of government, business, industry and labour. Aboriginal peoples' access to post-secondary education, inclusion and community development has been one of the Association's strategic priorities since its creation in 1972.

In 2005 ACCC released the first report on college Aboriginal programs and services entitled *Canadian Colleges and Institutes – Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Learners*. Five years later, this report provides an updated view of how colleges are serving Aboriginal learners and communities based on the results of an environmental scan. The scan included consultations with the ACCC National Aboriginal Programs and Services Committee; a review and analysis of statistics and research on Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education, particularly from Statistics Canada sources; an on-line survey of member colleges to garner policy perspectives on serving Aboriginal learners; and, a search of college websites to build inventories of Aboriginal education programs and support services.

The 2006 Census confirms that educational attainment gaps persist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, in particular with respect to high school completion. At the same time, the percentage of Aboriginal people with a college certificate or diploma is almost at par with the non-Aboriginal population, and the percentage of Aboriginal people with apprenticeship or trades certification is higher than for the non-Aboriginal population. Results from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey indicate that a much higher proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are attending colleges (42 percent) and technical institutes and trade schools (20 percent), than universities (16 percent).

Demographic data on Aboriginal participation in college programs show that a higher proportion of Aboriginal college students are female (58 percent) between the ages of 25 and 40. In 2008-09, more Aboriginal students were enrolled in adult upgrading programs and post-secondary certificate and diploma programs. Aboriginal student enrolment at the two publicly-funded Aboriginal institutes has grown enormously in the last five years: by more than double at Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and by three times at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). The highest Aboriginal student enrolments are at mainstream institutions, notably Northwest Community College reporting an Aboriginal student population of 3,933 for 2008-2009, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) with 2,369, and Red River College with 2,284 Aboriginal students. However these enrolment figures must be considered estimates as colleges continue to report challenges in having Aboriginal students self-identify. The report highlights some measures colleges are taking to improve self identification, such as promoting Aboriginal-specific programs and services, improving data collection, offering options for students to self-identify later in the academic year, developing more user-friendly forms, and clarifying terminology.

Active Aboriginal student recruitment is essential to increase access to college education. Respondent institutions emphasized the need to integrate recruitment in a community relations process tied to Aboriginal student services. Colleges need recruitment strategies which link Aboriginal students to programs, and provide laddering opportunities from adult upgrading, to college preparatory and post-secondary programs in career fields in high demand in Aboriginal communities and elsewhere.

Eighty colleges, including the three in the territories and two publicly-funded Aboriginal institutions (NVIT and SIIT) offer education and training programs specifically for Aboriginal students, including adult upgrading, college preparatory, post-secondary certificate and diploma programs, trades and apprenticeship, university transfer and degree programs, community-based, and distance learning programs. The report indicates the type of Aboriginal programming colleges are focusing on, with the top three being Aboriginal-specific certificate and diploma programs (offered by 71 percent of colleges), preparatory programs for Aboriginal students to facilitate entrance to post-secondary programs (49 percent), and community-based Aboriginal programs (50 percent).

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1 For the purposes of this report, the term Aboriginal is used to describe, in general, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit people of Canada.

Aboriginal student support services are widely offered, with 87 colleges offering such services. These services enable students to feel welcome and connected, and succeed in college programs whether they are Aboriginal specific or not. Key components include:

- having a focal point with targeted and visible Aboriginal student services, personal one-on-one support through Aboriginal advisors or counsellors, and a welcoming place to meet, gather, study and learn;
- services by Elders to provide cultural connections, personal support and counselling, and teach traditions that provide a community atmosphere.

The report also summarizes respondent colleges' views on funding challenges for Aboriginal students as well as for program development and delivery. Colleges continue to report that the funding cap on Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Post-secondary Student Support Program is a severe constraint. There are more qualified Aboriginal students than the program can fund. Other key funding related challenges include:

- the lack of financial assistance for students in adult upgrading;
- funding amounts that do not recognize the costs of the diverse range of support services and upgrading needed by Aboriginal students before starting post-secondary programs;
- unstable project-based funding for Aboriginal program development and delivery;
- lack of funding for student supports in community-based programs;
- insufficient coordination among federal funding agencies.

Colleges identified lessons learned related to four main themes:

- Aboriginal community engagement is fundamental for the effective delivery of Aboriginal programs and services.
- The Aboriginal voice must be heard within and across institutions through Aboriginal representation at the governance and senior administrative levels; curriculum which is culturally relevant and embeds Aboriginal world views and traditional knowledge; purposeful hiring practices to increase Aboriginal faculty and staff recruitment; intercultural training for college faculty and staff; and providing Aboriginal students with a welcoming environment that allows them to celebrate their culture.
- Support services are key for Aboriginal student retention and success as they address the barriers many Aboriginal students must overcome to succeed. These services are pivotal in creating a culturally-appropriate, welcoming and supportive learning environment.
- In the 2010 survey, a new trend has emerged whereby mainstream colleges are restructuring to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. Many institutions emphasized the importance of adopting holistic approaches to serving Aboriginal learners because Aboriginal services departments or offices cannot do it alone. An institution-wide approach integrates support services more effectively.

Building on the holistic approaches identified by colleges, the report ends with an update of the Aboriginal Programs and Services Process Framework and an analysis of how colleges can adopt the Aboriginal Human Resource Council's Inclusion Continuum.





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# Colleges Serving Aboriginal Peoples and Communities

## 1. Introduction

Trends in post-secondary education participation in Canada continue to show that Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> people rely significantly on Canada's publicly-funded colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps, and universities with a college mandate (hereinafter referred to as colleges). Colleges are mandated and structured to provide laddering opportunities for learners, from high school equivalencies to career-oriented education programs and transitions to university. In the case of Aboriginal learners, colleges continue to work with Aboriginal communities, partners and leaders to build on and diversify the range of programs and support services to better serve their specific learning needs.

ACCC is the national voluntary membership association which serves Canada's publicly-funded colleges, and informs and advises various levels of government, business, industry and labour. Aboriginal peoples' access to post-secondary education, inclusion and community development has been one of the Association's strategic priorities since its creation in 1972.

ACCC's 1993 submission to The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples called for the development of creative partnerships between Aboriginal communities and colleges:

“As First Nation communities deal with their internal needs, grow strong and reach out in strength, then colleges and institutes will have a role to play. The key is partnerships of equals.”

This submission emphasized the need for these partnerships to be led by Aboriginal communities, called for the creation of more Aboriginal schools and colleges, and emphasized “the value of having Aboriginal people teach Aboriginal people,” in “recognition of what has long been known about the recovery of cultural self-esteem and confidence.”

Since its inception, ACCC has addressed Aboriginal post-secondary education (PSE) access in a cross-cutting manner through targeted sessions at the ACCC annual conference and recommendations for increased Aboriginal post-secondary education funding in briefs to parliamentary and senate committees. In addition, ACCC has convened colleges around exemplary practices through national Aboriginal symposia and has organized roundtable meetings to inform federal policies related to Aboriginal access to PSE, skills training and labour market participation. ACCC also collaborates with national Aboriginal organizations including the Assembly of First Nations and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It works closely with the Aboriginal Human Resource Council and is represented on its Board of Directors and Council of Champions.

In 2005, ACCC released the first report on college Aboriginal programs and services entitled *Canadian Colleges and Institutes – Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Learners*. The 2005 report provided an overview of the programs and services offered and described how colleges work with Aboriginal communities to deliver a diverse range of programs and support services with a view to better serving the needs of Aboriginal learners.

Five years later, ACCC conducted an environmental scan of Aboriginal engagement at colleges which included consultations with the ACCC National Aboriginal Programs and Services Committee, a review and analysis of statistics and research on Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education, in particular from Statistics Canada sources, an on-line survey with member colleges to garner policy perspectives on Aboriginal program and service delivery, and a search of college websites to build inventories of Aboriginal education programs and support services. The 56 member institutions that responded to the 2010 Aboriginal programs and services survey are listed in Appendix 1. This report provides an updated view of how colleges are serving Aboriginal learners and communities. Three accompanying documents are provided: *Inventory of College Aboriginal Education Programs*, *Inventory of College Aboriginal Student Services*, and *Programs Offered by Aboriginal Institutes in Collaboration with Mainstream Institutions*.

The types of institutions available to Aboriginal learners for post-secondary education differ from one province to another. In addition to mainstream post-secondary institutions (colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps, university-colleges and universities), Aboriginal learners can access post-secondary education programs through Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions. It is important to note that there are two very distinct types of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions: the provincially-supported institutions and the Aboriginal-controlled institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, the term Aboriginal is used to describe, in general, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit people of Canada.

Provincially-supported institutions have the authority to grant certificates and diplomas, as well as access to annual operating and special grant funding to support operations and special initiatives. Only two institutions have achieved provincial recognition in Canada: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT).

Aboriginal-controlled institutions are not supported by provincial policy and therefore do not have authority to grant certificates and diplomas. Aboriginal institutes must therefore partner with mainstream institutions to offer students provincially-recognized credentials. In addition, Aboriginal institutions in this system are not eligible for annual operational grant funding like mainstream institutions.

This report provides the perspectives and profiles the types of programs and services offered by mainstream colleges. Where applicable, distinctions are made for the Aboriginal institutions NVIT and SIIT, as well as the three colleges in the northern territories and the University College of the North. The latter are not considered Aboriginal-specific institutions, but have a unique role in that they primarily serve Aboriginal learners. In order to provide a more complete picture of Aboriginal learners' options for accessing post-secondary education programs and services, an overview of Aboriginal-controlled institutions is also provided.

The report is organized into the following sections:

1. a summary of recent statistics and data on Aboriginal educational attainment, participation in post-secondary education and a profile of Aboriginal students at colleges;
2. student participation in college programs and self-identification challenges, systems and practices in place at colleges;
3. funding sources and challenges;
4. student recruitment, admissions and assessment approaches;
5. education and training programs;
6. student services;
7. participation in college governance, strategic planning and program development and delivery
- 8.. challenges in program and service delivery, and lessons learned.



## 2. Overview of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada

Gains are being made in the number of Aboriginal people in Canada completing post-secondary education. However, there are still gaps between the Aboriginal population and the non-Aboriginal population in terms of post-secondary educational attainment. This section provides an overview of the issues and current trends in Aboriginal post-secondary education, with a specific focus on those relevant to Canadian colleges.

### 2.1 The Aboriginal Population is Increasing

The most current data from the 2006 Census<sup>2</sup> indicates that Canada's Aboriginal population is increasing. In 2006, 1,172,790 individuals identified themselves as an Aboriginal person, that is North American Indian (First Nations people), Métis and Inuit.<sup>3</sup> This count was 20 percent higher than the figure of 976,305 in 2001. During the same time period, Canada's non-Aboriginal population only increased by 4.9 percent.

In 2006, individuals who identified themselves as Aboriginal accounted for 3.8 percent of Canada's total population. However, the Aboriginal population has grown faster than the non-Aboriginal population and between 1996 and 2006, it increased by 45 percent.<sup>4</sup> This is almost six times faster than the eight percent rate of increase for the non-Aboriginal population.

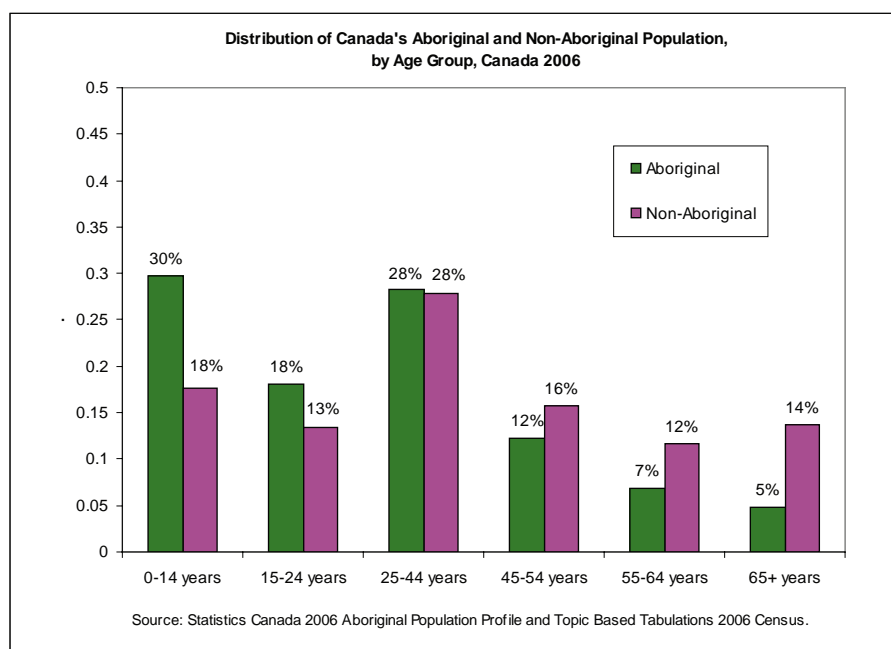
Aboriginal people in Canada are increasingly moving to urban centres. According to Statistics Canada, in 2006, 54 percent resided in urban areas, including large cities or census metropolitan areas, up from 50 percent in 1996. A total of 291,035 Aboriginal people, or 25 percent of the Canadian Aboriginal population lived in nine of the nation's 33 metropolitan areas.

### 2.2 The Aboriginal Population is Younger

The Aboriginal population is significantly younger than the overall population of Canada. The Census of 2006<sup>5</sup> confirmed that this is a continuing trend from the 2001 Census. The median age of the Aboriginal population in 2006 was 13 years younger than that of the non-Aboriginal population (26.5 years compared to 39.5 years).

Children under the age of 14 represented 30 percent of the total Aboriginal population, a significantly higher proportion than the corresponding share of 17.7 percent in the non-Aboriginal population. While the Aboriginal population accounts for 3.8 percent of Canada's total population, Aboriginal children represent 6.3 percent of all children in Canada. As these children get older, they will eventually account for the increased growth of the working age population. This will be more pronounced in provinces with higher concentrations of Aboriginal people.

Figure 1



2 Statistics Canada 2006 Census Aboriginal Population Profiles.

3 Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada.

4 Ibid.

5 Statistics Canada 2006 Census Aboriginal Population Profiles.

## 2.3 The Education Gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal People

There exists a gap between levels of educational attainment among Canada's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population. On March 3, 2010, the speech from the throne indicated a renewed commitment on behalf of the Canadian government to invest in education for Canada's Aboriginal population.

“Our government will also work hand in hand with Aboriginal communities and provinces and territories to reform and strengthen education and to support student success and provide greater hope and opportunity.”<sup>6</sup>

Data from the 2006 Census and the International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALLS) will be used in this section to explain the gap in educational attainment and outcomes.

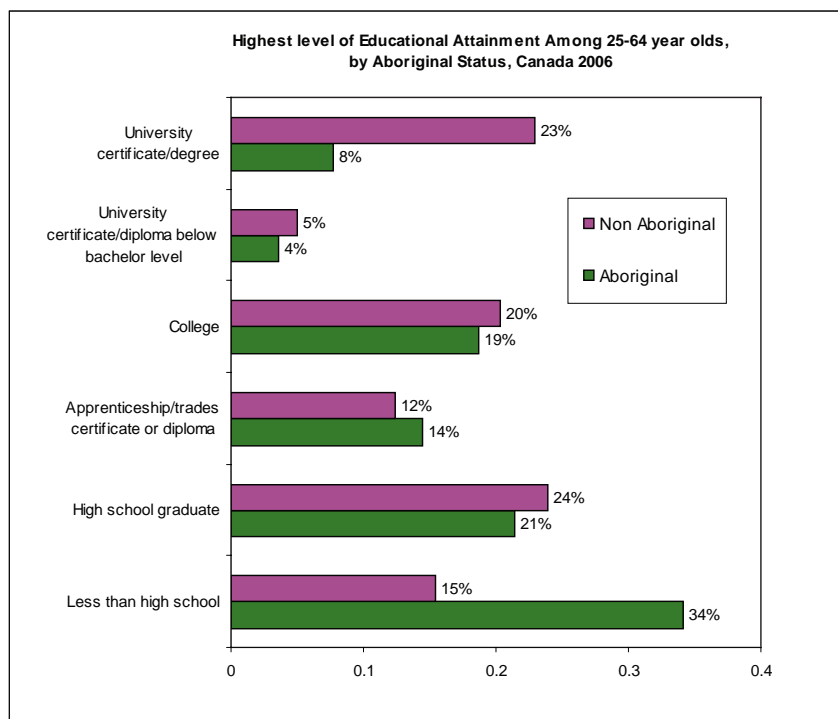
Of continued interest is whether or not the gap in post-secondary education between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population is narrowing or widening. Census data is a leading source of statistical information on Canada's Aboriginal population, however because the questions related to non-university education asked on the 2006 Census were different from those asked in previous years, it is difficult to determine trends over time.

Some comparisons are possible however, such as the percentage of university graduates. The proportion of the Aboriginal population with a university degree has been growing, from six percent in 2001 to eight percent in 2006. There have also been gains made among the non-Aboriginal population, with the percentage obtaining a university degree rising from 20 percent in 2001 to 23 percent in 2006.

### Working Age Population (25-64 years) by Highest Level of Educational Attainment

When examining the highest level of educational attainment among the working age population, eight percent of Aboriginal people had attained a university certificate/degree, compared to 23 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. The percentage of graduates with apprenticeship or trades certification was higher among the Aboriginal population, 14 percent, compared to 12 percent among the non-Aboriginal population.

Figure 2



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

6 Speech from the Throne, March 3, 2010. A Stronger Canada. A Stronger Economy. Now and for the Future.



It should be noted that colleges are the primary providers of in-class training for apprenticeship programs. The percentage of Aboriginal people who had attained a college certificate/diploma was very close to the non-Aboriginal population. Nineteen percent of Aboriginal people in the working age population had graduated with a college certificate/diploma; in 2006, this figure was only slightly higher among non-Aboriginals at 20 percent. The largest gap in educational attainment still lies within high school completion. The working age Aboriginal population has a significantly higher proportion that has not completed high school, 34 percent compared to 15 percent of the rest of the Canadian population.

Some Aboriginal groups fared better than others. Based on data from the 2006 Census, 50 percent of the Métis population had a post-secondary credential, compared to 36 percent of the Inuit populations. Looking more specifically at the Métis and Inuit population, there were slight variations in college and trades attainment. Métis reported slightly higher figures in college attainment, with 21 percent compared to 17 percent among the Inuit. There were also minor variations in trades certification, with the Métis reporting slightly higher levels, 16 percent compared to 13 percent among the Inuit. However, it should be noted that both Aboriginal groups were relatively close to the overall attainment levels of the non-Aboriginal population. Among First Nations, 42 percent had attained a post-secondary credential. This figure was slightly higher among First Nations living off reserve, where 46 percent had attained this qualification. Among First Nations living off reserve, the percentage that had completed a college diploma was significantly higher compared to the on-reserve population, 20 percent compared to 14 percent.

**Table 1**

<b>Educational Attainment of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Peoples Aged 25-64 (2006)</b>							
	<b>Non- Aboriginal</b>	<b>Aboriginal (all groups)</b>	<b>Metis</b>	<b>Inuit</b>	<b>First Nations (all groups)</b>	<b>First Nations (on reserve)</b>	<b>First Nations (off reserve)</b>
Less than high school	15%	34%	26%	51%	38%	50%	30%
High school graduate	24%	21%	24%	13%	20%	15%	24%
Post-secondary qualification - all types	61%	44%	50%	36%	42%	35%	46%
Trades certificate	12%	14%	16%	13%	13%	13%	14%
College diploma	20%	19%	21%	17%	17%	14%	20%
University below bachelor	5%	3%	4%	2%	5%	4%	3%
University degree bachelor or higher	23%	8%	9%	4%	7%	4%	9%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

There were variations in post-secondary attainment among the working age Aboriginal population from a provincial perspective. Looking specifically at apprenticeship and trades certification, the highest rates of attainment within the Aboriginal population were in the province of Quebec at 21 percent. This was higher than the 18 percent seen in the non-Aboriginal population. The rates for those attaining a college certificate or diploma were highest in the province of Prince Edward Island. Just over 25 percent of the Aboriginal population had this level of educational attainment, followed closely by Ontario and Yukon, at just over 23 percent.

**Table 2**

Percentage of the Aboriginal Population 25-64 by Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Canada and Provinces, 2006						
	Less than high school	High school graduate	Apprenticeship/ trades certificate or diploma	College	University certificate/ diploma below bachelor level	University certificate/ degree
Canada	34%	21%	14%	19%	4%	8%
Newfoundland	34%	17%	16%	23%	3%	7%
Prince Edward Island	19%	25%	12%	25%	6%	12%
Nova Scotia	26%	20%	17%	21%	4%	12%
New Brunswick	30%	21%	18%	20%	3%	8%
Quebec	36%	17%	21%	14%	4%	8%
Ontario	28%	24%	13%	23%	3%	9%
Manitoba	41%	21%	12%	16%	4%	8%
Saskatchewan	38%	22%	13%	14%	4%	8%
Alberta	35%	21%	15%	20%	4%	7%
British Columbia	31%	24%	15%	18%	4%	7%
Northwest Territories	43%	15%	13%	23%	2%	4%
Yukon	34%	19%	14%	24%	3%	7%
Nunavut	59%	9%	10%	18%	1%	3%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

The primary source of statistical information for literacy rates is the IALLS. Conducted in 2003, this survey provides detailed information on literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills among the working age population, 16-65 years.<sup>7</sup> IALLS included analysis where possible for three Aboriginal groups, North American Indians, Métis and Inuit. It should be noted that data from the IALLS should be used with some caution, as the sample was not representative of the entire Aboriginal population in Canada. Analyses were conducted for samples of Aboriginal people living in urban areas in Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as for the three territories. Analysis from the IALLS study compares the Aboriginal working age population to the non-Aboriginal population.

There are a total of five levels of literacy and numeracy proficiency. An average literacy score of level 3 (above 276 points) is an indication that the population as a whole has a literacy level appropriate for working in a modern economy. Results of literacy performance among the three Aboriginal groups surveyed were not significantly different, however, there were differences in average scores in some domains, when comparisons were made between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population.

At the highest level of prose literacy, there were some significant differences between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations with slightly over 10 percent of the Aboriginal population scoring in this range, compared to almost 20 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. The results were almost identical for achievement in document literacy with 10 percent of the Aboriginal population scoring at level 4/5 and 21 percent of the non-Aboriginal population.

Examining the scoring below level 3, approximately 28 percent of the Aboriginal population scored below this level in prose literacy. This figure was lower for the non-Aboriginal population at 21 percent. In the document category, 30 percent of the Aboriginal population scored below level 3, compared to 22 percent for the non-Aboriginal population.

While strides are being made in post-secondary attainment among the Aboriginal population, a gap still exists between this population and the non-Aboriginal population. With the growth of the Aboriginal population, there is the need for increased support so pursuing post-secondary education is easier for the Aboriginal community. Canada's population is aging, while the Aboriginal population is comparatively young. Investment in post-secondary education for the Aboriginal population is an investment in Canada's future productivity and growth.

<sup>7</sup> Literacy Performance of the Working-Age Aboriginal People in Canada, HRSDC, July 2008.

## 2.4 Barriers to Aboriginal Learners' Participation in Post-Secondary Education

Aboriginal people face many complex barriers to accessing post-secondary education which accounts for the educational and learning outcome gaps described above. The main barriers described below are categorized as: historical, social, lack of academic preparation and prerequisites, financial, geographic, cultural and individual/personal. Although this overview is by no means exhaustive, it does help understand the situation facing Aboriginal learners and contextualize the need for specific Aboriginal programs and services.

**Historical barriers** are largely due to the assimilation-focused education policies of the federal government. The 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded that many current problems facing Aboriginal communities – violence, alcoholism, and loss of pride and spirituality – have been caused by the residential school system. Many Aboriginal learners have developed a feeling of distrust towards education due to their or their families' experiences in residential schools. As a result, the legacy of this system continues to be a barrier to Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education.

**Social barriers** are varied and complex. Focus groups conducted by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation<sup>8</sup> identified a variety of challenges facing Aboriginal youth in their decision to pursue post-secondary education, including the need to care for children or other family members, difficulties with relocating to pursue post-secondary studies, issues with loneliness and isolation, and insufficient academic preparation. Social barriers include the following:

- **A lack of role models** with post-secondary credentials within Aboriginal communities impacts negatively on Aboriginal post-secondary education participation.
- **The social discrimination** experienced in post-secondary institutions is a significant barrier. Mainstream post-secondary institutions often seem impersonal and intimidating to Aboriginal learners as they do not recognize Aboriginal culture, traditions and values.
- **Unemployment:** data from the 2006 Census indicates the unemployment rate among the Aboriginal population stood at 15 percent, compared to six percent among the non-Aboriginal population.

**Family responsibilities** was the top reason among the Aboriginal non-reserve population aged 25-64 for not finishing post-secondary studies, cited by 23 percent of individuals in the Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006. More Aboriginal women are enrolled in post-secondary education than men and are more likely to have dependants, which has implications for the types of support they require for meeting family demands, in particular funding and accessibility of daycare services.

**Lack of academic preparation and prerequisites:** Not only are Aboriginal students facing barriers due to low high school graduation rates, they are also less academically prepared for post-secondary education which leads to higher dropout rates. Rural, remote and reserve schools typically do not offer the academic preparation required for a successful transition to post-secondary education. In some cases, Aboriginal students seeking to enrol in post-secondary institutions do not have the academic prerequisites for success, whether they are mature students who may not have completed high school, or young graduates who do not have the necessary courses such as mathematics and science, or lack the skills needed to succeed, such as study skills, time management, and computer literacy.

