

— CMEC —

ABORIGINAL EDUCATORS'

— SYMPOSIUM —

Yellowknife | Northwest Territories | June 29–30, 2015

Summary Report

**We want you to understand,
and we will help you to
understand, what it is that we
need to shine.**

—NT Elder, Margaret Thom



cmecc

Council of
Ministers
of Education,
Canada

Conseil des
ministres
de l'Éducation
(Canada)



CMEC Aboriginal Educators' Symposium

Summary Report

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Acknowledgements to all the Elders and participants of the AES; CMEC Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the CMEC Aboriginal Education Plan; co-leads, Northwest Territories and Alberta; and the CMEC Secretariat.

CMEC gratefully acknowledges the financial contribution of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in support of the symposium.*

* At the time of the symposium this federal department was known as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).

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Executive Summary

Recognizing the power of Aboriginal educators to transform lives and therefore people's futures, it has become more and more apparent that we need to attract more Aboriginal people to the teaching profession and retain those already in the system.

The CMEC Aboriginal Education Symposium brought together new and experienced educators and Elders of Aboriginal ancestry from across Canada to discuss:

- how best to attract more Aboriginal people to teaching careers;
- how to encourage existing Aboriginal educators to remain in the profession;
- how to support Aboriginal students entering the field of education; and
- how to support all Aboriginal educators in their training and career development.

For two full days, participants discussed their challenges and successes in relation to education, teacher training, and professional development. They also provided innovative advice on how to support Aboriginal postsecondary students entering the field of education and ongoing support for experienced Aboriginal educators.

Each province and territory was invited to send a delegation of six new or experienced educators of Aboriginal descent, as well as one Elder, to discuss relevant issues and share information on successful practices. On the final day, delegates met with education ministers and CMEC officials to participate in culminating activities, share innovative ideas, and listen to final thoughts.

Advised by the Elders in attendance, all aspects of the symposium were informed by the observance of Aboriginal protocol that supported traditional knowledge and ways of knowing.

Findings

Over the course of the symposium, innovative recommendations were identified and framed within eight themes. One top recommendation for action was identified to address each theme. Specific jurisdictions each have unique needs that will be addressed in particular ways, guided by these themes:

1. **Motivate:** establish an Aboriginal education steering committee
2. **Prepare:** a required course in Aboriginal peoples and culture
3. **Support:** the Indigenization of education
4. **Employ:** gain understanding of deep systematic barriers to employment
5. **Develop:** a coordinated national resource base
6. **Partner:** to create a mandatory course across Canada
7. **Include:** a mandatory Aboriginal studies course
8. **Lead:** set strategic direction to institute change

Provincial and territorial delegations met together to consider ideas and solutions that could possibly be implemented regionally. Delegates illustrated their ideas and concepts graphically, and presented the information to their respective education minister for consideration to inform action “at home.”

The information gleaned from the symposium can be a starting place for further consideration and detailed application in provinces and territories across Canada. It can also serve as a source of information for other Aboriginal groups internationally.



Aboriginal Education: A National Priority

Aboriginal education has been a part of CMEC's work since it was made a priority by ministers of education in 2004. The following is a high-level overview of CMEC's four focus areas in its Strategic Plan on Aboriginal Education as of 2011.

1. Sharing best practices in Aboriginal education
2. Strengthening the capacity for evidence-based decision making
3. Addressing teacher-training issues in Aboriginal education
4. Engaging with the federal government

At present, Northwest Territories and Alberta are the leads for work on Aboriginal education at CMEC. Education ministers are currently implementing an updated plan of work on Aboriginal education. For up-to-date information on CMEC's current work in Aboriginal education, please refer to the [CMEC Web site](#).



Standing from left to right: the Honourable Peter Fassbender (British Columbia); the Honourable Doug Graham (Yukon); the Honourable Liz Sandals (Ontario), and Mr. Alexandre Iracà, Parliamentary Assistant to the ministre de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche (Quebec).

Seated from left to right: Chief Wilton LittleChild, TRCC Commissioner; the Honourable Jackson Lafferty (Northwest Territories); and Dr. Marie Wilson, TRCC Commissioner.



CMEC Aboriginal Educators' Symposium (AES)

Why are our Aboriginal educators so important?

Across Canada, ministers of education have made Aboriginal education a priority and recognize that a student's success stems from both their teachers' and their own sense of identity — growing up proud of themselves, their communities, and their cultures. Having a workforce of dedicated teachers who understand and can support Aboriginal students, and increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers who are members of the same communities and share the same culture and traditions as their students, are powerful vehicles for change.

Research has shown that one of the most powerful influences on students' success is their teachers' encouragement and help — especially Aboriginal educators who can help to build Aboriginal students' sense of identity so they grow up proud of themselves, their communities, and their cultures. Integrating Aboriginal knowledge into lessons and hiring Aboriginal teachers has been proven to enrich learning and produce positive results for all students, especially Aboriginal students. This is critical, given that Aboriginal students are Canada's fastest growing demographic and that they attend schools in urban centres as well as in Aboriginal communities. Training and hiring more Aboriginal teachers to increase student success has been identified in many reports as being key to bridging the gaps in Aboriginal student achievement. Recognizing the power of Aboriginal educators to transform students' lives and futures, CMEC is determined to attract more Aboriginal people to the teaching profession and retain those already in the system through improved supports.

About the AES

The Aboriginal Educators' Symposium (AES), held in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, on June 29 and 30, 2015, brought together both new and experienced educators of Aboriginal ancestry from across Canada to discuss teacher-training experiences.¹

The symposium aimed to provide a forum for Aboriginal educators to discuss, based on their own personal experiences, how best to:

- attract more Aboriginal people to teaching careers;
- encourage existing Aboriginal educators to remain in the profession;
- support Aboriginal students entering the field of education; and
- support all Aboriginal educators in their training and career development.

