

# 5



## Education

Among the Dene, it is said the child is born with a drum in its hand...

The child is born with integrity.

The child has worth.

It is the birthright of the Dene child to be acknowledged and respected for this.

The child who is not respected cannot become what it is meant to be.<sup>1</sup>

**IN ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES**, as in many societies, children are regarded as a precious gift. Control over the education of their children has been a pressing priority of Aboriginal peoples for decades. This is not surprising. The destiny of a people is intricately bound to the way its children are educated. Education is the transmission of cultural dna from one generation to the next. It shapes the language and pathways of thinking, the contours of character and values, the social skills and creative potential of the individual. It determines the productive skills of a people.

Aboriginal peoples are diverse in their histories, environments and cultures, but their deep commitment to education cuts across all boundaries. In our public hearings, Aboriginal parents, elders, youth and leaders came forward to tell us of the vital importance of education in achieving their vision of a prosperous future. Education is seen as the vehicle for both enhancing the life of the individual and reaching collective goals.

For more than 25 years, Aboriginal people have been articulating their goals for Aboriginal education. They want education to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision. Presenters told us that education must develop

children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity. Consistent with Aboriginal traditions, education must develop the whole child, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

Current education policies fail to realize these goals. The majority of Aboriginal youth do not complete high school. They leave the school system without the requisite skills for employment, and without the language and cultural knowledge of their people. Rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth. Those who continue in Canada's formal education systems told us of regular encounters with racism, racism expressed not only in interpersonal exchanges but also through the denial of Aboriginal values, perspectives and cultures in the curriculum and the life of the institution.

The human costs of this failure are immense. It saps the creative potential of individuals, communities and nations. Yet, despite the painful experiences Aboriginal people carry with them from formal education systems, they still see education as the hope for the future, and they are determined to see education fulfil its promise.

Aboriginal people rightly expect education to serve as a vehicle for cultural and economic renewal. But this will not happen without critical changes in education processes and systems. To grasp the directions education should take in the future, we must first understand how the present situation came to be. This chapter provides the historical context of Aboriginal education and presents some of the important initiatives introduced in Aboriginal education in recent years as a foundation for goals and strategies for the future.

## **1. Background**

The introduction of European-style education to Aboriginal people varied by geographical location, by the timing of contact, and by the specific history of relations between various peoples and Europeans. In some regions, schools operated by religious missions were introduced in the mid-1600s. In other locations, formal education came much later. But if there were many variations in the weave of history, a single pattern dominated the education of Aboriginal people, whatever their territorial and cultural origins. Formal education was, without apology, assimilationist. The primary purpose of formal education was

to indoctrinate Aboriginal people into a Christian, European world view, thereby 'civilizing' them. Missionaries of various denominations played a role in this process, often supported by the state.

Under its constitutional responsibility for "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians", the federal government enacted provisions in the *Indian Act* applying to the education of status Indians.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the numbered treaties were signed, and tribal leaders negotiated education provisions as part of the treaties. In the provinces, the federal government gradually withdrew from funding the education of Aboriginal people not residing on reserves, but not without protests from some of the provinces, which were reluctant to assume these costs.

In carrying out its responsibilities for Indian education, the federal government turned to the churches, which shared the government's goal of imparting Christian, European values. In Volume 1, Chapter 10, we recounted how residential schools were used deliberately to break down the transmission of culture and language from one generation to the next. For nearly a century, parents and grandparents in reserve communities were legally compelled to turn their children over to the custody of residential school authorities. Children were beaten for speaking their own language, and Aboriginal beliefs were labelled 'pagan'. In many schools, sisters and brothers were forbidden social contact, and the warmth of the intergenerational Aboriginal family was replaced with sterile institutional child rearing. Many residents endured sexual and physical abuse. Hard labour and hunger were part of the experience of many children. Those who tried to run away were returned to be punished and rehabilitated. The effects of these coercive efforts at social engineering continue to be felt generations later. (See Chapter 2 in this volume, particularly our discussion of the inter-generational effects of state interventions in Aboriginal family life.)

From early contact, education for Métis people emphasized religious studies, with some basic arithmetic and writing. Métis people in some areas attended residential schools, and in the northwest, the sons of affluent Métis received the formal education of the privileged, often being sent to eastern Canada or England for higher education. Missionaries provided limited instruction to the children of Métis people who followed the migration of the buffalo. However, most Métis in rural and northern

areas had little access to more than primary school until the 1950s. According to the report of Alberta's Ewing Commission in 1936, 80 per cent of Métis children in the province had no schooling at all.<sup>2</sup>

Among Inuit, formal education in the north arrived at various times. In Labrador, the first school was begun by the Moravians in 1791. From the age of five years, children were taught to read and write in their own language. By the early 1800s, the New Testament and hymn books had been translated into Inuktitut and were used to teach children and adults alike. Christian Inuit were required to send their children to school, and by 1840 most Christian Inuit could read and write in Inuktitut.<sup>3</sup> When Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, the language of instruction became English, eroding Inuktitut language use.

In other parts of northern Canada, formal schooling of Inuit began much later. Contrary to the experience of Inuit in Labrador, teaching in the local language was not commonplace elsewhere in the north. Inuit attended residential schools in some areas and missionary-run schools in others. In the 1950s, Inuit were encouraged to move into permanent settlements by making school attendance by children compulsory.<sup>4</sup>

With few exceptions, assimilationist education predominated in schools established under government or church authority. Although elementary day schools supported by the federal government continue to be a characteristic of schooling on-reserve, in the 1960s the federal government pursued a policy of integrating children from reserves into nearby provincial schools or boarding children with families in urban centres to attend high school. Also in the 1960s, provincial governments in the west formed large school districts in northern areas of their provinces with some Aboriginal representation. At the same time, a growing number of Aboriginal people moved from employment-starved rural areas into urban centres, expanding the number of Aboriginal students in city schools. Residential schools continued to operate into the 1970s.

In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood (the forerunner of the Assembly of First Nations) produced a policy statement, "Indian Control of Indian Education", which marked a watershed in Aboriginal education. This statement sent a clear, unequivocal call for local control of education by First Nations communities and parents. It recognized the failure of federal, provincial and territorial governments to implement appropriate policies to address First Nations goals for education. From 1972 on, discussion between

First Nations and the state shifted to restoring control of education in all its dimensions to First Nations parents and communities. Inuit and Métis people voiced similar concerns.

In the next section we review briefly what has happened since 1972 and consider current arrangements for the education of Aboriginal children on reserves, in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, in contexts where modern treaties have already been concluded, and in provincial schools.

## **1.1 First Nations Reserves**

The federal government's response to "Indian Control of Indian Education" was to adopt a 'devolution' approach, transferring the administration of education to Aboriginal education authorities in reserve communities. This has been a slow process, still under way more than twenty years later. Since 1972 residential schools have been phased out, federal day schools have dropped in number, and the number of schools under Aboriginal administration has grown proportionately. Aboriginally controlled schools have hired more Aboriginal teachers, enhanced curriculum to include cultural elements and introduced language classes. Yet Aboriginal education bodies report that their authority over education is limited. The federal government has generally insisted that schools conform to provincial regulations with respect to curriculum, school year and so on, thereby restricting schools' ability to include innovative, culture-based curriculum. Funding is very basic, with little money for Aboriginal curriculum development and few resources to address special needs. While the number of band-operated schools has grown steadily (51 per cent of federally funded schools in 1993-94<sup>5</sup>), almost half of First Nations children whose parents live on reserves attend provincial schools off the reserve. The federal government transfers funding to provincial schools to provide these services. Until recently, First Nations have had no control over these transfers and no opportunity to influence how education services are delivered. More recently, they have gained some involvement in negotiating agreements for education service delivery by outside authorities. There was a significant shift toward more Aboriginal control of education in 1994 when the Mi'kmaq Education Authority concluded an agreement with federal authorities for more autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2 The Northwest Territories and the Yukon**

An effort is being made to revise the education acts of the Northwest

Territories and the Yukon through consultation with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal languages have recognition in the Northwest Territories generally. In the school system, two culturally based curriculum projects have been undertaken with extensive community involvement: Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit. Among youth proceeding to higher levels of education, Aboriginal students continue to be under-represented. Although Métis people speak the Dene languages, their own language, Michif, has not been incorporated into the school system, nor has a culturally based Métis curriculum been developed.

In the Yukon, local autonomy has been very limited. However, under the provisions of the Umbrella Final Agreement negotiated with the Council of Yukon Indians, education now falls within the legislative powers that can be exercised by First Nations.<sup>7</sup>

### **1.3 Modern Claims Settlement Areas**

Education has been a priority in the settlement of some modern land claims. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975) provided for the creation of the Kativik and Cree school boards, each considered a special school board in the legislation adopted subsequently by the province of Quebec. The Kativik school board is controlled and operated by Inuit of Nunavik (14 communities) and has jurisdiction and responsibility for elementary, secondary and adult education for all people, including non-Inuit, living in the territory. While it exercises a high degree of control over education, it is still obliged to follow the Quebec provincial curriculum. The Cree school board performs a similar function for the Crees of northern Quebec and operates with parallel constraints.

Other claims settlements, such as the Yukon agreement, have also addressed education concerns. For communities under the Inuvialuit agreement, education is administered by the government of the Northwest Territories. In 1999, Nunavut is expected to assume jurisdiction for education from the government of the Northwest Territories.

### **1.4 The Provinces**

The majority of Aboriginal children outside of the territories — First Nations, Métis and some Inuit — attend provincial schools. Métis children attend

provincial and territorial schools almost exclusively. As shown in Table 5.1, about 42 per cent of First Nations people lived off-reserve in 1991, and in almost all instances, their children attended provincial schools.<sup>8</sup> In the same year, 46 per cent of students residing on reserves attended provincial schools.<sup>9</sup> Thus, 68.7 per cent of First Nations students were in provincial school systems.

**TABLE 5.1**  
**Adjusted Aboriginal Identity Population, 1991**

Location of Residence	Total Aboriginal		Registered North American Indian		Non-Registered North American Indian		Métis		Inuit <sup>3</sup>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total <sup>1</sup>	720,600	100	438,000	100	112,600	100	139,400	100	37,800	100
Reserves	254,600	35	254,600	58	—	2	—	2	—	2
Non-Reserve	466,100	65	183,500	42	112,600	100	139,400	100	35,600	100
Urban	320,000	44	148,500	34	77,800	69	90,100	65	7,900	22
Rural	146,100	20	35,000	8	34,900	31	49,300	35	27,700	78

*Notes:*

1. Approximately 95,000 was added to the APS count to compensate for the population on unenumerated reserves and undercoverage in participating reserve and non-reserve areas.

2. Actual APS counts for non-status Indians, Métis people and Inuit living on reserves were 3,600 (3.5%), 4,535 (3.4%) and 620 (1.7%) respectively. Because of the small numbers, these were added to non-reserve counts.

3. Non-reserve, urban and rural, adjusted counts for Inuit were derived by applying the percentage of urban and rural Inuit from the APS actual counts to the total adjusted Inuit count.

4. As a result of multiple Aboriginal group identity responses, the sum of individual group

populations may be greater than the number in the total column.

5. Urban is defined as a population concentration of at least 1,000 with a density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre.

6. The urban and rural counts do not include reserves.

7. Figures may not add to totals because of rounding.

*Source:* M.J. Norris et al., "Projections of Canada's Aboriginal Identity Population, 1991-2016", research study prepared for RCAP (1995).

Provincial schools have varied provincial schools have their receptivity to Aboriginal children. In some locations where there are many Aboriginal children, schools have opened their doors to Aboriginal parents and developed vibrant community/school programs. In Toronto, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, school boards have negotiated to establish Aboriginal schools. These are the exception. Most Aboriginal students attend schools where there is no special effort to make them or their families feel part of the life of the school. Aboriginal parents say they are excluded from their children's education. There is a gap between the culture of the home and that of the school. In very few instances are Aboriginal people among the representatives on school boards.