**Financial barriers:** While many Status Indian students can access funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), according to the Assembly of First Nations currently 10,589 First Nations students who are eligible were unable to attend post-secondary education between 2001 and 2006. The Assembly of First Nations also found that students only receive enough funding to cover 48 percent of the estimated average provincial cost per student per academic year.

Non-Status and Métis students, as well as Status Indians living off-reserve, face significant financial barriers. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006, reported that the lack of financial support was a major obstacle in obtaining a post-secondary education. Among urban Aboriginal students currently attending post-secondary institutions, only a minority reported they had adequate funding to support their post-secondary education.

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8 Factors Affecting the Use of Student Financial Assistance by First Nation Youth, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, prepared by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. and Dr. Blair Stonechild, June 2008.

**Geographic barriers** impact participation because many Aboriginal students are required to relocate to urban areas to attend post-secondary institutions. This has financial implications for students to cover housing and relocation costs, often in urban areas with higher living costs. The availability of housing is also an issue in some regions, such as Nunavut where the only housing available is student accommodation at Nunavut Arctic College.

**Cultural barriers:** Mainstream post-secondary education structures and approaches do not reflect Aboriginal culture and world views, nor the diversity of Aboriginal communities and the differences in learning styles of Aboriginal students. As a result, Aboriginal students often do not feel at home within mainstream institutions, and may not persist in their programs of study. Currently, post-secondary institutions do not have enough Aboriginal faculty and staff, nor is there sufficient cultural preparation of non-Aboriginal faculty and staff to help increase understanding of Aboriginal culture, traditions, values and approaches to learning.

**Individual and personal barriers** are largely manifested in students who experience a sense of powerlessness, poor self concept or motivation, apathy, poor mental and physical health, anger and frustration. This is exacerbated when students do not have sufficient family or institutional support to assist them with the emotional and health challenges they face. The dislocation rural students experience when they move away from home can also pose a significant barrier to success in post-secondary studies.

It was shown by Hull (2009)<sup>9</sup> that education for the Aboriginal population is an important determinant of income, labour market outcomes and other indicators of well being. Higher educational attainment has been associated with higher income, lower unemployment, higher labour market participation, lower chances of involvement in crime and improved health. Improving Aboriginal educational outcomes would have many benefits including improved labour market prospects for Aboriginal people. In addition, improved educational attainment could contribute to Canada's overall productivity. With the current aging population and declining birth rates, economists are looking to under-represented groups to meet the needs of the labour market.

## 2.5 Profile of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Participation

This section provides a profile of Aboriginal peoples' participation in post-secondary education drawn from the following sources:

- The Statistics Canada 2006 Census and Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). The APS was conducted in the fall of 2006 through to the spring of 2007 and provides data on the social and economic conditions of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged six and over.<sup>10</sup>
- The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey (UAPS) was conducted by the Environics Institute and aims to provide insight into the values, experience and identities of the growing Aboriginal population. Approximately 2,164 First Nations (status and non-status) peoples, Métis and Inuit living in 11 Canadian cities were interviewed. The UAPS examined education experiences of Aboriginal peoples, through the views of three different groups: urban Aboriginal peoples who have gone to college or university, but are no longer in school; students who are currently enrolled in college or university; and, elementary or high school students who plan to go on to post-secondary studies.
- An analysis of the data from a study conducted by ACCC and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) was released in 2008 as the *Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students – Report 2: The Characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students* (hereinafter referred to as *Pan-Canadian Report 2*). The results from the Aboriginal sample provide insight into the profile and experience of Aboriginal college students.<sup>11</sup> The study included a survey at college entry and at the end of first term. The Aboriginal student sample represented seven percent of respondents from the college entry survey and 10 percent of respondents at the end of first term.

9 Hull, Jeremy (2009) "Some Estimates of Private and Social Benefits of Improving Educational Attainment among Registered Indian Youth and Young Adults," in *Aboriginal Education: Current Crisis and Future Alternatives*, ed.J.White, J.Peters, D. Beavon and N.Spence, Thompson Educational Publishing (Toronto).

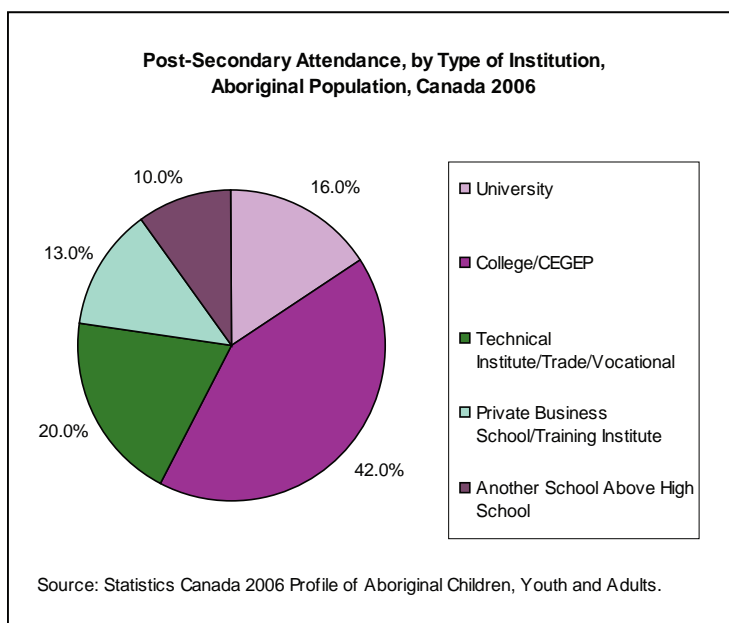
10 It should be noted that caution should be used when making comparisons between the Aboriginal Peoples Survey and the Census. "While the weighting process ensures that the total number of people with Aboriginal ancestry or identity is the same for the Census and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, it did not ensure that the counts for the Aboriginal groups would match. The Census and the APS produce different counts at the Aboriginal group level. This is due to changes in the way respondents answered questions about their Aboriginal ancestry and Aboriginal identity from the time of the Census to the time of the APS. Respondents may have changed their responses for a number of reasons, including differences in how information was collected". *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006: Concepts and Methods Guide*, Statistics Canada. Cat. #89-637-X.

11 This study asked students about Aboriginal ancestry, which encompasses a more broadly-defined group of Aboriginal people in Canada to include those whose heritage went back to an Aboriginal person, whether they identify themselves as Aboriginal. See Statistics Canada definition from Census 2006.



Based on data from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, among those attending post-secondary studies, 49 percent were enrolled on a full-time basis and 39 percent pursued studies on a part-time basis either during the day or evening. When making the decision to attend post-secondary studies, 42 percent of the Aboriginal population surveyed chose community college or cégep, 20 percent chose technical institutes/trade vocational schools and 16 percent pursued post-secondary studies at the university level. Please see Figure 3.

**Figure 3**



As shown in Table 3, data from the 2006 Census provides some indication of the top fields of study for the Aboriginal population over age 15, by highest level of educational attainment. The top fields for those with college certificates/diplomas are business, management and public administration (29 percent); health, parks, recreation and fitness (18 percent) and architecture, engineering and related technologies (18 percent). The highest proportion of Aboriginal people (44 percent) reported having an apprenticeship or trade credential in fields related to architecture, engineering and trades. The gender breakdown shows a preponderance of Aboriginal males have apprenticeship and trades credentials in these fields (67 percent). Aboriginal women are more likely to have a college credential related to business, management and public administration.

Data from the Aboriginal student sample in *Pan-Canadian Report 2* provides a college-specific perspective of Aboriginal post-secondary participation. Aboriginal students were enrolled in similar programs as non-Aboriginal students with a few differences. The majority of students were enrolled in career or technical programs. However a higher percentage of Aboriginal college students were registered in access or upgrading programs (six percent versus four percent), and fewer Aboriginal students were registered in university preparation, advanced diploma and degree programs. In terms of fields of study, business and health sciences were the top fields for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, but a higher proportion of Aboriginal students were registered in community and social services programs (14 percent compared to 10 percent of non-Aboriginal students).

Table 3

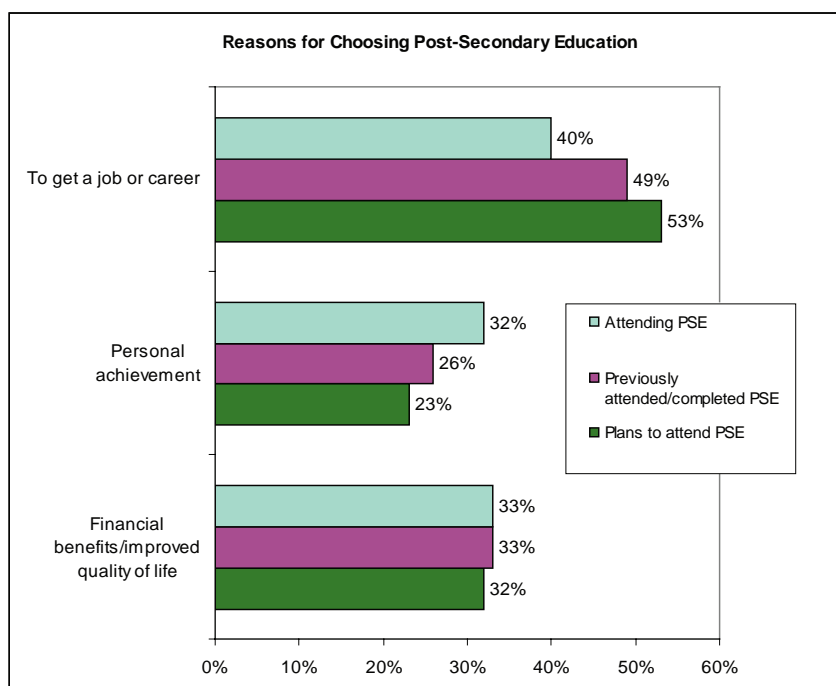
Aboriginal Population Over age 15, by Highest Level of Educational Attainment and Field of Study, Canada 2006				
Both Sexes	Highest Level of Educational Attainment			
	Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma [7]	University certificate or diploma below bachelor level [8]	University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level or above [9]
Education	1.3%	3.0%	13.6%	25.3%
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	1.7%	3.3%	2.9%	3.0%
Humanities	0.9%	2.6%	6.8%	10.3%
Social and behavioural sciences and law	2.6%	8.8%	12.4%	21.3%
Business, management and public administration	10.6%	28.9%	29.9%	18.0%
Physical and life sciences and technologies	0.3%	0.6%	1.5%	4.5%
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	2.1%	5.0%	2.5%	1.6%
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	43.7%	17.6%	9.4%	4.0%
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	3.4%	3.0%	3.1%	1.9%
Health, parks, recreation and fitness	11.7%	18.1%	15.8%	9.5%
Personal, protective and transportation services	21.7%	9.0%	1.9%	0.5%
Other fields of study	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
<b>Males</b>				
Education	0.6%	1.4%	8.3%	18.2%
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	1.7%	3.9%	3.8%	3.3%
Humanities	0.7%	2.4%	6.5%	11.7%
Social and behavioural sciences and law	0.5%	3.7%	12.5%	21.4%
Business, management and public administration	3.5%	15.4%	24.8%	18.0%
Physical and life sciences and technologies	0.3%	0.8%	2.1%	5.9%
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	1.3%	6.3%	3.5%	2.4%
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	65.6%	40.9%	23.0%	8.8%
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	4.1%	5.4%	5.3%	3.0%
Health, parks, recreation and fitness	2.8%	6.6%	6.7%	6.5%
Personal, protective and transportation services	18.9%	13.4%	3.4%	0.7%
Other fields of study	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
<b>Females</b>				
Education	2.4%	4.1%	16.6%	29.4%
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	1.7%	2.9%	2.4%	2.9%
Humanities	1.2%	2.7%	6.9%	9.6%
Social and behavioural sciences and law	6.1%	12.0%	12.3%	21.2%
Business, management and public administration	22.4%	37.3%	32.8%	18.0%
Physical and life sciences and technologies	0.2%	0.5%	1.2%	3.6%
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	3.5%	4.3%	1.9%	1.1%
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	7.3%	3.2%	1.8%	1.2%
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	2.3%	1.5%	1.9%	1.4%
Health, parks, recreation and fitness	26.4%	25.2%	20.8%	11.3%
Personal, protective and transportation services	26.3%	6.2%	1.2%	0.4%
Other fields of study	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

### Aboriginal Peoples' Post-secondary Education Goals

The UAPS found that when Aboriginal people were asked about their reasons for choosing to pursue post-secondary studies, there were three main reasons reported: to obtain a career; financial benefits and improving quality of life; and, personal achievement. The career-oriented goals of UAPS respondents are in line with results from the Aboriginal sample reported in *Pan-Canadian Report 2*. The majority of Aboriginal students (like non-Aboriginal students) were attending college for job-related reasons, the highest proportion to acquire the knowledge and skills for a future occupation (89 percent), to improve their chances for career advancement (63 percent) and to make more money (57 percent).

**Figure 4**



Source: Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, Main Report, Environics

### Obtaining a Career/Job

The most common reason supplied by UAPS respondents for pursuing post-secondary education, is that it opens the door to opportunities for advancing one's career. Some respondents also reported that it can help in achieving a career that they enjoy. Job or career-related reasons were reported by 49 percent of those who had previously attended post-secondary studies. Among respondents who were planning to attend post-secondary studies, this figure was 53 percent and 40 percent among those already attending a post-secondary institution.

### Financial Benefits and Improved Quality of Life

Many UAPS respondents indicated that financial benefits and an improved quality of life could be obtained by pursuing a post-secondary education. Among those currently attending post-secondary studies and those who had already obtained their post-secondary studies, 33 percent indicated that financial reasons and improved quality of life were the reason for pursuing post-secondary studies. That figure was only marginally lower among those who were planning to attend post-secondary studies in the future, at 32 percent.

### Personal Achievement

The third reason UAPS respondents provided for pursuing post-secondary education was personal enrichment. Whether through the enjoyment of learning or by completing education or upgrading skills, respondents believed that post-secondary education could provide an enriched sense of personal achievement. It is worth noting that among current post-secondary students, 32 percent indicated that personal enrichment was the common reason for pursuing a post-secondary education, that figure was 26 percent among those who had already attended post-secondary studies and 23 percent for those planning to attend a post-secondary institution in the future.

### Aboriginal Students Pathways to College

*Pan-Canadian Report 2* also provides information on Aboriginal students' pathways to college. The results of this study indicate that the largest percentage of students (29 percent from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal samples) reported working full time prior to beginning college. Fewer Aboriginal students were attending high school full time (27 percent compared to 30 percent of non-Aboriginal students) and a higher percentage of Aboriginal students had been attending a college full time (17 percent compared to 13 percent of non-Aboriginal students).

At the point of college entry, a higher percentage of Aboriginal students (21 percent), compared to non-Aboriginal (17 percent) were not attending college for the first time. When respondents were asked about their highest level of educational attainment, the majority of students, 62 percent reported high school completion or equivalent. Only a slightly higher percentage of the Aboriginal student sample reported a certificate or diploma from a college or institute, 12 percent versus 11 percent. Those figures were slightly lower for a university credential, three percent compared to six percent.

The majority of Aboriginal respondents surveyed (83 percent) indicated that their first choice post-secondary option was to attend their current college, as opposed to another college. Seven percent reported they would have preferred going to university. A higher proportion of Aboriginal students, 17 percent, compared to 14 percent of non-Aboriginal students indicated they were not enrolled in their preferred program.





### 3. Aboriginal Participation in College Programs

In order to better understand Aboriginal student participation in college programs, the 2010 survey asked colleges to provide estimates of the number of self-identified Aboriginal students in education and training programs for the 2008-2009 academic year. The survey also asked about gender and age breakdowns to provide an updated demographic profile of Aboriginal students.

As in 2005, self-identification of Aboriginal students continues to be a challenge for mainstream institutions. The 2010 survey also asked about challenges institutions face with Aboriginal self-identification and solutions they have put in place.

#### 3.1 Aboriginal Student Participation in College Programs

This section provides an overview of Aboriginal student participation in college programs based on enrolment estimates gathered through the 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey for the 2008-2009 academic year. Table 4 shows the total number of students enrolled at respondent colleges provided by 52 of the 56 respondent institutions, and the distribution by program type. This is followed by an analysis of the distribution by gender.

Table 4

Estimate of the Number of Self Identified Aboriginal Students at Publicly-funded Colleges by Program Type		
Education and Training Programs	Total Number of Aboriginal Students	% Distribution
Adult basic education	7,441	24%
Preparatory programs	842	3%
Aboriginal specific career technical programs (diploma/certificate)	1,759	6%
Career/technical programs (diploma/certificate)	8,712	28%
Trades and apprenticeship programs	3,522	11%
University preparation programs	560	2%
University transfer, joint collaborative degree programs	1,411	5%
Degree programs	467	2%
Other	6,227	20%
Total	30,941	100%

Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey

The programming with the highest percentage of Aboriginal students was adult basic education/upgrading/GED programs (24 percent), and career/technical programs (diploma/certificate), at 28 percent, accounting for more than half of enrolment by program type. As shown in Table 4, 11 percent of Aboriginal students were enrolled in trades and apprenticeship programming; approximately, seven percent were enrolled in university preparation, university transfer, joint/collaborative or degree programs. A significant proportion of colleges reported that Aboriginal students were enrolled in Aboriginal community-based programs and courses, and continuing education, captured in the "Other" category.

Mainstream institutions with the highest number of self-identified Aboriginal students are: Northwest Community College with 3,933 Aboriginal students, SIAST with 2,369, Red River College (2,167), College of New Caledonia (1,557) and NorQuest College (1,169). The enrolment profile of Aboriginal-specific and northern institutions are profiled separately below.

#### A Success Story from Aurora College

Tyra chose to do her second year apprenticeship electrical at Aurora College, although she did her first year apprenticeship at NAIT. She felt the smaller classes and hands-on approach at Aurora College suited her better. The instruction is hands-on and there is plenty of opportunity to learn new things on a daily basis. This environment has helped Tyra learn more easily and she remarks on how much she enjoys the flexibility in her course modules, the teaching methods and the supportive community at Thebacha Campus. The Fort Simpson resident will return to her job as an apprentice electrician at Diavik Diamond Mines in a few months, but she looks forward to continuing her education at Aurora College in the fall.

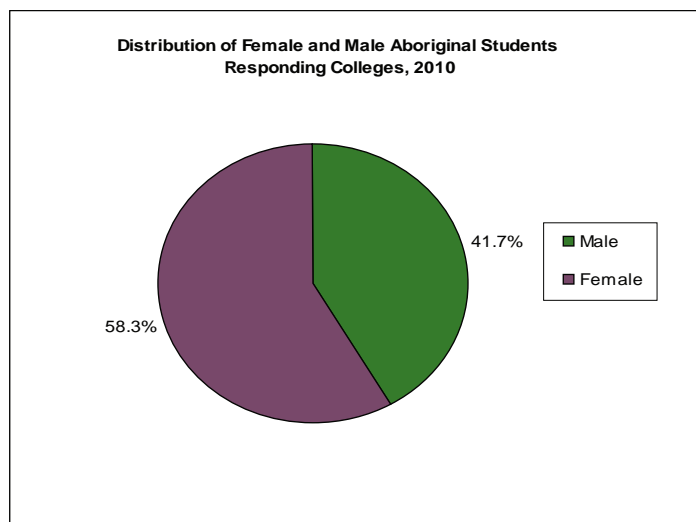
## Gender Distribution of Aboriginal College Students

The 2010 survey revealed that there is a higher proportion of females attending colleges compared to males: 58 percent versus 42 percent. This is consistent with the results from the Aboriginal sample in *Pan-Canadian Report 2*, as a higher percentage of the Aboriginal sample was female, 64 percent, compared to 60 percent of the non-Aboriginal group.

The institutions with the highest proportion of female Aboriginal students were in New Brunswick and Quebec. At the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, female enrolment was 88 percent, compared to only 13 percent for males. The other notable variations in gender enrolment were at two institutions in Quebec: Collège Shawinigan, where enrolment of females was 85 percent and Cégep John Abbott College reported 80 percent female enrolment.

Colleges reporting the highest percentage of male students were North West Regional College where male enrolment was reported at 75 percent, compared to 25 percent female; Northern College in Ontario, where 70 percent of the Aboriginal students were male and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), where the split between genders was equally distributed 50 percent male and female.

**Figure 5**



Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey

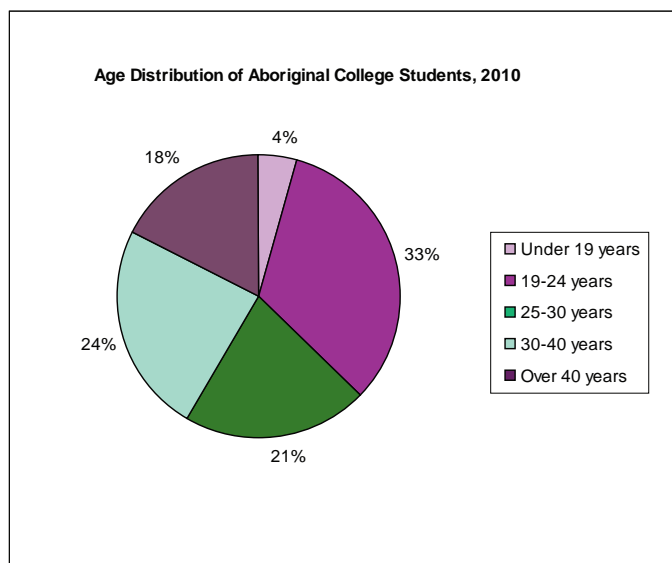
In Atlantic Canada, among the three colleges who participated in the survey, two out of three had a higher percentage of female Aboriginal students than male.

Across all institutions in Quebec, there was a higher proportion of female students enrolled, compared to male. The same story was reported across Ontario, with the exception of Northern College. In the western provinces, again, the number of female Aboriginal students was higher, compared to males, with the exceptions of North West Regional College and NAIT.

## Age Distribution of Aboriginal College Students

To provide greater insight into the demographic profile of Aboriginal college students, enrolment data was collected across five age categories, which included: under age 19, 19 to 24 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 40 years and over the age of 40. The highest proportion of Aboriginal students was in the 19 to 24 age category, comprising 33 percent of total Aboriginal enrolment across all the colleges reporting. The next highest category was 30 to 40 years with 24 percent, followed closely by the 25 to 30 year category at 21 percent. The remaining categories under 19 years, reported the smallest portion of the age groups at four percent and the percentage of Aboriginal students over the age of 40 years was 18 percent.

**Figure 6**



Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey

These results are consistent with those in *Pan-Canadian Report 2*, which indicated that Aboriginal students tended to be older than non-Aboriginal students. Among those under the age of 19, 41 percent were Aboriginal, compared to 48 percent non-Aboriginal. A higher proportion of Aboriginal students were 20 to 24 years, 36 percent compared to 34 percent among the non-Aboriginal population and the most significant variation was in the over 25 age group, where the comparison between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal was 23 versus 18 percent.

### **Enrolment at Aboriginal and Northern Institutions**

#### **Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology**

Total enrolment at SIIT was 2,183 for 2008/09, more than double from its 2005/06 figures. SIIT reported that 84 percent of students were First Nations in 2008/09, four percent were Métis and the remaining 11 percent were non-Aboriginal students. The institute also has a slightly higher proportion of male students over female students: 51 percent, compared to 48 percent. When data was collected on age groups, SIIT reported using slightly different age groups than those outlined on the survey. According to the age categories provided by SIIT, the majority of students were in the 20 to 29 year age group, comprising 43 percent. The proportion of students 30 to 39 years accounted for 27 percent, followed closely by the category over age 40, which accounted for 23 percent of overall enrolment. The smallest proportion of students came from the under 20 year age group, which made up only seven percent of the total enrolment.

#### **Nicola Valley Institute of Technology**

Total enrolment at NVIT was 1,034 students, more than three times the number of students reported in 2005/06. There was a significantly higher proportion of female Aboriginal students, 69 percent, compared to only 31 percent male. NVIT reported the highest level of enrolment in the over 40 years age category, with 39 percent of the total Aboriginal enrolment. The percentage of students between the age of 30 and 40 years, was 22 percent, and students aged 19 to 24 comprised 24 percent of total enrolment. The smallest proportion of students was in the 25 to 30 year age category, at 13 percent and only three percent were under the age of 19.

#### **University College of the North**

At the University College of the North, there was a total enrolment of 1,469 students. The proportion of male and female students was fairly equal, with 55 percent female, and 45 percent male. Enrolment was highest in the 30 to 40 year age group at 36 percent, followed closely by the 19 to 24 age group, which made up 34 percent of total enrolment. The proportion of Aboriginal students aged 25 to 30 years was 24 percent and only six percent of students were under the age of 19. There were no students over the age of 40 enrolled.

### Yukon College

Yukon College reported enrolment of 259 Aboriginal students in 2008/09. The proportion of female students was significantly higher than male: 68 percent versus 32 percent male. Enrolment was evenly distributed across the five age categories. The highest proportion of Aboriginal students was in the 19 to 24 year age group, at 28 percent, followed by 30 to 40 years, with enrolment comprising 23 percent. The proportion of students over the age of 40 years was 21 percent and only eight percent of the Aboriginal students enrolled were under the age of nineteen.