The symposium provided an opportunity to ask Aboriginal teachers what supports they need and to hear what they have to say about both the challenges and successes within education, teacher training, and professional development. Their advice was sought on the types of innovations needed to better assist and advocate for Aboriginal postsecondary students entering the field of education, as well as for experienced Aboriginal educators.

Participants discussed how best to help all educators in Canada and, specifically, to support training and professional development for new and experienced Aboriginal educators throughout their careers. By identifying and addressing the barriers that Aboriginal people face in entering the teaching profession, ministries and departments of education across Canada hope to attract more Aboriginal educators and increase their chances of success in all educational settings.

¹ For access to the symposium program, please refer to the [CMEC Web site](#).





Who was there?

Each province and territory was invited to send a delegation of six new or experienced educators of Aboriginal descent, as well as one Aboriginal Elder, to the symposium held at École Sir John Franklin High School and the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre (NACC) in Yellowknife.

One member per province/territory of the CMEC Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the CMEC Aboriginal Education Plan was also invited to support each delegation and help with the overall work of the symposium.

The two-day event coincided with the 104th annual CMEC meeting that was held in Yellowknife on the same dates. Education ministers joined Aboriginal educators on the afternoon of the second day to hear how they could be involved in effecting meaningful change.





Elders at the Symposium

We want you to understand, and we will help you to understand, what it is that we need to shine.

—NT Elder, Margaret Thom

Ministries and departments of education in all provinces and territories value positive and collaborative relationships with their Aboriginal stakeholders and recognize and affirm the significant role of Elders within Aboriginal education. Elders are the wise ones who are the keepers of wisdom and knowledge; they teach, model, and share their knowledge and wisdom to those who are willing to listen and learn.

Out of respect for Aboriginal protocol and custom, Elders from every province and territory were invited to attend the symposium, along with invited Aboriginal educators from across the country.

Led by Elder Margaret Thom from Fort Providence, NT, and several additional Elders from the NT, participants were welcomed to the traditional land of the Yellowknives Dene First Nations on Akaitcho Territory.

At the symposium, all Elders were invited to attend any discussion session they chose and were encouraged to openly participate in all sessions.

A special session for the Elders was held called the “Elders’ Tea and Bannock,” where they were provided with the opportunity to reflect on everything they had heard during the symposium.

Elders were given the opportunity to speak with each other in small groups, and symposium participants were invited to sit, listen, and learn from their conversations with each other, while enjoying some freshly prepared bannock (traditional bread) and tea.

It is a wise practice to consider the perspectives and wisdom of the Elders as they consider solutions to stubborn problems in relation to Aboriginal education.



Welcome Dinner at the Yellowknife River

Along the Yellowknife River, at the Yellowknives Dene First Nation's Weledeh site, guests from all across Canada enjoyed an evening out on the land.

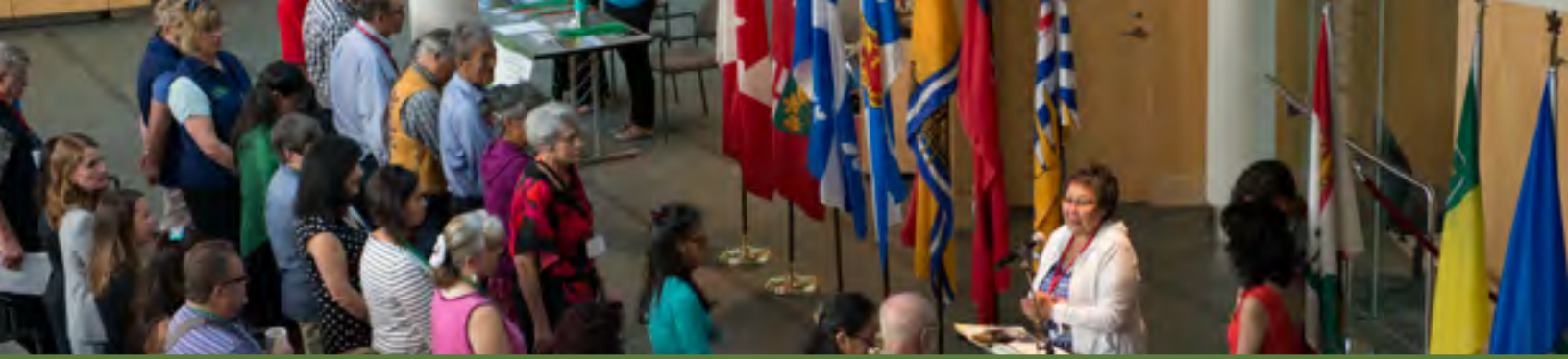
Ministers of education, along with their officials and symposium delegates, travelled by bus from the city to this beautiful traditional gathering site for a true Northern welcome.

The informal social event hosted by Northwest Territories provided an opportunity for people to get to know one another and prepare for the upcoming days of discussions and learning.

The evening event included a welcome ceremony to honour the Elders in attendance, a blessing and offering to the land and the water, words of welcome from local chiefs and dignitaries, a traditional dinner of fish and bannock, and entertainment by local NT artists.

Dr. Marie Wilson, one of the three commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC), was invited to address the guests and share the commission's work and findings.





Opening Ceremonies

Out of respect for the cultural and spiritual background of the invited Aboriginal educators and the people of the Northwest Territories, symposium participants, together with education ministers and representatives from education ministries and departments from across Canada, were invited to the opening ceremonies at the Northwest Territories Legislature in Yellowknife.



Participants were officially greeted by NT Elder Margaret Thom, the Honourable Jackson Lafferty (Minister of Education for the Northwest Territories), and the Honourable Peter Fassbender (Minister of Education for British Columbia).

Following the opening, a traditional Dene Feed-the-Fire ceremony took place. This ceremony was held to honour the four cardinal directions and elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and everything provided by the Creator. Based upon the guidance received from Elders, it was especially important to open the event in a way that would respect and honour the participants, the process, and the issues.