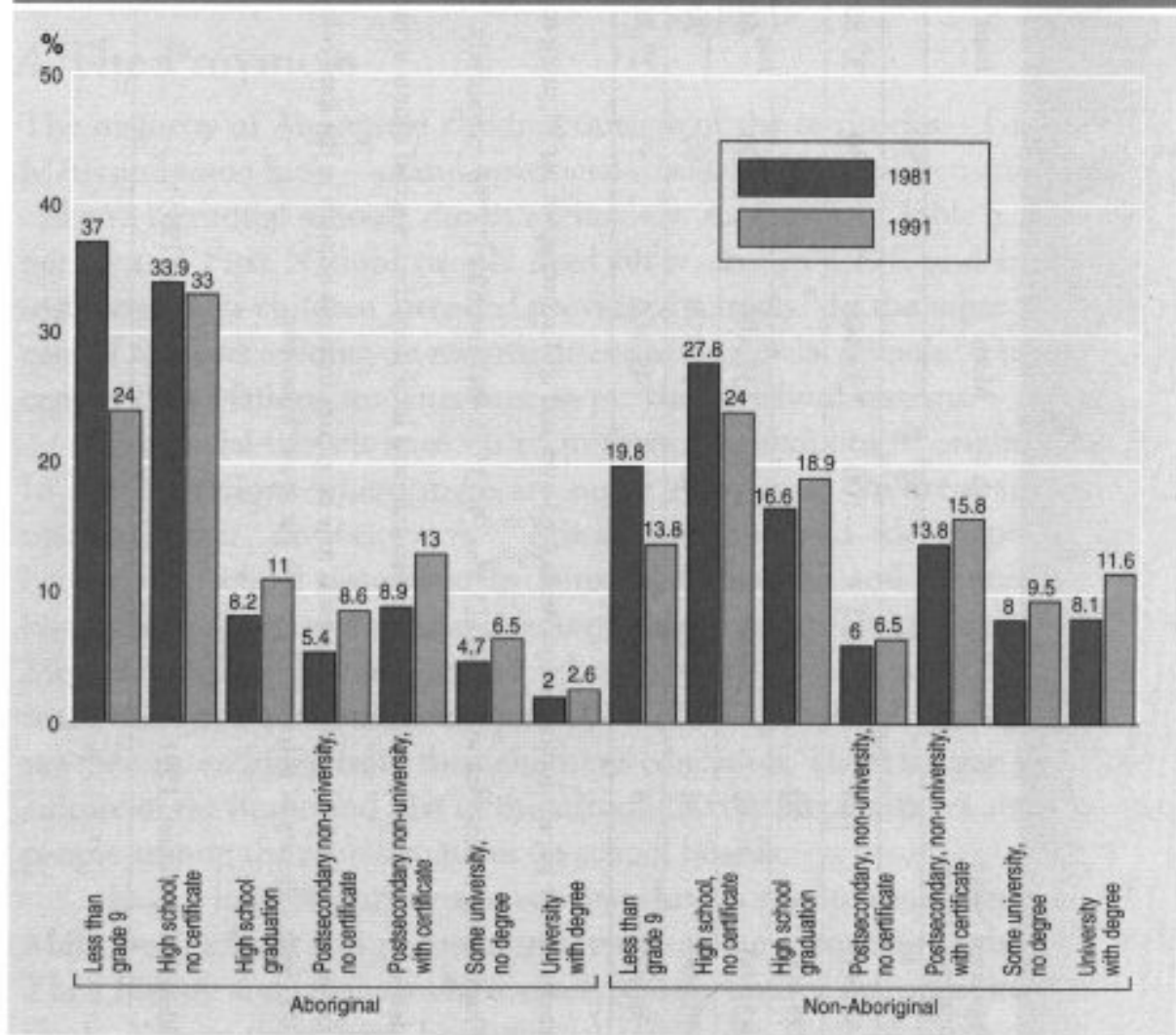
Except in a few northern areas where they constitute a majority of residents, Métis people have had minimal influence on the schooling of their children. Their history and languages have received only limited attention in school curricula. Where there have been special initiatives, First Nations culture, languages and issues are often given more prominence than those of Métis. In the prairie provinces, there has been more government recognition and respect for Métis concerns in education.

There have been many important initiatives by provincial governments and school boards to create a more positive learning environment for Aboriginal children. Aboriginal support staff have often been hired, curriculum has been reviewed to eliminate obvious racism, alternative programs have been established to assist students at risk, and Aboriginal teachers are being hired, particularly at the elementary school level. Aboriginal youth are staying in school longer. There have been gains, but these have been too modest. As shown in Figure 5.1, in 1981, 63 per cent of Aboriginal people 15 years or older no longer attending school had completed primary school, and 29 per



cent had completed high school. A decade later, 76 per cent of Aboriginal people over 15 had completed primary school, and 43 per cent had completed high school.<sup>10</sup> In 1991, even though Aboriginal youth were staying in school longer, the majority were still leaving before completing high school (see Volume 2, Chapter 5). The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in terms of high school completion had narrowed only slightly. We must ask why schooling has continued to be such an alienating experience for Aboriginal children and youth.

**FIGURE 5.1**  
**Highest Level of Education, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Populations**  
**Age 15+, 1981-1991**



*Note:* Includes persons still attending school.

*Source:* Statistics Canada, 1981 Census, 1991 Census, and 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations.

*Note:* Includes persons still attending school.

*Source:* Statistics Canada, 1981 Census, 1991 Census, and 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations.

For nearly 30 years, Aboriginal leaders have made policy recommendations to governments, and governments have conducted internal studies. The Commission examined 22 reports on Aboriginal education written between 1966 and 1992.<sup>11</sup> The recommendations of these reports, many of them excellent, show remarkable consistency (see box).

### **Recommendations in Past Reports and Studies**

- Aboriginal control of education.
- School courses in Aboriginal studies, including history, language and culture.
- Training and hiring of more Aboriginal teachers.
- Inclusion of Aboriginal parents, elders and educators in the education of Aboriginal children.
- Special support programs for Aboriginal students, for example, counselling, substance abuse education, remedial education and retention programs.
- Funding of support services for students in post-secondary studies.
- Aboriginal language instruction from pre-school to post-secondary education.
- The resolution of federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictional conflicts over responsibilities, or recognition by the federal government of its funding responsibility for education.
- Training Aboriginal adults for teaching, para-professional and administrative positions in education.
- More emphasis on pre-school and kindergarten education.

What we find most disturbing is that the issues raised at our hearings and in interveners' briefs are the same concerns that Aboriginal people have been bringing forward since the first studies were done. As we examine each one, we see that there has been progress, but it has unfolded at a snail's pace and falls far short of the goal. We have to question why, with so many sincere efforts to change the quality of Aboriginal education, the overall results have been so disappointing. From our analysis, we offer the following observations.

- Federal policy has been moving in the right direction since 1972, but federal authorities have failed to take the decisive steps necessary to restore full control of education to Aboriginal people.
- Nearly 70 per cent of Aboriginal education has been in the hands of provincial or territorial authorities, with few mechanisms for effective accountability to Aboriginal people and involvement of parents.
- Aboriginal people have been restricted in their efforts to implement curricula that would transmit their linguistic and cultural heritage to the next generation.
- Financial resources to reverse the impact of past policies have been inadequate.

It is readily apparent that Canadian society has not yet accomplished the necessary power sharing to enable Aboriginal people to be authors of their own education. This suggests that there are persistent barriers to be addressed if education for Aboriginal people is to change significantly.

## **1.5 The Need for Fundamental Change**

We believe that Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal communities must have the opportunity to implement their vision of education. Aboriginal children are entitled to learn and achieve in an environment that supports their development as whole individuals. They need to value their heritage and identity in planning for the future. Education programs, carefully designed and implemented with parental involvement, can prepare Aboriginal children to participate in two worlds with a choice of futures. Aboriginal people should expect equity of results from education in Canada.

This will not happen if the education system continues unchanged. For significant change to occur, Aboriginal people must have the authority to

organize their own education and to influence how their children are educated. We see this happening through a number of avenues.

Education is a core element of jurisdiction in Aboriginal self-government. Aboriginal people must have the opportunity to exercise self-governance in education. In so doing, they would resume control of their education in its entirety, passing their own legislation and regulating all aspects of education. Aboriginal nations, public governments and community of interest governments could all establish their own educational institutions under their own jurisdiction.

Although there were positive moves toward Aboriginal control under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the Kativik and Cree school boards are still governed by the rules of the provincial department of education. With the recognition of self-government, Aboriginally controlled school authorities would operate under an Aboriginal nation's law-making authority. We see Aboriginal self-governance in education applying to Aboriginal education institutions at all stages of life from early childhood on. Elementary and high schools, Aboriginal colleges and universities would all function as part of an integrated system of lifelong education.

In urban areas where there are Aboriginal people from various nations, they may choose to combine their efforts and exercise governance through collective structures such as Aboriginal school authorities, deriving their mandate from Aboriginal community of interest governments or provincial or territorial governments. Participation by parents in Aboriginal education systems in urban settings would, of course, be by choice. Aboriginal people could also continue to send their children to public schools and other provincial and territorial educational institutions by preference or because they are the only available option.

Numerous studies of education have identified changes required to improve the quality of education for Aboriginal children attending public education institutions. In the discussion that follows, we repeat many of these recommendations, because they remain relevant. It is vital that Aboriginal parents and families be able to become involved, articulating and shaping the education they want for their children. Where there are larger numbers of Aboriginal children, Aboriginal people have sometimes been able to establish their own schools with the sponsorship of local school boards. Such schools create a venue for innovative programs and active community involvement. In

addition, there have been specific initiatives by provincial and territorial governments and local school boards to improve the quality of Aboriginal education; it is imperative that these continue.

In some public post-secondary institutions, Aboriginal people have become more involved in governance and decision-making structures. This positive development strengthens the capacity of colleges and universities to serve Aboriginal constituents. In this chapter we outline other steps that should be taken to increase the capacity of public post-secondary institutions to respond to Aboriginal students' needs.

Changes in the public school system have been incremental and often far too slow. In schools administered by Aboriginal people, there have been serious constraints on their capacity to transform education. Aboriginal people will continue to negotiate an ever-widening space to implement their vision, pushing against the confines of such restrictions. Recognition of Aboriginal peoples' right to govern their education will be a major watershed. Aboriginal governments and education authorities will be positioned to implement the bolder vision they have developed. There will be many variations in the configuration of these changes. Some may resemble existing public school systems. Others will entail reorganization of the school year, the curriculum and school personnel. Aboriginal people remain committed to giving their children a range of options for the future and will, no doubt, negotiate avenues for children to move between Aboriginal and mainstream systems.

As discussed in Volume 2, Chapter 3, we anticipate that the assumption of jurisdiction by Aboriginal governments will proceed through three stages:

- the introduction of self-starting initiatives by Aboriginal nations for which they negotiate financial support within existing legislation;
- a transitional phase during which Aboriginal nations recognized under an Aboriginal Nations Recognition and Government Act exercise law-making powers on their existing territories in core areas, with financing, commensurate with the scope of jurisdiction, provided by the federal government; and
- the conclusion of treaties between Aboriginal nations and Canada (the federal government and the provinces) defining the scope of self-government and the role of Aboriginal governments as a third order of government in

Canada.

Our recommendations are designed to open the door to fundamental changes in the practice of Aboriginal education that can be implemented within present jurisdictions, during the transition to self-government, or by self-governing Aboriginal nations.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.1**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments act promptly to acknowledge that education is a core area for the exercise of Aboriginal self-government.

### **3.5.2**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with Aboriginal governments, organizations or education authorities, as appropriate, to support the development of Aboriginally controlled education systems by

(a) introducing, adapting or ensuring the flexible application of legislation to facilitate self-starting initiatives by Aboriginal nations and their communities in the field of education;

(b) mandating voluntary organizations that are endorsed by substantial numbers of Aboriginal people to act in the field of education in urban and non-reserve areas where numbers warrant until such time as Aboriginal governments are established; and

(c) providing funding commensurate with the responsibilities assumed by Aboriginal nations and their communities, or voluntary organizations, given the requirements of institutional and program development, costs of serving small or dispersed communities, and special needs accruing from past failures of education services.

In the pages that follow, we assume a path of education with Aboriginal self-governing institutions and Aboriginal participation in public schools, colleges

and universities. Many of the issues should be considered by Aboriginal education authorities as well as public institution officials. We also address establishing the institutional capacity to enable Aboriginal peoples to be self-governing in education at all stages of life.

## **2. The Framework: Lifelong, Holistic Education**

Education is a lifelong, continuous process requiring stable and consistent support. First Nations people of every age group require appropriate formal and informal opportunities for learning and for teaching. The education provided must be holistic. Education processes and institutions must address the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development of participants.<sup>12</sup>

Our discussion of education issues proceeds according to four stages of the life cycle: the child, the youth, the adult and the elder.<sup>13</sup> To organize the discussion, we use the Medicine Wheel, a teaching and communication tool borrowed from the traditions of First Nations people of the plains — Blackfoot, Cree, Dakota and others (see also Volume 1, Chapter 15). Although it is not a part of all Aboriginal traditions, it is nevertheless useful for understanding perspectives that are shared by many Aboriginal peoples. The Medicine Wheel is used to discuss relationships and values. Representing the circle of life, the wheel has no beginning and no end.

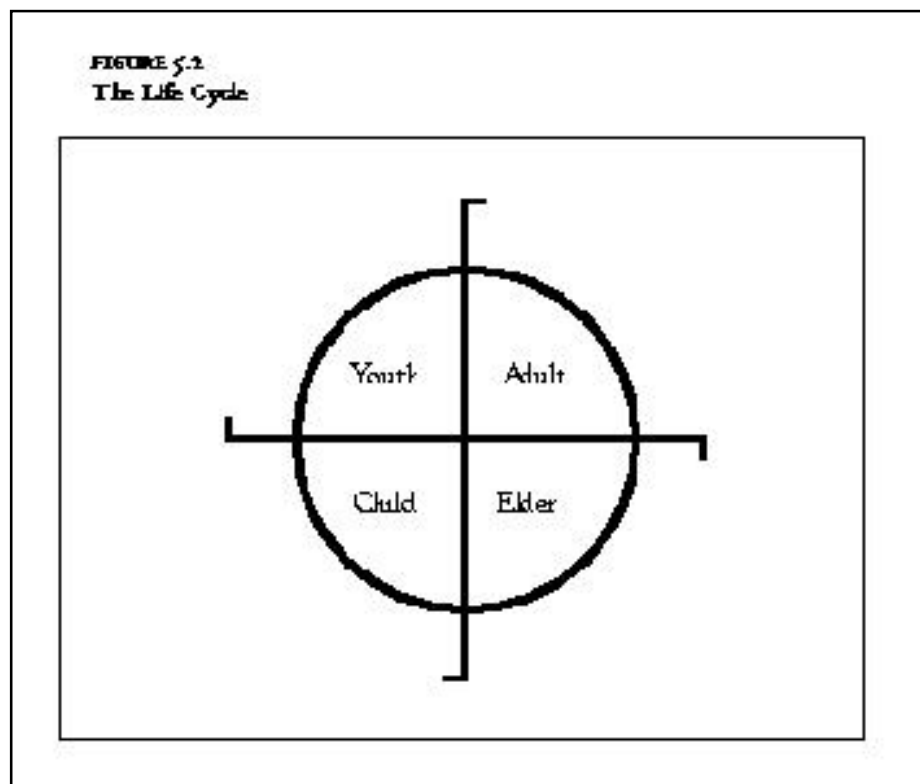
The first set of relationships of interest here is the connection between learning and the life cycle (Figure 5.2). Learning goes on throughout the life cycle, from infancy and early childhood to old age. Aboriginal people see education as a process that begins before birth and continues long after formal education is over. Learning at one stage has implications for subsequent stages. An adult who has not had the opportunity to develop fully may have to address growth needs later in life. As individuals mature and perhaps attain the status of elder, they are able to transmit to younger generations the knowledge and wisdom acquired through a lifetime of learning. As we will see, the integrity of the lifelong learning cycle in Aboriginal societies has been broken and must be restored.