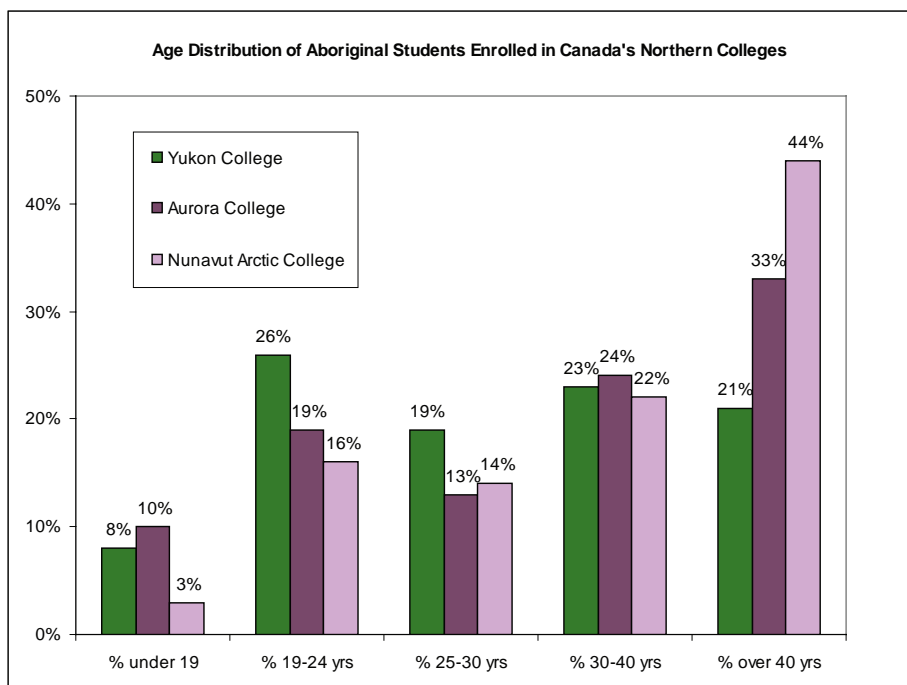
### Aurora College

Of the northern colleges, enrolment at Aurora College was the highest, with 1,813 Aboriginal students. The distribution of male and female students was quite unbalanced, with 60 percent female and 40 percent male. The greatest proportion of Aboriginal students was in the over 40 age category, making up 33 percent of total enrolment. Next was the 30 to 40 age group which came in at 24 percent, followed by 19 to 24 year olds who comprised 19 percent of total enrolment, and only 10 percent of Aboriginal students were under the age of 19.

### Nunavut Arctic College

Enrolment of Aboriginal students at Nunavut Arctic College was 1,531. The proportion of female students was significantly higher, 65 percent, compared to 35 percent male. Enrolment by age group at this northern college was similar to Aurora College, with the majority of Aboriginal students being over the age of 40 (or 44 percent), followed by 30 to 40 years with 22 percent of the total and the younger age groups 19 to 24 and 25 to 30, each reported 16 and 14 percent respectively. Again, the smallest proportion of Aboriginal students was under the age of 19, only three percent.

**Figure 7**



Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey

## 3.2 College Challenges and Approaches for Aboriginal Self-Identification

The majority of respondent mainstream institutions reported that they experience challenges with the self-identification of Aboriginal students. This section provides an overview of the key challenges identified through the 2010 survey and highlights the structures, systems and practices colleges identified to overcome these challenges. This section ends with some perspectives on opportunities for pan-Canadian approaches to improving Aboriginal self-identification.



### 3.2.1 Self-Identification Challenges

The main challenge is that it is optional for Aboriginal students to self-identify at the application and registration stages, and colleges indicated that there are always some Aboriginal students who chose not to do so. Consequently the Aboriginal student enrolment data can only be considered as an estimate. As in 2005, respondent institutions indicated that the main reasons Aboriginal students do not self-identify are because they mistrust the institution's motives or fear that this will impact negatively on their acceptance. Colleges also reported that some students are reluctant to self-identify because they feel they are just "regular" students and do not want to be singled-out because they are Aboriginal.

However, without accurate enrolment information on Aboriginal students it is difficult for institutions to understand the scale of services required, and to align the human, financial and service-oriented resources to the needs of all Aboriginal students.

Institutions reported there are no difficulties in identifying students sponsored by First Nations Bands or education authorities, as institutions work from the lists provided by the sponsors. For example, all of the cégeps in Quebec indicated that this is not an issue because they largely serve sponsored students.

Institutions which serve communities with a high proportion of Aboriginal people such as the colleges in the territories and those with regional campuses in northern communities, (e.g. College of New Caledonia in B.C. and the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Campus of the College of the North Atlantic) reported more student willingness to self-identify.

The following are the specific challenges mainstream institutions identified:

#### **Complexity of Collecting the Data from Various Sources**

Colleges reported they typically patch together the Aboriginal student enrolment data from various internal sources:

- data from the application and registration processes;
- students access to or registration through Aboriginal student service departments;
- data from the student financial assistance department for sponsored students;
- data from the contract training department for the delivery of programs and courses for Aboriginal communities.

#### **Access to Aboriginal Student Services**

Institutions encourage students to access and/or register with Aboriginal student service departments. This information is used to supplement the data provided through applications and registration systems to calculate Aboriginal student enrolment numbers. However, this is not a completely reliable data source either, as some institutions reported that not all Aboriginal students access these services.

#### **Identification of Aboriginal Students in Adult Upgrading and Apprenticeship Programs**

Ontario colleges indicated that it is more difficult to identify Aboriginal students in adult upgrading and apprenticeship programs because students do not apply for these programs through the centralized Ontario College Application Service. Although these are programs which typically attract more Aboriginal students, institutions reported that it is more difficult to identify the origins of students in these programs because the application process is more decentralized.

#### **Fewer Métis Students Self-Identify**

Colleges reported that more First Nations students self-identify compared to Métis students.

#### **Aboriginal Students Confusion Over Terminology**

There appears to be some confusion regarding terminology for self-identifying students, as many do not understand the difference. For example, Red River College indicated that some students check visible minority or consider themselves Métis and not Aboriginal. Sault College reported there is also confusion between the terms status and non-status.

#### **Concern about Introducing Discriminatory Practices**

Some institutions indicated that there are perceptions that asking Aboriginal students to self-identify or sending targeted information for Aboriginal students is discriminatory. The challenge is to articulate the value of self-identification for Aboriginal students.

#### **Aboriginal Ancestry Documentation**

Some students have difficulty obtaining the Aboriginal status or ancestry documentation.

### 3.2.2 Structures, Systems or Practices to Address Self-Identification Challenges

Respondent colleges identified various structures, systems and practices to address self-identification challenges which are described below, followed by some exemplary practices.

#### Promotion of Aboriginal Student Services and Programs

The most commonly identified strategy for improving student identification is through the promotion of Aboriginal student services and programs so that students are aware of the value and benefits of self-identifying. Promotional activities identified by respondent institutions are:

- Ensure college customer service representatives have key information about specific Aboriginal programs or services and that they are aware of the importance of providing this information to potential students inquiring about college programs.
- Promote programs and services through partners in Aboriginal communities and education authorities as they have an important role in supporting students making post-secondary choices.
- Include information or a welcome letter from the Aboriginal student services in registration packages.
- Ensure Aboriginal student services staff attend all program and division orientation sessions as well as open houses and career expositions.
- Offer student mentorship opportunities.
- Provide incentives for students to self-identify. For example, Northern College has a draw for a prize for those students who self-identify.
- Set up Aboriginal student service information booths in high-traffic areas to encourage students to self-identify.
- Inform Aboriginal students of the full range of services available from academic support to housing, medical services and cultural resources.
- Introduce a self-declaration information campaign in collaboration with Aboriginal student leadership. For example, Confederation College is considering this approach, as there has been a trend among elementary and high schools to encourage Aboriginal learners to count themselves in. The college is examining how similar projects could be organized in collaboration with the Aboriginal students association.

#### Data Measures

More institutions reported they are developing approaches to improve data collection and tracking of Aboriginal students through improved computer systems or database development to create efficiencies in their systems.

Since 2005, some provinces have introduced more centralized approaches to identify the number of Aboriginal college students. The Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) asks applicants about Aboriginal identity, and Ontario colleges reported that this assists them in identifying their Aboriginal students. Some reported technical difficulties in accessing the OCAS data but are working to improve this. British Columbia has instituted a common data standards policy which identifies the number of Aboriginal learners within the college system.

#### Alternate Means or Options to Self-Identify

Some institutions are offering alternate means or options to enable students to self-identify later should they change their minds after they register and begin their studies. Alternate options identified by respondent institutions included:

- Informing students they can self-identify at any point during their studies in person with staff of Aboriginal student services departments or the Admissions and Registration office.
- On-line self-identification through a tool or service on the Aboriginal student services webpage. For example, Okanagan College offers this option through the Aboriginal Access and Services webpage and NAIT is developing a self-service tool on the Aboriginal Student Services webpage that will automatically update the student record once submitted.

#### Create a More Welcoming Environment

Respondent colleges emphasized the importance of taking a more holistic approach by creating a welcoming environment that respects Aboriginal culture and inclusion, as this would in turn encourage more to self-identify. For some colleges this is also viewed as being part of a larger process of adopting a holistic approach to Aboriginal inclusion or indigenization of their institutions. This is discussed in more detail in Section 10. Institutions identified some approaches for creating a more welcoming environment including:

**More Aboriginal staff to serve and support students:** at Nova Scotia Community College, campus principals have been working with key leaders, Elders and funders to build relationships that may help bring more Aboriginal staff to their campuses.

**Promote Aboriginal culture on college campuses and provide the services of Elders** to conduct sharing circles and smudge ceremonies with the students. The increased exposure to cultural knowledge provides awareness and understanding for students to strengthen their Aboriginal identity.

**An Aboriginal mentorship program** was identified by Algonquin College as a way to create a more welcoming environment, and students can see the relevance of self-identification with the one-on-one support they receive from their mentors.

### **More User-Friendly Forms and Terminology Review**

Some Aboriginal students find the terminology related to Aboriginal identity confusing. In order to address the challenge, institutions indicated that they are developing more user-friendly forms and revising the Aboriginal self-identification question. For example, Aurora College expanded the categories of Aboriginal identity groups to include more specific categories for Aboriginal students. In the past, the college received feedback that the existing choices did not fully represent how they wished to identify themselves.

### **Support to Complete the Application and Registration Processes**

Colleges provide assistance to students for the completion of application and registration forms. This assists the students through the complexities and also enables the institution to explain the importance of self-identification and thus increase the likelihood that students will self-identify.

### **Remove Requirements for Aboriginal Status or Ancestry Documentation**

Most colleges did not specify whether they require Aboriginal students to provide documentation proving Aboriginal identity or status, but some indicated that they have removed the requirements for such documentation.

### **Collaboration and Partnerships with First Nations Bands, Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit Sponsoring Organizations**

Colleges work with sponsoring Aboriginal organizations to encourage students to self-identify.

#### **Exemplary Practices**

**Lethbridge College** is introducing a process to get authorization from students to change their status. Often students do not realize that they did not self-identify and are therefore willing to have their status changed. The college is developing a form which staff can use to get student authorization to change their status

**Okanagan College** provides alternative means for students to self-declare their ancestry at any time while studying at the college. They can do so in person to any of the Aboriginal Access and Services staff, they can do so online at the Aboriginal Access and Services webpage, or they can do so in person at the Admissions and Registration Office. No documentation proving their ancestry is required. At all recruitment events, the Aboriginal Recruiting and Events assistants encourage all applicants to self-declare their ancestry, and are informed as to why it is important. The Aboriginal Student Centres make regular efforts to encourage students to self-declare.

**Red River College** indicated that the School of Indigenous Education uses all marketing media to connect with students within the college environment: posters, mail, fax, email, in-person, radio, newspapers, and alumni. The college has also created an Aboriginal alumni and current student database which is maintained each year to get an accurate depiction of the number of Aboriginal students in day programs. This list is also cross-referenced with the alumni team and the institutional research office.

**Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)** has a self-declaration process at the point of admission. To encourage students to self-identify, SIAST promotes the benefits of self declaration such as reserved seating in many programs as part of their education equity program. Another benefit is the ability to participate in some transition programming and the ability to access additional targeted supports. SIAST has also established processes for students to self-declare later, should they change their minds after they begin their studies.

**Sault College** recognizes that it serves a diverse population, and is committed to making education meaningful, responsive to, and inclusive of the cultural diversity that characterizes its student population. Voluntary self-identification data is collected annually on the college's student portal "mysaultcollege" under the heading "Myself." The portal is accessible by all students enrolled at Sault College and is accessed by a unique login name and password. To encourage students to enter their information, a contest is held each semester in addition to internal marketing campaigns.

The Sault College Native Education department has created self-identification cards that are utilized throughout the year to reach those students who may not access departmental services or who may not be aware of the MySelf self-identification program on the student portal. All students are encouraged to complete these cards. Data collected through this method is cross-referenced with the MySelf data in order to provide a more accurate Aboriginal student count.

### 3.2.3 Pan-Canadian Efforts Related to Aboriginal Self-Identification

The Canadian Education Statistics Council, a partnership between the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and Statistics Canada, commissioned a review of provincial/territorial experience in collecting and using Aboriginal self-identification with a view to identifying lessons learned that can help improve the practice of collecting Aboriginal self-identification information and increase understanding of how this information can be used to improve outcomes for Aboriginal learners.<sup>12</sup>

The final report entitled *Review of Current Approaches to Canadian Aboriginal Self-Identification* (2008) concluded that there is a wide variety of data collection and dissemination practices in place across the country. Most jurisdictions ask questions related to Aboriginal status as a matter of identity. Manitoba and Saskatchewan also ask about Aboriginal status and ancestry. Quebec and the Atlantic provinces do not ask individuals to self-identify, but are able to identify Aboriginal students through a Band address or language. Once collected, the data is used for various purposes such as identifying Aboriginal students for tuition reimbursements and for improving program delivery. Not all data and results are transferable across jurisdictions, as there is no common standard in defining and coding Aboriginal identity.

The report recognized the complexity of obtaining consistent data at the post-secondary level and emphasized the importance of involving Aboriginal groups in policy discussions about creating pan-Canadian data standards for Aboriginal self-identification. The Statistics Canada Post-Secondary Student Information System (PSIS) is a national data collection instrument which has the potential to collect and store high level pan-Canadian data on Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education and allow for inter-jurisdictional longitudinal comparisons. The PSIS student data file contains demographic information and asks whether the student is from a visible minority or an Aboriginal person. There is only one Aboriginal identity category “North American Aboriginal person.” All publicly-funded colleges are required to submit data through PSIS, and full college data is expected to be available for the 2011-2012 academic year. Given the limitation of having just one Aboriginal identity character, it would be worth exploring with Statistics Canada whether the Aboriginal identity variable is well reported, and if not, assess how this could be improved.



<sup>12</sup> *Review of Current Approaches to Canadian Aboriginal Self-Identification, Final Report*, Educational Policy Institute, October 2008.



## 4. Funding Sources and Challenges

The funding sources and structures in place to meet Aboriginal people’s post-secondary education needs are varied and complex. This section describes how Aboriginal learners are accessing financial assistance for post-secondary education, explains how colleges are funding Aboriginal programs and services, and describes the funding challenges colleges identified through the 2010 survey.

### 4.1 How Aboriginal Learners are Accessing Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education

Access to financial assistance continues to be a significant barrier for Aboriginal people to complete post-secondary education. This was confirmed through the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, which found that finances was one of the top two reasons among the Aboriginal non-reserve population for not finishing post-secondary studies. More recently, the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (2010) reconfirmed this. Cost was reported as the main obstacle for urban Aboriginal people to complete post-secondary education, and financial support is what many urban Aboriginals believe could allow them to attain their educational goals. In effect, 45 percent of those surveyed who were currently in college or university, indicated financial issues were the primary obstacle and 39 percent who had attended in the past, identified the cost of their education, poverty or the cost of living as barriers to post-secondary education. This is in line with the perspectives provided by Aboriginal respondents to the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students. Half of Aboriginal college students, a higher proportion than non-Aboriginal students, reported being very concerned about having enough money to pay for college studies and living expenses.

In terms of accessing financial assistance, the results of the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey on financial assistance for post-secondary education indicated that 51 percent of the Aboriginal population had applied for financial assistance and 88 percent received financial funding for their post-secondary studies. There were only minor variations between males and females and their success rates in receiving funding. Approximately 57 percent of female Aboriginals applied for funding and 90 percent received that funding, compared to 44 percent of males of which 84 percent received funding.

Table 5 shows the primary sources of funding identified by Aboriginal respondents of the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students. The primary source of funding for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal college students were loans (37 percent). Parental support was the second largest source of funds for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, however this figure was higher for non-Aboriginal students at 29 percent, compared to 21 percent for Aboriginal students. Funding sources such as scholarships, grants and bursaries, comprised only a small portion, with Aboriginal students being slightly more likely to have used one of these funding types to support their post-secondary studies.

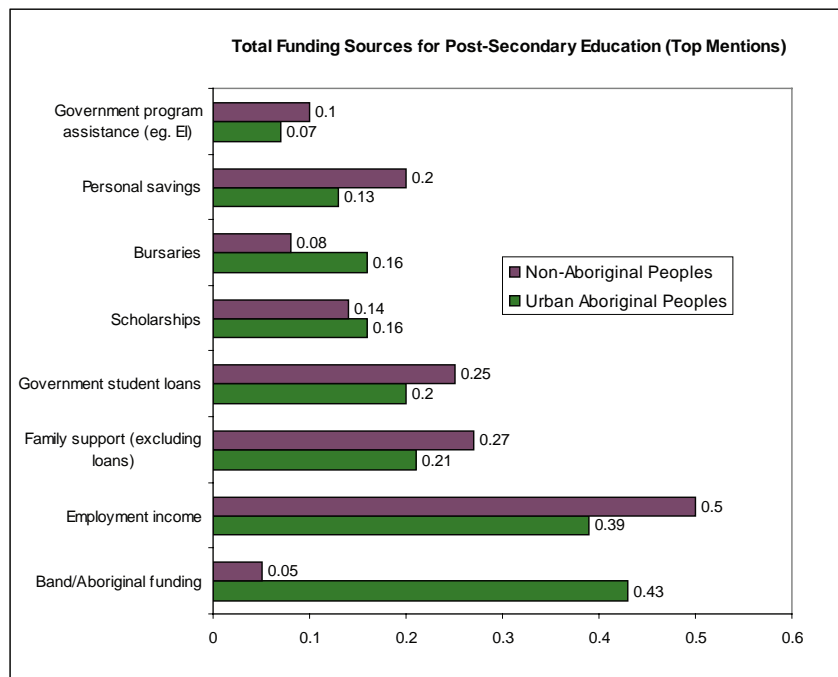
Table 5

Primary Source of Funding for Aboriginal Students - Proportion Reporting (%)		
	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Parents	29%	21%
Spouse or Partner	2%	2%
Other people	1%	2%
Loans	37%	37%
personal savings from working	21%	13%
Scholarships, awards or prizes	2%	2%
Grants or bursaries	2%	5%
Other sources	5%	15%

Source: College Entry Survey, 2005 (Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students)

The results of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey show a different distribution in the sources of funding as shown in Figure 8. The source of post-secondary funding identified most frequently by urban Aboriginal students was Band or Aboriginal funding. Compared to the non-Aboriginal population, urban Aboriginal people typically have less access to employment income, family support and personal savings; they were less comfortable with government student loans and less likely to be saving for their children’s post-secondary education.

**Figure 8**



Source: Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2010

The most significant source of post-secondary education funding distributed by First Nations Bands is from the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the University College Entrance Preparation Program funded by INAC. These programs assist with tuition, books, travel and living expenses for Status Indians and Inuit people. Almost all of the combined funds of these two programs are delivered directly by First Nations Bands or their administering organizations. Funding is distributed according to selection criteria and policies set by Band Councils. Although the number of students funded through these programs has increased substantially over the years, they also have serious limitations:

- The PSSSP has been capped at two percent annual increases since 1996. According to a study commissioned by the Assembly of First Nations, 10,589 eligible students who successfully completed high school were unable to access support for post-secondary education between 2001 and 2006. Each year, it is estimated that approximately 3,000 additional students are denied access.
- Not all Status Indians, such as “Bill C-31 Indians” who achieved Indian Status through changes to the Indian Act in 1985, can access the Student Support or Entrance Preparation programs, and non-Status or Métis are not eligible.
- The Assembly of First Nations has indicated that cost breakdowns for post-secondary education need to include, but not be limited to tuition, books, housing, daycare, clothing, travel (in order to address the \$5,000/\$6,000 deficit per student) including indirect costs (such as family care/assistance).
- The PSSSP does not fund one-year programs, trades training, computer studies or upgrading and there are restrictions on the choice of institution and the age of students.

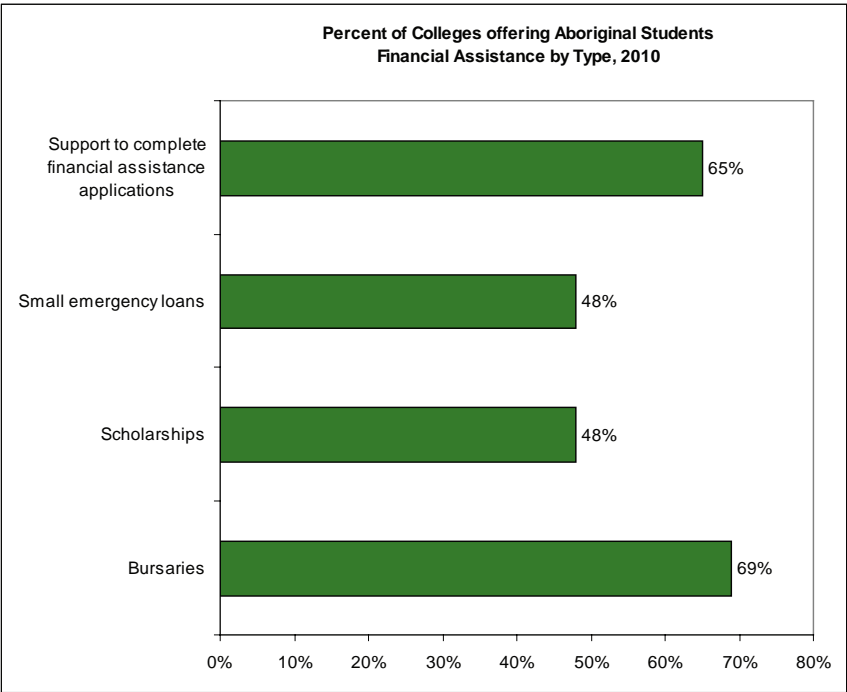
Since Non-Status and Métis students cannot access INAC programs, they must rely on their own resources or Canada Student Loans in order to fund their post-secondary education, and once again these are often insufficient.

#### A Success Story from Algonquin College

Successfully overcoming poverty wasn't easy for Jimmy, a First Nations student, who waited several years for Band funding so he could attend college. While he was eligible for funding, his Band did not receive enough post-secondary funding to sponsor all of their students and Jimmy was placed on a two-year wait list. Unwilling to wait, Jimmy enrolled in the Aboriginal Studies program and paid his own tuition and living expenses by working two part-time jobs and studying full time. Jimmy knew his career would involve either governance or political work that would advance the lives of Indigenous peoples. In his Aboriginal careers course he developed a career plan that would take him in that direction. Due to family circumstances, Jimmy had to leave school. Upon his return to school four years later, he received Band funding and was able to complete his Aboriginal Studies Certificate. Three years since graduating with a college certificate, Jimmy is a policy analyst involved in political work aimed at advancing the lives of Indigenous peoples.

The 2010 survey requested that colleges report on the types of financial student assistance offered at their institutions. This included bursaries, scholarships, small emergency loans, support to complete financial assistance applications and any other type of funding. As shown in Figure 9, 2010 survey results indicate that 69 percent of colleges reported they offer Aboriginal-specific bursaries, 48 percent provide scholarships and small emergency loans and 65 percent provide Aboriginal students with support to complete financial assistance applications.

Figure 9



Source: 2010 Survey of Aboriginal Programs and Services

Other Forms of Financial Assistance

In some cases, financial assistance options to Aboriginal students went beyond the categories supplied on the survey. Both Heritage College and Lambton College indicated they provide assistance to Aboriginal students through food banks. Confederation College indicated it provides workshops for Aboriginal students to assist them with the completion of applications. George Brown College provides on-going assistance with food and transportation. Canadore College has a specific discretionary bursary available to Aboriginal students in need of one-time-only emergency funding. University College of the North indicated that certain programs may also offer financial assistance to students in need. Table 6 shows the provincial distribution of financial assistance offered by respondent colleges.

**A Success Story from Lethbridge College**

With a value of \$10,000, the EnMax First Nations Wind Turbine Technician Award is the largest at Lethbridge College. The award provides a living allowance, books, tools and supplies for a student in the Wind Turbine Technician program. This has created a good partnership that benefits a student. Ty was this year’s recipient, and was already registered in the program when the award was advertised. He had already secured funding from his Band for tuition costs, but was concerned about a living allowance as he had family responsibilities. Through this scholarship, Ty was given a great opportunity to move into his program of choice with all the financial support he needed for success.

Table 6

<b>Provincial Distribution of Financial Assistance, Based on Respondent Colleges</b>	
<b>Atlantic - 3 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	33%
Scholarships	33%
Small emergency loans	0
Support to complete financial assistance applications	0
Other	0
<b>Quebec - 10 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	40%
Scholarships	30%
Small emergency loans	30%
Support to complete financial assistance applications	40%
Other	40%
<b>Ontario - 14 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	87%
Scholarships	87%
Small emergency loans	33%
Support to complete financial assistance applications	73%
Other	73%
<b>Manitoba - 2 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	100%
Scholarships	
Small emergency loans	
Support to complete financial assistance applications	
Other	50%
<b>Saskatchewan - 4 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	75%
Scholarships	75%
Small emergency loans	30%
Support to complete financial assistance applications	80%
Other	
<b>Alberta - 8 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	88%
Scholarships	75%
Small emergency loans	75%
Support to complete financial assistance applications	88%
Other	50%
<b>British Columbia - 8 Colleges</b>	<b>Percentage offering financial assistance</b>
Bursaries	71%
Scholarships	14%
Small emergency loans	43%
Support to complete financial assistance applications	71%
Other	29%
Yukon College - Yukon	No data
Aurora College - Northwest Territories	Only offer scholarships
Nunavut Arctic College - Nunavut	

## 4.2 Funding for College Programs and Services

Colleges were asked to identify their main sources of funding for Aboriginal programs and services. Results from respondent colleges are presented in Table 7.