The ceremony, led by Elders, included offerings of tobacco and prayers to the fire. A youth and an adult provided tobacco from a birchbark basket to each participant to offer to the fire.



The Symposium

Held over two days, the AES was an opportunity to hear directly from Aboriginal educators to determine how to attract more Aboriginal people to the teaching profession and retain those already in the system.

The AES included a mix of keynote presentations, panels of Indigenous scholars, breakout sessions, talking circles, and Elders' sharing — all designed to facilitate open exchanges, sharing, and critical reflection.

Day 1 focused on the exploration of issues related to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal educators, centring on current challenges and concerns. Participants were asked guiding questions about **“Recruiting — Getting Aboriginal Educators into Our Classrooms”** and **“Retaining — Supporting Aboriginal Educators Once They Are in Our Classrooms.”**

Day 2 focused on innovation in relation to those same issues, concentrating on the possible solutions and next steps expected to result in recruiting more Aboriginal educators and retaining the ones we already have. Day 2 included sharing with education ministers from across Canada.





Keynote speakers

Each day included an inspiring keynote presentation from a distinguished professional with experience and background that complemented the topics being discussed.

Mr. Darren McKee, executive director of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, opened the first day with a keynote address focused on key issues that affect and challenge Indigenous educators in Canada.

Mr. McKee is Anishinabe and originally from the O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation in the Interlake region of Manitoba.

He invited audience participants to help demonstrate how important it is to harness the power that exists within tension to initiate change.

Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, associate dean of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program and a professor at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education, provided the keynote for the second day, focusing on innovative solutions to issues that affect and challenge Aboriginal educators in Canada.

Dr. Archibald is from the Sto:lo and Xaxli'p First Nation. Mr. Kaleb Child, an Indigenous scholar, was invited to provide an honour song to conclude Dr. Archibald's keynote address.

Educating kids is the most important social endeavour in the country, and our kids matter.
—Mr. Darren McKee



It is joyful to be Indigenous. It's a good day to be Indigenous, and it's a good day to be an Indigenous ally too. So everybody is included in this.
—Dr. Jo-ann Archibald



From left to right: Pamela Rose Toulouse, Sherry Peden, Kaleb Child, Lori Eastmure, Michelle Hogue, Denise Kurszewski, Jo-Anne Chrona, Diane Campeau, Tina Jules, and Elder Margaret Thom.

Panel presentations, breakout sessions, and talking circles

Indigenous scholars from across the country were sought out to be panellists at the symposium. As panellists, these scholars used their expertise to help define and provide context to the issues discussed. Their skills were further accessed to facilitate critical discussions with symposium participants in focused breakout sessions

Organized into two different panels, the Indigenous scholars introduced the specific question that they were assigned to address to the symposium participants.

Panel #1 addressed getting Aboriginal educators into our classrooms. It asked:

1. What can motivate Aboriginal students to pursue becoming teachers?	Ms. Denise Kurszewski and Ms. Diane Campeau
2. How can Aboriginal students be best prepared for entering teacher-education programs?	Ms. Jo-Anne Chrona
3. How can Aboriginal students be best supported to complete teacher-education programs?	Ms. Tina Jules
4. How can Aboriginal teacher-education graduates be supported to find employment as teachers?	Dr. Lori Eastmure



Panel #2 addressed supporting Aboriginal educators once they are in classrooms. It asked:

5. How can Aboriginal educators be best supported in accessing opportunities for relevant training and professional development?	Dr. Myra L. Laramee ²
6. How can Aboriginal educators be supported in bridging gaps between their schools and communities by building partnerships?	Mr. Kaleb Child and Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse
7. How can Aboriginal educators be supported to create a culturally welcoming and inclusive environment in their schools and classrooms?	Dr. Michelle Hogue
8. How can opportunities for Aboriginal educators to be educational leaders be created and increased?	Dr. Sherry Peden

Following each panel, symposium participants and Elders were given the choice to join more focused discussions in breakout sessions. Here, Aboriginal educators explored the issues and discussed challenges around one of the questions that the panelists asked, and shared their personal experiences and reflections.

After each breakout session, the Indigenous scholars reported back to the whole group on the top three ideas. These ideas were captured in a graphic recording done on stage.

On day 2, in more intimate groups, participants once again had the choice of which group to attend. This time, smaller talking circles were formed to discuss and suggest the possible innovations to those issues explored on day 1.

Groups were asked to come up with the single most important idea to help address the issue. This idea was then also reported back to the whole group and captured in the graphic.

² Because of sudden unforeseen circumstances, Dr. Myra Laramee was unable to attend the symposium. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse who was able to switch panels to cover this vacancy at the last moment.

Welcome to Ministers and CMEC Officials

On the afternoon of the second day, ministers of education and CMEC officials were invited to join the symposium for final thoughts, culminating activities, and to hear directly from Aboriginal educators from their jurisdictions.

The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment for Northwest Territories, offered a welcoming address to ministers, CMEC officials, and all symposium participants. He explained that:

the advice that you share with us will become part of the ongoing discussion that we're going to be having as ministers across Canada and in our own provincial and territorial jurisdictions to better recruit and retain Aboriginal educators throughout Canada.

Minister Lafferty also announced that at the CMEC meeting, ministers:

reconfirmed their commitment to develop teaching resources on the history and legacy of residential schools for K-12.

I am even more encouraged that ministers agree to extend this commitment to include all Canadian educators, no matter whom they teach, what they teach, or where they teach.

Education ministers were then invited to listen to the summary reports from all eight focus areas that were offered by the Indigenous scholars.



Graphic recording³



The skills of a graphic recording artist were enlisted during the event to capture highlights, ideas, images, and key themes that emerged over the two-day symposium, summarizing the thoughts, reflections, and ideas of the Aboriginal educators who participated.