The second set of relationships is the connection between dimensions of learning and development. In Aboriginal educational tradition, the individual is viewed as a whole person with intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical dimensions. Each of these aspects must be addressed in the learning

process. Holistic education is the term used to describe the kind of education traditionally used by Aboriginal peoples. Such education is organized to develop all aspects of the individual. In western countries, similar learning models have evolved, but they have been eclipsed by models of education that place primary emphasis on intellectual development, with this focus intensifying as the individual moves into higher levels of education.

Lifelong learning and learning aimed to balance all dimensions of the person are intermeshed. At each stage of life, learning should develop the whole human being. Intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical learning depends upon the success of development at previous stages.

The circularity of the medicine wheel urges us to keep the whole picture in mind, even though the individual component parts may be compelling. As we wrestle with issues in the education of the child, the youth, the adult, and the elder in turn, we will be reminded that the problems encountered by adults today are rooted in education processes in the past. We will see that educational innovation at each stage of the life cycle gives us the opportunity — and indeed the responsibility — to bring about profound and significant changes in the lives of generations to come.





### **3. The Child**

Childhood is the foundational stage of life. Within the family, the child acquires language, develops trust, becomes aware of self and others, establishes bonds with family members, develops intellectual and social skills and values. This important foundation prepares the child to enter society's formal system of education, the other distinct context in which the child must function. During this important early stage of life, the child's intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional capacities must be developed and his or her special gifts identified and nurtured.

#### **3.1 Early Childhood Education**

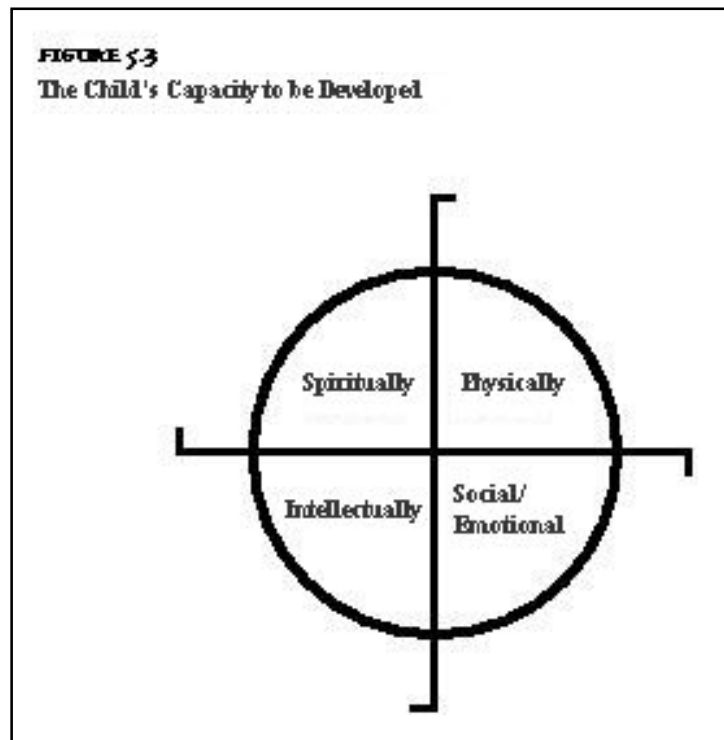
Young children absorb information at a rate greater than at any other stage of life. They make sense of the world around them, deciphering a whole language system in order to communicate. They learn to label objects, perceptions and emotions. They form bonds with the significant people upon whom they are dependent and develop trust. They are curious, exploring, receptive and vulnerable.

Early childhood is one of the most important points in the learning process. In recent decades, research has confirmed the critical importance of infancy and early childhood as a foundation upon which identity, self-worth and intellectual strength are built. Trauma, dislocation and inconsistency in early childhood can affect the rest of the individual's life.<sup>14</sup> But if the child's environment is rich in love, intellectual stimulation and security, the capacity to grow is invigorated. Because early childhood is regarded as so important to later development, educators have turned a spotlight on learning before formal education normally begins.

Traditional Aboriginal life provided the conditions for a solid childhood foundation. Babies and toddlers spent their first years within the extended family where parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters all shared responsibility for protecting and nurturing them. Traditional Aboriginal child-rearing practices permitted children to exert their will with little interference from adults.<sup>15</sup> In this environment, children were encouraged to develop as thinking, autonomous beings. At the same time, they acquired language and were integrated into the rhythms of daily life in the family and community.

In this early stage of development, children learned how to interpret and respond to the world. They learned how to walk on the land, taking in the multiple cues needed to survive as hunters and gatherers; they were conditioned to see the primacy of relationships over material possessions; they discovered that they had special gifts that would define their place in and contribution to the family and community. From an early age, playing at the edge of adult work and social activities, they learned that dreams, visions and legends were as important to learning as practical instruction in how to build a boat or tan a hide. (See Volume 1, Chapter 15 for more discussion of patterns of socialization that contribute to the formation of distinctive Aboriginal world views.)

Traditional child-rearing practices survive in many Aboriginal families, and they are consciously being revived in others. Some parents are fortunate to have the continuing support of an extended family, with grandparents and other family members available to share the responsibilities of parenting and to pass on knowledge and skills that support a strong sense of identity and self-esteem.



However, social change, the stresses of poverty, and disruptive interventions in Aboriginal family life over generations have taken a severe toll on the capacity of many Aboriginal families to provide this kind of positive

environment for raising children. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this volume, family violence scars the lives of far too many Aboriginal children. Families who live in urban areas often find themselves far from the company of relatives who can give support on a daily basis. Access to elders is particularly difficult in cities. The lives of many young parents are economically precarious as they try to survive on the brink of crisis. Many children are being raised by a single parent, usually the mother, who receives no outside help besides social assistance.

If stresses interfere with the development of a child's capacity for health, self-esteem and intellectual growth before beginning school, the schooling experience soon accentuates the child's 'weaknesses'. Once they have entered the formal education system, children may never recover the ground lost in these early years.

The link between early childhood experience and success in the formal schooling system has been studied intensively by researchers since the 1960s. At that time, programs such as Head Start in the United States were implemented to help children develop the skills needed to tackle the demands of formal education. After three decades of examining early childhood interventions, there is strong evidence that such programs do make a difference, particularly if they are continued into the elementary school system. There is substantial research showing that children who participate in high quality early childhood development programs are more likely to finish high school and to be employed.<sup>16</sup> The Carnegie Institute, for example, has called for the United States Congress to expand family leave rights, improve the training of daycare workers and extend Head Start programs even further.<sup>17</sup>

In 1994, Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning found the arguments for early childhood intervention so compelling that they recommended giving all parents the option of sending their children to early childhood education programs from age three. They were particularly concerned about the increasing number of children growing up in poverty:

Children who come through a carefully planned process of early education gain significantly in competence, coping skills, and (not least important) in positive attitudes towards learning....We're convinced that early childhood education significantly helps in providing a level playing field of opportunity and experience for every child, whatever her background.<sup>18</sup>

Testimony from Aboriginal parents, grandparents, educators and organizations indicated Aboriginal people's appreciation of the importance of the early years. Studies by the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and the National Association of Friendship Centres have all advocated early childhood education and child care under Aboriginal control.<sup>19</sup>

Aboriginal people want to prepare their children for stronger academic performance, but their concerns go beyond a singular focus on cognitive development. They recognize the need of families for support and respite while they struggle with personal and economic problems. They want to see early identification of children with special needs and provision of appropriate care and parent education in the community. They see high quality child care as a necessary service for parents undertaking training or gaining a foothold in the work force. Most important, they see early childhood education as a means of reinforcing Aboriginal identity, instilling the values, attitudes and behaviours that give expression to Aboriginal cultures. (For a closer look at child care in support of training and employment, see Volume 2, Chapter 5, and our discussion of employment development.)

Formal education, as we will see later, is still predominantly the domain of non-Aboriginal professionals even though inroads into the teaching profession are being made by Aboriginal people. Initiatives by Aboriginal people to implement their priorities in early childhood education have therefore taken shape typically in daycare services on-reserve, where a substantial degree of community control can be maintained, and in grant-funded projects on- and off-reserve engaging the energies of parents and volunteers. Many Aboriginal parents are resistant to the idea of sending their children to school at progressively earlier ages, particularly when schools have so often proven to be a hostile environment for the development of Aboriginal identity.

## Splats'in Daycare Centre

In 1991 the Splats'in daycare centre was initiated by the Spallumcheen First Nation community in British Columbia. The program design was based partly on the Te Kohanga Reo model from Aotearoa (New Zealand) and used an extended family model, with elders and children participating in everyday activities together. Through daily exposure to the use of the Shuswap language, the children absorbed the language quickly. The elders introduced the children to traditional activities, such as caring for animals, cultivating a garden, and making traditional crafts. The whole daycare environment reflected the traditional rhythm of Shuswap life and social relationships. When funding for the two-year program ended, the community tried to continue it using volunteer resources, but momentum for the language and cultural component were lost. Program staff believe that this kind of program needs long-term program stability to be effective.

The incorporation of Aboriginal language in early childhood programs has been a focal point for the drive to ensure that learning in such settings has a distinctly Aboriginal character.<sup>20</sup> One of the models of great interest to Aboriginal communities in Canada has been the Maori language 'nests', or *Te Kohanga Reo* (discussed later in this chapter). This total immersion program involves trained staff, parents and elders and uses local community facilities, and aspects of it have already been adapted by Aboriginal communities in Canada, with impressive results. In British Columbia, the Splats'in daycare program in Enderby (see box), the Gitksan immersion program in Kispiox, the Kyah Wiget education society in Moricetown, and the Gitwangak education society in Kitwanga have all been influenced by Te Kohanga Reo. In our hearings, Aboriginal presenters from all over Canada expressed interest in the model. There have also been programs in tribal communities in the United States, for example, the Lummi of Washington state, where parents have created programs based on their linguistic and cultural traditions.

The development of language skills is an important dimension of early childhood education. There is an increasing body of research supporting the importance of fluency in a primary language before entering school.<sup>21</sup> Research with bilingual students indicates that the primary language becomes the vehicle for acquiring more complex learning, but fluency levels must be strong. Students who are switched from their primary language to another language before they have strong fluency levels have more difficulty with

learning. This is particularly important for Aboriginal children living in predominantly English- or French-speaking environments who do not speak an Aboriginal language, English or French with any depth. Purposeful intervention at this early stage will provide the language base upon which future learning takes place.

The accumulation of convincing evidence that early childhood is a strategic intervention point to enhance healthy development and learning has prompted government initiatives to invest in this stage of learning. Aboriginal initiatives in early childhood education, many of them including Aboriginal language components, have received a major boost from the Child Care Initiatives Fund, introduced by the federal government in 1988 to support community-based initiatives in early childhood development. The program committed \$98 million over five years and was extended for an additional two years. Almost a hundred Aboriginal child care and daycare projects received funding, demonstrating the range of approaches to pursuing community objectives: Aboriginal language immersion programs, in-home daycare, free-standing daycare facilities, Head Start programs, toy lending libraries for parents, training programs for local caregivers, and manuals to help non-Aboriginal caregivers respond sensitively to the needs of Aboriginal children.

This spectrum of programs underlines the desirability of having a variety of options available to parents, to respond to varying circumstances and preferences. Early childhood education can take many forms, some institutionally based and others focused on the family and the home. Some parents may reject institutional forms of early childhood education, preferring to work with their own children at home, with support or resources from child care workers or educators. Others, including working parents, may prefer to see a centralized facility where children come together under one roof. Since any intervention at this critical age for cultural transmission will have a profound, long-term impact on the child's life, it is imperative that early childhood strategies be fully under the control of parents, who can make strategic choices about shaping their child's future.

In 1992 the federal government introduced the Brighter Futures program with a mandate to support projects in child development and community mental health. There is a First Nations and Inuit component in Brighter Futures for on-reserve and Inuit communities. Aboriginal people off-reserve are eligible to apply for project funds available to the general public.

In 1995, Health Canada introduced an Aboriginal Head Start program that will disburse \$83.7 million over four years for about 50 projects. The program is directed to Aboriginal people primarily in the western provinces and northern regions and not living on-reserve. Community programs are expected to contain Aboriginal Head Start's five components: culture and language; education; health promotion and nutrition; social support programs; and parental involvement. The program is not intended to focus on day care.