In terms of the allocation of college revenue and resources, the highest proportion of respondent colleges identified operating grants from provincial/territorial governments and tuition as sources of funding for Aboriginal programs and services. Some respondent colleges noted that tuition would also include some Aboriginal students with Band funding; however this is not always tracked by institutions. One quarter of colleges reported earned revenue as a source for program development and delivery, largely through contract training with Aboriginal communities and partners.

Partnerships with Aboriginal organizations is another significant source of funding, with 38 percent of institutions reporting partnerships with First Nations Bands as a source of revenue, followed by partnerships with Métis organizations (24 percent), Tribal Councils (18 percent), Inuit Organizations (11 percent) and Non-Status Indian Organizations (four percent).

Among the federal government sources of revenue, the highest proportion of respondents identified Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement Holders (AHRDAs) through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS) now called the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), and funded through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Twenty-five percent of colleges reported AHRDAs as a source of funding. In the case of funding from AHRDAs, as well as other HRSDC funded programs such as the Aboriginal Skills and the Employment Program (ASEP) and Aboriginal Skills Training Strategic Investment Fund (ASTSIF), some respondent institutions noted that it is not always possible for a college to know the original funding source. For example, Aboriginal organizations could contract a college for training and the group could be using funds from AHRDS, ASEP or ASTSIF. As a result, the amount of funding these HRSDC programs provide for the delivery of college education programs in Aboriginal communities is likely under-represented.

**Table 7**

Sources of Funding for College Programs and Services	Yes	%
College operating grant from provincial/territorial government	28	51%
Tuition	24	44%
Earned revenue	14	25%
Provincial/territorial government Aboriginal program funding	22	40%
Federal government Aboriginal program funding		
• Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Indian Student Studies Program	7	13%
• HRSDC Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement Holders	14	25%
• HRSDC Aboriginal Skills and Employment Program	5	9%
• HRSDC Aboriginal Skills/Training Strategic Investment Fund	6	11%
First Nations Bands or partnerships	21	38%
Tribal councils	10	18%
Inuit organizations	6	11%
Métis organizations	13	24%
Non-Status Indian organizations	2	4%
Industry partnerships	6	11%
Other	1	2%

Forty percent of colleges reported Aboriginal-specific program funding from provincial/territorial governments as a source of revenue. Some provincial governments have increased funding for Aboriginal programs offered by colleges.



**Ontario colleges** reported that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has instituted a new funding formula for institutions that were receiving the Aboriginal program funding through the former Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS). In the 2010 survey, Ontario colleges, particularly those in the northern part of the province, reported that they now receive increased multi-year funding (three years) which is tied to their action plan. These institutions indicated that this allows for more accurate long-term strategic planning while at the same time reducing staff stress in submitting funding proposals on a yearly basis, as was required by the AETS.

The **Government of New Brunswick** announced a new \$1 million initiative to help Aboriginal students pursue post-secondary education. As a result, New Brunswick Community College has hired four full-time Aboriginal coordinators for its five campuses and a part-time Aboriginal coordinator at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. The coordinators/student advisors will support Aboriginal students, help with Aboriginal recruitment and collaborate with Aboriginal communities and other provincial post-secondary education institutions to share best practices and better meet the training, and learning needs of the province's Aboriginal population.

In **British Columbia**, for 2010-2011, the government announced an investment of \$61.5 million for Aboriginal education to support Aboriginal language and culture programs, service programs, and other localized education programs, at \$1,160 per student in estimated funding (based on district-estimated enrolment and self identified as Aboriginal ancestry). The goal is to continue the development of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* to help Aboriginal students start, stay and succeed in post-secondary education and training. The strategy's actions will help Aboriginal students by increasing scholarship opportunities, and funding for Aboriginal-focused programs. This will also include increasing access, retention and success by investing \$14.95 million to create three-year service plans between 11 public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities that identify interests and educational needs of Aboriginal students and create programs that meet those needs. Colleges in B.C. were very pleased with the multi-year funding previously provided and are now hopeful for continued funding of this strategy.

#### **4.3 Challenges with Current Funding Structures and Sources for College Aboriginal Programs and Services**

Given the complexity of Aboriginal post-secondary funding, colleges were asked to identify the challenges they face with current funding structures and sources for the development and delivery of Aboriginal programs and services. The challenges identified by respondent institutions are summarized below.

**Insufficient student-based funding:** As in 2005, respondent colleges reported that they are seeing the impact of the limited funding available through the PSSSP. Fewer students can access funding, which impacts on colleges' capacity to deliver Aboriginal programs, in particular in institutions with reserved seats for Aboriginal students. When the financial support does not meet student demand, spaces cannot be filled with Aboriginal students and programs cannot run at full capacity. The limitations of PSSSP funding are also affecting access, as students struggle to cover living allowances and costs for day care, transportation and housing.

**Insufficient funding for college programs and services due to diverse needs of Aboriginal learners:** The lack of academic preparedness of many Aboriginal students and the broad range of supports required, ranging from tutoring and learning skills upgrading to daycare and reliable transportation, have cost implications for colleges. Colleges indicated that the base and program funding available is not sufficient for institutions to be truly responsive and provide the diversity of services needed by Aboriginal learners. As in 2005, institutions indicated that base funding formulas should reflect the funding required for the additional student supports needed by Aboriginal learners.

**Lack of financial assistance for students in adult upgrading or adult basic education:** A significant proportion of Aboriginal learners begin college in adult upgrading or basic education, however institutions reported that as these programs are not considered to be at the post-secondary level, there are no funding sources for students, aside for some who succeed in receiving funding through Social Assistance. However some students are reporting that this is not a reliable source of funding as not all students' funding requests are approved.

**Unstable and project-based funding:** Funding available through provincial government Aboriginal-specific programs can supplement the limitations of base funding, however respondent institutions in most jurisdictions indicated that the main challenge with these programs is that they tend to provide project-based year-to-year funding and are therefore not sustainable. For example, colleges reported that they received funding to establish culturally-appropriate Aboriginal student centres or gathering places through provincial/territorial government programs, however institutions then struggle year to year to maintain and staff these facilities. This type of funding also results in colleges receiving last minute requests or

“cash bombs” that must be spent before the end of the fiscal year end which allow institutions little time to plan and ensure the funds are well spent and meet the needs of learners. These types of funding arrangements also impact negatively on students because a program or service may be available one year and gone the next.

Similar challenges exist with the federal Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) funded through INAC, which provides Aboriginal-controlled institutes and other eligible post-secondary institutions with financial support for research, development and delivery of college- and university-level courses for First Nations and Inuit students. Institutions reported that this program does not provide sustainable funding for program development and delivery. The ISSP is a primary source of funding for Aboriginal-controlled institutions; as such many mainstream institutions prefer not to apply.

**Lack of funding for student supports for community-based programs:** Generally, funding agreements for the delivery of community-based programs do not provide for student services or other supports and leave institutions with coverage for only direct instructional costs.

**Federal Aboriginal human resource development, skills training and employment programs:** Colleges identified some challenges in effectively responding to training needs for Aboriginal partner organizations of the following programs funded through HRSDC: the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)<sup>13</sup>, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP), and Employment Insurance (EI). The main challenges colleges identified with these programs are as follows:

- The lack of coordination among funding agencies for ASETS and ASEP projects. There are several sources of funding available for program delivery, but the funding parameters do not always match with changing labour market needs. In jurisdictions where there are numerous agreement holders for ASETS present, it can be challenging for colleges to meet specific training needs, and at the same time capitalize on volume efficiencies. For example, if a program is needed that could attract 15 to 20 candidates from different rural communities, it could potentially be supported by a number of ASETS agreement holders. A single ASETS agreement holder may not have enough students to run some programs, but collectively they could. Greater efficiencies could be achieved if provisions in ASETS and ASEP allowed Aboriginal organizations and colleges to plan and coordinate training activities on a regional level.
- Interventions funded by these programs are too short and geared to direct employment. However many aboriginal learners require more long-term training due to low secondary school graduation rates and literacy levels or because they have been out of school for a long period of time. As in 2005, it was suggested that there is a need for more flexible funding criteria which does not necessarily require direct employment upon program completion. This would enable HRSDC programs to better address the gap between rural and remote and urban areas, and take into account geographic and demographic differences that exist in Canada's rural and remote regions.
- The requirement of the Labour Market Agreements that only EI-eligible people benefit from training programs is very limiting in rural and remote contexts with high unemployment rates because there may not be many people in these regions who are EI eligible. This limits what colleges serving these regions can do with the available federal funding.
- In addition, EI funds are allocated through learners and are not project-specific or block funds. As such, colleges must depend on having enough students to run the programs. Colleges have to be creative in pooling resources to make Aboriginal projects happen. Projects that can be block funded are easiest to undertake, however institutions often get stymied by the complexities of policy that only allows a certain component of a project to be funded.

**Limitations or lack of funding for rural Aboriginal programming:** Institutions in Alberta and Saskatchewan reported that existing funding programs lack the flexibility to deliver rural programming, particularly for continued funding needed by those who require additional time and support to successfully complete their program. It is often hard for institutions serving rural and remote regions to access federal funding for labour market development and training because the geographic and demographic reality in these regions does not fit the funding criteria. In order to access this type of federal funding, institutions are sometimes required to design a training program to meet the funder's needs which is contrary to the education goals for programs that are designed to meet the learners' needs.

**Mainstream institutions serving large numbers of Aboriginal students** identified some particular challenges worth noting. These institutions indicated that they need to improve how they communicate with external sources about the major role they play in the education of Aboriginal students.

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13 The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) was previously called the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS). The 2010 survey referred to AHRDS, however for this section the new program title will be used as colleges made recommendations for improving training delivery within the current program.

For example, SIAST indicated that it is not well known that they train more Aboriginal students than any other provincial institution, and are therefore not recognized for their expertise in this area by external funding sources. SIAST is a large institution with multiple campuses offering various types of training. Coordinating and prioritizing Aboriginal-specific programming and funding needs is a challenge. SIAST recently announced the launch of its *Aboriginal Student Achievement Plan*, an institution-wide plan to ensure that potential sources of funding are coordinated in the most efficient way.

Northwest Community College has the largest Aboriginal student population in B.C. (over 3,933), yet continues to be funded as if it were not a significant player in Aboriginal post-secondary education.

**Standard funding models do not fit for institutions serving smaller groups of students:** One of the challenges for regions with small Aboriginal populations is that the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in some programs does not make the programs financially viable, even though they serve an extremely important need.

**Aboriginal-controlled Institutions face specific funding challenges:** In some provinces, such as Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, Aboriginal-controlled institutions typically must partner with mainstream institutions for the credentialing of their programs. Although the Aboriginal institutes deliver the programs, they do not receive any operating grant from the provinces nor are they transferred funds from mainstream institutions' tuition revenue for those Aboriginal students. This severely limits the funding sources for Aboriginal institutes. Currently these institutes are funded through provincial and federal government programs. Aboriginal-controlled institutions can apply through the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) for the development of Aboriginal programs and services. However under this program, Aboriginal-controlled institutions are required to partner with mainstream institutions for program credentialing, and mainstream institutions are also eligible to apply for funding under this federal program. This year-to-year funding structure continues to put serious limits on the type of programming Aboriginal institutes can offer, particularly for certificate and diploma programs which require more than one year of study.



## 5. Aboriginal Student Recruitment, Admissions & Assessment

Given the barriers many Aboriginal students face resulting from a lack of academic preparedness and lower literacy levels, colleges have highlighted the importance of having more pro-active approaches for recruitment and admissions. The 2005 Aboriginal survey confirmed that recruitment is viewed as one of the essential first steps in helping Aboriginal students succeed in post-secondary education programs, as it helps with goal setting and ensures students take the prerequisite courses in high school. In a 2008 survey of colleges on programs and services for disadvantaged learners, college application and admissions processes were one of the most frequently cited barriers for disadvantaged and low-skilled learners largely because they tend to be cumbersome, lengthy and difficult to understand.

This section draws upon 2010 survey results to describe college Aboriginal student recruitment strategies and how these institutions are supporting Aboriginal students through the application, admissions and assessment stages.

### 5.1 Aboriginal Student Recruitment Strategies

The 2010 survey asked colleges to identify their Aboriginal recruitment strategies to better understand how they are attracting Aboriginal students. The survey confirmed that colleges utilize a variety of approaches to recruit Aboriginal learners. Given the education gap and lower high school completion rates faced by many Aboriginal learners, recruitment strategies are important in aiding students to make informed decisions. These strategies help students choose programming, assess their readiness for post-secondary programs, and the support services colleges offer are important in helping students determine their future career options. Ninety eight percent of respondent colleges indicated they had recruitment strategies in place aimed at increasing Aboriginal participation in their post-secondary programs.

Strategies used by the colleges varied between institutions in terms of the type and frequency of the strategy in place. Below is a description of the most commonly-identified practices used to attract Aboriginal students.

#### Visits, Meetings and Partnerships with First Nations Bands

Recruitment strategies of Aboriginal and mainstream colleges involve visits to Aboriginal communities to meet Education and Training officers of First Nations Band Councils and Aboriginal organizations. Some colleges have more formal partnerships in place, while others rely on communicating with First Nations Bands by mailing out college material. Based on survey respondents, the most commonly-used form of Aboriginal student recruitment were visits and meetings with First Nations Bands and organizations.

As part of its recruitment campaign, the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design mails out packages to all First Nations Education Directors in the region. Niagara College and Vancouver Community College do an annual mass mailing to Aboriginal communities, Bands and referring agents across the country. In Alberta, Grant MacEwan University is building relationships with First Nations communities and Métis settlements through the use of newsletters and by attending community gatherings.

Northwest Community College (NWCC) has developed an approach to increase recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students, including the delivery of community-based programs in partnership with First Nations communities and Aboriginal institutes. It has also developed relevant assessment tools that are both culturally appropriate and educationally relevant. NWCC is also working with Aboriginal role models to deliver culturally-relevant programming and introduce the Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Advisory Committee to ensure First Nations content is addressed in all new courses offered by the college.

Both Yukon College and Aurora College work with First Nations partners to create relevant and accessible programming for Aboriginal students. Aurora College has a number of programs delivered in partnership with First Nations and works with partners to identify community members who may be interested in taking college programs. For example, the Underground Miner Training Program is offered in partnership with Tli Cho Government, Akaitcho Territory Government and Yellowknives Dene. The Environment and Natural Resources Program in Inuvik is offered in partnership with Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation; and the Behchoko Teacher Education Program in partnership with Tli Cho Government.



## Career Days, Fairs and Conferences

Career days, fairs and conferences are all tools being utilized for Aboriginal student recruitment. Northwest Regional College in Saskatchewan conducts job and career fairs in First Nations high schools, as well as Aboriginal events to attract more students to their campus. Both Cégep de Sept-Îles and Cégep John Abbott College in Quebec participate in career fairs to engage and attract Aboriginal students.

Grant MacEwan University attends and participates in First Nations, Métis and Inuit career fairs and also conducts presentations and tours for First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups. In the province of Ontario, Fanshawe College and Canadore College are engaged in community outreach and attend local career fairs to increase attendance levels among the Aboriginal population. Seneca College has large scale fairs at events such as Blue Print for the Future, Canadian Aboriginal Festival and Inclusion Works.

Presenting students with information on programming and how it links to the employment market is a key recruitment tool being utilized by Algonquin College. In the program Connecting Jobs to College, it is important that both the parent and the Aboriginal candidate make the connection between education and finding employment. Activities such as Aboriginal Orientation Day, Dream Quest Camp, Orientation Week and “A-Crew,” assist students and their families to see the connection between college and future employment.

## Media and Marketing

Every day the world becomes more technologically advanced and the way students engage is more frequently done on a web-based platform. Media and marketing were among the top three recruitment strategies identified by colleges that utilize a variety of media techniques to aid in student recruitment. Cégep John Abbott College places advertising and articles in specialized publications to attract potential students. Canadore College has engaged in a media campaign in print, television, and radio broadcasting as a key strategy to attract the Aboriginal students to its campus. By providing more information in print, many colleges are using college marketing materials to attract new Aboriginal students.

SIAST recently conducted a survey among Aboriginal students and found that students' greatest source of information about post-secondary studies came from friends and relatives, followed by the institutions' websites. Based on this feedback, SIAST has placed a greater emphasis on media as a form of recruitment and enhanced its website presence for Aboriginal, as well as other services.

## Working in Partnership with High Schools

In order to attract Aboriginal students early on, many colleges acknowledged the importance of engaging students while they are still in high school so they can begin to think more about the options they have and the opportunities that a post-secondary education can provide them. Many colleges indicated they provide specialized orientation sessions for Aboriginal high school students. Some colleges begin the process of recruitment even earlier than high school.

### Exemplary Practice on Working with High Schools

Northern College has the “Go to College Initiative,” an early intervention at Grade 8 level that introduces college program areas and services to students, teachers and parents through interactive activities designed to plant a seed in the minds of the students about what colleges have to offer. Students also learn about careers available through different program areas delivered at colleges and the high school courses required for entry into these programs. Students come to a Northern College campus, and a team of faculty representing different program and service areas also travel to the James Bay Coastal communities to deliver the activities to the students.

## Dedicated Aboriginal Recruitment Services at Mainstream Institutions

Mainstream institutions recognize the value of having dedicated staff for Aboriginal student recruitment, however many reported they do not have the resources to staff this service. Some examples of colleges which have dedicated Aboriginal student recruiters include:



- Okanagan College recently created two new recruitment positions: Aboriginal Recruiting and Events Assistant. They are base funded with a mandate to engage local Aboriginal communities and organizations in hopes to attract new students and they attend large provincial events as needed.
- Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning recently hired an Aboriginal recruitment officer to develop relationships with the Aboriginal community.
- Sault College is hiring a full-time Aboriginal Student Recruitment Officer who is an active participant on the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Information Program (often referred to as the “Road Warriors”).
- Fleming College plans to establish the position of Aboriginal Student Liaison Officer to support outreach and recruitment initiatives with local First Nations communities, and to support outreach and recruitment initiatives in distant Aboriginal communities.

## 5.2 Application and Admissions Processes

The first real point of contact learners have with a college is at the application and admissions stages. In a 2008 survey, colleges indicated that application and admissions processes pose barriers for disadvantaged learners because they are cumbersome and lengthy, rely mostly on computer-based and Internet systems, and learners typically do not understand the requisite skills needed for many post-secondary programs offered by colleges.

The 2010 survey asked colleges to identify the measures and approaches they have introduced to support Aboriginal students at the application and admissions stages. The most commonly identified measures and approaches are described below.

### Integrated Approaches

The most common response about assisting students with the applications and admissions processes was that there is the need to integrate with other key services. This begins with recruitment, upfront career counselling and making the linkages to other college services that will address barriers. These include support to find housing and financial assistance for those relocating from rural areas, information on funding sources and assistance with the required paperwork. In some cases, this would also include collaboration with or referrals to other community supports. Colleges also emphasized the need to strengthen internal systems, with a particular focus on having Aboriginal student services establish strong communication bridges with key college departments such as the Registrar’s Office, Cash Office, Financial Aid Office, Academic Foundations Liaison Office, Learning Centre, etc.

### “First Contact” Services for Completion of Application Forms

Another commonly identified practice was the provision of dedicated staff for first contact, one-on-one services for Aboriginal students throughout the application and admission phase as well as for pre-registration for each semester. In some cases this falls within the responsibility of Aboriginal recruiters, however most institutions indicated this is part of the responsibility of Aboriginal student services departments.

In the north, Aurora College and Nunavut Arctic College have adult educators in Community Learning Centres who provide assistance to students by conducting placement tests and helping with applications. Aurora College has Community Learning Centres in 25 communities throughout the territory and Nunavut Arctic College has 25 centres in every community in Nunavut. At the main campuses of these institutions, assistance is provided by staff and counsellors responsible for student services as well as the admissions office.

### Collaboration with Aboriginal Partners

Collaboration with Aboriginal post-secondary education counsellors was identified as a common practice. It is important to ensure counsellors are familiar with college processes and provide students assistance with applications and course selection. Quebec cégeps indicated that their First Nations partners provide a lot of support for students to complete applications, and they are key in helping to monitor and support students as they progress through their academic year. In Ontario, Fanshawe College indicated that its First Nations Centre provides space for the local First Nations post-secondary education counsellors to come to the college on a weekly basis to meet with prospective students and provide assistance with applications and admissions.

## Approaches to Support Aboriginal Student Transitions

Respondent colleges identified practices intended to ease Aboriginal students' transition to post-secondary education programs. For example, Conestoga College has introduced an Aboriginal Summer Transition Program to support students with the transition process and to build a sense of community. George Brown College indicated they have someone available during the summers to provide support to applicants, and that Aboriginal students who self-identify are invited to a welcome session to inform them about the services and supports that are available.

## Supportive Admissions Policies and Procedures

Colleges identified admissions policies which help to accommodate and support Aboriginal students. First, although not Aboriginal-specific, many colleges have open admissions policies for some programs which allow students to be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. Through this type of policy, no other selection requirements are applied beyond the minimum requirement (typically a high school diploma) and there may not be a cap on enrolment numbers. Some institutions have admissions policies that provide for a certain number of reserved seats in every program for self-identified Aboriginal applicants. New Brunswick College of Craft and Design indicated that their college admissions deadline is extended to accommodate First Nations funding. Bow Valley College indicated that the application fee is waived for students who self-identify as Aboriginal.

### Exemplary Practices in Providing Supportive Admissions Policies and Procedures

**Lethbridge College:** The Aboriginal Academic Advisor and Aboriginal Career Counsellor work together as key supports to all prospects, applicants and new admissions. The college provides Aboriginal students with assistance to complete college applications and promote career counselling, and offers tutor support through the Learning Cafe to prepare for admissions testing. The college uses testing services to assess applicants and award conditional acceptance to allow those applicants that don't meet the admission requirement to take any missing courses. This conditional acceptance approach provides an opportunity for admission to a program while enabling students to address learning gaps. The College has also built partnerships with First Nations and Métis funding organizations to inform students about funding guidelines, opportunities, and requirements. In addition, the application process is supported by the finance department's Sponsorship Specialist.

**Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT):** When students express an interest in NVIT they are entered into the 'Prospects' module of the integrated management system. Prospects are sent communications which include application forms and are followed up by telephone calls from Academic Planners. Once a student submits an application form, they are provided a conditional offer and an Admissions and Registration Officer follows up through written and telephone communication until all admission requirements are met and the student is able to register.

At **Northern College** admission requirements are transparent to all Aboriginal students. 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 are walked through the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) service online or over the telephone, and any missing admission requirements are discussed with options provided in a timely manner so that applicants can acquire the admission requirements through different means such as 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 they can access while attending the college, e.g. cultural centres in campus communities, Native Student Association, Northern College Aboriginal Council on Education, Student Success Centres and peer tutoring. Group tours of campuses are also provided to high school students from Aboriginal communities, reserves, adult education centres and Native Friendship. This provides Aboriginal students with an increased comfort level prior to attending college.

**Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT)** has developed and introduced an Enrolment Management Centre on site that deals with the individual student prior to applying and works through the process. Furthermore, SIIT is developing an 'Adult Transition' programming and 'Life Coaching' initiative that further concentrates on assisting individuals throughout their college experience.

### 5.3 Assessment

Aboriginal and mainstream colleges offer assessment services to Aboriginal learners, both for high school entrants and mature students. Most survey respondents from mainstream institutions confirmed that they do not have assessment services specifically for Aboriginal learners, but that they can access services available for all students who do not meet regular entrance requirements. The types of assessment services identified by Aboriginal and mainstream institutions are varied and include standard college placement tests, prior learning assessment and recognition, and career assessments. These are described below.

- The more common college entrance and academic testing include Accuplacer and the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT). Sault College indicated that to date, anecdotal evidence has shown that a high number of Aboriginal candidates do not perform well on CAAT, thereby creating a potential barrier to accessing post-secondary education. As a result, the college is currently reviewing Aboriginal student CAAT success rates to determine the feasibility of implementing alternative testing options for entrance into post-secondary programming.
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) services are also widely offered at colleges and 2010 survey respondents identified this as a key assessment service. The results of the *Pan-Canadian Inventory of Exemplary Practices in Learning at College and Institutes* (Dietsche 2006) indicated that over 80 percent of colleges offer PLAR services. However, most Aboriginal respondents to the *Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students* indicated that they were not aware that they could apply for academic credit for prior experience. More could be done to increase Aboriginal peoples' awareness about PLAR services, given the demographic profile of Aboriginal students shows they tend to be older, with prior work experience and some post-secondary education.
- In some cases, colleges are using career assessments combined with pre-admission assessments. For example, Nova Scotia Community College reported that one of their campuses is using the Test of Workplace Essential Skills combined with pre-admission advising to find a productive learning path for applicants.
- As in 2005, respondents indicated that more culturally-appropriate assessment approaches and tools are needed to more effectively address the needs of Aboriginal students. These approaches should be holistic in nature to take into account Aboriginal learners' history, educational challenges, and high school and work experiences. The exemplary practice highlighted below of the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition and Portfolio Development Project at Nunavut Arctic College shows how such approaches can be developed to meet the particular needs of Aboriginal communities.