Because the event took place in Yellowknife, NT, where there is a wide and diverse expanse of beautiful and rugged territory, this graphic was created to symbolically reflect the wide and diverse expanse of territory that must also be covered in education.

The graphic artist first recorded the action words and ideas that characterized the exploration of how to attract more Aboriginal people to the teaching profession and retain those already in the system. These ideas appear across the bottom of the landscape and represent the roots or ground that we are working from.

To capture the action needed as expressed during the innovation portion of the symposium, the graphic artist then chose to radiate those same thematic action words from the sun. Each innovative idea, or possible solution, was carefully represented by an animal symbol that best reflects the spiritual significance of those actions.

³ Image courtesy of thinkbank, Toronto, Ontario.



Yukon Elder Mark Wedge reminded symposium participants that we are relatives of the water, the air, and the land. We are also related to the animals, birds, and insects. This graphic representation represents the findings of the eight specific focus areas.

NT Elder Margaret Thom eloquently summarized how this image and these actions answer the question: **What do we need to shine?**

The eight focus areas were then addressed by the Indigenous scholars.

1. Motivate
2. Prepare
3. Support
4. Employ
5. Develop
6. Partner
7. Include
8. Lead



What We Heard at the Symposium: A Comprehensive Overview

Thematic Areas

MOTIVATE

Top recommendation: Establish an Aboriginal education steering committee

Indigenous scholars: Ms. Denise Kurszewski and Ms. Diane Campeau

What can motivate Aboriginal students to pursue becoming a teacher?



Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Representation of Indigenous people** must be part of the decision process to determine appropriate and culturally relevant curriculum and resources. Perhaps this work could be supported through a steering committee in each of our jurisdictions.
2. We need **advocacy** to assist Indigenous people in finding their rightful places in classrooms and in educational positions.
3. **Relationships** permeate everything in education, school, community, and government. Therefore it is important to get involved and to be “strong in two worlds.”⁴

Day 2

INNOVATION

Leadership was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

Leadership facilitates:

- a. the creation and maintenance of relationships and trust at all levels;
- b. a shared responsibility for the provision of adequate educational opportunities to motivate and inspire Aboriginal students to pursue teaching as a career;
- c. the provision and sustenance of adequate and equitable student supports, mentorship programs, and the recognition of Elders and parents as partners;
- d. the creation and application of culturally relevant policy, such as hiring and ease of access to Aboriginal representation; and
- e. communication and sharing information, for example, through the establishment of a steering committee.

⁴“Strong in two worlds” implies that, for many Aboriginal people, there are two world views: a contemporary western-style mainstream view and an Indigenous view informed by ancient Aboriginal knowledge.

PREPARE

Top recommendation: Required course in Aboriginal peoples and culture

Indigenous scholar: Ms. Jo-Anne Chrona

How can Aboriginal students be best prepared for entering teacher-education programs?

Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Language and culture** are strong grounding.
2. **Parental and family involvement** are crucial.
3. There are many **strategies to support teachers** such as strong mentorship, connections to support people who might be entering the programs, instilling passion for educating, and increased inclusion of parents and families within the K–12 education system.

Day 2

INNOVATION

A **mandatory course** for every student was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

This course would be for every student within the K–12 system and would include Aboriginal history, literature, culture, people, and languages.

Such a course will create a system that is more inclusive and responsive to Aboriginal people and will respond to the recommendations of the TRCC.

This recommendation is concrete, actionable, and demonstrates value for Aboriginal people.



SUPPORT

Top recommendation: Indigenization of education

Indigenous scholar: Ms. Tina Jules

How can Aboriginal students be best supported to complete teacher-education programs?



Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Indigenization within institutions and practices of education** needs to be in all education systems and at all levels, including superintendents, principals, and ministry of education officials.
2. **Indigenization within teacher-education programs** must include supporting teacher-education students to become professionals, and could consider culture and language to be criteria for admission into teacher-education programs.
3. **Direct, holistic, and culturally appropriate student supports and services** are needed, such as providing direct student support, especially for those dealing with intergenerational trauma such as addictions, family violence, etc.

Addressing the issue and impact of colonization through the provision of accurate history and of culture-based education, and focusing on supports for Aboriginal languages and language development are crucial.

Day 2

INNOVATION

Indigenization was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

It was agreed that widespread **Indigenization** would facilitate many improvements to teacher education in Canada through the provision of holistic, culturally responsive, and appropriate supports to promote and nurture student belonging, cultural identity, and a sense of family.

In essence, Indigenization provides all educators with roots of resiliency that help to facilitate success for those within teacher-education programs and for those already in the classroom.

EMPLOY

Top recommendation: Indigenization to gain understanding of deep systematic barriers

Indigenous scholar: Dr. Lori Eastmure

How can Aboriginal teacher-education graduates be supported to find employment as teachers?

Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Data and accountability** — develop a rich database to support the analysis of data to inform responsive action, make data accessible, and report on progress in addressing areas of need.
2. **Raise the profile of Aboriginal education** by implementing a mandatory educators' course with a focus on Aboriginal content and educational issues, eliminating racial exploitation through approved curricula and resources, and by making Aboriginal education inclusive for everyone, especially all educators within public education systems.
3. **Indigenize policy**, especially in areas of interviewing and hiring, and provide widespread cultural orientation.

Day 2

INNOVATION

Leadership was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

Aboriginal educators must be equitably represented at all leadership levels in provincial and territorial public education systems, from the bureaucratic to the ministerial level.

Reconciliation through education is required where all educators come to understand and appreciate systemic barriers, issues, and the inequities faced by Indigenous educators in Canada.

All educators are needed to support the reconciliation process currently under way in Canada.



DEVELOP

Top recommendation: Coordinated national resource base

Indigenous scholar: Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse

How can Aboriginal educators be best supported in accessing opportunities for relevant training and professional development?



Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Relevance of education and training** – ensure that all educators are honoured and supported adequately; give Aboriginal educators an opportunity to define what is relevant training and professional development; and share wise practices that inspire.
2. **Mobilize Indigenous knowledge** through the latest innovations of technology, defining the challenges and gaps that limit educators' opportunities.
3. **Indigenization** – identify, recognize, and celebrate the contributions of all educators.

Day 2

INNOVATION

Sharing information was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

Aboriginal educators require access to relevant information and this could be provided via a national “living” resource or a coordinated national resource base that houses information such as authentic community knowledge, wisdom from Elders, histories, languages, values, teachings, and contributions.

This resource requires continuous sponsorship to develop, utilize, and embrace interactive technologies and social platforms.

Access to information will enable Aboriginal educators to “have a voice, have a big heart, and have courage.”

PARTNER

Top recommendation: Mandatory course across Canada

Indigenous scholar: Mr. Kaleb Child

How can Aboriginal educators be supported in bridging gaps by building partnerships between their schools and communities?

Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Trust** is essential to all relationships and integral to our work as educators. Therefore, successful transition programs must be grounded in trust and our work and actions must align with data in support of learners.
2. **Leadership** must be modelled from where we are in the system and at all levels.
3. **Indigenization** in the way that we do things is important.

Day 2

INNOVATION

A **mandatory course** for all students was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

It is recommended that ministers mandate this course to enable and empower all communities, schools, and people on the ground to complete their work effectively.



INCLUDE

Top recommendation: Mandatory Aboriginal studies

Indigenous scholar: Dr. Michelle M. Hogue

How can Aboriginal educators be supported to create a culturally welcoming and inclusive environment in their schools and classrooms?



Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. Pay careful attention to **culture**.
2. Pay careful attention to **culturally appropriate and relevant curriculum**.
3. **Bridge culture and curriculum** to move forward.

Day 2

INNOVATION

A mandated Aboriginal course for all K-12 grades was the top innovative solution in response to this question.

This course would include Aboriginal content, pedagogy, and methodology and is to be developed and implemented on a regional basis instead of through a pan-Aboriginal approach. It would be funded by the government.

LEAD

Top recommendation: Set strategic direction to institute change

Indigenous scholar: Dr. Sherry Peden

How can we create and increase opportunities for Aboriginal educators to be educational leaders?

Day 1

EXPLORATION

1. **Communication and support** are essential to further reconciliation, especially as a part of the decolonization process. And support for educators and leaders is required to best address dysfunction such as lateral violence. Positive and reciprocal communication with community, organization, and leadership is needed to celebrate success.
2. **Mentorship** can support educators in the attainment of global competency skills and is best achieved through Elders who are there to provide knowledge, guidance, and modelling. We need to make space for mentorship within the education system.
3. **Leadership**, both formal and informal, can start at home, extend out into the community, and outward onto the land. Educators need support to develop and lead education initiatives that ensure Aboriginal ways and values are included in education.

Day 2

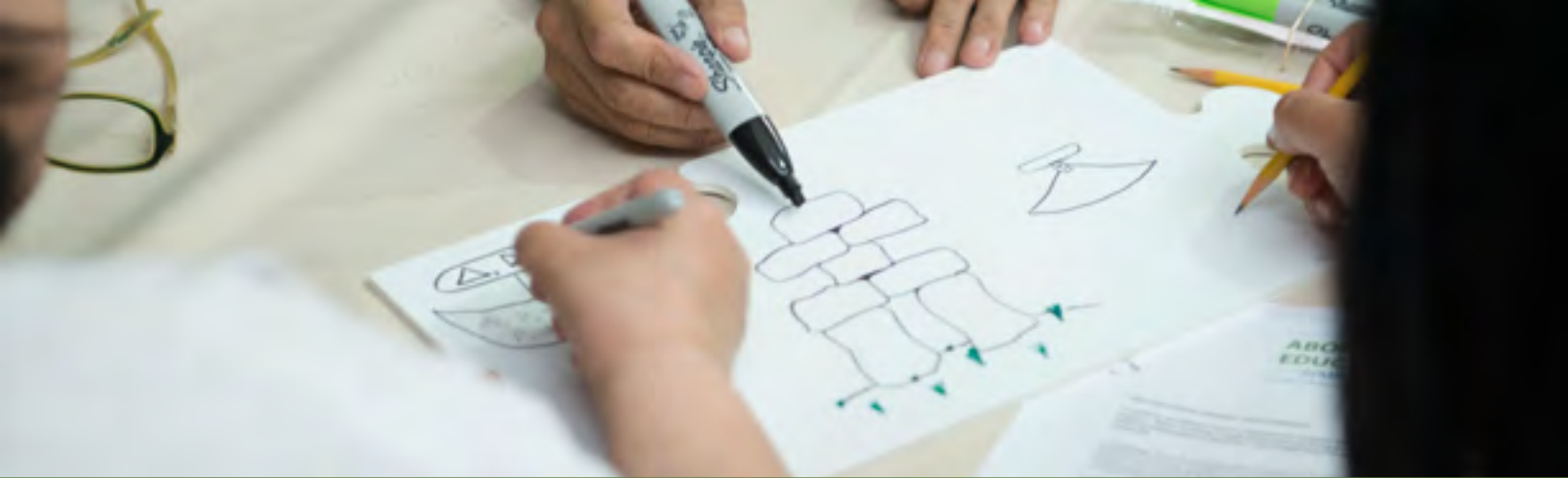
INNOVATION

Responsiveness was the top innovative solution to this question.

All education decision makers need to consider and employ the ideas and perspectives of Aboriginal educators to be able to set strategic direction and then support the various departments in implementing these strategies.

This is important because, ultimately, the perspectives of Aboriginal educators are informed by the wisdom of the Elders. Responsiveness in education will include setting policy and program direction accordingly, developing monitoring systems and accountability measures that will create a representative workforce, and helping to develop and support mentorship, coaching, and leadership programs to mobilize Aboriginal educators into leadership roles.