In December 1995 the minister of human resources development announced the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative, to take effect in fiscal year 1995-96, funded at \$72 million over three years, with \$36 million in ongoing funds thereafter. Its focus is child care to support participation in employment as well as child development. Both Aboriginal Head Start and the human resources development initiative consulted Aboriginal people in their design. The programs have separate administrations and advisory structures.

Provincial governments, which have constitutional responsibility for child care as a social support measure and early childhood education as an educational service, have recognized the importance of early childhood education. In British Columbia, the Royal Commission on Education (1988) recommended that bands and councils, school authorities and government agencies take steps to improve the language capabilities of Aboriginal children in pre-school and in the early years of elementary schooling.<sup>22</sup> The prominence given to early childhood education in the report of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (1994) is another indication that this period of development has emerged as an important field of intervention for policy makers.

We acknowledge the importance of programs that commit substantial resources to support early childhood development. Community experience with these programs has already established a strong base from which future programming can evolve. However, problems remain to be addressed.

First, early childhood programs are variously defined as child care to support parental employment; as mental health or prevention initiatives to enhance the life chances of children at risk; and as cultural programs to reinforce cultural identity and educational programs to foster intellectual achievement. We consider these distinctions irrational. Aboriginal parents and educators consistently press for holistic programs that address the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development of children. This priority should guide the design and operation of

all early childhood programs.

Second, programs with differently defined objectives and eligibility criteria, directed to various target groups, are initiated by different departments and different levels of government. The lack of co-ordination between programs and the maze of regulations governing them constitute an impediment to rational planning and equitable access to services at the community level.

Third, early childhood programs for Aboriginal children are funded predominantly as special projects of limited duration. The newly announced Indian and Inuit Child Care Initiative (enhancing daycare services already in place under Indian affairs sponsorship on-reserve and in Inuit communities) addresses the need for continuity. On the other hand, the highly regarded Child Care Initiatives Fund has been terminated and with it many of the creative projects for which it provided seed funding. Stop-and-start program support is wasteful of resources and community effort and demoralizing to Aboriginal people. It is also difficult to acquire or construct appropriate facilities without secure funding.

In our recommendations for health and healing centres in Chapter 3 of this volume, we urged that the full range of health and social services be brought under Aboriginal control through a reorganized service system. Early childhood program needs could be addressed within this system, or they could be dealt with as an extension of the education system. The requirements for support of holistic child development are the same in either case.

As Aboriginal nations are recognized and negotiate fiscal transfers to support community services, they will be positioned to introduce services that respond to community priorities in an integrated, equitable and consistent manner. Within current jurisdictions, a strong commitment from federal, provincial and territorial governments is needed to provide stable support to early childhood programs that serve all Aboriginal children, regardless of their status and residence.

The strategy supported must give parents and communities the opportunity to exercise choice across a spectrum of high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education options. These include support for parents and families in the home, language immersion, co-operative arrangements, in-home daycare, daycare centres, involvement with elders, and other community activities. Aboriginal governments should place a priority on early childhood education in



formats appropriate to the community and ensure that resources for early childhood education are negotiated in self-government agreements.

Many presentations before the Commission emphasized the importance of restoring the role of elders in early childhood and elementary education. The legacy of elders is precious, unique and irreplaceable. In the models of early childhood education adopted by some communities, elders have been able to resume their role in intergenerational teaching. Again, it takes parent- and community-controlled initiatives to implement such an approach.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.3**

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments co-operate to support an integrated early childhood education funding strategy that

- (a) extends early childhood education services to *all* Aboriginal children regardless of residence;
- (b) encourages programs that foster the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual development of children, reducing distinctions between child care, prevention and education;
- (c) maximizes Aboriginal control over service design and administration;
- (d) offers one-stop accessible funding; and
- (e) promotes parental involvement and choice in early childhood education options.

## **3.2 The Child in the Formal Education System**

At the age of six, children are required to enter the formal education system.<sup>23</sup> From that point on, children spend most of their daytime hours in classrooms. What happens there will have a profound impact upon their whole lives. While the family and other forces in society also shape the child, the education

system is a compelling and compulsory presence in the child's life. In the classroom, children must absorb what is being taught, and their performance is evaluated continuously through a system of rewards and penalties.

The success of transition to the more regimented school system depends, in part, on the continuity between the child's home environment and the classroom. The elements of this continuity include language, the presence of familiar respected persons, and the consistent application of values that govern daily life.

Values and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and nations are diverse, but there are common elements that often conflict with those dominant in the conventional classroom. For example, Aboriginal children may be raised in a home environment where co-operation and non-competitiveness are emphasized. They may be taught that intellectual and other gifts are meant to be shared for the benefit of others rather than for personal gain. In some Aboriginal cultures, the principle of non-interference predominates; the child's will is respected, and adults do not interfere in the choices made by the child. The imposition of the adult's will on the child is considered inappropriate except, of course, in instances where the child may encounter harm.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, the regimentation of the classroom experience, the emphasis on individual achievement, and the exertion of the teacher's authority constitute a rupture with the child's home environment. This process of cultural conflict is described by Elsie Wuttunee:

A common concern of parents is when schooling becomes a threat to their developing child's identity, primarily when the values and world view that prevail at school contradict or ignore the existence of a different perspective the child lives with at home. In the case of students of Aboriginal ancestry, this situation is all too common. The result can be that the child experiences serious conflict and doubt about the validity of his or her own identity. When an Aboriginal child's identity has been threatened, they will withdraw into themselves; become silent and refuse to participate as a means of protecting themselves from criticism and rejection; attempt to abandon their previous identity and mould themselves to the culture which they perceive as more valid or acceptable; they may take on non-productive and rejecting attitudes which generally culminate in failure or dropping out.

Elsie Wuttunee  
Calgary Catholic Separate School District No. 1  
Calgary, Alberta, 27 May 1993\*

Today, the efforts of Aboriginal educators and communities are directed to restoring continuity between the Aboriginal home environment and the school. The teaching of Aboriginal languages, the staffing of schools with Aboriginal teachers, the inclusion of elders as teachers, and the development of curriculum rooted in the values, history and traditions of Aboriginal peoples are all attempts to fit formal education into a broader learning process that begins in the family.

Educational change is now under way, but within strict limits. Where modern treaties have been concluded, as under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, there has been some latitude to reshape the education process and experiment with alternatives. In the Northwest Territories, public education is being adapted to reflect the language base and values of Aboriginal residents. Gains have been made in southern Canada as well, where some First Nations administer education under an arrangement with the department of Indian affairs. Staff are hired by local school authorities, language classes can be introduced, and Aboriginal materials can be incorporated into the curriculum. Provinces, territorial governments and local school boards have also directed financial resources to assessing curriculum, employing Aboriginal support workers, making language classes available, and increasing the opportunities for students to learn about Aboriginal history and values.

These efforts represent important changes in the environment for Aboriginal children. But data as recent as the Aboriginal peoples survey (1991) showed that a large percentage of Aboriginal youth was not completing high school. As discussed later in this chapter, of Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 years who left school, 68.5 per cent did not have a diploma.<sup>25</sup> There are local variations and success stories of keeping students in school until graduation. Researchers who study retention issues maintain that leaving school is not a sudden event. Rather, it is a process that begins much earlier. In the education of Aboriginal children, the seeds of the future are being planted in early school experience.

Many complex, interrelated factors contribute to creating the conditions for successful education for children. We cannot hope to deal with all of them here. We know, too, that parents hold differing hopes and dreams for their children, depending on a host of cultural, family and personal expectations. In this section, we consider three concerns that Aboriginal people raised

repeatedly as fundamental issues in education of children and youth: a curriculum that instils a proud Aboriginal identity and competence as an Aboriginal person; language education; and Aboriginal control and parental involvement.

### ***Innovations in curriculum***

Modest improvements have been made to school curricula over the last 15 years. There is more Aboriginal content, particularly in schools where the majority of the students are Aboriginal. Careful scrutiny of textbooks has meant that fewer texts portray Aboriginal people in negative terms. In some linguistic communities, Aboriginal language curriculum materials are being used in the school system. These are important accomplishments to which many elders, educators and parents have contributed.

However, improvements have been far too slow and inconsistent. Revisions often gloss over or avoid tackling the fundamental changes that are necessary to create curriculum that is rooted in an Aboriginal understanding of the world, in subjects such as history, art, health, mathematics and sciences. To substantiate this assessment in the face of efforts to improve the education of Aboriginal children, it is necessary to focus on some of the obstacles that continue to block the attainment of Aboriginal goals. To do so, we present an example of a successful education program that is community- and culturally based. We examine what makes it appealing and ask why similar education initiatives are not more widespread.

Akwesasne is a Mohawk community at the intersection of the Ontario, Quebec and New York state borders. The Akwesasne Science and Mathematics Pilot Project was begun in 1988 to reverse the pattern of student alienation from science and mathematics as it is taught in most curricula (see box). The Mohawk people started with the assumption that all jobs of the twenty-first century would require a solid science and mathematics base and that everyone serving the community would require such training. In addition, the community requires the skills of health and science professionals in its self-governing structures. It was also considered critical that the curriculum should not supplant Aboriginal values and knowledge.

The Aboriginal health professions program of the University of Toronto, the board of education of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, and General Vanier Secondary School of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School

Board (Ontario) joined together to carry out the project, which they call the “Mohawk Way to Go to School”. A curriculum for grades seven to nine has been developed, with extensive involvement of Mohawk health and science professionals, elders, spiritual leaders, parents and community members. Other advisers, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, are consulted from time to time. Throughout this process, Mohawk contributions to science and mathematics, historically and in the present, have been elaborated. Working with these contributors, staff have been able to develop science themes integrating earth, trees, animals, birds, agriculture, food, water, cosmology and Mohawk ways of knowing. Similarly, they have developed mathematics themes incorporating Mohawk number systems, cultural values, sacred circles and references to ceremonies. Mohawk concepts of space, time, measurement and distance, puzzles and games are used. Applications of mathematics to agriculture, forestry, geography and conservation are studied.

The science and math *content* is not the only focus of the pilot project. Teaching and learning methods are also being analyzed to determine what works best for the children. The approach of successful traditional Mohawk teachers is observed carefully because it is so effective. Career promotion is a component of the project. Students are given opportunities to meet Aboriginal science and math professionals in Canada and the United States to learn about various careers.

Much can be learned by examining the characteristics of the Akwesasne science and maths curriculum and the process followed to develop and implement it:

- The curriculum makes Mohawk knowledge, values and beliefs its central focus, not a supplement to a western science and mathematics curriculum.
- The curriculum does not reject western science and mathematics concepts, but it does not attempt to assimilate students into the logic of western beliefs. It makes visible the underlying values and assumptions of Mohawk and western concepts. These are different ways of looking at the world, with complementary strengths.
- The curriculum is holistic. Rather than separating the earth and water into component parts from a single disciplinary perspective, it looks at the inter-connections from a multitude of perspectives. This construction of the curriculum reflects a whole way of thinking about the world.

- The curriculum includes experiential components that link the theory learned in the classroom to the life of the community. The involvement of students in monitoring serious environmental problems in the community is immediate and engaging. Students do not have to ponder the possible connection between what they are learning and its value to the well-being of their community.
- The curriculum development process used community involvement in an optimal way. The resources of the whole community, including those not currently resident at Akwesasne, were tapped to bring this curriculum to fruition. Elders, spiritual leaders, historians, science and math professionals, and others with specialized knowledge contributed to the project. Parents and community leaders invested in the project. In short, this is a unique Mohawk design, built from the bottom up and owned by the community.
- The essential role of elders and spiritual leaders in teaching the young is clearly evident. The knowledge of elders and spiritual leaders is integral to the curriculum and its teaching process.
- Children shaped by this curriculum will have a better chance of operating comfortably in two worlds.
- Non-Aboriginal educators and school authorities collaborated to provide support to strengthen the resources of the project, but control of the project is firmly under Mohawk leadership.
- Careful attention is paid to what works and why. The evaluation of each component of the project, as a way to improve it and to understand its dynamics, will make an important contribution to this and other Aboriginal curriculum and teaching projects.

## **Akwesasne Science and Mathematics Pilot Project "Mohawk Way to Go to School"**

At Akwesasne, we are using the Mohawk Thanksgiving Address, which has been recited for centuries. It acknowledges and expresses appreciation for the natural world and the duties that are fulfilled in order to maintain existence. This forms the basis of the science curriculum design and embraces the Mohawk concept of the relatedness of all creation while exploring the internal and external environments of all living things. The Aboriginal concept of 'ecology' is examined and compared to the dominant culture theories.

Our Mother Earth is studied through the discovery of what constitutes earth, or soils, and Aboriginal uses of soils are explored from an agricultural perspective as well as from an Aboriginal potter's perspective. Plant life is surveyed from a holistic Aboriginal perspective — their assistance to Mother Earth, people and animals (ecology); medicinal characteristics; uses as natural dyes; the

Haudenosaunee [Iroquois] connection of the Three Sisters — corn, bean and squash — and the cultural significance they play. The characteristics of western classifications are incorporated into the units.