#### Exemplary Practice

##### Nunavut Arctic College PLAR Project

The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition and Portfolio Development Project (PLAR & PD Project) at Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) is a three-year research project funded by the Pan-Canadian Innovations Initiative of HRSDC.

The main objective of the project was to create and pilot a portfolio development course within the Adult Basic Education program at NAC that would enable adult learners to identify, value, and document the full breadth of their life learning. The key goals of the project were for learners to:

- experience a positive change in self-image and self-confidence;
- increase their literacy skills; and
- set goals for education and employment.

NAC met the project objectives and is now working to create a permanent infrastructure for PLAR. This involves training more adult educators and instructors to facilitate portfolio development courses, revising PLAR policy and developing flexible assessment tools and training so that life learning can be formally recognized in college programs.

NAC has an established PLAR policy, however very few people have accessed NAC programs through PLAR to date. As a result, the PLAR and Portfolio Development Team is revising current PLAR policy to make it more learner-friendly. Guidelines, training and resources for staff are also being developed so that PLAR can be implemented more widely at the college. Throughout the remainder of the project, the team will be working with NAC programs to assist them to determine which courses will be eligible for PLAR applications for credit. A PLAR committee will also be set up to oversee PLAR developments across the college, and continue to develop training and resources to assist staff in flexible assessment.

## 6. Aboriginal Education and Training Programs

Aboriginal and mainstream institutions offer different types of education and training programs intended to meet the varied needs of Aboriginal learners whether they are high school leavers, adult learners or recent high school graduates. This section profiles the types of education and training programs offered at mainstream and Aboriginal institutions. Aboriginal education programs are listed and described by college in the *2010 Inventory of College Aboriginal Education Programs*, an accompanying document of this report. This inventory was developed based on the results of the 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey and a search of college websites.

The results of the *2010 Survey of Aboriginal Programs and Services* and the *Inventory of College Aboriginal Education Programs* indicate that 80 publicly-funded colleges offer education and training programs specifically for Aboriginal students, whether they be preparatory programs, post-secondary certificate and diploma and trades programs, community-based programs and distance learning programs. Among these 80 institutions, 78 are mainstream institutions and two are Aboriginal-specific: NVIT and SIIT. There are also 23 Aboriginal-controlled institutes offering college programming in partnership with mainstream colleges. These are described in section 6.5.

In order to better understand the reach of college Aboriginal education programming it is helpful to examine this by region:

- The three colleges in the territories (Yukon College, Aurora College and Nunavut Arctic College) are classified as mainstream institutions however it must be noted that although most of their programs are not identified as being Aboriginal-specific, these institutions serve primarily Aboriginal students.
- Among the western provinces, all colleges in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba offer Aboriginal-specific programs, as do 87 percent of institutions in Alberta. As with the three colleges in the territories, University College of the North is a mainstream institution but serves primarily Aboriginal learners.
- In Ontario, 88 percent of colleges offer Aboriginal-specific programming, in particular those in Northern Ontario (Cambrian College, Canadore College, Collège Boréal, Confederation College, Northern College and Sault College) and central Ontario (Fleming College and Georgian College). Colleges in major urban centres (Algonquin College, Humber College, Mohawk College, Seneca College and St. Clair College) also identified Aboriginal-specific programs or programs with Aboriginal content integrated into mainstream programs.
- In Quebec there is a smaller concentration of cégeps offering these programs: ten institutions or almost one quarter of the 48 cégeps in the province. The majority of these are located in northern communities such as Rouyn-Noranda, (Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue); Saguenay (Cégep de Chicoutimi, Cégep de Saint-Félicien) and the north shore (Cégep de Baie-Comeau, Cégep de Sept-Îles). Four urban cégeps reported they offer Aboriginal specific programming as they serve Cree and Inuit students who re-locate to attend cégep (Heritage College, John Abbott College, Cégep Marie-Victorin and Cégep François-Xavier Garneau).
- In the Atlantic provinces, NSCC offers Aboriginal-specific programming through some regional campuses, and the Labrador campus of College of the North Atlantic also offers these types of programs. New Brunswick College of Craft and Design reported offering Aboriginal-specific programs. Currently, New Brunswick Community College, Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick and Holland College do not offer Aboriginal-specific programs, but offer support services to Aboriginal students.

### A Success Story from George Brown College

A former Aboriginal student from George Brown completed her human services program as a mature student with children. Currently, she is a program director at an Aboriginal agency in Toronto. She works closely with the college and other educational institutions to create partnerships that bring courses and opportunities to the women who use that agency.

### A Success Story from Nova Scotia Community College

Travis is of Mi'kmaq descent and a graduate of Nova Scotia Community College's Deckhand Training Program. After a few years of deckhand work, Travis was ready to become a captain of his own fishing vessel. This past winter, Travis returned to NSCC to obtain his Fishing Master Four Certification. Today Travis is a proud captain and operator of a lobster fishing boat.

**Table 8**

<b>Aboriginal Education Programs Offered by Mainstream Colleges</b>		
	Yes	%
Preparatory programs for Aboriginal students to facilitate entrance to certificate, diploma or degree program (e.g. Pre-health, pre-trades)	38	49%
Aboriginal specific certificate and diploma programs (e.g. Aboriginal Policing, Practical Nursing for First Nations)	55	71%
Community-based Aboriginal Programs: upgrading, trades or career programs	39	50%
Programs offered in partnership with Aboriginal-controlled institutes	26	33%
University preparation or transfer programs specifically geared to needs of Aboriginal students	21	27%
Distance education programs specifically geared to needs of Aboriginal students	20	26%
Other	22	28%

Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey and Inventory of College Aboriginal Education Programs

Table 8 indicates the type of Aboriginal programming at mainstream colleges, with the three top being Aboriginal-specific certificate and diploma programs (offered by 71 percent of colleges), preparatory programs for Aboriginal students to facilitate entrance to post-secondary programs (49 percent) and community-based Aboriginal programs (50 percent). Over one third reported offering programs in partnership with Aboriginal-controlled institutes. This is another way of contributing to community-based programming given these institutes are typically located within Aboriginal communities. A profile of each type of college programming is provided in this section including examples and innovative approaches.

## 6.1 Adult Basic Education or Upgrading Programs

Adult Basic Education or Upgrading Programs (herein referred to as adult upgrading) are offered by colleges to help bridge the high-school to post-secondary education gap for many learners who may not have completed high school or who are under-prepared for post-secondary programs because they are missing high school prerequisites. These programs enable learners to gain the equivalent credits for Grades 10 to 12. All mainstream colleges in Canada offer adult upgrading programs, with the exception of a few in B.C. that have a university transfer focus and the cégeps in Quebec, where these programs are offered by adult learning centres run by school boards.

As indicated in section 4, enrolment data provided by respondent institutions show that a significant proportion of Aboriginal students are enrolled in adult upgrading programs. Given a high proportion of Aboriginal people do not have their high school diploma, college adult upgrading provides a good option to gain their high school diploma or equivalent and then ladder into a post-secondary education program.

At mainstream institutions, these programs are primarily adult upgrading programs offered for all students. NVIT, SIIT, University College of the North and the three colleges in the territories have more Aboriginal-specific content for adult upgrading. The adult upgrading model used by the colleges in the territories is very similar, with six levels of study ranging from basic literacy to work at the Grade 12 level, delivered on-campus and through community learning centres.

Through the 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey, some mainstream institutions identified Aboriginal-specific adult upgrading programs: Confederation College, Northwest Community College, Fanshawe College, Seneca College, and Red River College, as well as Camosun College which offers Aboriginal-specific adult upgrading on-campus and through community-based delivery. Some exemplary practices are highlighted on the next page.



## Examples of Adult Upgrading Programs

**Confederation College** offers access-related programming within the Aboriginal Studies Program through Negahneewin College (the Aboriginal college within the college). The programs, open to all and with a high number of Aboriginal learners, include Personal and Career Development, Academic Career Entrance and Academic Upgrading. The programs are delivered on campus and through distance learning and flex learning in community outreach locations.

**Nicola Valley Institute of Technology** has just completed an Aboriginal literacy curriculum that goes from level 1 literacy to the adult provincial diploma.

**Northwest Community College** is offering a new Community Literacy and Learning (CLL) course that bridges community literacy programming with the college for learners and practitioners. The course recognizes and maintains the strengths of the two different providers: college and community literacy organizations. The college also offers Career and College Prep (CCP) that provides high school level courses for adult students in an adult environment. Students can complete entry requirements for university, career, technical, trades, health and business programs at Northwest Community College and most other post-secondary institutions. The CCP program allows students missing high school course requirements to complete grade 12, the BC Adult Graduation Diploma, or improve their knowledge in preparation for the GED exam. There are also options available to students over the age of 19 to fast track to graduation, that require only five courses to earn a grade 12 diploma. The CCP program helps prepare students for the workforce and meet personal educational goals.

The Adult Academic and Career Preparation Department of **Okanagan College** offers programs designed for adult learners with a wide range of backgrounds and varying needs for educational upgrading. Courses provide students with basic skills, prerequisites for admission to post-secondary programs and the requirements for the BC Adult Graduation Diploma. Okanagan College offers programs for adults with special learning needs (personal and social development underlie all aspects of these programs). Two semesters, approximately five months long, are offered each year. Offerings vary from campus to campus as student demand warrants and resources permit. The College also provides help with basic literacy including reading, writing and math to improve skills for work or further education.

**Red River College** has an Adult Learning Centre (ALC) available on campus where students can complete a Mature Student Diploma. The School of Indigenous Education works closely with the ALC and offers a number of dual credits where students can receive credits toward their Mature Student Diploma while enrolled in the Aboriginal college transition program called Biindigen program.

**Seneca College** offers a major educational initiative for Aboriginal people, Seneca Centre for Outreach Education (SCOrE). It is an intensive eight-month program that leads to an Ontario College Certificate in General Arts and Sciences. Potential Aboriginal candidates do not need a high school diploma or GED for admission to SCOrE, but must attend an interview and complete the necessary educational requirements for entry.

## 6.2 College Preparatory Programs

College preparatory programs include those that prepare learners for entrance to post-secondary level certificate, diploma and apprenticeship programs through “pre-programs” or “access programs,” as well as for university transfer and degree programs, generally through General Arts and Sciences programs. These programs are different from adult upgrading programs because they require learners to have a high school diploma or equivalent and allow them to gain prerequisites needed to access post-secondary programs. Through a 2008 survey of programs for disadvantaged learners, 85 percent of colleges confirmed they offer preparatory programs and that there is growing demand for these types of programs.

Currently about half of colleges (49 percent) provide Aboriginal-specific preparatory programs. Some colleges, notably in B.C. and Manitoba, offer these programs in an integrated manner with mainstream programs, so that learners take required upgrading and post-secondary courses at the same time.

Some examples and innovative approaches for the delivery of these types of programs are highlighted below.

### A Success Story from NorQuest College

Full of fear, anxiety and self-doubt, I opened the doors to NorQuest College. Two years later, I wore a cap and gown after completing my academic upgrading. I am now completing my first year practicum in the Social Work program. It has not always been easy, yet today I believe that anything is possible; I am living my dream. NorQuest helped me push past my self-imposed limitations. Today I feel like I can, and will, accomplish my dream of obtaining a degree in Social Work.  
Darlene, NorQuest College Student

## Exemplary Practices - Preparatory Programs

**Aurora College** has developed seven access programs to prepare students for entry into certificate, diploma or degree programs, as well as some trades programs including: Social Work Access; Nursing Access; Environment and Natural Resources Technology Access; Teacher Education Access; Business Administration Access; Trades Access 1 and Trades Access 2.

**Collège Boréal** offers Francophone Métis students a pre-apprenticeship program for Industrial and Construction Electricians delivered in Sudbury and Timmins. This program includes 240 hours of theory, a four week work placement and employment readiness training and support such as interview techniques, resume preparation and workplace ethics.

**Nicola Valley Institute of Technology** offers the Bridging to Trades program which introduces students to eight different trades through a mobile trailer unit that is taken into Aboriginal communities. Once students complete the program, they are encouraged to attend their local institution for entry into trades or apprenticeship.

**Northwest Community College:** Interdisciplinary Access Programs (INTA) are six-month, full-time programs that help students meet the requirements needed to enter post-secondary programs. INTA programs also give students the opportunity to explore their interest in specific programs to ensure they make the best choice for their future. INTA programs prepare students for access to, and success in, specific NWCC post-secondary programs including Early Childhood Education, Social Service Worker, Special Education Assistant, Culinary Arts, First Nations Fine Arts, and Trades (Carpentry Foundation, Electrical Foundation, Heavy Duty Mechanic, Millwright /Industrial Mechanic, Residential Building Maintenance Worker, Welding).

**Red River College** has two preparatory programs for Aboriginal students:

**The Biindigen College Studies** assists Aboriginal students to achieve the appropriate prerequisites and skills to transfer into other college programs of their choice, and also have the opportunity to earn a Mature Student High School Diploma. The program incorporates Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum content and courses include cultural and social components and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. The college strives to nurture the academic, spiritual, physical and emotional needs of students to assist them in achieving balance during their academic training and in other areas of their lives outside of the college environment.

**The ACCESS Model Program** offers preparatory programs designed to provide admission to specific Red River College programs for low-income residents of Manitoba who have not had the opportunity to participate or succeed in a college education because of social, economic, or cultural factors, formal education, or geographical location (inaccessibility to post-secondary institutions).

**Cégep John Abbott College** offers a three-week college preparation program for Inuit students prior to the first semester, as well as a Pathways to a Career Program for Cree Students. This two-semester program is designed to prepare Cree students for the college program of their choice and to help students who are unsure of their career path to explore their options. The aim of this program is to help students:

- develop a sense of belonging in the college environment;
- understand the college system and the student's role within the system;
- learn how college programs fit into the development of a career plan
- acquire study skills and patterns of behaviour needed to succeed in college;
- develop college level English reading and writing skills;
- gain credits toward their Diploma of College Studies.

**Cégep Marie-Victorin** offers a college studies program specifically for Inuit students to facilitate access to cégep programs, called the Inuit Exploration and Integration Program. The program content is aligned with the core components of cégep programs, while at the same time tailored to the specific needs of Inuit students. This program enables Inuit students to explore the various technical and pre-university programs offered at cégeps, gain the key skills required to succeed in college level studies and obtain their Diploma of College Studies. The program offers a mix of courses that develop language skills:

- French: communication, writing, analysis, reading and comprehension;
- foundations of the Inuit culture and traditions, and present day Inuit culture;
- Inuktitut language, culture and literature;
- professional and practical communication in Inuktitut;
- methodology;
- computer studies and society;
- communication and creativity.

### 6.3 Aboriginal-Specific Certificate/Diploma Programs

Three quarters of mainstream colleges offer Aboriginal-specific post-secondary certificate and diploma programs in different fields of study including: arts, language and culture; business administration; education, health services; policing and corrections services; natural resources; environment; social services and technology.

There is increasing discussion about adopting more inclusive approaches for program content and delivery by embedding Aboriginal culture, tradition and world views in the curriculum of college programs.

#### Exemplary Practices in Integrating Aboriginal Content into College Programs

**The Aboriginal Emphasis Initiative at Fleming College** is an inclusive approach to providing more understanding of Aboriginal peoples, communities and nations that provides students with an opportunity to take courses that are designed from an Aboriginal perspective. Students learn the mainstream requirements for their program of choice, and gain a more in-depth understanding of Aboriginal populations. Course materials are geared towards program-specific learning outcomes with emphasis on Aboriginal peoples, history, spirituality and culture. Students in the following programs can participate in this Aboriginal Emphasis Initiative:

- Community and Justice Services
- Drug and Alcohol Counsellor
- Early Childhood Education
- Ecosystem Management Technician
- Educational Assistant
- Police Foundations
- Social Service Worker

When students successfully complete the Aboriginal Emphasis, they will have gained a deeper awareness and understanding of Native culture and tradition. Students acquire knowledge of both historic and contemporary issues facing Native people and will be able to apply this awareness, understanding and knowledge in the workplace, school, social circles and everyday life.

**Nunavut Arctic College** offers a Bachelor of Science in Arctic Nursing in partnership with Dalhousie University, and the curriculum for this degree has an emphasis on respect for Inuit culture. It is designed to provide nurses with an education that will allow them to respond to the needs of the people of Nunavut.

Nunavut Arctic College also offers a mental health diploma which offers a multidisciplinary, cultural and holistic approach to mental health. This diploma introduces students to cultural, spiritual and traditional practice teachings throughout the program. Elders and cultural advisors are available to consult with students and faculty on cultural issues, traditional teachings and spiritual practices that can be accessed at the community level.

**Aboriginal institutes** offer programs specifically designed and developed to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and their communities. SIIT and NVIT are the only two Aboriginal institutes with provincial mandates and funding to offer post-secondary certificates and diplomas. The lists of 2009-2010 programs offered by NVIT and SIIT are provided below. The full range of programs is included, from college preparatory programs to post-secondary certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, university transfer and, in the case of NVIT, a Bachelor of Social Work.

These institutions develop programs based on the core value that post-secondary education is a treaty right for Aboriginal people and should be controlled by Aboriginal people. As such, programs combine technical and academic skills and knowledge with Aboriginal values, history, culture and traditional knowledge. Business, community development and administration programs are designed to assist Aboriginal learners and communities meet the leadership and management challenges of business, and Aboriginal self-sufficiency and self-government. Natural resources and environmental programs provide knowledge and skills that reflect traditional native ethics of respect and care in the management and protection of forests, grassland, fish, wildlife and other wilderness resources. Early Childhood Education (ECE) and First Nations Child Care programs include content on ECE and child care theories, values, practices, skills and standards relevant to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals, families and communities. Aboriginal, First Nations and Native Studies programs examine Aboriginal history, laws, languages, arts, literatures, cultures, as well as social, political and economic issues. Graduates of these types of programs develop critical reasoning skills and knowledge applicable to many entry-level planning and development positions and for Band-controlled programs and projects.

### 2009-2010 Programs Offered by the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

#### College Readiness

BC Adult Graduation Diploma  
College Readiness

#### Career Training

Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Certificate and Diploma  
Bridging to Trades  
Education Coordinator's Program  
First Nations Speech & Language Assistant  
Law Enforcement Preparation Certificate  
Native Adult Instructor Diploma  
Natural Resource Technology Certificate and Diploma

#### Career Training – Health & Human Services

Home Support Resident Care Aid Certificate  
Access to Practical Nursing Certificate  
Aboriginal Community & Health Development Certificate and Diploma  
Aboriginal Human Services Diploma

Chemical Addictions Worker Certificate & Diploma  
Foundational Skills in Counselling Certificate  
Understanding Disabilities in Human Services Certificate

#### Business

Aboriginal Community Economic Development Certificate and Diploma  
Business Administration Certificate and Diploma  
First Nations Public Administration  
Tourism Management

#### University Transfer

Associate of Arts Degree - Criminology  
Associate of Arts Degree - General Arts  
Associate of Arts Degree - Social Work  
Diploma of Academic & Indigenous Studies  
Associate of Arts Degree - First Nations Studies

#### Bachelor of Social Work

Bachelor of Social Work

### 2009-2010 Programs Offered by the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

#### Academic Preparation

Pre-Adult 10, Adult 10, Academic Secondary Education, Adult 12

#### Health & Community Studies

Community Health  
Community Services Addictions Certificate and Diploma  
Education Assistant  
First Nations Child Care  
Health Care Aide

#### Business Administration & Information Technology

Office Administration Certificate  
Business Administration - Certificate and Diploma Level  
Accounting  
Information Technology Diploma

#### Trades & Industrial

Apprenticeship, Construction Trades  
Career Centres

Carpentry Level 1 (Apprenticeship) Program

Construction Worker Preparation  
Welding Applied Certificate  
Heavy Equipment Operation  
Process Operation Technician I/II  
Women in Trades (WIT)  
Basic Fire Training

#### Workforce Development Unit

Career Development Series/Applied Certificate  
Workplace Management Series Certificate  
First Nations Board Governance Series  
Aboriginal Economic Development Officers/CANDO Certification  
Certificate in Career Pathing (on-line program)  
First Nations Orientation to Daycare & Headstart (online programs)

## 6.4 Programs Offered Within Aboriginal Communities

Through the 2005 survey, colleges affirmed the importance of community-based programming as one of the most effective ways of meeting the learning needs of Aboriginal students. Colleges are well positioned to deliver community-based and on-reserve programs because they are already in close proximity to many Aboriginal communities and reserves. Community outreach and partnership are also at the core of how colleges do business. As such, it is not surprising that when developing programs and services for Aboriginal learners, institutions work closely with Aboriginal community leaders, Elders, school boards, employers and graduates of their programs who have returned to work in their communities.

Community-based delivery enables Aboriginal learners from more isolated communities to begin post-secondary education within their own community thus allowing them to keep their community support networks and reduce the financial burden of living far from home. Since many colleges are still within a relatively short commute from many Aboriginal communities, community-based programs can often ladder or bridge into higher level college programs, or even university programs through the many articulation and university transfer agreements in place in a number of provinces and territories.

Fifty percent of colleges offer community-based programs for Aboriginal learners. These programs are typically offered through colleges' continuing education or contract training services. The programs designed specifically for Aboriginal students are done in cooperation with Aboriginal communities to ensure they are in line with learners, community, regional development, and labour market needs. This type of programming contributes significantly to Aboriginal community development by providing much-needed education and training opportunities for future employment, as well as a role model for children and youth.

One key area for community-based training is related to trades and apprenticeship training. An increasing number of colleges, including Aurora College, NVIT, NAIT, Red River College, SIAST and SIIT, have acquired mobile trades training trailers that are equipped to provide trades training in rural and remote communities.

At the three colleges in the territories, community-based programming is offered through a network of community learning centres or campuses. Aurora College has 24 community learning centres throughout the Northwest Territories, most of which are located in Aboriginal communities. Nunavut Arctic College has community learning centres with a full-time adult educator in every community. Yukon College has 11 community campuses located throughout the territory. Adult educators at the community learning centres or campuses provide a variety of supports for learners including annual needs assessment, adult upgrading and other programming as identified by the communities.





## Exemplary Practices and Partnerships in Community-Based Programming

**Aurora College**, in partnership with the Mine Training Society, is offering the Underground Miner Program designed to provide students with the necessary knowledge and basic skills to consider a career as an underground miner and provide an overview of the other careers in the mining industry. The program blends community-based and on-campus delivery. Students begin with a four week community-based Ready To Work North course followed by four expanded courses taken over 10 weeks at the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus covering various topics specific to the underground mining process: The Mine Life Cycle, Mine Geology, Underground Mining Methods, and Underground Mine Safety. Course delivery has theoretical and practical components. Students learn about and experience many of the daily routines in an underground mining operation including extensive training utilizing the underground equipment simulator. From this, students are able to select those industry professions and occupations that suit their personal profile and skills. The program also includes certificate training courses for Standard First Aid and CPR 'A', Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, Go Safe-Work Smart, and Mine Survival.

**Collège Boréal** in partnership with Nipissing First Nation and McLeod Contracting is offering a Carpenter's Training Program for Francophone Métis people. The goal of this program is to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills required to obtain gainful employment in the ever-expanding carpentry trade and upgrade the skills of those with prior experience in the trade. The training consists 120 hours of training in an in-class setting including health and safety, framing, interior and exterior finishing, trade mathematics and estimating, and 360 hours of practical training.

**Fleming College** offers the Environmental Monitor Training Program (EMTP) supported by the Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources. This is a bridge program delivered by faculty and staff at Fleming's School of Environment and Natural Resource Sciences to regional Aboriginal youth. The goal of the EMTP is to help Aboriginal youth develop basic skills in environmental monitoring so that they can be active and informed participants in the kinds of projects that might have a direct impact on their land. The curriculum incorporates local and traditional knowledge and the participation of Elders in the classroom, and fieldwork is encouraged.

**Northwest Community College** offers the Essential Skills for Work Certificate (ESWK) through community-based programming. Offered in partnership with First Nations communities of Northwest BC, this program involves the community in its design and delivery. The design and content of the program is focused on a holistic applied educational experience that integrates the social, spiritual, cultural and educational aspects of a person's learning. As such, the program attempts to build participants self-esteem, pride and respect for traditional knowledge, culture and language; strengthen personal life skills; and, develop academic skills. It further seeks to prepare participants to make the transition to post-secondary education and/or positions within a wide range of local economies.

The program integrates college resources from various departments with the cultural and social resources of Elders and community members. The community provides the "place of learning" and the infrastructure as well as access to community supports and resources. The college provides the instructional funding and resources. Together the partners recruit and hire instructors.

Practical skills in computer competency and effective and solution-based communication are also integral components of the program. A significant aspect is the opportunity for students to practice newly-acquired or enhanced skills and behaviours in both typical and atypical work environments. Traditional knowledge, history and practice is woven throughout the program and recognized as holding important wisdom and teaching.

### Red River College

Red River College currently has partnerships with three First Nation communities as well as the City of Winnipeg to deliver community-based programs:

- Fisher River Cree Nation: Enhancement Program;
- Peguis First Nation and the City of Winnipeg: Centered Therapy Program;
- City of Winnipeg: Computer Applications for Business offered in Inner City Winnipeg;
- Peguis First Nation: ACCESS Nursing Program and Aboriginal Self Government Program;
- Sagkeegn First Nation: Early Childhood Education; and
- Introduction to Trades (offered on a rotating basis year to year in Aboriginal communities using the Mobile Training Trailer).