What Can We Do at Home?

Jurisdictional puzzle piece exercise

Delegates from each province and territory gathered in groups representing their jurisdictions to consider ideas and solutions that they could possibly implement back home.

Once a central idea had been established by participants from a specific jurisdiction, participants illustrated the concept on an 8½ x 11-inch puzzle piece as a visual representation.

Once all individual puzzle pieces were completed, they were put together to create a beautiful and creative collage of information.

Each puzzle piece was illustrated by delegates from specific provinces and territories in Canada. Together, all these pieces provided a colourful and creative collage that responded to the question **“what can we do at home?”**

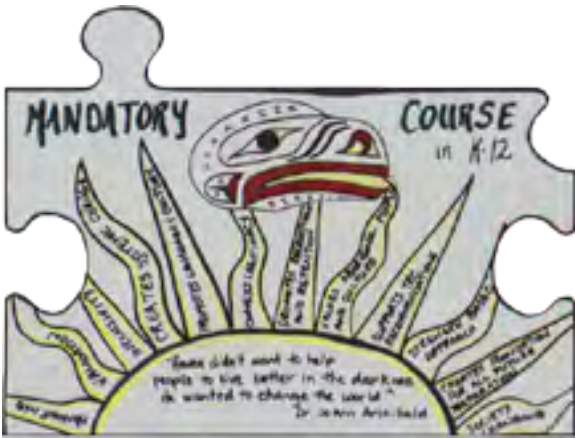
Education ministers or their designates were then invited to meet with their jurisdictions’ delegates to discuss the ideas represented by their puzzle pieces.

The sessions were very productive and the intimate atmosphere provided excellent opportunities for rich discussions that could better inform policy, programming, and planning at home.



Details of puzzle pieces by provinces and territories

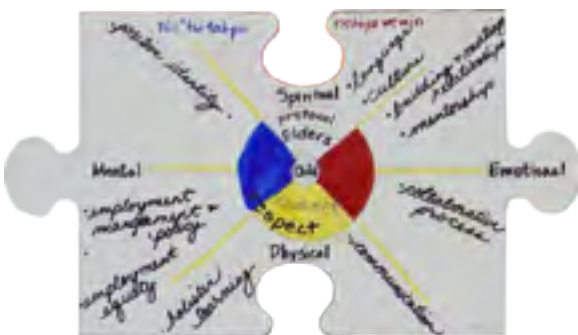
BRITISH COLUMBIA



The BC group said that their puzzle piece showed their understanding of how they can change their education system through one small act: to ensure that all students graduate having experienced mandatory Aboriginal content in their education journey.

They used the metaphor of the sun since that is part of the BC provincial flag and the sun symbolizes a dawning of something new. The rays from the sun include a rationale for why they would do this. They also included a quote from Dr. Jo-ann Archibald as an overarching guiding statement.

ALBERTA



Alberta's delegates focused on what can be done to engage and promote the success of Aboriginal students and attract and retain more Aboriginal teachers. Their puzzle piece uses the medicine wheel to illustrate a holistic model for the education system that is child-centred and balanced in attention to each area of healthy development: emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual.

They wrote that this model requires changes to our schools and education system to show respect for Indigenous knowledge, culture, and languages. In practice, respecting local traditions includes following appropriate protocols to work with locally respected Indigenous Elders.

MANITOBA



At the centre of Manitoba's puzzle piece is fire — *iskotew* (Cree) or *ishkode* (Ojibway). Participants explained that this fire represents the teachers and their passion for learning, “the spark that we as Indigenous educators wish to pass on to our students.” The fire also represents their drive and determination to help their students to be successful and make positive changes. The fire is surrounded by all people who share in learning because it is all of our responsibility to teach our youth.

The Seven Sacred Teachings are part of this circle that surrounds the fire. Group members said that the teachings are foundational, and help us as Indigenous educators teach our youth the fundamentals of being part of Turtle Island's greater community. The community circle is connected to two trees. These represent both the life we have and the lives we teach. We must remember the power of knowledge (lightning) and the power of reflection (water) and model these for our students so they can be successful in their education. Above, connected to the trees, is the Thunderbird. Thunderbird represents our connection to Creator, and our beliefs and values, and how important it is that we make sure our Indigenous youth learn about their culture, including the spirituality that comes with it.

They concluded by explaining that they have the sun and the moon connected to their trees. These represent that our learning objectives are ongoing — and like the sun and the moon, as they change in the sky, we have to change, adapt, flow with current issues, and integrate our learning with our teachings. Below the trees are the roots. The roots are coloured with the four aspects of the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel represents that we need to teach to the whole child, not just parts, to ensure that they are successful and receive those sacred teachings.

SASKATCHEWAN



Saskatchewan's puzzle piece visualizes relationships as foundational for the development of Aboriginal educators. Specific actions and partnerships build relationships. The branches (support, Elders, mentors, culture, history, and language) are critical components in equipping Aboriginal educators.

The key priority area identified was the need to build relationships. The priority encompassed considerations such as encouraging Aboriginal students to pursue a career in education, supporting Aboriginal educators, identifying and removing barriers to education and employment, and developing Aboriginal leaders in the education sector.

ONTARIO



Ontario's puzzle piece focuses on the continuum of relationships between First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations, governments, and civil society groups.

The puzzle piece depicts the circle in which all of the parties work together and are connected while the doorways represent the different directions in which relationships can go. The circle is created by directional arrows to show the reciprocal nature of these relationships.

At the centre of the circle are the learners. The text around the circle identifies the key drivers in building a strong and responsive education system.

Symbols around the puzzle piece represent the diversity of the Indigenous communities in Ontario.