Water is looked at from an Aboriginal ecological perspective, while also incorporating the study of the chemical composition and properties...An activity being incorporated into the grade 8 curriculum is a water quality project that monitors the water life and the water conditions along the heavily polluted St. Lawrence River. Local universities and governmental agencies participate in assisting the students to conduct the various testing and analysis required. This activity is incorporated into the draft mathematics and science curriculum for grade 8. Haudenosaunee and First Nations beliefs permeate the exercise to ensure that the values of Aboriginal people are reinforced. Another project being designed for grade 8 curriculum is a joint effort with the Akwesasne Environmental Division that will design and implement an indoor aquaculture project, including historical Mohawk fishing practices.

Animals form the basis of the Haudenosaunee 'clan system' or family organization. This significant practice is incorporated into the curriculum while also studying classification, characteristics, cell and cell functions.

The study of 'Energy' includes units on the Haudenosaunee teachings of the four winds, Thunder, Lightning, Sun and overall conservation, while also examining the 'western' science. The cosmos is incorporated by providing experiential teaching in the Aboriginal and Haudenosaunee concept of oneness with the universe. The moon, stars and other galaxies are intertwined with Aboriginal cosmos mythology to demonstrate the intricate thought of our ancestors relative to cosmology.

Field trips and experiential programming are integrated into the science curriculum to demonstrate incorporation of Aboriginal and 'western' concepts.

*Source:* Excerpted from Brenda Tsioniaon LaFrance, "Culturally Negotiated Education in First Nation Communities, Empowering Ourselves for Future Generations," paper presented at the National Round Table on Education, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Ottawa, July 1993.

The Akwesasne science and maths project is not the only model of innovation in Aboriginal education in Canada (see box). But these are the exception rather than the rule. Most Aboriginal children in Canada do not have the opportunity to experience the excitement of science, maths and other subjects grounded in the concepts of their respective nations. Although the National Indian Brotherhood articulated the principle of "Indian control of Indian education" in 1972, more than two decades later, Aboriginal children are still consuming the standard curricula of mainstream educational institutions. Adding Aboriginal content to curriculum usually consists of adding units designed to 'enrich' existing curriculum content rather than changing the core assumptions, values and logic of the curriculum itself. Language and culture classes may be added to a school's program without altering the basic English or French curriculum, the science curriculum, the maths curriculum and the social studies curriculum.

Why has there not been more curriculum innovation when Aboriginal educators and communities and their allies have worked so hard for more than two decades to improve Aboriginal education? The experiences presented to the Commission suggest why progress has been stalled.

One of the main reasons is that First Nations schools (reserve schools) have been required to sign funding agreements specifying that programs must conform to provincial standards.<sup>26</sup> While many Aboriginal parents and



educators would willingly follow parts of a provincial curriculum, there must also be room for creative curriculum design, as at Akwesasne.

### **Examples of Culture-Based Curriculum**

- The Dene Kede Curriculum in the Northwest Territories is the culmination of a major community-based effort to produce a cultural curriculum for children in kindergarten through to grade six. It is a holistic curriculum built around the four key relationships that are central to a full life: the land, the spiritual world, other people and the self. The teaching approach is based on experiential learning using key cultural experiences. Analysis, practice, review, reflection and basic academic skills are offshoots. This innovative curriculum makes extensive use of community participation, the children's personal experience and the resources of elders. The curriculum, with its 50 thematic units, can be adapted by each community to establish its own unique community curriculum. To assess student progress, the curriculum emphasizes individual development and student self-evaluation rather than comparative measures.

- The Inuuqatigiit curriculum, also in the Northwest Territories, is intended for Inuit children from kindergarten to grade 12. In its draft stage in 1994-95, the curriculum adopted three dimensions of Inuit life as its foundation: the circle of belonging (to the family, to the community and to the world); the cycle of life; and the cycle of the seasons. All of these are infused with Inuit values and beliefs. Thematic units have been prepared to elaborate these concepts in relation to other people and the environment.

- SIMA7, Come Join Me, is an intercultural curriculum produced in British Columbia for pre-adolescent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. It begins with a series of lessons for understanding stereotyping and then introduces students to a summer camp attended by First Nations youth from across Canada and Central America. During the four-day camp, the young people share important dimensions of their cultural traditions. The student reader, teacher's guide and video are published by Pacific Educational Press. *SIMA7* (pronounced 'shee-ma' with a glottal stop at the end) is a word in the Lil'wat language. SIMA7 is adapted from DIMA7wl, meaning 'Come join us, you all'.

The concern of parents is that the child's education will not be recognized by provincial school systems if the child must transfer from one school to another. To the credit of the Ontario government, the Akwesasne science and maths project is provincially accredited. In many communities, however, efforts at curriculum innovation have met negative responses. Curriculum innovation is risky: it is much safer to make modifications that are unlikely to attract attention from outside authorities.

The experience of Kitigan Zibi Education Council, which has insisted on curriculum control in local education, illustrates the tensions of trying to make curriculum innovation work with the current systems:

We would decide what would be best. Now, we are not fools. We knew that our kids would be going to college and university so we would prepare our curriculum in [light of] that....If our students decide to transfer from our system...into the Quebec [cegep] system, the Ministry of Education doesn't recognize [our program]. The higher institution [university] does [recognize it]; the lower level doesn't. No logic.

Gilbert Whiteduck  
Maniwaki, Quebec  
2 December 1992

Innovative Aboriginal programming is not a question of watering down standards. The fundamental question is whether Aboriginal people can represent their values in the design of education programs. Aboriginal people have operated from a position of weakness with respect to provincial governments and their educational institutions. Even in Nunavik, where the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement has assigned the Kativik school board considerable authority and flexibility, the imposition of standards from external educational authorities has interfered with the attainment of local goals. Sheila Watt Cloutier of Makivik Corporation and the Nunavik educational task force writes:

We accepted the southern institutional programs as the standard, because that is what schooling meant to us — it was what southern society did in their schools. In addition our School Board was accountable to the Quebec Government through its Ministry of Education, and not to our own emerging regional government. As a result, what our school system provided was a watered down, superficially adapted version of the official Quebec Curriculum. This has little to do with the real challenges our people are facing. The result

is a system that does not adequately prepare our youth for life in either the North or the South.<sup>27</sup>

The right of Aboriginal people to articulate and apply their own standards of excellence in education is at stake in this debate. Tension is likely to intensify as provinces and territories move to implement Canada-wide testing of students. The goals of education embodied in such testing are defined by non-Aboriginal authorities. Some Aboriginal parents and communities may share these goals, but it should not be assumed that they will place them above their own goals for the education of their children. Self-determination in education should give Aboriginal people clear authority to create curriculum and set the standards to accomplish their education goals. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authorities must negotiate agreements that show mutual recognition of each other's curriculum decisions and standards. As self-governance in education is implemented, agreements should demonstrate respect and recognition of Aboriginal competence in the area.

Lack of funding resources has been another significant deterrent to developing systematic, integrated Aboriginal curricula. The Akwesasne science and mathematics pilot project is exactly that — a pilot project. The organizers were able to assemble project funding from a variety of government and private sources. Securing assured funding after the pilot project phase ends is critical to sustaining the approach in the longer term.

The community-based process that produced the Mohawk Way to Go to School is costly in time and resources, but there is no other way to undertake this kind of innovation. Standard Canadian curricula are developed by teams of scholars, researchers and writers, not only in Canada but in a large, international textbook industry. Aboriginal communities and educators have performed the same important work on very low budgets and have produced some remarkable work.<sup>28</sup> Where cultural education centres exist, they have assisted with and sometimes spearheaded curriculum development. But often curriculum development is left to the Aboriginal teacher, who must produce it on the spot. This is an inefficient approach with no permanent public record of methods or materials when staff move on. Moreover, the process is ad hoc, lacking integration with a broader vision of what Aboriginal parents want education to accomplish.

The government of the Northwest Territories has sponsored curriculum development to support Dene and Inuit cultures. Such projects involve

extensive consultation and considerable research and development costs. Resource materials are needed to support the curriculum and must be developed in their entirety. Once the core curriculum is developed, training for implementation and revision can be carried out through existing processes.

The Akwesasne science and maths curriculum helps us to glimpse what is possible. Holistic, culturally and community-based curriculum development is achievable and is an investment that must be made for present and future generations.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.4**

Aboriginal, provincial and territorial governments act promptly to reach agreements for mutual recognition of programs provided by their respective educational institutions so as to facilitate the transfer of students between educational systems while protecting the integrity of cultural dimensions of Aboriginal education

### **3.5.5**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with Aboriginal governments, organizations and educators to develop or continue developing innovative curricula that reflect Aboriginal cultures and community realities, for delivery

(a) at all grade levels of elementary and secondary schools;

(b) in schools operating under Aboriginal control; and

(c) in schools under provincial or territorial jurisdiction.

## ***Language education***

Aboriginal people speak about language and culture in the same breath. (For a more generic discussion of Aboriginal language conservation, see Chapter 6

of this volume.) Fluent speakers, particularly elders, are certain that without their languages, their cultures will be lost, because it is impossible to translate the deeper meanings of words and concepts into the languages of other cultures. Linguists agree that language shapes the way people perceive the world as well as how they describe it. The intimate relationships between language, culture and thought underlie the insistence of Aboriginal people that language education must be a priority. Mi'kmaq educator Marie Battiste describes this interrelationship and what it means to have another language imposed on one:

Cognitive imperialism...is [the attempt to change] a whole way in which people see things. I think it is important at this point to tell you a little bit about the Mi'kmaq language. It is a beautiful language. It has many, many ways of expressing things. There are more ways to express things in Mi'kmaq than there are in English and the language is built around relationships....

The language is the cement and the bonds. It provides the moral communion, if you will, of the community. And when we begin to take that language away from the people, when we replace it with this other language called English, we tear the people away from the very rudiments of that language in terms of the relationships of people to each other, the relationship to their universe, their relationships to the animals and the plants. We take away their interconnectedness and we leave them empty, lost and alone. This is a tremendous loss that people feel, as I have felt...

Marie Battiste  
Cultural Curriculum Co-ordinator  
Eskasoni School Board  
Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, 7 May 1992

The eradication of Aboriginal languages was one prong of the federal government's overall attempt to erase Aboriginal cultures. In some parts of Canada, Aboriginal language use remains strong, particularly in the north and in the province of Quebec.<sup>29</sup> Linguists consider Inuktitut, Anishnabe (Ojibwa) and Cree to be the most robust languages today, while the everyday use of many other Aboriginal languages diminished substantially with the rise of schooling in English and French. Teaching Aboriginal languages in schools has been a priority of Aboriginal education authorities in their efforts to give schooling an Aboriginal cultural base.

How a language is taught depends on whether the Aboriginal language is the

child's first or second language. Teaching language skills is complex:

In Eskasoni we do have language instruction going on in the school. We do provide cultural integration into the curriculum and we do a lot of things toward cultural enhancement, enrichment and appreciation. And those have had many kinds of positive outcomes. But one area still remains sort of vague, and that is the whole element of

English as a second language. How do we begin to help students make the transition from their Native Aboriginal language into English? We haven't got the right formula yet.

Marie Battiste  
Cultural Curriculum Co-ordinator  
Eskasoni School Board  
Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, 7 May 1992

The Kativik school board in Nunavik has developed curriculum materials to support oral and written language instruction. Inuktitut is used in early grades as the language of instruction and is taught in upper grades as a subject. There is strong family and community support for the use of the language. Inuktitut is heard up to six or seven hours a day on radio, and the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation co-operates with regional bodies to produce five and a half hours a week of television programming in Inuktitut. Regional magazines, official reports and community newsletters are printed in Inuktitut.

Language education is perhaps easier to implement in the home territory of Aboriginal people where there are large numbers of students from a single linguistic tradition. In urban centres where there are Aboriginal people of many linguistic backgrounds, it is more challenging to provide solid language support for everyone. British Columbia's education policy is that Aboriginal parents living in Vancouver who want their children to learn Aboriginal languages through the education system can approach the school board with an application and curriculum for a locally developed course. They suggest the name of a fluent member of the linguistic community who can be recognized as an Aboriginal language teacher by the British Columbia College of Teachers. The course can be given in a regular classroom or in a home-based or community setting.<sup>30</sup>

When should Aboriginal language instruction begin? When should a second or third language be introduced? These are questions asked by many Canadian

parents who want their child to learn a heritage language. Researchers in language learning say that every child is born with the capacity to pronounce every sound of every human language. Children learn from the acoustic environment starting at birth. As a baby hears sounds in the environment, it selects these sounds from the vast possibilities of human speech. The period up to three years of age is a critical time for laying the child's template of sounds and language acquisition is easiest when the child is young.

Lynn Drapeau, who has conducted studies of Aboriginal languages in Quebec, advises that it is important for the child to start school in its mother tongue. The argument is that well-developed fluency in the child's first language is necessary to achieve facility in reading and writing. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children who enter public school speaking an Aboriginal language are typically immersed in English or French, with no attention paid to retention of the primary language or to helping them gain fluency in the second language. This submersion strategy may result in impaired fluency in both languages. Drapeau's studies suggest that the current practice of shifting from the Aboriginal language (first language) to English or French (the second language) upon entering school prevents the establishment and transfer of strong literacy skills.<sup>31</sup>

### **Maori Language Nests Te Kohanga Reo**

One of the innovative language approaches comes from the Maori of Aotearoa (New Zealand). The language nest is a total immersion program from birth. Elders, parents and children meet in a small, home-like setting and conduct their everyday activities, all in the Maori language. While the elders provide the knowledge of the language and traditional ways, the task of caring for the children is done by the parents. This strengthens the extended family unit while teaching the language and Maori values, beliefs, knowledge and ways of doing things. By the time children reach school age, they can speak the language. Children who have been involved in Te Kohanga Reo are able to continue using Maori in the elementary school system, Kura Kaupapa Maori, an offshoot of the language nests. The teachers for this program are trained at the Auckland College of Education.