### Vancouver Community College

Both **Vancouver Community College** campuses are located on land that is the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples (Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations). Vancouver Community College is a member of the Coastal Corridor Consortium, which consists of 10 partners, seven Aboriginal/First Nations and three post-secondary institutions which are supported by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. The Consortium works to improve levels of participation and success for Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training in the Coastal Corridor region. The Consortium's knowledge-based strategies are informed by local First Nations derived research.

## 6.5 Programs offered in Partnership with Aboriginal Institutes

Aboriginal-controlled institutions were created by First Nations to provide culturally-appropriate and relevant curriculum and to address the low recruitment, retention and success rates of Aboriginal peoples in mainstream post-secondary institutions. As indicated earlier there are only two Aboriginal institutes which are supported by provincial policy and legislation, NVIT and SIIT.

The Aboriginal-controlled institutes and colleges which are not provincially-recognized must partner with mainstream institutions to grant recognized credentials. Aboriginal institutes partner with mainstream institutions to offer joint programs so that learners receive provincially-recognized credentials and thus facilitate their transferability within post-secondary education systems. There are about 22 Aboriginal-controlled institutes offering college programming in partnership with mainstream institutions: eight in Ontario, six in British Columbia, six in Alberta, two in Saskatchewan, and one in Manitoba. A list of programs offered by Aboriginal-controlled institutes in partnership with mainstream institutions is provided as an accompanying document to this report. Over one third of mainstream institutions offer programs in partnership with Aboriginal-controlled institutes. This is also a way for mainstream institutions to support community-based delivery of programs, as the majority of Aboriginal institutes are based in Aboriginal communities.

### A Success Story from Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Rhonda from the Soda Creek Band completed her Business Diploma at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and then continued on to receive her Bachelor of General Studies degree through an affiliation between NVIT and Simon Fraser University. Rhonda is currently employed as the Co-coordinator for her Band's Economic Development Department. Rhonda says she wasn't just a student number at NVIT and found those at NVIT went above their call of duty to ensure the students' needs were met. "NVIT is an inviting, friendly, cultural environment that made learning fun."

In order to fully understand Aboriginal post-secondary issues, it is important to understand how Aboriginal-controlled institutions address the needs of Aboriginal learners. Aboriginal-controlled institutions focus on providing student support and community-based programming and delivery. The range of programs offered by Aboriginal-controlled institutions is very diverse and includes:

- literacy;
- adult basic education and upgrading;
- secondary school completion;
- certificate, diploma and degree programs offered in partnership with mainstream colleges, institutes and universities;
- apprenticeship and skills training;
- culture, language and history programs;
- employee/employer training; and
- community workshops.

## 6.6 University Preparation, Transfer and Joint Degree Programs

Over one quarter of colleges provide Aboriginal-specific university preparation and transfer options. These programs enable Aboriginal learners to gain the pre-requisites to enter degree programs or provide them with the opportunity to complete two- and three-year diploma programs at colleges with university transfer agreements.

### A Success Story from Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

The training I received at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies consisted of the Management Studies program and continued onto the Accountancy diploma. I can say that the diplomas I received through SIIT have been the foundation for my business education and experience. I went on to pursue a Bachelor of Commerce at University of Saskatchewan and completed my Masters in Business Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. I am now working with the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Saskatchewan as an Executive Director.  
Eugene, SIIT Graduate

### Exemplary Practices in University Preparation and Transfer Options

**Bow Valley College** offers an Aboriginal university preparation program in partnership with the University of Calgary and the Native Centre offers the Aboriginal Student Access Program, a joint partnership with Bow Valley College.

**Confederation College** offers the Aboriginal Community Advocacy Program, which is first year university equivalent and allows a student to transfer to the Political Science program at Lakehead University through articulation.

**Red River College** has several articulation agreements in place with the University of Winnipeg where students earn credit based on programs completed at the college. For example, the Aboriginal Language Specialist diploma earns two years of credit in the Bachelor of Education program; the Aboriginal Self Government Diploma earns two years in the Aboriginal Governance B.A. program; the Community Development/Community Economic Development programs earns one to two years in the Urban and Inner City Studies degree program.

At **Northwest Community College** the Associate of Arts - First Nations Studies offers several First Nations-specific courses such as Ethno-botany: Plants and First Peoples, Introduction to First Nations Studies, Aboriginal Language Preservation and Revitalization, First Nations Community Research, First Nations Education and First Nations Health. Other courses offered include an overall First Nations focus or a portion dedicated to First Nations issues and or themes.

In addition, the Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art offers a fine arts certificate and diploma, both of which are transferable to university. The Freda Diesing School Art features a number of program and course offerings from certificate to degree level. The First Nations Fine Arts program is only open to students of First Nations descent.

## 6.7 Distance Education Programs

Distance education programs provide students with the opportunity to take advantage of post-secondary studies from their home communities, including rural and remote areas. Twenty percent of colleges provide distance education programs to Aboriginal learners through on-line programs and video-conferencing technology.

In 2005, many institutions indicated that they would like to deliver more distance education but could not due to lack of infrastructure and funding. Some 2010 survey respondents have reported increased investments in distance learning capacity. Northwest Community College is currently in the process of expanding its online and video conferencing offerings. This new initiative will enhance access to the college for students in remote communities, as well as provide an alternative learning opportunity for shift and seasonal workers. Nunavut Arctic College has received funding from the federal and territorial governments to develop a cyber system which will be completed in 2011. The college views this as an excellent opportunity to expand program offerings by offering distance and on-line programs in partnership with post-secondary institutions in the south.

Some examples of current Aboriginal programs offered by distance include:

- Heritage College provides on-line learning in partnership with its continuing education department.
- Keyano College offers its Aboriginal Entrepreneurship and Office Administration program on-line, as well as other certificate and diploma courses based on community need.
- NVIT uses a variety of methods for community capacity building, from on-line learning to face-to-face delivery.
- College of the North Atlantic has five remote Community Learning Centres with on-line access to deliver programs by distance.
- Okanagan College provides a distance education program which is available to all students at the college.
- Aboriginal Early Childhood Education is a collaborative program offered on-line by College of the New Caledonia, NVIT, Northern Lights College and Yukon College.

#### A Success Story from Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

My journey for a better life started at SIIT in 2004 when I enrolled in Management Studies. The support I received from SIIT was tremendous. I transferred to a degree program in another province and kept in touch with some of the instructors from SIIT. SIIT was my home as well and I always looked forward to seeing the Elder on campus. Once I finished my degree I went on to pursue an MBA. I found out that I was the third person from SIIT who was going into the MBA program. Today I am starting a PhD program and working as a sessional lecturer at the Edwards School of Business.  
Ahneen, SIIT Graduate

## **6.8 Measuring and Reporting on the Retention, Graduation and Employment Rates for Aboriginal Students at Colleges**

This section reports on colleges' current efforts to track Aboriginal student success. The 2010 survey asked colleges how they are tracking the outcomes of Aboriginal students in terms of completion in adult upgrading programs, and retention, graduation and employment rates for Aboriginal students in post-secondary programs. Currently, a small proportion of colleges have tracking systems in place specifically for Aboriginal students, or those in Aboriginal-specific programs. The challenges of putting such tracking systems in place are related to the self-identification issues reported earlier.

### **6.8.1 Completion Rates for Adult Upgrading Programs**

Many Aboriginal learners begin their college education in preparatory programs such as adult upgrading, adult basic education, high school equivalency, or GED. As part of the 2010 survey, colleges were asked whether they collect data on completion rates. Twenty-three percent of respondent colleges are collecting data on completion rates for these programs, with a fairly equal provincial distribution.

Some colleges indicated they were in the process of tracking completion rates. Northwest Community College has recently begun to deliver the Integrated Access Program and because this program is new to the college, statistics were not available at the time of the survey. The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies has recently undertaken a study to understand completion rates for their students.

Nova Scotia Community College reported they are able to track learning success for students/graduates from Aboriginal communities, however, metrics on retention, persistence and completion rates are still under development for the whole college. Once the metrics are fully designed, they will be able to report comparative data.

Aurora College is trying to track completion rates of students in upgrading or adult basic education programs, however, this has been problematic because each student has a different entrance and exit point, depending on their academic capacity and goals. For example, one student may come to the college to take adult upgrading math courses in order to qualify for a certain job or for entrance into a PSE program. Completing these two courses is "success" for that student. However, the college's Student Record System simply shows them as completing two courses. It does not acknowledge that they started and completed a particular program.

### **6.8.2 Retention, Graduation and Employment Rates for Aboriginal-Specific Post-Secondary Programs**

Part of measuring the effectiveness of Aboriginal post-secondary education programming is tracking indicators related to retention, graduation and rates of employment. Respondents were asked to report on retention rates for Aboriginal-specific programs and for the 2008-09 year, 22 percent of respondent colleges indicated they collected this data.

Colleges surveyed were asked about graduation rates for Aboriginal-specific programming. Among survey respondents, only 16 percent reported collecting data on graduation rates. However, many colleges indicated they were trying to establish tracking mechanisms but having reliable data is challenging.

Employment rates can be a good gauge of a program's success. Institutions were asked whether or not they collected data on employment or placement rates for graduates from Aboriginal-specific programs. Very few respondent colleges indicated they collected this information (12 percent). Several colleges indicated that they were collecting this data; however, it was not available at the time of the survey.

- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies has an annual graduate employment survey. In 2008, their survey indicated that 87 percent of Aboriginal graduates found full-time employment within six months of graduation.
- Northwest Community College assessment of the First Nations Art Certificate is relatively new. As artists, many graduates become self-employed and may subsidize their art career with other part-time employment while they establish themselves.
- At Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology, within the Social Service Worker program (Native specialization), 100 percent of students were employed within six months of graduation.

## 7. Aboriginal Student Services

In the 2005 Aboriginal programs and services report and through past ACCC Aboriginal symposia, colleges have emphasized the key role support services play in enabling Aboriginal students to reach their academic goals and transition into employment. Colleges have called these services “wrap around” services to emphasize the need to support students in a holistic manner.

This was also confirmed by Aboriginal respondents to the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students. Aboriginal students were more likely to report that they could benefit from support in all areas compared to non-Aboriginal students, including learning skills development, coping with a disability, child care issues, personal and career counselling. Aboriginal respondents were also more likely than non-Aboriginal students to report that they would use college services if they were provided. Aboriginal students were more likely to have used support services during the first term as compared to non-Aboriginal students.

Eighty-seven colleges offer targeted Aboriginal student support services (85 mainstream institutions and two Aboriginal institutes). Support services are key to Aboriginal student success, as they help address barriers to participation and persistence, regardless of the type of program students are enrolled in.

The types of Aboriginal student services offered by colleges are listed in Table 9, which shows the range of support services offered and those colleges are focussing on, with academic counselling, learning skills development and personal counselling topping the list. In addition, the *2010 Inventory of College Aboriginal Student Support Services* is provided as an accompanying document and describes by college the support services identified through the 2010 survey.

**Table 9**

Percent of Colleges Providing Aboriginal Student Services	
Student Services	Yes
Academic counselling for Aboriginal students	94%
Learning centre for tutoring services	90%
Personal counselling for Aboriginal students	90%
Employment and career counselling	88%
Job search skills training and search support	79%
Support to find housing	81%
Financial counselling for Aboriginal students	78%
Dedicated Aboriginal student centre	73%
Work placements or internships	73%
Support to find daycare in the community	70%
Support services with Elders from the community	68%
Special advice to Aboriginal students on your college website	67%
Daycare on campus	62%
On campus food bank	57%
Inter cultural counselling for Aboriginal students	59%
Anti-discrimination counselling for Aboriginal students	57%
Other	50%
Aboriginal mentorship program	47%
Resident Elder services	49%
Transportation	44%

Source: 2010 Survey of Aboriginal Programs and Services

### 7.1 Support Services to Facilitate Aboriginal Learner's Completion of College Programs

Aboriginal learners face a variety of barriers when enrolling in post-secondary programs. This section describes and provides examples of the types of support services colleges offer Aboriginal students to enable them to successfully complete their programs.



### 7.1.1 Special Advice Directed to Aboriginal Students via College Websites

College websites can be an excellent resource for learners, providing up-to-date information on programming and services available. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported they provide Aboriginal-specific information via a dedicated webpage for Aboriginal student services. Red River College emphasized the importance of having an easy-to-find link on the home page of the college website to lead Aboriginal students directly to information about programs and support services.

### 7.1.2 Dedicated Aboriginal Student Centre

A very high proportion (73 percent) of respondent colleges indicated they have a dedicated Aboriginal student centre on site. This type of support service is key to providing a welcoming learning environment and allows students to have a common meeting place.

### 7.1.3 Academic and Learning Supports

Aboriginal respondents to the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students reported that they would benefit greatly from support to improve math skills, followed by reading and writing skills. More Aboriginal students had also used services for improving these skills than non-Aboriginals.

#### Academic Counselling

All colleges offer academic counselling and advisory services to assist with entry and transitions in college programs or to transfer to other post-secondary institutions upon completion of their college program. Up to 68 percent have Aboriginal-specific counselling services through Elder services or Aboriginal Advisors.

At Red River College, two academic counsellors are available to Aboriginal students within the School of Indigenous Education. At NAIT, academic counselling is provided by Aboriginal Student Advisors. Canadore College identified a more integrated approach, as the Aboriginal Learning Unit works closely with college-wide departments including Campus Life, Special Needs Services, Financial Aid, Academic Coordinators, Deans and Faculty.

#### Learning Centres and/or Tutoring Services

The vast majority of survey respondents (90 percent) indicated their colleges provide learning centres/tutoring services for Aboriginal students. Learning centres provide a combination of services with the primary aim of assisting students succeed in their programs, however, the types of services vary from one institution to the next and may include tutoring, workshops or study skills and use of computers for the completion of assignments.

#### A Success Story from Grant MacEwan University

Moving to Edmonton from my community of Saddle Lake First Nation was a challenging yet necessary change. I started my Bachelor of Arts degree at Grant MacEwan University and the Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) was the first place I went. The AEC became my second home, a place I went to access resources or just hang out with fellow Aboriginal students. It's difficult to think how my experience at MacEwan would be without the AEC because it played a major role in my development.

Joel, Grant MacEwan University

#### A Success Story from Grant MacEwan University

The Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) was a positive outlet for me during my two years at Grant MacEwan. Being part of this club was a great benefit to me through stressful academic and personal times, as I was able to talk to AEC staff, students - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, openly as there was a warmth of home in the room. The cultural and club aspects in the AEC such as cultural teachings, club meetings, group activities, barbeques and cultural days was a great way to feel involved and part of a team.

Joanna, Grant MacEwan University Graduate

#### Exemplary Practices in Offering Learning Support

**Lethbridge College** has the Learning Café, the college's learning assistance centre, which enhances success and empowers learners to develop skills, strategies, and behaviours that promote independent learning. The goal is to help underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, and advanced students excel. The diverse learning styles, skill levels and needs of students are addressed through individual Aboriginal community members hired as tutors in Math and English. Priority is to service Aboriginal students; however the learning centre is available to all students who require assistance.

**Northwest Community College** has learning centres in all six campuses and four additional community learning centres in the region served.

**Sault College** hires Aboriginal community members as tutors for Math and English. Priority is to service Aboriginal students; however this service is available to all students who require assistance.

**University College of the North** has learning centres at both main campus locations and provides travelling instructional support for all regional centres.

**Vancouver Community College** Aboriginal Education Services work with the Learning Centre to indigenize all of their workshops and workshop materials.

#### 7.1.4 Personal Support

Given the complexity of the barriers Aboriginal students face, including culture shock and managing family responsibilities while studying, they often require more than academic supports to succeed in their programs. As Table 9 shows, colleges are offering a mix of “wrap around” services which help students feel supported and overcome personal challenges.

##### Personal Counselling

Personal counselling aims to help students deal with issues related to cultural disconnections, family issues, transitions from rural to urban environments, addictions challenges, and racism and discrimination. The vast majority of institutions which participated in the survey, 90 percent, indicated they provided personal counselling for Aboriginal students, whether through regular counselling services offered to all students or Aboriginal-specific counselling. Aboriginal-specific institutes and the northern institutions indicated they provide counselling services for their students, the majority of which are Aboriginal.

##### A Success Story from Red River College

My name is Jannell. I am a 24 year old Métis female attending Red River College. I am currently enrolled in the Aboriginal Self Government Administration program. Deciding to attend Red River College and study in the Aboriginal Self-Government program has allowed me to become more involved with the Aboriginal community here in the city. Red River College, especially the Aboriginal Services, has been a huge support network. The Aboriginal Services has really created a community within the college, and for many of us students who are not from Winnipeg, this has really enhanced our experiences while attending Red River College.  
Jannell, Red River College

Three campuses of **Nova Scotia Community College** have Aboriginal student advisors. If a student self-identifies, they are referred to the campus advisor who can help the student access all the services available at the campus. **Lethbridge College** has a counselling services department on campus and also utilizes Elders for students that need personal support. **New Brunswick Community College** offers the services of Aboriginal Student Advisors covering all five NBCC campuses. These advisors provide assistance to students as well as serve as mentors.

##### Support of Elders

The support of Elders is considered central to offering a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal learners. Sixty-eight percent of colleges provide this service to their Aboriginal learners and 49 percent of institutions provide Resident Elder services.

##### Anti-Discrimination and Intercultural Counselling

Anti-discrimination and intercultural counselling are intended to help students deal with racism and diversity issues. Anti-discrimination counselling is offered at over half of colleges. Fifty-nine percent of colleges provide intercultural counselling to Aboriginal students. These services are aligned and supported by human rights and Elder services and cultural events offered by colleges.

##### Exemplary Practices in Intercultural Counselling

**Canadore College** introduced mandatory cross-cultural training for all college employees in 2007; these sessions are on-going. In addition, Canadore's Protecting Human Rights in Support of a Respectful College Community is provided to all students, and the Director of the Aboriginal Learning Unit is an Advisor to the policy and acts as mediator along with the Campus Life Director. Lunch and Learn sessions are also offered throughout the academic year to all students.

At **Lethbridge College**, the First Nations Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Cultural Support Program and the Manager for FNMI Education Services support students that experience discrimination and make referrals for specialized support for discrimination to the Diversity Program at the Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge.

**Red River College** has three Elders in Residence who assist students as well as five counsellors with anti-discrimination counselling. The college also has a student diversity office which provides counselling and education.

##### Support to Find Housing

Many Aboriginal learners have to move away from home to attend college and encounter difficulties finding adequate housing. This is considered a key service by colleges in many parts of the country. Eighty one percent of colleges provide support to Aboriginal students to find housing.

##### Access to Daycare Services

These are facilitated by reserving spots for Aboriginal learners in institutional and community daycares. Seventy percent of colleges provide support to find daycare for Aboriginal learners within the community, and only a slightly lower proportion, 62 percent, reported that they provide support for daycare spaces on campus.

## Financial Counselling

Seventy-eight percent of colleges provide financial counselling services to Aboriginal students. This type of counselling includes one-on-one counselling with college counselling staff, connections with First Nations Bands for funding support, and financial management workshops on campus, often with the assistance of banks or financial organizations from the community. For example, Canadore College provides these services through staff counsellors in the Aboriginal Learning Unit as well as through Lunch and Learn sessions and orientation sessions with all Aboriginal students.

### A Success Story from Vancouver Community College

Elders who are our traditional knowledge keepers play a critical role in supporting learners by providing positive expectations; however there is a lack of funding to sustain their involvement at Vancouver Community College. A national strategy would be required to ensure that their role is recognized and supported.

## Food Banks

Food banks have been introduced as a way of easing financial burdens for students. Fifty-seven percent of colleges offer the services of an on-campus food bank often run by students' associations, and in some cases the Aboriginal students' association runs its own food bank. At Algonquin College the Indigenous Students' Association cost-shares with the Mamidosewin Centre to run a breakfast program towards the end of each month. College of the North Atlantic reported that this service is offered through the Labrador Friendship Centre as part of the outreach services offered through the Aboriginal Resource Center.

## Transportation

Colleges have reported that transportation is a barrier to many Aboriginal learners, particularly those in rural and remote communities. Forty four percent of colleges provide some form of transportation support to Aboriginal students.

### Exemplary Practice in Providing Transportation for Aboriginal Students

**Nova Scotia Community College** has recently put into place a pilot transportation project which provides daily return bus transportation at the Marconi Campus in Sydney which is near two reserves – Membertou (10km from campus) and Eskasoni (35km from campus). Response to the pilot program has been very promising and ridership very high.

## Aboriginal Mentorship Programs

The lack of role models with post-secondary education in Aboriginal communities has been cited as a factor contributing to low high school completion rates and post-secondary education participation. Aboriginal mentorship is one way to provide role models for Aboriginal students. Almost half of colleges offer Aboriginal mentorship programs and examples provided show that approaches vary.

### Examples of Aboriginal Mentorship Programs

**Canadore College** has a mentorship program which enables upper-year students to mentor new students and especially those who are new to the city.

The **Fanshawe College** 'Peer Helper Program' is an integral part of the peer support resources provided to first year students.

**North Island College** has an informal mentorship program in place.

**Okanagan College** offers a part-time Aboriginal mentor on each of its four campuses, as well as part-time student peer mentors on three campuses, soon to be four. This program also provides employment for Aboriginal students to work as peer mentors while studying at the college.

**Red River College** has a mentorship program offered with alumni as well as internship programs set up with business.

**Sault College** offers the Aboriginal Role Model Program which is delivered via videoconferencing. Geared towards those students living in remote and rural areas, the program utilizes current Aboriginal students and past graduates. The intent of the program is to convey the key message that education is a viable option and reinforce the message that there are certain responsibilities in attending post-secondary education.

**Vancouver Community College** is planning to introduce more formal mentorship programs in the next two years, however at this time, mentorship is being provided by student aids, or those students closely associated with the Aboriginal community.

SIAST and Sault College also identified examples of program specific mentorship programs, both related to the health fields. SIAST has a mentorship initiative through Science & Health Aboriginal Student Success Coordinators. At Sault College, the Aboriginal Student Nursing Association has as part of its purpose to mentor and support both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. One of the mandates of the association is to give back to the Aboriginal community through various projects and volunteering. The establishment of the association has provided the opportunity for students enrolled in the BsCN program to develop a mentorship program in which incoming first year students are paired with a senior student within the program.

## 7.2 Support Services to Facilitate Labour Market Participation

Colleges offer programs that are both practical and employment-oriented and provide support to facilitate students' transitions to employment. This may be achieved through a variety of services offered by colleges as described below.

### Employment and Career Counselling

Eighty-seven percent of colleges provide employment and career counselling for Aboriginal learners. At Aurora College, this service is offered with the support of Career Development Officers from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and through the Student Success Centre. As well, counsellors on campus provide career counselling.

#### Exemplary Practice in offering Employment and Career Counselling

The **Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies** offers an innovative program called the Mobile Career Coach. This project is done in partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and is specifically designed to provide Saskatchewan First Nations communities with career support services. In order to house these services, two recreational vehicles were purchased and equipped with Internet capability, servers, laptops, facilitation screens, and custom-built to provide ample office space. An innovative design concept of this nature allows staff and participants to comfortably engage in mobile career services.

### Job Search Skills Training and Search Support

Providing job search skills training can assist learners in finding employment. A large majority of colleges, 79 percent, provide this service specifically to Aboriginal learners, and many colleges reported that this service was available to Aboriginal learners through the college's mainstream student services. Fanshawe College provides basic support within the First Nations Centre, but more specialized support is referred to other resources within the college and from surrounding Aboriginal communities and organizations.

### Work Placements or Internships

The majority of institutions provide programs with work placements or internships (73 percent). Work placements, co-op placements and internships all provide avenues for Aboriginal students to gain valuable work experience in their field of study. Upon graduation, many students obtain jobs with employers from their work placements, internships or co-ops.

## 7.3 Aboriginal Student Associations

Students' associations are the voice of students at colleges and 33 percent of institutions, mostly serving northern regions, have Aboriginal student associations.

Some institutions which serve a high proportion of Aboriginal students noted that although they do not have Aboriginal students associations, the majority of students on their students' associations are Aboriginal. For example, North West Regional College indicated that each campus has its own student association some of which are 100 percent Aboriginal. Over 60 percent of Aurora College students are of Aboriginal descent and the participation of Aboriginal students in the student associations at the three campuses is reflective of this.

Some colleges that do not have formal Aboriginal student associations have clubs. Grant MacEwan University has an active Aboriginal student's club; Lethbridge College has a First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Club.

### Examples of Aboriginal Students' Associations

An Aboriginal Student's Association has just been formed at **Algonquin College** this year. The feedback has been extremely positive. The members have representation on the Aboriginal Education Council and work closely with the Aboriginal Events Coordinator. The college has also employed the services of a facilitator who has assisted students in preparing a business plan, and a coach who has assisted students in developing documentation to support their process; both leaders are from the Aboriginal community.

**Red River College** does not have a formal Aboriginal Student Association, but has the Resource Crew which is made up of four Aboriginal students. Each year, students must apply for these positions and go through an interview process. Once selected, they have a direct line to the Student Association and are actively involved in all activities organized by the students. At one time, Red River College did have an Aboriginal Student Association, but found that with students attending the college for one or two years, they preferred to organize formal student groups in each program area with assistance from the College Student Association. There are also Aboriginal student representatives on the college's student association and Board of Directors.

The voice of Aboriginal students on the campus of **Sault College** is the Native Student Council, which is an integral part of Aboriginal education at Sault College. The Council President is a voting member on the Native Education and Training Council. Departmental staff works closely with the Council in the development of social, cultural and educational activities offered throughout the year. Goals put forward by the Sault College Native Student Council include uniting Sault College students, especially those of Native descent, through social, cultural and sporting events. The Council also provides linkage for college students with the larger Native and non-Native communities, as well as assisting them with furthering their education.