QUEBEC



The Quebec delegation puzzle piece design represents the core belief that by walking together and working together in each other's worlds we will not only succeed in meeting the needs of our Indigenous learners but also enrich the lives of all our learners.

By accessing knowledge and expertise from both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal world we will create the framework for quality educational experiences. To be successful in this we need to access the wisdom and ways of knowing of our

Indigenous Elders. They are, we believe, a key resource. In addition, we must ensure our teachers have the necessary training and knowledge to empower them to meet our learners' needs.

NOVA SCOTIA



The eight-pointed star is a recognized symbol in the Mi'kmaw culture and in the case of the symposium and the NS delegation, it resonated well in terms of representing their views. The title of the work is "Maw lukutimk" which is Mi'kmaw for "working together."

In each of the Mi'kmaq star's eight points, a different value or belief is highlighted, including:

1. Honour
2. Elders
3. Empathy
4. Respect
5. Teachings
6. Treaties
7. Traditions
8. Language

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



The puzzle piece represented the Aboriginal Action Plan activity of the Indigenous Education Committee and referred to the plan's implementation. The committee meets four times per year and discusses implementation activity. Prince Edward Island acknowledges the great importance of addressing Aboriginal education throughout the province.

- An Indigenous Education Committee supports First Nation learners in all areas of transition.
- Tuition fee agreements continue to support reinvestment funds where a portion of the fees paid is reinvested into First Nation education initiatives.
- Increased learning outcomes, related to First Nations history, culture, language, and residential schools, have been added to the K–12 social studies curricula.
- Information-sharing and self-identification initiatives remain important.
- All teachers will receive appropriate training in Aboriginal education, at some point, via appropriate courses and practicum. Pre-service teachers in the Faculty of Education at UPEI are now required to take an Indigenous education course and those who follow the Indigenous Education Stream are required to take a second course on incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum. They must also do a practicum within a setting that has Indigenous people.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



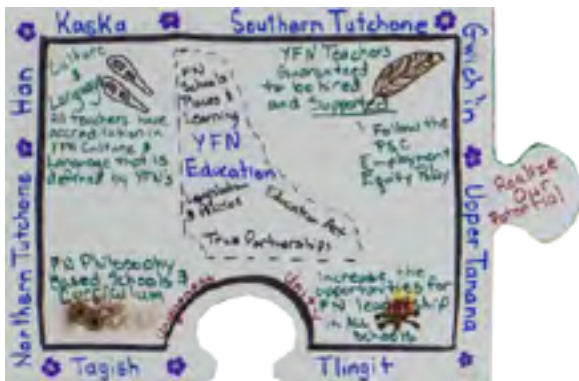
The puzzle piece was designed recognizing the province's Aboriginal groups. In particular:

- The caribou antler represents the importance of the caribou as a major contributor to the survival of the province's Aboriginal groups.
- The Inukshuk represents the importance of using the environment and land as a major survival and navigational directional tool.
- The eagle feather represents the importance of truth and respect

demonstrated by the province's Indigenous people, in particular First Nations.

- The fire and rising sun represents the continual renewal and life of knowledge, traditions, and customs of the province's Aboriginal people. The sharing of this knowledge adds to the province's shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents.
- "Many Visions – Shared Reality" signifies that while Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups have many visions, the shared reality highlights the continual contribution of the province's Aboriginal people.

YUKON



All of the eight Yukon First Nations (YFN) languages are represented in the border along with beaded flowers to acknowledge the importance of language and culture as a framework for education.

Snowshoes highlight the complex knowledge contained in an authentic culture and language-teacher accredited training that is designed by YFN. A feather shows the need for First Nations educators to be supported and hired to achieve employment equity in the workforce as outlined in the land claims agreements. Moccasins represent the goal of First Nations

philosophy-based schools and curriculum that honour the YFN ways of knowing and doing, history, languages, content, and perspective. There is a need for more opportunities for First Nations leadership in Yukon schools represented here by a campfire.

The four priority areas are designing culturally authentic teacher accreditation courses, achieving employment equity, increasing numbers of First Nations administrators, and creating culturally relevant schools that help students realize their potential.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



The delegates decided on three flowers with five petals on each flower and a stem to symbolize strength, along with three bonded flowers. Their image also recalls the stunning floral designs used on jackets, vests, moccasins, gloves, and other adornments. The designs and colours are not only a source of pride but also include teachings that guide and explain our interaction with the world around us.

Each flower represents innovation, recruitment, or retention and within each, the five petals represent the key priority areas discussed by the group.

NUNAVUT



A major symbol in the Nunavut puzzle piece is the Inuksuk which is a stone figure built on the land and used to mark a place of respect; it can also be used as a directional aid or to indicate migration routes. It is the guide for Inuit to enter the teaching profession.

The Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP) provides Inuit with the opportunity to earn a teaching degree or certificate and it is hoped that NTEP graduates contribute to and shape the education system in Nunavut by becoming teachers.

The ulu drawn in the puzzle piece is an all-purpose women's knife used to cut food, hair, or even snow. This symbol represents the need for a diverse set of skills for teaching, which NTEP needs to provide.

The Inuit drum was included in the puzzle because this instrument is played during most celebrations, reminding us that each milestone we reach needs to be celebrated.

Indigenous Scholars



We are in this together is the central theme of this puzzle piece from the Indigenous scholars.⁵ According to the scholars' group, the journey we take is always mindful of Turtle Island and her children. At the heart of this symbol is a sacred fire that is fed by our languages, lands, and Elders' teachings. We have a sacred responsibility to provide leadership in education through pedagogies and methodologies that are from the heart. The words "no borders," "speak loud," "balance," "patience," "time," and "accomplishments" represent the approach and perspectives of our people. The colours in this image all come from our mother —

the earth — and represent the elements and healing powers of our cultures. *We* is the key word here. We are the only way to move forward respectfully for all of our children.