In the Maori culture, song is a vital form of communication. The language nest teachers place great emphasis on songs and acting out

the words. As part of language development, teachers use traditional customs and ways of living with the land.

Te Kohanga Reo resulted from a meeting of Maori elders and leaders in 1982. They were concerned because their language was endangered. They trained 25 teachers the first year to return to their communities and establish language nests. Each year, 25 more teachers come to learn. The original teachers are now learning more complex and deeper expressions of the Maori language.

Volunteerism has been a keystone of Te Kohanga Reo. Elders and parents have given freely of their time because of a deep desire to retain Maori language and culture. The Te Kohanga Reo concept continues to evolve. Initially, there were few guidelines. Today language nests receive state funding and there are national guidelines that pertain to provision of resources.

*Source:* New Economy Development Group, "Maori Language Nests (Te Kohanga Reo)", in *First Nations Children: Success Stories in Our Communities* (Ottawa: Health and Welfare Canada, Children's Bureau, 1993).

Most Aboriginal children are not offered the option of schooling in an Aboriginal language. English and French are the only choices. This sends a powerful message to Aboriginal children that their languages are not important. The dominance of English or French in the school environment diminishes the vitality of the Aboriginal language in the child's communication world.

It is clear from the declining use of Aboriginal languages that informal acquisition will not result in the preservation and vitality of Aboriginal languages. Aboriginal communities and parents have several options. They may choose primary use of the Aboriginal language at all stages of schooling. They may decide to support the use of the Aboriginal language as a second language with bilingual fluency and literacy. A further choice is to provide early immersion in the Aboriginal language with transition to English or French after the child has strong fluency. Parents whose children speak an Aboriginal language when they start school may not realize how important it is to reinforce these language skills in the first years of schooling.

Much curriculum development and teacher education is needed to support



effective language instruction. In some cases, language research is needed. Aboriginal languages usually require 'lexical elaboration' to add words to the language for concepts encountered later in the child's education. Some languages have dialects that must be documented. There has been very little research on Michif, the Métis language and its dialects, which have been mainly oral languages. The prospects for preserving Michif are discussed in Volume 4, Chapter 5. The language is in a fragile state, since only one per cent of Aboriginal people over the age of 15 reported speaking Michif in 1991.

One of the barriers to teaching Aboriginal languages in the public schools has been the lack of recognition by educators (at the elementary, high school and post-secondary levels) of the competence of elders and other fluent speakers as teachers in the school system. Because elders and other potential teachers do not hold formal qualifications, their unique expertise has not been acknowledged. They have been barred from teaching opportunities and compensation commensurate with their expertise. Some Aboriginal language teacher certification programs have now been established — for example, at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and in the Northwest Territories — but we did not discover whether these programs have increased elders' access to the classroom. In Chapter 6 in this volume, we discuss the critical importance of restoring intergenerational language transmission using the expertise of fluent speakers, who are often older people.

The preservation and continued vitality of Aboriginal languages are unlikely to be assured by the education system alone. This requires individual, family and community commitment to use language as a source of collective wealth in all forms of communication: newsletters, radio and television broadcasting, public events, ceremonies and, most important, in everyday life. Political and community leaders should encourage the conduct of community business in their own language to the greatest extent possible. The formal education system can be an essential resource in a community-wide effort to ensure the vitality of Aboriginal languages for future generations. Te Kohanga Reo is one model that has attracted the attention of Aboriginal language educators and whole communities (see box). It offers evidence that grassroots community mobilization can be highly successful in saving a language where the will for language survival is widely shared.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### 3.5.6

Aboriginal language education be assigned priority in Aboriginal, provincial and territorial education systems to complement and support language preservation efforts in local communities through

- (a) first- or second-language instruction or immersion programs where parents desire it and numbers warrant;
- (b) recognition of Aboriginal language competence for second-language academic credit whether competence is acquired through classroom or out-of-school instruction;
- (c) involving elders and fluent Aboriginal speakers in programs to enhance Aboriginal language acquisition and fluency;
- (d) developing instructional materials; and
- (e) encouraging and rewarding language teaching as a career path and language research in lexical elaboration, structural analysis and cultural contexts as professional and academic specializations.

#### ***Aboriginal control and parental involvement***

Aboriginal control of education and parental involvement are two principles first advocated in the National Indian Brotherhood's landmark paper, "Indian Control of Indian Education". Many Aboriginal leaders speak of *resuming* control of education, since First Nations and Inuit exercised complete control of education for countless generations. Rather than being a new responsibility, self-determination in education was practised by families and communities in earlier times.

Certainly, Aboriginal involvement in the direct delivery of education has increased substantially since the early 1970s. Through its devolution policy, the federal government has delegated administrative authority to First Nations for most of the schools that serve reserve communities. In a few instances where First Nations and Métis people constitute a majority in a school district, they have gained a majority on local school boards, for example, in the Northlands school division in northern Alberta, the Frontier school division in

northern Manitoba, and the Northern Lights school division in northern Saskatchewan. Apart from these exceptions, however, and despite traditions of local control and parental involvement in Canadian education, representation of Aboriginal parents on boards of education and other education authorities is limited. This is true for both provincial and territorial public schools, where almost 70 per cent of all Aboriginal children attend school. In Ontario and New Brunswick, legislation provides for Aboriginal representation on school boards, but we did not find any data to indicate whether this approach has been successful in bridging the gap between Aboriginal parents and the education system.

Even where Aboriginal people are in the majority, they may be marginalized in school governance. We were told that in some communities in the Northwest Territories, Aboriginal parents are underrepresented or absent from local school bodies, even where the community is largely Aboriginal. Yellowknife education district #1 has had no Aboriginal members on the school board.<sup>32</sup>

Until recently, First Nation communities in British Columbia, Ontario and New Brunswick whose children attend provincial schools were subject to master tuition agreements. The federal government provided funds directly to provincial authorities on a per student basis: parents and communities had no power to set standards or require accountability from school boards receiving the funds. As these agreements have expired one by one, the First Nations communities have used funding negotiations to obtain appropriate education for their children. Again, the Commission did not find any information on whether this mechanism is improving Aboriginal education. However, representatives of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council on Vancouver Island and Port Alberni school district no. 70 described the evolution of their positive working relationship, following the signing of a local agreement, and the benefits to Nuu-chah-nulth children.<sup>33</sup>

Even where education authorities are Aboriginal, there must be a continuing effort to involve parents in the education of their children. The Kativik school board found that parents felt removed from the decision making of local schools. The board and local school committees have begun a consultation process that will involve parents in defining the outcomes they want for their children through the education system. They will participate in decisions that will guide the design of education in the future.

In some urban centres, Aboriginal consultants and advisers act as the focal point for co-ordinating Aboriginal initiatives in the school system. Calgary and Vancouver have such positions (see box). City-wide advisory committees are sometimes established to work with the Aboriginal consultant. Where there are many Aboriginal students in a school, parent groups may also be set up. In many cases, however, Aboriginal parents are far removed from the school. Unless there is a critical mass of Aboriginal people involved, the school culture may be simply too difficult to penetrate.

Elders in particular are absent from the classrooms where Aboriginal children are being educated. In Aboriginal societies, elders are key teachers of the young. Elders must be restored to their place of influence in teaching the young. The doors of the school need to be opened to Aboriginal people. The absence of parents and elders from educational processes is an expression of the lack of Aboriginal influence in the school.

In a study of First Nations and provincial schools to determine the status of First Nations control of their education, Kirkness and Bowman report a number of ways for parents to become involved with the school, including “being guest speakers, working as volunteers in the classroom, assisting in cultural activities, elders’ visits, assisting on field trips, tutoring, noon hour supervision, project planning, participating in social events, coaching sports”.<sup>34</sup> In addition, school personnel visit reserves to meet with parents or with local education authorities. Parents can also become involved in specific committees and programs, including in-service training for teachers.

### **Vancouver School District No. 39**

Vancouver School District No. 39 has established First Nations education programs and infrastructure to serve an estimated 2,000 Aboriginal students from varying cultural backgrounds in 130 district schools. A First Nations education specialist provides leadership and support to the entire program. At the school level, 19 First Nations school support workers are deployed to encourage parent participation, to problem-solve with teachers, parents and students, and actively to facilitate culturally relevant learning experiences for Aboriginal students.

Involving Aboriginal parents has been an important focus of the First Nations education program. Some parents become involved in the school consultative committees established in each school for all

parents. In three schools where there is high enrolment of Aboriginal students, the schools have established Aboriginal parent groups. At the district level, there is a First Nations advisory committee in which parents and urban-based Aboriginal organizations are represented. This advisory committee, which reports to the Vancouver school board, plays a critical role in advancing Aboriginal education issues and initiatives in the district. The First Nations education specialist also sits on other district-wide advisory committees, for example, race relations, employment equity and inner city. While there have been no Aboriginal trustees on the Vancouver school board, Aboriginal parents and school staff are attempting to have an impact at various levels of the district school system.

The district has a number of support programs for Aboriginal students at the elementary, junior high and secondary levels. Students are assisted if they require a lower teacher-student ratio, if their learning styles differ from methods used in the conventional classroom, or if they are deemed to be at risk. There are three alternative school programs for grades six to 10, the grades at which Aboriginal students most frequently drop out. The ARIES street kids program operates out of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre for Aboriginal students who have been on the street and want to continue their education.

The district has pioneered the use of Fuerstein's instrumental enrichment and dynamic assessment approach in its support programs, not only with Aboriginal students but with all students in the district. Over 700 district staff and teachers have been trained in implementing this approach in their classrooms. The First Nations education specialist has been acknowledged internationally for her leadership and expertise in this field.

In 1995, the Vancouver school board approved a feasibility study on the establishment of a First Nations school.

One of the strategies employed by schools to bridge the gap between home and school has been the hiring of support workers or liaison workers. These workers can be crucial in promoting an understanding of Aboriginal values, providing support for children in the school, resolving difficulties, and serving as an advocate for children and parents. However, the important work of liaison workers is not a substitute for real participation by Aboriginal parents in

the school's strategic decision-making processes and the day-to-day education of the children.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.7**

Where Aboriginal children attend provincial and territorial schools, provincial and territorial governments take immediate steps to ensure that Aboriginal people are involved fully in the decision-making processes that affect the education of their children. Aboriginal control of education and parental involvement should be implemented through a variety of actions:

(a) legislation to guarantee Aboriginal representation on school boards where population numbers warrant;

(b) recognition of Aboriginally controlled schools under the jurisdiction of Aboriginal community of interest governments;

(c) establishment of Aboriginally governed schools affiliated with school districts, if requested by Aboriginal people; and

(d) creation of Aboriginal advisory committees to school boards.

### **3.5.8**

All schools serving Aboriginal children adopt policies that welcome the involvement of Aboriginal parents, elders and families in the life of the school, for example, by establishing advisory or parents committees, introducing teaching by elders in the classroom, and involving parents in school activities.

### ***Positive directions for the future***

Aboriginal people, federal, provincial and territorial governments, school authorities and individual teachers have all taken important and positive steps to improve the education of Aboriginal children. Much more must be done if these gains are to be expanded.

We have discussed four key issues: early childhood education, culturally based curriculum, language education, and Aboriginal control and parental involvement. Many other themes appeared in the hearings: the lack of Aboriginal teachers and education leaders in public school systems; inadequate funding to deal with special needs of children with disabilities in Aboriginal schools; racism in classroom interactions and in curriculum; the use of intelligence and scholastic tests that take non-Aboriginal populations as their norm; learning styles of Aboriginal children and teaching styles to accommodate them; the streaming of Aboriginal children away from academically rigorous programs. The list could be extended.

Aboriginal education can follow two paths: Aboriginal governance and improved public education systems. Many issues could be resolved quickly if Aboriginal people had effective control of education and sufficient resources to develop and implement education systems that reflect their needs. Aboriginally controlled institutions will be best situated to create a learning environment in which Aboriginal values, beliefs and traditions are imbedded in the culture of the school. Aboriginal people will choose and design the programs that reflect their aspirations for their children. Aboriginal control and parental involvement will provide mechanisms for Aboriginal people to identify problems and become involved in the solutions. At the same time, increased participation should not relieve provincial and territorial governments of the responsibility to take an aggressive and proactive stance against discrimination and barriers to the achievement of equitable outcomes in education for Aboriginal peoples.

### **Education Equity in Saskatchewan**

The goal of education equity is to provide a supportive learning environment for Aboriginal children. There are five components to an education equity plan.

1. The first is to recruit more Aboriginal teachers in all of our schools.
2. The second is to involve Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. And that means a lot of things. That means making schools more friendly. That means teachers being available to parents on a very flexible basis. That means encouraging parents to participate in all aspects of school life, including school boards, division boards, that kind

of thing. The Commission did not go so far as to order participation on school division boards, although it is our opinion that we have that authority.

3. The third component of an education equity plan is to put more Aboriginal content into the curriculum. The Department of Education has had a task force and has had some curriculum. The Commission has gone further. We have prepared and had sent out to all school divisions, all schools in the province, lesson plans that deal with Aboriginal history and deal with the problems of discrimination....