## 7.4 Intercultural Training

Intercultural training provides increased awareness and understanding of Aboriginal cultures, knowledge and world views. This is a cross-cutting measure for creating a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal students, in particular if this training reaches senior and middle managers, staff and faculty across departments. Fifty-nine percent of respondent colleges provide intercultural training. Some exemplary practices are described below.

### Exemplary Practices in Intercultural Training

**Canadore College** introduced mandatory Cross-Cultural Training for all employees in 2007. The Aboriginal Learning Unit provides targeted classroom presentations to various academic program areas. Lunch and Learn sessions are also available to all students which include a variety of themed discussions and presentations. A web-based information portal available to all Canadore students posts resource materials, web links and academic resources.

#### **Northwest Community College (NWCC)**

In October 2009, NWCC held the first Challenging the Paradigm gathering as a starting point for a focused effort to transform the culture and practice of the college, and to examine how to integrate Aboriginal and mainstream pedagogical paradigms. The intent of the conference was to initiate a dialogue between the community of educators and the community of Aboriginal learners that would lead to real change. Participants at the follow-up First Northern Collaborative Learning Forum asked the college to continue to develop the follow-up conferences and workshops.

Since then, the NWCC House of Learning and Applied Research has been working with Aboriginal communities and organizations to further their engagement with the college, holding and/or supporting campus events celebrating Aboriginal culture, assisting employees to meet the pedagogical challenges, as well as planning events for the teaching year. The approach is based on respecting community values and needs by working from the communities into the college.

NWCC has also included events, such as the Celebration of the Wisdom of Elders, which focus on orientation workshops for Elders, community-based education leaders and workers, and college personnel, as well as Celebrations of Aboriginal Musicians which enable informal social interaction between Elders, community members, and college personnel. With the community base in informed support, the college is now focusing on changing the culture of education with a Year of Dialogue celebrating Aboriginal Learning. This is as a direct follow-up to the conference and workshops of October 2009.

At **North West Regional College**, intercultural training focuses primarily on staff training. There is an annual onsite session with a focus on Aboriginal culture. Students receive information depending upon the program enrolment, and events aimed at increasing awareness around Aboriginal culture are held such as Pow Wows, round dance, and displays.

At **University College of the North**, all students in certificate and diploma programs participate in a course entitled 'Tradition and Change.' The majority of degree programs incorporate an Aboriginal and northern component into programming and staff and faculty participate in an Aboriginal Awareness session when initially hired.



## 8. Aboriginal Participation in College Governance, Strategic Planning and Program Delivery

In consideration of Aboriginal control of education and participation in curriculum design, the 2010 survey tried to get a sense of how colleges, both mainstream and Aboriginal, receive input from Aboriginal leaders for college governance, planning, program development and delivery. Colleges identified a number of different structures and approaches to ensure that Aboriginal leaders from their regions contribute to and provide direction for the planning, development and delivery of Aboriginal programs and services.

### 8.1 Institutional Governance and Leadership

A key approach to ensuring Aboriginal input into college planning processes is through Aboriginal representation at the governance level. Thirty mainstream institutions indicated they had Aboriginal representation on their Boards or Aboriginal councils that report to their Boards. Some examples include:

#### **Confederation College**

Confederation College has one designated seat for Aboriginal representation on the Board of Governors. This representative is appointed by the community-based council as mandated by Ontario government funding. Further, the college has one Aboriginal senior manager responsible for Aboriginal education and sometimes privy to the Board of Governors processes. This administrator reports directly to the college president.

#### **Georgian College**

Georgian College has an Aboriginal Circle that meets quarterly and is involved in decision-making related to Aboriginal Education; the Board of Governors has an Aboriginal representative.

#### **Lambton College**

The College has an Aboriginal Education Council comprised of local community representatives; there is also an Aboriginal member on the Board of Governors, and College representatives sit on various local and provincial committees.

#### **Canadore College**

In 2000, Canadore College introduced a corporate policy framework that is revised on a regular three-year cycle. A policy *Framework for Education and Training Relationships with Aboriginal Nations and Aboriginal Students* is endorsed by the Aboriginal Circle on Education, approved by the College's Board of Governors, and lays out a clear statement of the process for engaging with First Nations Aboriginal and Métis' organizations and communities.

#### **University College of the North**

University College of the North has a tri-council governance structure (Governing Council, Council of Elders and Learning Council) with representation from the Aboriginal community. For example, on the Governing Council, 13 members (65 percent) are of Aboriginal descent; both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Council are of Aboriginal descent; the Council of Elders has 98 percent of its members who are of Aboriginal descent. At the Senior Executive Council (internal senior leadership), four of the seven members are of Aboriginal descent (57 percent).

#### **Vancouver Community College**

Vancouver Community College has used support from the provincially-funded Aboriginal Services Plan to develop a progressive governance model that puts communities in charge of a consortium of partners that includes seven Aboriginal organizations, local First Nations, and three post-secondary institutes.

### 8.2 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning involves the process of gathering input on the future directions of a post-secondary institution. The 2010 survey requested input from colleges on how they engaged in strategic planning and received input from Aboriginal leaders, education councils, Elders and community leaders.

For planning purposes, colleges reported they engage with tribal councils, hold community/management forums, planning reviews and meetings with Elders and community leaders.

### **Nova Scotia Community College**

Nova Scotia Community College engaged in a strategic planning process which included a province-wide meeting of Elders and other leaders within First Nations communities to invite their perspectives.

### **Red River College**

Red River College utilizes community forums for its strategic planning. The forum meets on a regular basis with education councils, Elders, and community leaders. Red River College also receives feedback through advisory groups as part of the college's strategic planning.

### **Okanagan College**

In the past two strategic planning reviews, Okanagan College has engaged the Aboriginal community, considered one of the key stakeholders, and thus consulted extensively on the strategic plan. One of the key priorities for Okanagan College and its strategic plan is to partner with Aboriginal communities with the aim of increasing Aboriginal participation and success rates. The college also emphasizes the importance of Aboriginal learners through recently-created College Wide Goals. One of the goals is to increase retention of Aboriginal learners by two percent over the next several years.

## **8.3 Program and Curriculum Development**

Aboriginal input into program and curriculum design is key to support goals of Aboriginal control of education. College Program Advisory Committees are responsible for developing new programs and updating the curriculum of existing ones. The 2010 survey results confirmed that a significant proportion of mainstream institutions have Aboriginal Advisory Committees or Education Councils or include Aboriginal representatives on relevant program advisory committees. NVIT and SIIT also have a program advisory committee structure. For both Aboriginal-specific committees and regular program advisory committees, colleges draw upon representation from Aboriginal community leaders, Elders and employers based near Aboriginal communities. Some exemplary practices are highlighted below for mainstream, Aboriginal and Northern colleges.

### **Aboriginal Advisory Committees and Education Councils at Mainstream Colleges**

#### **Northwest Community College**

The First Nations Council was established in 1996 by the Board of Governors to provide direct consultation with First Nations Communities in the college region, with feedback providing direction in the strategic and operational planning of the college. Communication links have been implemented through regular reports to the Board from the Chair of First Nations Council, who is a member of the college Board of Governors. First Nations Council policy recommendations focus on student advocacy, program promotion, curriculum design, cultural issues and content, program and education service evaluation. The Council assists Northwest Community College in strengthening its 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. Membership consists of representatives from each of the First Nations villages within the College region; representation from each First Nations Bands in the Northwest region; the Tahltan Bands; Native Friendship Centres; the Northwest region of the Métis Nation BC, the four Aboriginal post-secondary institutes in the Northwest; NWCC First Nations Access Coordinators; a NWCC Administration Representative; the College President, and a member of the College Board.

Programming through the NWCC House of Learning and Applied Research involves Elders and other community leaders in dialogues with NWCC employees. Programming is intended for the transfer of knowledge about Aboriginal heritage and issues (community based, as well as pedagogical issues).

#### **Okanagan College**

The Aboriginal Education Council at Okanagan College provides advice, recommendations and guidance in responding effectively to the educational and research needs and goals of Aboriginal peoples by reviewing and making recommendations for proposed program and service developments; monitoring the implementation of Aboriginal programs and services; and participating in the review of, and making recommendations for Okanagan College program and service evaluations.

#### **Portage College**

The majority of college programs have industry advisory committees with Aboriginal members in place. Portage College regularly engages in joint program development with Aboriginal industry partners or various Bands and settlements with regard to program and curriculum development.

### **Sault College**

Programming and curriculum development is overseen by each program advisory committee, with advisory members working directly in the development of programs to meet labour market requirements. The Native Education and Training Council also provides input and direction to new program development.

### **Aboriginal Institutions and Northern Colleges**

Program advisory committees are in place at Aboriginal institutes such as SIIT and NVIT, as well as at the University College of the North and the colleges in the territories. These committees include representatives from faculty, Elders, employers and other institutions.

### **Yukon College**

Yukon College works with 14 Yukon First Nations through a President's Advisory Committee for all of its input across governance, strategic planning, curriculum development and program and student services delivery.

### **Aurora College**

For program development, as well as program and student services delivery, Aurora College has leadership meetings with the President and campus directors in partnership with regional educational committees that include a representative from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (Government of the Northwest Territories), First Nations partner representatives, school board representatives and Aboriginal government representatives to plan program delivery each year.

### **Nunavut Arctic College**

Nunavut Arctic College utilizes working groups to revise and develop programming and curriculum development. The college also has an Inuit partnership with regional representatives.

## **8.4 Program and Student Service Delivery**

Many colleges identified the use of Elders as the primary means to support the delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal learners. For many institutions, the involvement of Elders is key to ensuring Aboriginal approaches and practices are incorporated into programming and student service delivery. Aboriginal Education Circles and Councils were also identified as key tools in program and student service delivery.

### **Elders**

#### **Red River College**

Red River College has an Elders in Residence Program. The college has regular communications with education counsellors and Bands and attends community meetings to receive feedback regarding program and student service delivery.

#### **Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology**

SIAST also has Elders onsite. Stakeholders at the college are regularly consulted in order to improve program and service delivery.

### **Aboriginal Circles and Councils**

#### **Georgian College**

Georgian College has an Aboriginal Education Circle which assists in making decisions regarding program and student services. It also has an Elders Advisory Circle which was recently formed to assist with cultural aspects of curriculum development and student service delivery.

#### **Canadore College**

Canadore College has an Aboriginal Circle on Education, which oversees the Aboriginal Learning Unit work plan and strategic direction, which includes the on-going development of culturally-appropriate student support services, academic supports, and student success across Canadore College.

## Algonquin College

Algonquin College utilizes a variety of Aboriginal education circles and councils. There is a main Aboriginal Education Council, as well as an Indigenous People's Education Circle and Student information sharing circles. The college utilizes student surveys, engages in community feedback through liaison activities and engages in discussion on best practices with other educational institutions to review program and student service delivery.

## 8.5 Consultations and Focus Groups

Colleges that do not have formal structures in place utilize focus groups or organize consultations with Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal school boards, teachers, Aboriginal college graduates, First Nations Bands, Tribal Councils and Aboriginal organizations in order to obtain community stakeholder input. Lambton College and College of the New Caledonia both use focus groups as part of their strategic planning process. Around program and curriculum development, College of the North Atlantic utilizes focus groups for input into this process.

### Partnerships with Aboriginal-controlled Institutions

Many colleges have developed strong partnerships with Aboriginal-controlled institutions and work very closely with these institutions in strategic planning and curriculum development. NorQuest College networks with Aboriginal employees and other educational institutes (i.e. Blue Quills First Nations and Onion Lake) as part of its strategic planning. SIIT is connected to the communities it serves by aligning with post-secondary education counsellors from all Bands and Tribal councils.

## 8.6 Aboriginal Faculty, Staff and Administrators

Aboriginal faculty and staff play an integral part in the development of new Aboriginal program content and services. Instructors of Aboriginal ancestry and those sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal students are also responsible for curriculum development in their own fields, with support from Aboriginal advisory structures in place at colleges.

The 2010 survey asked colleges to provide estimates of the total number of staff, faculty and administrators and what proportion were Aboriginal. Among the colleges who reported these figures, there was no significant variation between the percentage of faculty and administrators who were Aboriginal as 2.4 percent of administrators were Aboriginal and 2.7 percent of faculty. The percentage of Aboriginal staff employed at colleges was slightly higher at 3.8 percent.

Table 10

Estimate of the Total Number of Aboriginal Faculty, Staff and Administrators		
	Total Number of Employees	Number of Aboriginal Employees
Administrators	2,792	66
Faculty	7,865	213
Staff	9,510	363
	% of Employees that are Aboriginal	
Administrators	2.4%	
Faculty	2.7%	
Staff	3.8%	

Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey

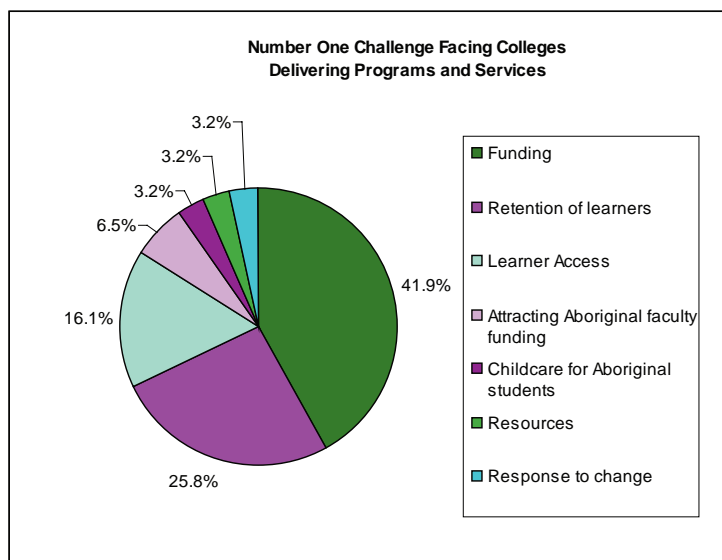
While the overall average across all colleges was relatively low, the percentage of Aboriginal staff employed at colleges varied considerably across the country. The highest proportion of Aboriginal staffing among survey respondents was SIIT, with 65 percent of total staff, administrators and faculty. NVIT also had a high proportion of Aboriginal staff and faculty, with 68 percent of overall staff.

## 9. Challenges

To gain greater insight into the variety of challenges facing colleges when it comes to serving Aboriginal learners, the 2010 survey requested that respondents rank the challenges facing them in order of importance.

As shown in Figure 10, 41 percent of respondent colleges placed funding in the number one position, followed by retention of learners at 26 percent. Sixteen percent placed learner access in the number one ranking. Attracting Aboriginal faculty was ranked as the most important issues for six percent of responding colleges. Resources, responses to change and childcare for Aboriginal students, each came in at about three percent.

Figure 10



Source: 2010 Aboriginal Programs and Services Survey

### 9.1 Challenges Serving Aboriginal Learners in Urban Settings

Respondent colleges identified four challenges in serving Aboriginal learners in urban settings: supportive and affordable housing, child care, issues with isolation and transition, as well as financial issues.

#### Supportive and Affordable Housing

One of the top challenges for serving Aboriginal learners in urban areas was the ability of students to find adequate and affordable housing. Making the transition to attend post-secondary studies often involves moving away from home. In the case of Aboriginal students, moving from a reserve or rural setting to a city can be a daunting experience. Access to affordable and supportive housing is a critical factor to ensuring that students will not have to allocate too much of their budgets to housing.

#### Childcare

For many Aboriginal students, attending a post-secondary institution may involve finding childcare and juggling school with family responsibilities. The burden of finding accessible and affordable childcare is one of the most frequently cited challenges. Childcare programs are essential supports for students, staff and faculty, helping ease some of the work/school/family strain. They can also provide rich resources to the academic learning and research mandates.

A report by the Millennium Scholarship Foundation,<sup>14</sup> found that many college students felt burdened trying to find affordable childcare. Many Aboriginal college students attending urban colleges are less likely to live at home and consequently have less family support to assist with childcare.

14 Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Research Note #2.



## Issues with Isolation and Transition

Aboriginal students attending colleges in urban settings face significant transition challenges. Some respondent colleges indicated that the transition to a post-secondary institution can be stressful for students, and many experience a sense of isolation and loneliness during the transition process. Many Aboriginal students come from small communities, have to move a long distance and lose family support available in their home communities. Because of the close kinship ties and the nature of relationships between individual members of Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal students often experience a stronger sense of isolation than other students. The large urban setting often lacks the supportive opportunities Aboriginal community life can provide.

## Financial Barriers

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006, revealed that one reason many Aboriginal learners did not complete post-secondary studies was a lack of finances. Among female First Nations women, 14 percent indicated they did not complete post-secondary studies because of financial reasons. That figure was higher among males at 18 percent.

Many respondent colleges serving urban areas indicated that financial challenges were a barrier facing Aboriginal learners. Fanshawe College noted that often additional financial resources are necessary for Aboriginal students because the living allowance supplied through PSSSP funding is not enough to survive.

Algonquin College reported that poverty is a major challenge for many Aboriginal students. According to the college, not all Aboriginal students receive education funding, and even those who do receive small allowances that are far below the poverty line. Poverty is an issue that is magnified in the urban setting, as the cost of living is significantly higher in larger metropolitan areas. The college reported that many Aboriginal students find it difficult to make ends meet and run out of funds for food by the end of the month.

## 9.2 Challenges Facing Colleges Serving Aboriginal Learners from Rural Communities

Challenges facing colleges serving Aboriginal learners in rural settings were similar to those reported by colleges serving urban areas, including housing, child care and inadequate student funding. Those more specific to colleges serving rural communities included: geographic location/transportation, academic readiness, and accessible education supports.

### Geographic Location/Transportation

Geographic location and transportation are key challenges facing colleges serving rural areas and affect Aboriginal student attendance. Not only is transportation often difficult for students to arrange in rural settings, it can also be costly. There are also financial implications associated with relocating to a rural area, such as housing and moving costs.

**Okanagan College** has three campuses (Penticton, Vernon and Salmon Arm) which are not considered Census Metropolitan Areas. Many First Nations communities are located 35-45 minutes away from these college campuses. Not only is transportation difficult because of the geographic location, but the costs associated with transportation are also an issue.

**Cégep de Baie-Comeau** cited that they encounter difficulties with transportation because of the distances to campus and lack of public transportation.

**Sault College** has received feedback indicating that those residing in the far north (e.g. James Bay Coast) feel that Sault Ste. Marie is located too far south for students to attend. The college also reported that feedback received from Southern Ontario indicated that Sault St. Marie was located too far north to attend.

### Academic Readiness

Not only do Aboriginal students face barriers due to lower high school graduation rates, they are often less prepared academically for post-secondary education. In many cases, rural and remote reserve schools do not offer academic preparation required for the successful transition into post-secondary studies.

Both Confederation College and Aurora College indicated that academic readiness was a rural challenge facing their institutions. Confederation College cited unpreparedness for academic studies is something they often encounter. Aurora College reported that there are strides being made in the Northwest Territories in terms of academic readiness, however, there are still problems with residents from smaller and more remote communities. Many coming from these communities have lower success rates in the K-12 system and consequently they are not academically prepared for the rigors of programming at Aurora College.

### **Accessible Education Supports**

Providing ongoing supports to Aboriginal students once they enter a college is critical to ensuring they are able to attend classes. Canadore College reported that they must find ways to provide continued supports for Aboriginal students so they can attend school on a regular basis. Ensuring access to proper supports like child care and reliable transportation is imperative.

Colleges emphasized the need to improve on the delivery of educational and learner supports for campuses serving rural communities and for community-based programming. When students have issues in larger metropolitan centres, obtaining access to these supports is much easier than in rural areas. Processes must be reviewed and improved to ensure students in need have access to the supports they require.



## 10. Lessons Learned

The 2010 survey asked colleges to identify lessons learned from their experience in delivering programs and services to Aboriginal learners. This section summarizes the lessons learned identified by respondent institutions. Four main themes emerged from the lessons learned:

- Aboriginal community engagement is fundamental for the effective delivery of Aboriginal programs and services;
- the Aboriginal voice must be heard within and across institutions;
- recruitment and support services are key for Aboriginal student retention and success;
- a holistic approach is required to enable colleges to become institutions of Aboriginal Inclusion or Indigenized institutions.

### 10.1 Aboriginal Community Engagement is Fundamental to Success

First and foremost, respondent institutions emphasized that Aboriginal students are most successful in college programs when there is strong Aboriginal community engagement and Aboriginal leadership is supportive. It is essential that Aboriginal community members and students be involved in determining the direction of programs and services that affect them, and cultural components are integrated into programs.

It is also important to engage with Aboriginal communities through industry partnerships. Such collaborative approaches can provide excellent learning opportunities for Aboriginal people, in particular if they are in fields that are tied to high-demand jobs near their home communities.

"Our new strategy is based on broad outreach to the community, rather than specifically to potential students. This is much more successful and engages other Aboriginal community members in influencing potential students. We host events that bring the community into the college and we bring the college to the community."

- George Brown College

"I think we've realized that simply increasing our Aboriginal student enrolment is but one step in really meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners. Further attention should be paid to retention. Thus, it is imperative to consistently engage in dialogue and partnerships with the Aboriginal communities and organizations that we serve. Their input is critical if we want to meet our college-wide goal related to Aboriginal student retention."

- Okanagan College

### 10.2 Aboriginal Voice Within and Across Colleges

One of the most frequently cited lessons learned was the need to hear the Aboriginal voice within and across colleges at all levels:

- beginning with governance structures such as Boards of Governors which include Aboriginal representation and help define the overall mission of the institution;
- senior Administrators must know and engage with local and provincial First Nations Chiefs, Council members, etc.;
- in program curriculum and content which is culturally relevant and embeds Aboriginal world views and traditional knowledge;
- through purposeful hiring practices that support affirmative action hiring policies, resulting in increased Aboriginal faculty and staff recruitment;
- through proactive professional development for college faculty and staff which includes intercultural training in Aboriginal world views and knowledge;
- by providing Aboriginal students opportunities to celebrate their culture amongst themselves and with non-Aboriginal students.

### 10.3 The Key Role of Recruitment and Support Services for Aboriginal Student Retention and Success

Recruitment initiatives are essential for increasing access to college education for Aboriginal students. However recruitment must be integrated as part of a community relations process and linked to Aboriginal student success. This means having active recruitment strategies in place to link Aboriginal students to programs that provide them with ladder opportunities from upgrading and college readiness to accessing programs that are in high demand in Aboriginal communities, such as police foundations, social work, early childhood education and trades and technologies related to industry needs.

Student support services are key to Aboriginal student success and program completion. Aboriginal services within the college environment are important to help ensure that Aboriginal students in the college system have access to culturally appropriate and relevant services that support their educational needs as well as provide a welcoming and supportive environment. These services enable students to feel welcome and connected. Key components include:

- having a focal point for Aboriginal students with targeted and visible Aboriginal student services, personal one-on-one support through Aboriginal advisors or counsellors, and a welcoming place to meet, gather, study and learn;
- services by Elders to provide cultural connections, personal support and counselling, and demonstrate and teach customs and traditions that provide a community atmosphere.

“Creating a sense of community for students attending any post-secondary institution is essential. This is an opportunity to provide a sense of “home” for students in a safe learning environment while at the same time providing the opportunity for them to become engaged with one another as well as the greater Aboriginal community. Having a dedicated Aboriginal student space, offering a variety of social and cultural events and the provision of Aboriginal-specific services contributes greatly to this sense of community for Aboriginal students.”

- Sault College

### 10.4 Holistic Approaches Which Enable Colleges to Become Institutions of Aboriginal Inclusion

Through the 2010 survey, a new trend has emerged in how mainstream colleges are structuring themselves to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. A number of respondent institutions emphasized the importance of adopting more holistic approaches to serving Aboriginal learners because Aboriginal services departments or offices cannot do it alone. There is a need for a more institution-wide approach to integrate services and supports more effectively.

Aboriginal departments should have a lead role in program and service planning to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples; however these departments are often under resourced and have limited capacity to move initiatives forward. If institutions are truly committed to helping Aboriginal students succeed within a post-secondary environment, it is key that all departments work closer together. This would enable colleges to collectively send a stronger message to Aboriginal communities, prospective students and industry partners that there is inherent capacity to advance Aboriginal education. In addition, a commitment must be made to develop a genuinely indigenous and mainstream strategy for meeting Aboriginal student needs as well as creating an environment of social inclusion - one that seeks, promotes and nurtures inter-cultural sharing.

Examples of some holistic approaches identified by respondent institutions are provided below.

#### **Camosun College**

The Indigenization Project focuses on processes, programs and supports to improve the college's educational approvals process to reflect Aboriginal ways of being and knowing. Additionally, analysis and review of college policies, curriculum development and design, student services, and employee development have all received support to move toward an indigenized institution, with the clear belief and vision that an indigenized institution is better able to serve the needs of a diverse student population.

#### **Fleming College**

The goal of Fleming College is to enhance the institutional infrastructure to facilitate Aboriginal student tracking and success and demonstrate measureable progress against strategic goals. The college is in the process of establishing the Fleming College Aboriginal Education Task Force with a focus on developing a policy to support access, retention and success, establishing a central resource for the college community. With the Aboriginal Education Council, this will provide oversight of the Post-Secondary Education and Training Plan and accountability measures. The Fleming Aboriginal Student Services staff, an Aboriginal Student Success Facilitator and Aboriginal Student Counsellor support outreach efforts for prospective and current students.



