

Support for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions

Jurisdiction: Alberta

Contact: Marg Leathem

Level: Post-Secondary

Theme: Organizational/Structural Practice

Description of Practice:

Advanced Education is seeking to broaden its relationship with First Nations through support for First Nations Colleges as a recognized and integral part of an advanced education system that is expanding access – particularly to rural and remote communities. Changes to existing mechanisms (e.g. funding, statutes, regulations, policies and practices, etc.) are currently being considered.

Background:

As part of the A Learning Alberta policy review, Alberta Advanced Education commissioned a study profiling First Nations Adult Education Institutions in Alberta including each institution's history, governance, size, programs and operational structure.

The following were identified as important partnership areas:

Broadening of funding support;

Recognition of traditional knowledge;

Aboriginal designed curriculum;

Alternative delivery mechanisms;

Eligibility criteria for program funding; and,

Program accreditation and brokering of programs from Aboriginal post-secondary institutions to mainstream institutions.

Development:

First Nation colleges have been included in the Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library Initiative. This will provide post-secondary students and faculty at these institutions with instant access to a vast collection of research articles, textbooks, journals, images and other learning resources.

Access to the Future Fund - In response to recommendations from the *A Learning Alberta* review, dedicated funding for six First Nations colleges has been made available from the Access to the Future Fund. The Fund supports innovation and excellence within the advanced education system in order to enhance and expand accessible, affordable and high quality learning opportunities and is a key mechanism to set future directions for Alberta's post-secondary system. Initial allocations to the First Nations colleges will be made in the 2006/2007 fiscal year. In addition to creating a provincial government funding source for the colleges, the Access to the Future Fund is designed to stimulate private, industry, corporate and other public contributions.

First Nations College Access Grant – This program is inspired by the current Alberta Opportunities Bursaries (AOB) program. In 2006-2007, students attending post-

secondary studies at First Nations colleges are eligible to apply for needs-based bursaries. The program may be repeated in subsequent academic years.

The department is continuing to explore other policy options and partnerships that will lead to a strengthening of infrastructure in First Nation and Métis communities that supports Aboriginal learners.

Evidence:

The inclusion of First Nation Colleges within the advanced education system promotes the development of programs and initiatives that will serve to increase the access, retention, and success rates of Aboriginal learners in Alberta.

Adaptability:

Other jurisdictions would be able to tailor the concept of a First Nations Coordinators Council to fit their own needs.

Further information:

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