4. The fourth component of education equity is providing cross-cultural training for all school staff and for school administrators. That, to me, is a crucial part of education equity. Many school divisions have gone a long way to providing excellent cross-cultural training for their teachers. Unfortunately, all school divisions have not done that and it is something that the Commission is seriously considering mandating. It is at the point where some school divisions are going to have to be ordered to do that in the near future.

5. The final component to education equity is a review of all school policies to make sure [that even if] they appear neutral they do not [in fact] discriminate; again to remove systemic discrimination....All school policies are reviewed.

Many school divisions have taken this to heart and have gone right to Aboriginal organizations to improve their policies. Some have not. That kind of affirmative action program fights against systemic discrimination. We know that changing the system is a slow process. Our position is that the process has to start now. We have to do something.

*Source:* Theresa Holizki, Chief Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, RCAP transcripts, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 28 October 1992.

The experience of Saskatchewan is instructive in this regard. In 1985, the provincial Human Rights Commission (hrc) issued a report, *Education Equity: A Report on Indian/Native Education in Saskatchewan*. The hrc requires every school board whose enrolment of Aboriginal students exceeds five per cent to prepare a plan of action for education equity. When she appeared at our hearings, Chief Commissioner Theresa Holizki noted that 18 school districts



had action plans in place. She described the program and reported on its results, as detailed in the accompanying box. The hrc monitors the implementation of measures to improve the education of Aboriginal people in the province.

Other provinces and territories may have their own monitoring mechanisms, or they may have none. Except where Aboriginally run schools have been established, there is no real accountability of provincial and territorial school systems to Aboriginal parents and communities for the quality of education. This needs to change. Provincial and territorial schools receive funding to provide quality education to Aboriginal students. More than two decades after the demand for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education, it is apparent that equity of outcomes will not be achieved without focused, determined efforts to make things change.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.9**

Provincial and territorial ministries require school boards serving Aboriginal students to implement a comprehensive Aboriginal education strategy, developed with Aboriginal parents, elders and educators, including

- (a) goals and objectives to be accomplished during the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples;
- (b) hiring of Aboriginal teachers at the elementary and secondary school level, with negotiated target levels, to teach in all areas of school programs, not just Aboriginal programs;
- (c) hiring of Aboriginal people in administrative and leadership positions;
- (d) hiring of Aboriginal support workers, such as counsellors, community liaison workers, psychologists and speech therapists;
- (e) curriculum, in all subject areas, that includes the perspectives, traditions, beliefs and world view of Aboriginal peoples;

(f) involvement of Aboriginal elders in teaching Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students;

(g) language classes in Aboriginal languages, as determined by the Aboriginal community;

(h) family and community involvement mechanisms;

(i) education programs that combat stereotypes, racism, prejudice and biases;

(j) accountability indicators tied to board or district funding; and

(k) public reports of results by the end of the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples in the year 2004.

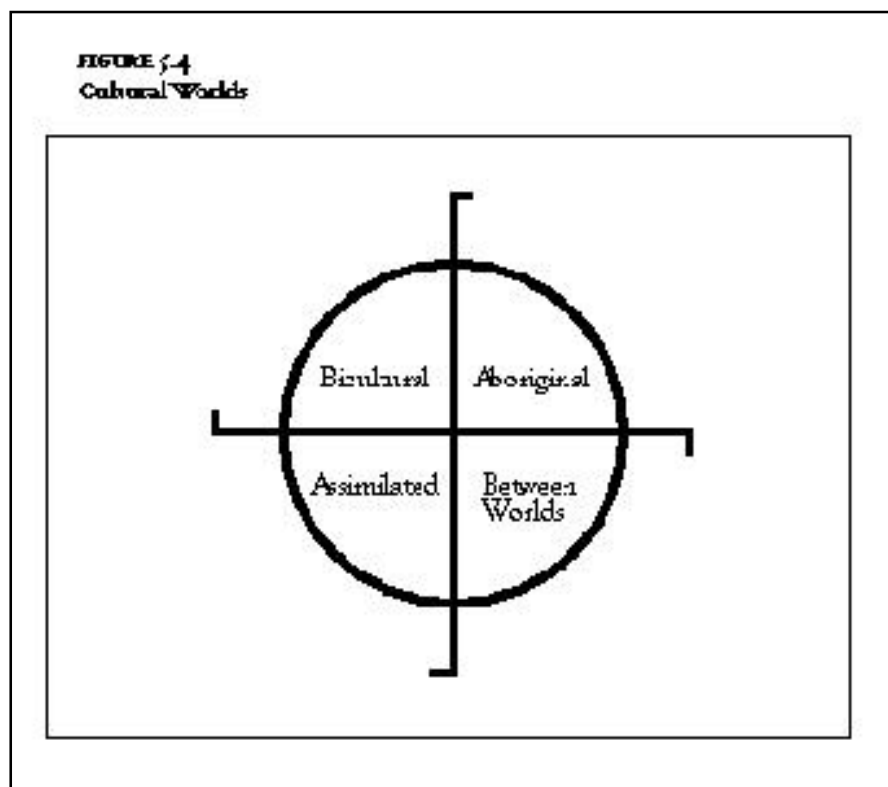
## **4. Youth**

Aboriginal youth today straddle two worlds. The non-Aboriginal world has become a fast-paced, competitive, changing environment in which ever higher levels of education and new skills are required to survive. These are powerful cultural forces that necessitate a secure, solid identity to balance the conflicting messages and demands created where the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds meet.

The medicine wheel (Figure 5.4) illustrates the cultural implications of this convergence of worlds. Some youth, whose aboriginality has been nurtured in the family and through childhood schooling, function comfortably as bicultural individuals. Others have been raised in environments where their Aboriginal heritage is peripheral to daily life, and they live primarily in mainstream society. Social scientists use the term 'assimilated' or 'acculturated' to describe this pattern. In some communities, young people have had exposure to Aboriginal lifeways and are grounded in traditional Aboriginal value systems and beliefs.

The vast majority of Aboriginal youth, however, are simply struggling to survive. They are caught between the expectations, values and demands of two worlds, unable to find a point of balance. Their despair is manifested in

early school leaving, substance abuse, suicide attempts, defiance of the law, and teen pregnancies. As shown in Figure 5.1, 57 per cent of Aboriginal people age 15 and over had less than a grade 9 education in 1991 or did not graduate from high school.<sup>35</sup> The comparable figure for non-Aboriginal people was about 37 per cent.<sup>36</sup> Shocking as these figures may seem, dropping out may be an understandable choice if attending school feels like a jail sentence. Unfortunately, those who leave school have few employment options. The rate of unemployment among Aboriginal youth who have not completed high school is notoriously high. If they try to return to school, they face many barriers in an education system that is not geared to mature students.



The experience of Aboriginal youth today stands in sharp contrast to the heritage of Aboriginal peoples. Traditional education prepared youth to take up adult responsibilities. Through apprenticeship and teaching by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, skills and knowledge were shaped and honed. In the past, the respective roles of men and women in community life were valued and well established, with continuity from generation to generation, so that youth saw their future roles modelled by adults and elders who were respected and esteemed within their world.

The transition from childhood to youth was, and continues to be for some, a

time marked by traditional ceremonies recognizing the emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual upheavals young people experience as they grow into their adult bodies, emotions and roles. The importance of the individual within the community is stressed with rites of passage — fasts, vision quests and ritual dances. The unique identity of the youth in the broader community is thus established and recognized. Through participation in community life from an early age, the youth observes and absorbs the knowledge and behaviour required to function successfully in adult roles in Aboriginal society. This is part of the lifelong learning process.

By the time they enter high school, many Aboriginal youth have spent eight years or more in an education system from which they and their parents feel alienated. In public schools, the absence of support for Aboriginal identities is overwhelming: no Aboriginal high school teachers; only a limited curriculum dealing with contemporary Aboriginal languages, cultures, history and political issues; an emphasis on intellectual cognitive achievement at the expense of spiritual, social and physical development; and the marginalization of youth in decision making about their education.

At the high school level, most parents are even less involved in their children's education than at elementary school levels. Their exclusion from decision making is intensified where there are no local high schools, where teachers and administrators are non-Aboriginal, and where Aboriginal parents are in a minority. Issues of culturally appropriate curriculum, language education, parental involvement, and funding for curriculum development and culture programs are all present in the education of youth, as in the education of the child. Additional challenges are encountered in the education of youth are the need for youth empowerment; the need for local high schools; the opportunity to return to high school; and the transition from high school to economic activity and careers.

## **4.1 Youth Empowerment**

Parents are not the only ones who feel unable to shape the education process significantly. Youth themselves are excluded. The Commission heard testimony from youth that, although their present and future are at stake, they are rarely involved in decisions about their education. The same difficulties are present in public and Aboriginal controlled schools alike. This sense of disempowerment signals that the experience of youth is out of alignment with

statements by Aboriginal leaders who place hope and trust in youth as the next generation of leaders.

What processes are needed so that youth can influence their environment and change the circumstances they find distressing? Schooling, in its organization and content, can help to foster students' potential as active, engaged Aboriginal citizens and leaders.

An extensive and soul-searching evaluative study of the education system in Nunavik in northern Quebec lends support to these voices. In 1992, the final report of the Nunavik Educational Task Force pointed out that the Kativik school board had implemented many of the changes that other Aboriginal people are advocating. They had offered Inuktitut classes and opportunities for cultural programs in the school. Yet their young people were continuing to leave the education system before completion and were becoming entangled in self-destructive behaviour such as substance abuse and suicide.

The report recommended a number of changes, including the development of an integrated and systematic culturally based curriculum; adopting high academic standards; moving to a 12-month school year; adopting the community school model; implementing relevant programs for youth; offering high-impact heritage adventure programs; and providing an alternative 'culture track' school program through the Land College. To promote youth empowerment, the study recommended the following:

Student initiated programs should be encouraged to involve students in school operations, to give them real responsibilities, and to involve older students in the creation and implementation of programs for all ages. This is to provide them with effective training, tools, and resources. Students should become a respected and responsible partner in maintaining an active community for learning. Student councils and committees, school host and monitor programs, peer and cross-age tutoring, and special projects such as travel and school exchanges and community volunteer service programs, are all examples of activities that student councils should take on to demonstrate that they have some real responsibility in the school.<sup>37</sup>

Presentations made to us emphasized the importance of empowering youth. (Empowerment was a recurring theme in presentations from Aboriginal youth at our hearings; see Volume 4, Chapter 4.) There have been specific efforts to do this using a variety of approaches, or several approaches in combination,

including cultural approaches, skills development and support programs, sports and outdoor education programs, and transformative education. We describe several programs that are under way. While the Commission found few formal evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives, it is important to report the efforts of dedicated educators, elders, community members and leaders.

### ***Cultural approaches***

Cultural approaches start from the belief that if youth are solidly grounded in their Aboriginal identity and cultural knowledge, they will have strong personal resources to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. The ability to implement culture-based curriculum goes hand in hand with the authority to control what happens in the school system. Cultural programs can be added to the school curriculum, or the whole curriculum can be developed around a cultural core. The most established cultural programming can be found in the schools governed by Aboriginally controlled boards, for example, Kativik school board and the divisional boards of the Northwest Territories. They have been able to implement curriculum changes that communities in other parts of the country are still struggling to achieve. But there is progress in other locations, and we sample a few of them.

- Joe Duquette High School is an Aboriginally managed high school in Saskatoon, established under the jurisdiction of the separate school board. It has strong cultural programming, and there is a culture camp at the end of each year. It has been difficult to establish a strong language program because the students come from many nations with diverse languages. Joe Duquette is operating at maximum capacity.

- Children of the Earth is a high school in Winnipeg school division no. 1. In its few years of existence, it has grown rapidly. The school offers a strong cultural core as well as specific support programs that are provincially funded. Students from Children of the Earth who appeared before the Commission spoke about the school with commitment and with enthusiasm about completing their high school education.

- Ile-a-la-Crosse School in northern Saskatchewan is operated by a board composed of local people. It offers education from junior kindergarten to grade 12. Métis values, history and culture are an integral part of all subject areas, and Michif is taught as a language credit. The school building houses a

daycare facility, dental clinic and public library, and the gym and classrooms are used in the evenings for public events.

- The Kahnawake Survival School (Quebec) began more than 20 years ago when Mohawk students and parents fought to establish their own school. Today, it has 170 students, from grades 7 to 11. Haudenosaunee history and culture are part of the curriculum, and the students study Mohawk language in class daily. The students' council is modelled on the traditional Mohawk government. Students sit in clans and make decisions by consensus. The council has been able to influence the school's policies.

In addition to Aboriginally run schools, provincial and territorial governments have launched important curriculum initiatives resulting in Aboriginal curriculum in the classroom. Curriculum for Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit in the Northwest Territories are examples. In British Columbia, a First Nations studies curriculum has been developed for grade 12. Ontario has also implemented a Native As Second Language Program and produced an Aboriginal studies curriculum for grades 7 to 10.

Despite the positive contribution of culturally based programs to the lives of youth, students may have problems obtaining credit for traditionally based education. Representatives from the Nutshimiu Atusseun training centre told the Commission that the traditional wilderness skills taught by elders as part of their youth training program are not recognized by the department of education in Quebec. The department does not recognize the elders as teachers, so youth do not receive credit for the training, although they receive credit for components not taught by elders, such as first aid and job search skills. The centre has faced funding difficulties, particularly since funders of job-related skills increasingly emphasize accreditation.<sup>38</sup>

The use of Aboriginal role models is another approach that uses Aboriginal identity to motivate youth. Health Canada has been a major sponsor of a role model program based in part on posters featuring the accomplishments of Aboriginal people. Many of the role models travel across the country and speak to Aboriginal youth. Teachers could also serve as role models, but there are few Aboriginal high school teachers in education systems today.