### **Northern Alberta Institute of Technology**

The EnCana Aboriginal Student Centre provides services primarily to the Aboriginal student population. These services include Elder services to provide traditional and cultural guidance to staff and students, Aboriginal Student advisors to assist with career planning and the institution admission process, and various resources to assist students to succeed such as computer lab and faxing services. There are also a number of communication bridges that have been established internally to ensure Aboriginal Student success. This includes one point of contact for Aboriginal students with the Registrar's Office and the Cash Office. This bridge assists students who are being funded by their Bands to attend post-secondary training.

### **Northwest Community College**

Northwest Community College (NWCC) is striving to be a bicultural college. NWCC has an Education council which is the advisory body to the College Board on major institution-wide issues, as well as educational policy. The Council acts as an overarching body to assist the college in achieving its mission of being a post-secondary institution dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning and an institution of first choice for Aboriginal students. In this role, the council gathers, reviews and discusses information and makes recommendations and decisions for the overall well being of the college.

NWCC recognizes the many challenges faced by Aboriginal students. To address barriers, increase access, and provide appropriate support for Aboriginal learners, the college has increased student services and other areas including increased hours for Learning Assistance Specialists, First Nations Access Coordinators; expanded the Elders in Residence program; and developed additional Learning Pathways courses designed to assist potential learners navigate their way through the assessment, admissions, and application processes. The College trained additional staff in the use of the guiding circles assessment tool and continues to focus its efforts on the development of culturally-relevant assessment tools and methodologies including increased outreach efforts by College staff. The College changed the minimum grade point average criteria for scholarships from 3.67 to 3.0, initiated a scholarship campaign, and expanded its online offerings.

### **Nunavut Arctic College**

The primary goal of Nunavut Arctic College is to create a bilingual and bicultural learning environment and having this as the strategic direction of the college supports students in achieving their educational goals. To provide further guidance in working towards attaining this goal, Nunavut Arctic College developed teaching and learning principles to serve as the framework and foundation for program and service delivery.

#### **Teaching and Learning Principles**

Nunavut Arctic College is an inclusive institution that:

- respects and honours Inuit language and culture;
- involves Elders as an integral part of college life;
- promotes an understanding of Inuit culture and language;
- values students' connections to family and community;
- helps students prepare for meaningful careers and healthy lives;
- places the well-being of students first, and provides a strong caring network of support;
- promotes learning as a positive life-changing experience involving the whole person – body-mind-spirit;
- encourages the personal, professional and academic development of students and staff;
- engages learners as active participants in all aspects of learning and evaluation;
- ensures graduates meet national standards.

### **Red River College**

Since 2005, Red River College has added new staff to the Aboriginal Student Support & Community Relations (ASSCR) department to increase support to Aboriginal students across the college. The Aboriginal Recruitment Officer was created as a full-time position to increase recruitment efforts at the college in the area of Aboriginal learners/students at the community level and internally with tours and student advising. Further, the Aboriginal Student Support Representative position was formally created. Although retention was woven into the Liaison Officer role, the newly created position offered the opportunity to expand the services and outreach to all programs at the college. The Elders in Residence were part-time positions in 2005 funded by TransCanada Pipeline and they have since been moved into the college's main budget. This demonstrates the college's support and recognition of cultural inclusion.

An internal relationship was established with the Dean of Student Services which strengthened both communication and cooperation for both departments to streamline the services offered to Aboriginal students in college application referrals, assessment services and the ability to increase statistical data collection. In 2005, Continuing and Distance Education included an Aboriginal self-declaration option on the standard application form which helped the ASSCR to establish more accurate annual comparative statistical reference points and analysis. Since 2005, marketing materials, including the Student Viewbook, campus recruitment CD, college calendar and program brochures, started to include the Aboriginal supports and services information and the college website has a quick link to the School of Indigenous Education page. Unified, these resource materials sent a strong statement to the community that Red River College provides an inclusive environment for Aboriginal learners.



### **Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)**

The new Aboriginal Student Achievement Plan provides an institution-wide plan and priorities which will ensure coordination of potential funding sources in the most efficient way. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to achieve a representative Aboriginal student population in all SIAST programs and to have an Aboriginal student program completion rate that is equivalent to the general student population.

The strategy is holistic in nature, taking into consideration the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health of students as suggested by the Aboriginal medicine wheel. The initiative includes concrete actions to address systemic barriers that are faced by Aboriginal students including:

- establishing an Aboriginal student success strategy implementation steering committee and hiring a coordinator;
- establishing key performance indicators for Aboriginal participation and completion, with priority to those programs with the lowest rates of Aboriginal student success;
- proactively supporting Aboriginal students through the application process;
- developing specialized information about finances and funding for Aboriginal students;
- increasing early intervention for Aboriginal students experiencing difficulties;
- establishing a post-secondary summer transition program at each campus;
- developing a marketing and communications plan to raise awareness about SIAST among Aboriginal people;
- offering student support modules in key personal and academic skills;
- developing discipline-specific post-secondary preparatory programs;
- implementing a strategy to help English language learners;
- addressing barriers created by attendance practices;
- developing targeted student recruitment activities;
- establishing an Aboriginal alumni network;
- intensifying SIAST's representative workforce efforts; and,
- integrating Aboriginal knowledge and learning into programs.

### **University College of the North**

University College of the North (UCN) has Aboriginal representation at the governance and senior management levels and is focused on serving the needs of Aboriginal communities. At the program level, UCN has introduced the Student Tracking and Retention Strategy which is an early alert system so instructors can contact a counsellor quickly when a student is experiencing difficulties. Academic advisors and counsellors are dedicated to specific programs, so information is current, relevant and clearly articulated to students at every stage of their experience. Instructor-advisors ensure that students feel welcome, have a personal connection to an instructor, and are receiving program-specific advice.

### **Vancouver Community College**

Vancouver Community College (VCC) has a multi-faceted strategy through increased awareness; integration of the Aboriginal Education & Services Department within the college; and with a consortium of local Aboriginal community partners that meet monthly to enhance culturally-relevant delivery of services and programs. Aboriginal consortium community partners sit as Chair and Vice Chair of this unincorporated society. The Coastal Corridor Consortium funding model respects the voice and authority of the local Aboriginal organizations and First Nations communities in the development and delivery of Aboriginal post-secondary education has been significant.

The research from this group included:

- Exemplary Practices in Aboriginal Post Secondary (local, regional, national and international);
- Aboriginal Community Post Secondary Education Needs Framework;
- Aboriginal Instructors Discussion Paper (resulting in a 2010 pilot to deliver an accredited Aboriginal Instructors Program with NVIT);
- Teaching Aboriginal Higher Learners Workshop and Train the Trainer Workshop.

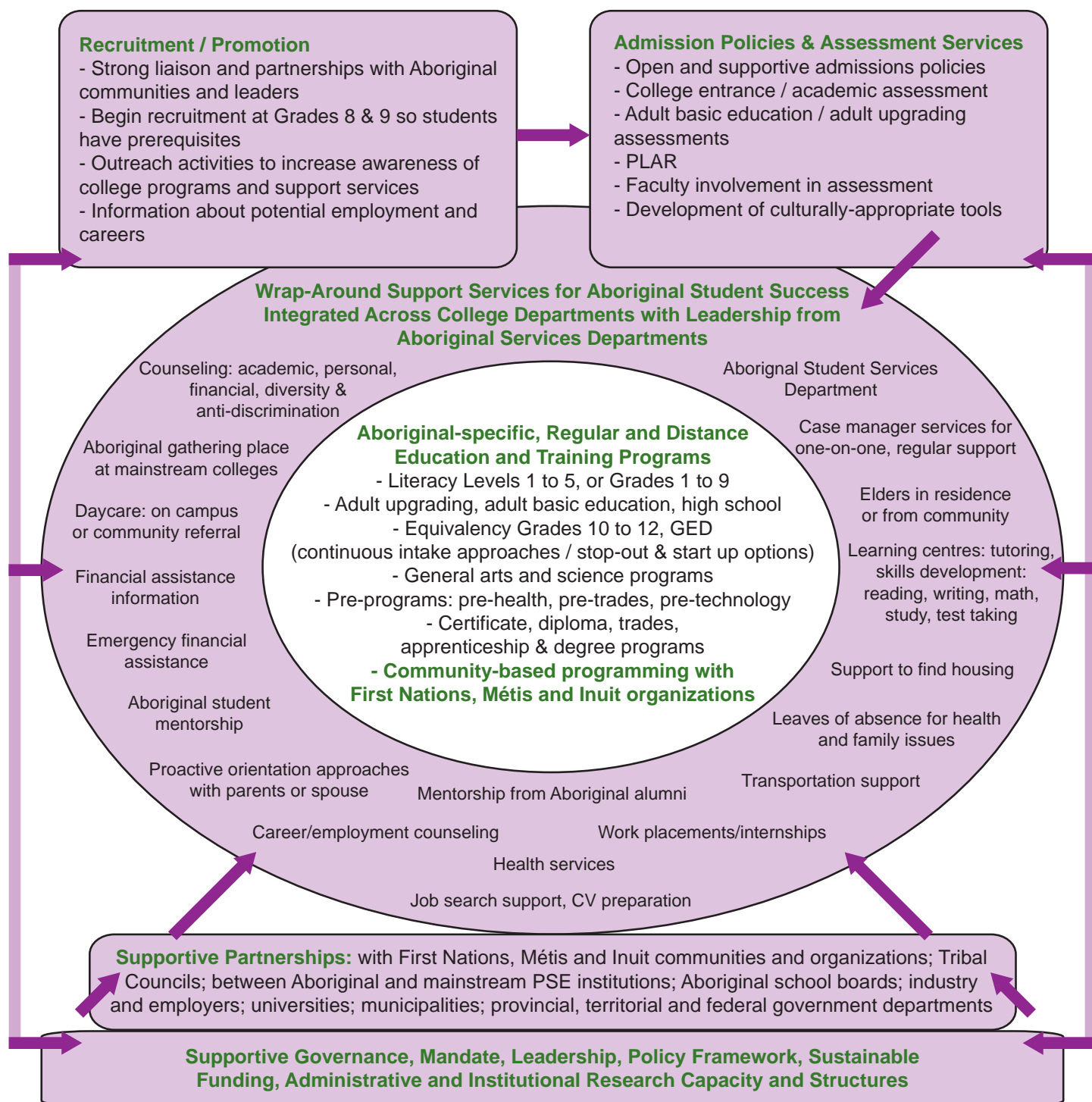
This research combined to act as a catalyst for the VCC Aboriginal Education and Services Department to refine and enhance services delivery that has resulted in a significant increase in Aboriginal student enrolment and graduation rates.

## 10.5 College Process Framework for Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities

The College Process Framework for Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities (Figure 11) has been revised and updated based on the programs and services identified in the previous sections of the report, the lessons learned and holistic approaches. The process framework provides an overview of the programs and services colleges offer to Aboriginal learners, including Aboriginal student recruitment, admissions policies and approaches and assessment, education and training programs, support services aimed at student success and transitions to employment. This process framework outlines a comprehensive approach for addressing the needs of Aboriginal learners and communities. It is understood that not all colleges have the resources and capacity to provide the full range of programs and services outlined in the framework.

Figure 11

College Process Framework for Serving Aboriginal Learners and Communities



The relevance and importance of each of the elements of the process framework are as follows:

### **Recruitment/Promotion**

The promotion of learning opportunities and recruitment efforts were identified as the essential first steps for the effective delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal learners. The process framework highlights some of the key factors for effective recruitment and promotion. In order to reach out to Aboriginal learners within their community, colleges establish partnerships with Aboriginal communities and leaders. Colleges have emphasized the importance of beginning recruitment early in secondary school, in Grades 8 and 9 so that students take the secondary school courses that provide the prerequisites for college programs. Recruitment efforts should also promote and increase awareness about college programs and support services as well as include information about potential careers.

### **Admissions Policies and Assessment Services**

The next step in the process for learners is to apply to the college program and go through the admissions procedures. Respondent colleges emphasized the importance of having open and supportive admissions policies for Aboriginal learners because many lack confidence and are intimidated by the applications procedures and by post-secondary institutions in general. Open admissions policies would also include continuous intake approaches so that learners have more flexibility in program start dates. Colleges have standard assessment tools and approaches to place learners in appropriate level programs; this would also include assessments for adult upgrading programs and prior learning assessment and recognition services. There is a need to develop more culturally-appropriate assessment tools.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services for Aboriginal Student Success**

“Wrap-Around Support Services” were identified as a key to Aboriginal student success. These support services are “wrapped” around the education and training programs in the process framework in order to illustrate this term and the importance of these services for addressing the needs of Aboriginal learners in a holistic manner. Respondent colleges identified a wide range of support services that address the learning, personal, cultural and career-related needs of Aboriginal learners.

### **Education and Training Programs**

As shown in the process framework, colleges offer education and training programs that enable Aboriginal learners to upgrade skills and gain prerequisites that enable them to access post-secondary level programs. The main types of literacy, adult upgrading, preparatory and post-secondary programs offered by colleges are outlined in the centre of the process framework.

### **Supportive Partnerships**

The process framework shows that the delivery of programs and services depends on supportive partnerships with a wide range of partners from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, as well as Tribal Councils, Aboriginal school boards, industry and employers and municipalities, including partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream post-secondary institutions.

### **Supportive Governance, Mandate, Leadership, Policy Framework, Funding, Administrative and Institutional Research Capacity and Structures**

The process framework also shows that for the successful delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal learners, institutions must have a supportive governance, mandate, leadership, policy frameworks, funding and administrative structures and capacity as well as institutional research capacity.

## **10.6 Colleges as Institutions of Aboriginal Inclusion**

There is clearly a trend among colleges across the country towards examining internal structures, processes and approaches as well as external partnerships and relationships with a view to improving programs and services for Aboriginal learners. The holistic approaches to Aboriginal program and service delivery indicate that colleges are aiming to become more inclusive or indigenized. To build on the process framework, this section examines the key elements for an Aboriginal inclusion model for colleges inspired by the Inclusion Continuum of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC).

The Inclusion Continuum was developed to guide employers to become organizations of Aboriginal inclusion and is considered a roadmap to creating a culture of Aboriginal inclusion. Based on the accounts of companies that have made large strides in growing an engaged, upwardly mobile Aboriginal workforce, the Inclusion Continuum outlines the seven stages through which a culture of inclusion progresses. The Continuum is shown in Figure 12.

A first attempt at applying the Inclusion Continuum to publicly-funded mainstream colleges is outlined in Table 11. AHRC has emphasized that the first three of these stages are misdirection, and it is only at Stage Four, “initiation,” that a company begins on the true path of inclusion. Since colleges are providing a public service and have an access mandate to facilitate post-secondary education pathways, the first three stages of the continuum are not applicable. As a result, this initial analysis of how the continuum can be applied to learning organizations indicates that there are five stages.

**Stage 1** has been named “Business as Usual” which implies that colleges offer their standard programs and services but do not interact with Aboriginal communities in their regions and have not established policies or structures to specifically serve Aboriginal learners.

At **Stage 2**, “Initiation,” institutions engage more with Aboriginal community partners and begin more targeted recruitment, program development and delivery. With increased numbers of Aboriginal students, the institution provides some support for the creation of an Aboriginal learning and services department. However this department must rely mostly on project-based funding to operate. Without sustainable funding the resources and services are more limited and may not be available from one year to the next.

**Stage 3**, “Incubation,” is a point where there is increased recognition at the governance and senior management levels that a more structured approach is required for Aboriginal education. The college has more formal partnerships with Aboriginal communities resulting in increased programming and more targeted student services on-campus. The college seeks out Aboriginal representation in governance either through Board representation or the creation of an Elders Council. The college also increases commitment by establishing an Aboriginal gathering place.

**Stage 4**, “Integration,” is a period of growth as Aboriginal inclusion is integrated into the college mission and mandate. The college introduces more integrated recruitment, student services approaches and a complementary range of programs, and begins looking at how Aboriginal culture and traditions can be integrated into the content of mainstream programs. The Aboriginal representation and voice is increased further through proactive practices for hiring Aboriginal faculty and staff and for the Aboriginal student voice on campuses.

At **Stage 5**, “Inclusion,” colleges have developed a truly inclusive learning environment which embeds First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditional knowledge and world views into the curriculum of college programs. Aboriginal learning and services departments are an integral part of a sustainably-funded unit which functions in an integrated manner with other departments. The Aboriginal voice is present across the institution. The college integrates inclusion indicators in its performance measurement tools and reports on progress.

**Figure 12**

### Aboriginal Human Resource Council - Inclusion Continuum

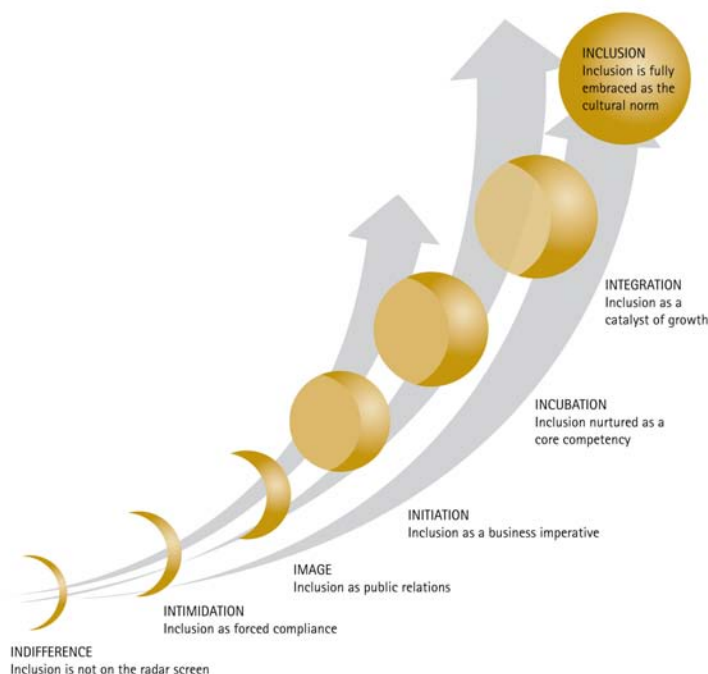


Table 11

## Aboriginal Human Resource Council – Inclusion Continuum

Stages of Aboriginal Inclusion for Private Sector Employers	Stages of Aboriginal Inclusion Applied to Mainstream Colleges
<p><b>Stage 1 – Indifference – Inclusion not on the radar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial forms the basis of workplace diversity.</li> <li>• Here, employee morale is never a priority.</li> <li>• Here, discrimination and harassment go unchallenged (under human rights legislation, such companies are disappearing).</li> </ul> <p><b>Stage 2 – Intimidation – Inclusion as forced compliance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This company acts wholly from fear.</li> <li>• The minimal legal requirement is the high bar.</li> <li>• All important actions are reactive rather than proactive.</li> <li>• Legal obligation becomes the surest guide to Aboriginal Inclusion.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stage 1 – Business as usual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No targeted recruitment of Aboriginal students</li> <li>• Limited support available at admissions and assessment stages</li> <li>• Regular education and training programs</li> <li>• Regular student support services</li> <li>• Limited, if any, interaction or partnership with First Nations, Métis or Inuit communities, or Aboriginal institutes</li> <li>• May offer some information about Aboriginal student funding sources through student financial assistance office</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 3 – Image – Inclusion as public relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This company prizes HR – so long as it serves PR.</li> <li>• What value exists in Aboriginal employees – how can they be showcased.</li> <li>• Wholly reactive, but to the carrot rather than the stick.</li> <li>• External perceptions become the surest guide to Aboriginal inclusion.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Stage 4 – Initiation – Inclusion as a business imperative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A change agent has been roused by the values of inclusion.</li> <li>• That person presents other managers with a business case for inclusion.</li> <li>• A nucleus of managers demand drives executives to move the effort forward</li> <li>• The organization begins a self-assessment: how can it become more inclusive</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Stage 5 – Incubation – Inclusion nurtured as a core competency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The highest executives commit to the path of inclusion.</li> <li>• Inclusion is regarded as a ‘core competency’, necessary for organizational effectiveness.</li> <li>• Business case for Aboriginal inclusion is translated into policies and programs.</li> <li>• Company organizes training and other efforts to grow an inclusive culture.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stage 2 – Initiation – Inclusion as a business imperative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some targeted recruitment of Aboriginal students.</li> <li>• Partnerships with Aboriginal communities initiated.</li> <li>• Development &amp; delivery of some Aboriginal-specific programs.</li> <li>• Creation of Aboriginal learning and services department or unit but relies mostly on project-based funding with limited core funding from the college.</li> <li>• Aboriginal cultural activities organized.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stage 3 – Incubation – Inclusion nurtured as a core competency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More formal partnerships with Aboriginal communities: joint needs assessments, community-based programming.</li> <li>• College Board of Governors and Senior Management commit to path of inclusion.</li> <li>• Aboriginal representation in college governance through Board representation or Elders Council.</li> <li>• Aboriginal gathering place available on campus.</li> <li>• Increased Aboriginal programming and more targeted student services.</li> </ul>



Stages of Aboriginal Inclusion for Private Sector Employers	Stages of Aboriginal Inclusion Applied to Mainstream Colleges
<p><b>Stage 6 – Integration – Inclusion as a catalyst of growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company's goals are permanently integrated with its inclusion goals.</li> <li>• Employees have high morale and show a high degree of engagement.</li> <li>• Long-term strategies drive internal and external Aboriginal relations.</li> <li>• Organization vigorously promotes inclusion to other organizations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stage 4 – Integration – Inclusion as a catalyst of growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal inclusion as part of college mission &amp; mandate.</li> <li>• Recruitment integrated as part of community relations process.</li> <li>• Proactive hiring policies to increase Aboriginal faculty &amp; staff.</li> <li>• Aboriginal student government through representation on Student Association or separate Aboriginal Students' Association.</li> <li>• Complementary range of programs and services, and delivery modes according to Aboriginal community needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 7 – Inclusion – Inclusion is fully embraced as the cultural norm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This highly-productive workplace is dedicated to continuous improvement.</li> <li>• Corporate culture is one of unflagging commitment to inclusion.</li> <li>• This is the company of choice for the very best Aboriginal talent.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stage 5 – Inclusion – Inclusion is fully embraced as the cultural norm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nations, Métis and Inuit traditional knowledge embedded in college program curriculum.</li> <li>• Aboriginal learning &amp; services department serves as focal point for Aboriginal learners and functions in integrated manner with other departments to address Aboriginal learners' needs holistically.</li> <li>• Aboriginal voice across the institution: governance, faculty &amp; staff, students.</li> <li>• Inclusion performance measurement and reporting.</li> </ul>

Source: Aboriginal Human Resources Council, [www.aboriginalhr.ca](http://www.aboriginalhr.ca)

## 11. Conclusion

The results of the 2010 Environmental Scan on Aboriginal programs and services demonstrate the strong commitment of colleges across all regions to improve outcomes for Aboriginal learners and contribute to Aboriginal community development. Colleges emphasized the need to work within the overarching goal of Aboriginal control of education by engaging and partnering with Aboriginal communities.

An interesting trend that was identified through survey responses is that mainstream colleges are beginning to structure themselves to become more inclusive or indigenized. Colleges are examining their structures and policies to develop truly inclusive learning environments which embed First Nations, Métis and Inuit traditional knowledge and world views in their programs, address the needs of learners in a holistic manner through support services, and ensure that the Aboriginal voice is heard across institutions beginning with the governance level, right through to the learners themselves.

Mainstream and Aboriginal colleges across Canada must continue to reach out to form partnerships with Aboriginal communities and institutes with a view to providing the education, training and skills development that enable Aboriginal people to contribute to the economic and social development of Aboriginal communities and Canada as a whole. Colleges must also enhance Aboriginal student retention through culturally-appropriate counselling and support services, seeking and making use of student input, and having more Aboriginal faculty so students feel understood and supported in the challenges they face while attending college.

ACCC must also continue to form partnerships at the pan-Canadian and regional levels with a view to supporting colleges' efforts to provide more effective programs and services for Aboriginal learners. This includes supporting exchanges of exemplary practices, providing opportunities for colleges to dialogue with federal government departments and national and regional Aboriginal organizations.



## Appendix 1: 2010 Survey of Aboriginal Programs and Services

### List of Participating Colleges

#### **British Columbia/Yukon**

Camosun College  
College of New Caledonia  
Langara College  
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology  
North Island College  
Northwest Community College  
Okanagan College  
Selkirk College  
Vancouver Community College  
Yukon College

#### **Alberta/Northwest Territories**

Bow Valley College  
Grant MacEwan University  
Keyano College  
Lethbridge College  
Medicine Hat College  
NorQuest College  
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology  
Portage College  
Aurora College

#### **Saskatchewan/Manitoba/Nunavut**

North West Regional College  
Parkland College  
Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies  
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology  
Red River College  
University College of the North  
Nunavut Arctic College

#### **Ontario**

Algonquin College  
Cambrian College  
Canadore College  
Collège Boréal  
Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning  
Confederation College  
Fanshawe College  
Fleming College  
George Brown College  
Georgian College  
Lambton College  
Niagara College  
Northern College  
Sault College  
Seneca College

#### **Québec**

Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue  
Cégep de Baie-Comeau  
Cégep de Chicoutimi  
Cégep de Sept-Îles  
Cégep John Abbott College  
Cégep Marie-Victorin  
Cégep Sainte-Foy  
Cégep régional de Lanaudière Collège constituant de Terrebonne  
Collège François-Xavier-Garneau  
Collège Shawinigan  
Heritage College

#### **Atlantic**

College of the North Atlantic  
New Brunswick Community College  
New Brunswick College of Craft and Design  
Nova Scotia Community College

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2010 Environmental Scan  
Trends, Programs, Services, Partnerships,  
Challenges and Lessons Learned**

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