⁵ Description provided by Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse on behalf of the Indigenous Scholars at the AES.

How the puzzle fits together



The image above contains all completed puzzle pieces designed by symposium participants from specific provinces and territories to illustrate ideas on “What Can We Do at Home?” This mosaic demonstrates the beautiful, diverse, and unique approaches to addressing Aboriginal Education in Canada.



Closing Ceremonies

The symposium concluded with songs from Dene drummers. All guests participated in a traditional Dene drum dance and a Dene handshake, along with expressions of goodwill, prayers for safe journeys home, hugs, and high-fives.



Aboriginal Education Co-leads

Northwest Territories and Alberta are co-leads for work on Aboriginal Education at CMEC. Having two jurisdictions provides significant leadership for CMEC's work on Aboriginal education and increases the profile and priority of the work in Canada.

The chair of CMEC at the time of the AES, as well as one of the co-leads for Aboriginal education, was the Honourable David Eggen, Minister of Education for Alberta. Because Minister Eggen was unable to attend the symposium, the vice-chair of CMEC, the Honourable Peter Fassbender, Minister of Education for British Columbia, was asked to address symposium participants on his behalf.

The other co-chair of Aboriginal education at the time of the AES was the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Minister of Education from the Northwest Territories. Here is some of what he said in his concluding remarks:

We are here to make meaningful progress on something I know we all care deeply about — the education of our children and youth, the foundation of this country's future. Education is the key to improving individual well-being and lifelong opportunities. A strong education system builds strong communities and a productive, competitive economy. Ultimately, that benefits us all.



This symposium has been a success! We identified the need to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers as an important step in improving education for all students, but most particularly, for Aboriginal students who can learn directly from teachers who share the same culture and traditions. This simple connection between teacher and student can be powerful enough to transform students' lives and can help to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal students across Canada.

Perhaps most importantly, these meetings enable us to develop new friendships and learn from each other's diverse views and experiences. Mahsi Cho for a job well done.

Elder Margaret Thom: Concluding Reflection

Elders spent their time listening and observing during the symposium. After meeting together to discuss what they had heard and seen, they developed some very important messages for everyone. NT Elder Margaret Thom was asked to present these thoughts at the closing. Here is a summary of what she thought was important:

1. Seek wisdom.
 - ✿ Elders are the knowledge-keepers for our people. It is important to seek their guidance and knowledge if we are to find our place in the world and our purpose in life.
2. Be responsive.
 - ✿ Require culturally responsive policies and procedures to support the development of the best educators possible.
3. Be equitable.
 - ✿ Require equitable representation of Aboriginal educators at all levels of government.
4. Be accountable.
 - ✿ Elders requested an annual progress report and expect not to be forgotten — they expect to be invited to be part of the conversation.

Our children can be happy and can be successful people in their future.




APPENDIX 1

Symposium participants

ELDERS	
Victor Jim	BC
Andy Black-Water	AB
Don Robertson	MB
Ina Zakal	ON
Alex Sonny Diabo	QC
Sister Dorothy Moore	NS
Margaret Thom (host Elder)	NT
Sarah Jerome	NT
Ted Blondin	NT
Mattie McNeil	NT
Mark Wedge	YK
SarahTokalik	NU
SPEAKERS	
Jo-ann Archibald	keynote
Darren McKee	keynote
Angela James	moderator

Scott McQueen	moderator
Denise Kurszewski	panellist
Diane Campeau	panellist
Jo-Anne Chrona	panellist
Kaleb Child	panellist
Lori Eastmure	panellist
Michelle Hogue	panellist
Pamela Toulouse	panellist
Sherry Peden	panellist
Tina Jules	panellist
PROVINCIAL /TERRITORIAL DELEGATIONS	
Chelsea Nyeste (Prince)	BC
Starleigh Grass	BC
Ted Cadwallader*	BC
Deborah Gladue-McLeod	AB
Roy Weasel Fat	AB
Laurie Thompson	AB
Nora Yellowknee	AB
Noreen Price	AB
Assistant Deputy Minister Jane Martin	AB
Gabrielle Christopherson*	AB

Leanne Gailey	SK
Sheldon Couilloneur	SK
Corey O'Soup*	SK
Ron Cook	MB
Ken McCorkle	MB
Brittney Ferland	MB
Tamara Prince	MB
Jacqueline Bercier	MB
Lance Guilbault	MB
Helen Robinson-Settee*	MB
Neil Debassige	ON
Mary-Ann Ketchemonia	ON
Lucy Fowler	ON
James Angus	ON
Dawn Harvard	ON
Deneen Montour	ON
Shirley Carder*	ON
Ruth Ahern	QC
Naomie Fontaine	QC
Sherry Weistche	QC
Yvonne Morrison	QC



Glorya Pellerin	QC
Josée Rousselot-Bellefleur	QC
Donna Lameman	NS
Yolanda Denny	NS
Melody Martin-Googoo	NS
Jacqueline Sullivan	NS
Newell Johnson	NS
Wyatt White*	NS
Fiona Walton	PE
Thomas Mugford	NL
Tyrone Power*	NL
Doris Camsell	NT
Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault	NT
Sheila Stewart	NT
Aleda Lafferty	NT
Crystal Cockney	NT
Jeannetter Goldney	NT
Lois Philipp	NT
Maribeth Pokiak	NT
Mayvis Arey	NT
Shirley Desjarlais	NT



Jessica Schmidt*	NT
Gayle StrikesWithAGun*	NT
Lindsey Oosenburg-Trihn*	NT
Melanie Bennett	YK
Ann Jirousek	YK
Monica Primozic	YK
Noli Eastmure	YK
Melissa Hawkins	YK
Janet McDonald*	YK
Mary Neeveacheak	NU
Marjorie Havioyak	NU
Jefferson Uttak	NU
Mina Rumbolt	NU

*Members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the CMEC Aboriginal Education Plan.