### ***Skills development and support programs***

Some education programs help youth develop the skills they need to complete their academic work successfully. Through tutoring, counselling and skills development, they help to strengthen the individual's capacity for achievement. Career counselling and fairs help expose youth to career possibilities. Other programs target at-risk youth, often providing alternative programming or specific information programs that might reduce youth involvement in risky lifestyle choices such as substance abuse, unprotected sexual activity or gangs. These programs are sometimes combined with cultural approaches to tackle root issues of identity and alienation.

The Vancouver school board has introduced a program called Instrumental Enrichment, based on the work of Israeli educator Reuven Feuerstein. By working through a structured set of exercises, students develop problem-solving strategies that can be used in classroom work. They are also encouraged to apply the same principles and processes of problem solving to concerns in their daily lives. While the program serves both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students, the First Nations specialist employed by the Vancouver school board has played a leading role in developing and implementing this program. Many Aboriginal students have discovered for themselves that they are competent and creative learners.<sup>39</sup>

As well as offering a strong cultural program, Children of the Earth High School in Winnipeg offers a variety of support programs. Pride is an early detection and prevention program designed to prevent chemical dependency. Witchi-ak-kan-nak (partnerships) offers alternatives to students who might be attracted to gang-related violence.

Vincent Massey Collegiate in Fort Garry school division no. 5 has implemented an Empowering Aboriginal Students program. To enhance the self-concept of youth, it has introduced more Aboriginal history, language and culture in the curriculum and has increased staff awareness of the social and political concerns of students. It has also established a mentorship program between Aboriginal youth and adults.

In 1992 the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia initiated the Synala Honours Program, which offers grade 11 students a six-week on-campus experience in the summer to introduce them to university life. The students are encouraged to pursue professional careers through a program that addresses intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of learning. The program has a strong focus on Aboriginal



identity.

### ***Sports and outdoor education programs***

Sports provide a vehicle for physical and emotional development, the nurturing of pride and Aboriginal identity, and the fostering of leadership skills. Sports can be integrated into school programs or friendship centre programs or sponsored by other community organizations. Team sports have been very popular in Aboriginal communities across the country, as have traditional sports.

The potential of traditional sport and games as a form of youth empowerment is described by Alwyn Morris, a member of the Mohawk nation and 1984 Olympic gold and bronze medallist in kayaking:

[T]raditional sports are a recreation activity as well as a method of enhancing cultural retention. Many of the games promote values that were practised traditionally. Some games promote a spiritual value, others identify the high level of respect the people displayed for all humans, specifically women. Still others had a dispute settling purpose. Traditional training respects and fosters strength; spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally, traits needed to be instilled in our youth today for their personal growth.<sup>40</sup>

Popular Canadian culture often emphasizes the elite athlete. While individual excellence is highly valued in Aboriginal cultures, there is also a strong collective tradition. The Arctic Games are a good illustration. The games include seal skinning, tea boiling, fish cutting, one- and two-foot kicks and head pulls — and competitors actually teach each other during the competition!

Sports have provided an important mechanism for youth development, as illustrated in the following examples.

The First Nations Ski Team in Calgary was established by Cort Gallup, a Cree who reached the top ranks in the Alberta skiing world. His experience taught him to believe that the physical challenge of skiing could help Aboriginal youth rediscover the superb mental and physical conditioning required of warriors and hunters in traditional societies. Twenty young people between the ages of six and 16 now train year-round for the team. Their school work has improved, their alcohol and drug consumption is non-existent, and their self-esteem has

soared. The skiers have started a traditional drumming and dancing group that pulls in elders and other youth who do not wish to ski. Local merchants donate equipment, families raise money, and ski hill operators offer slope time for training. This initiative is entirely community supported.<sup>41</sup>

On the west coast, the annual all-Aboriginal basketball tournament attracts youth and adult teams in all age categories, male and female, from First Nations villages up and down the coast. Tribal reputations are put to the test in a week-long competition each January in Prince Rupert. Traditional entertainment is provided by students of various nations. Teams put in months of local fundraising to participate in this popular event.

Outdoor education programs have also been a vehicle for youth empowerment by combining outdoor skills, traditional land-based skills, and cultural and environmental awareness. Elders are often the primary teachers. On-the-land programs, survival camps and other culturally based outdoor programs have been initiated by some schools. The Rediscovery summer camps, for example, bring together young people between the ages of eight and 17 to spend seven days on the land learning traditional knowledge and skills. The program content differs according to the ecosystem: in Fort McMurray in northern Alberta, students canoe, hunt for small game, fish in fresh water and learn to set up camp. In coastal British Columbia, the young people develop skills related to the ocean. The Canadian Outward Bound School has also worked with Aboriginal schools in various parts of the country to run youth programs.

In Big Trout Lake, Ontario, community members have created their own land-based program. Elders take about 40 young people out on traditional land for several weeks at a time during each of the four seasons. Since 1982, the Nutshimiu-Atusseun training centre on the north shore of the St. Lawrence in Quebec has offered a 16-week youth program, of which eight weeks are spent with elders on the land. The Avataq Cultural Institute in Nunavik operates a traditional Inuit summer camp in Inukjuak each year, and a similar summer camp is operated by the community of Kuujuaq. In New Brunswick, a summer camp provides cultural enrichment for Mi'kmaq and Wuastukwiuk (Maliseet) students.

### ***Transformative education***

Many of the youth who spoke before the Commission expressed their deep

desire to be involved in their communities, to see the school joined to the real issues of their lives, to see relevance in what they are learning, to make a difference. Education as they experience it is something removed and separate from their everyday world, their hopes and dreams. This sense of distance between learning in the school and the world around them does not have to exist. It can be bridged in a number of ways.

One way is to cast aside the walls of the school and to treat the whole community as the site of education. We saw an example of this in the Akwesasne science and maths project. As part of the learning process in that curriculum, youth became involved in examining water quality. A real community issue became the focus for learning about biology, chemistry, geology and mathematics. The potential to learn citizenship skills can be woven into this learning, as well as the spiritual and ethical dimensions of the issue. For students, this is engaging learning that connects them to the whole of community life.

Another way to transcend this divide between the school experience and daily life is to take as the focus of learning the issues that are most relevant to youth. Excellent study and practice in education have emerged from other parts of the world where people have also experienced colonialism or racial oppression.<sup>42</sup> This form of education — called by a variety of names, including transformative education, popular education and critical pedagogy — acknowledges that the educational process is one of unequal power relationships. Students should be active creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients. The teacher is perceived as a facilitator who can guide the educational process without dominating.

By connecting their experiences to the broader picture, students are able to develop an understanding of the political, social and economic forces that shape their lives. This kind of understanding is critical for youth. The pain experienced in everyday life — racism, violence, poverty — is raw and real. Most youth do not yet have an interpretive framework that helps them understand their own experiences as part of the larger struggle of Aboriginal peoples for their rights. Many blame themselves for life conditions over which they have little control and, as a result, gravitate to risky, self-destructive lifestyles.

Transformative education uses the students' personal experiences as the springboard for deeper analysis and understanding. School courses in history,

literature, Aboriginal studies, social studies, geography, art, theatre arts and other subject areas have the potential to transform experiences into an intelligible pattern with local, regional and global aspects. This educational process is participatory and may use experiential learning, research projects, oral histories, theatre, drawing techniques and other forms of creative expression to do analysis. An important dimension of the learning is the sharing of knowledge by all participants: everyone contributes and there is no competitive ranking of performance.

Youth must become active agents capable of taking action to transform the imperfect world they encounter. This is the basis of active, responsible citizenship. Youth who spoke before the Commission talked about the importance of confronting the problems they face. They came forward with examples and proposals:

The youth in this community should organize a youth group with the express goal of combatting racism. The group could be called Kids Against Racial Discrimination and should work with a number of community organizations to develop programs to make people feel welcome, not excluded, and to educate all people in the community on the need for equality of support and of treatment. Schools must include programs against racism in curricula at all levels. Schools must provide opportunities for all students to learn about the values and beliefs of other people. The study of Native culture, for example, should be compulsory for non-Aboriginal students also.

Dawn Campbell  
North Battleford Comprehensive High School  
North Battleford, Saskatchewan, 29 October 1992

As recommended in *Silatunirmut: the Pathway to Wisdom*, a study discussed earlier, youth must have opportunities to assume positions of leadership. Student councils, peer teaching, youth conferences and recreation leadership training are all options for expanding the capacities of youth for future leadership. In high schools where Aboriginal students are in the minority, proactive approaches may be required to invite Aboriginal youth into leadership roles.

Also important are youth exchanges and travel. School exchanges expand learning, understanding and possibilities. Some schools already hold such trips. International exchanges should also take place. A few Aboriginal young people have travelled internationally with programs like Canada World Youth,

and others have attended international gatherings of Indigenous peoples. There should be more opportunities for Aboriginal youth to make connections with Indigenous youth in other parts of the world. Transformative education, used in conjunction with travel, would help youth to analyze the links between their experience and the broader patterns of social and political life they encounter in the world.

### **"They Look A Lot Like Us"**

In May 1987, 12 students from Coppermine, Northwest Territories, 10 of them Inuit, travelled to China to explore a different culture and way of life. Their journey took them to Mongolia where they were to encounter a people with a culture and lifestyle that bore remarkable similarities to Inuit life. Their journey is documented in a film, "They Look A Lot Like Us — A China Odyssey" (Kudluk Productions, 1987), which has won several awards.

Electronic adventures are also opening the door to exchange as students are introduced to the Internet and are able to chat with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Discussions have linked classrooms of Indigenous youth from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and other countries. Through the SchoolNet project, opportunities for electronic communication could open up significantly in the next decade.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.10**

Aboriginally controlled, provincial, and territorial schools serving Aboriginal youth develop and implement comprehensive Aboriginal youth empowerment strategies with elements elaborated in collaboration with youth, including

- (a) cultural education in classroom and informal settings;
- (b) acknowledgement of spiritual, ethical and intuitive dimensions of learning;
- (c) education to support critical analysis of Aboriginal experience;

(d) learning as a means of healing from the effects of trauma, abuse and racism;

(e) academic skills development and support;

(f) sports and outdoor education;

(g) leadership development; and

(h) youth exchanges between Aboriginal nations, across Canada and internationally.

## **4.2 Need for Local High Schools**

The highest drop-out rate for Aboriginal students is between grades nine and 10. Where there is no local Aboriginally controlled high school, entering high school outside an Aboriginal community may be the youth's first direct experience with the attitudes of mainstream society. At this vulnerable age when there are intense social pressures, youth in public schools frequently encounter racist attitudes and behaviour that undermine their self-esteem. Presenters pointed out schooling practices that discriminate without malice on the part of teachers:

We put Mi'kmaq [language] into kindergarten and then switch them in primary level to English with the hope that they'll start getting it....So little is understood [about the length of time] it takes to be able to think in the second language. Our students leave Eskasoni at grade 10. By that time they have been given English language instruction in school, but they are still thinking in Mi'kmaq when they leave here to go to Riverview High School. There they are subjected all day to English, at a pace that assumes they should know what is happening. Questions are given to them...and by the time the student has thought about what was asked, and what needs to be said based on what he read last night, and by the time he comes up with the right words in English to express his Mi'kmaq thinking, the teacher has long gone, moved on to someone else.

Marie Battiste  
Cultural Curriculum Co-ordinator  
Eskasoni School Board

Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, 7 May 1992

For many youth in geographically isolated communities, there are no local high schools. To continue their education, they must relocate to urban centres or spend many hours commuting. The transition to high school demands massive disruption of their family and community life, and they experience intense isolation and loneliness.

Our children, before they actually grow up...have to leave their parents to go down south, but they cannot survive in the big cities, so they just end up coming back to their own people because they get very lonely in the bigger cities, and it is a very different type of life and this is what happens. They come back to the communities and they are not hunters any more because they were not properly trained by the elders.... [translation]

Johnny Epoo  
President, Avatuck  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 21 April 1992

The availability of high school education in remote or isolated communities varies from region to region. In band-controlled schools, 27 per cent go to grade 12; 59 per cent of them have grade 9, 10 or 11. The Northwest Territories has a goal of establishing high school services in every community.<sup>43</sup> In the Baffin Island region, early secondary education (grades 9 and 10) is available in all communities, and in Nunavik, high school can be completed in almost all of the 14 communities.

### **Wahsa Distance Education High School**

Wahsa is a radio high school that was established in 1989 by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council in northwestern Ontario. It serves 23 First Nations communities, most of which have only fly-in access. Radio classes are broadcast on the FM band two or three times a week, and students meet in a local community learning centre under the supervision of a local community facilitator who is responsible for creating a positive learning environment. The students hold audio-conferences with the teacher by using a telephone convener that brings students from different communities on-line at the same time for discussion with the teacher. The 'Wahsa Express' is a plane service that carries students' assignments back and forth to Sioux Lookout for

marking once a week. A free tutoring hot-line and fax service gives the students additional contact with their teachers. On-site tutors help students four to eight hours a week. At least once a term, a teacher visits students in each community. Wahsa also offers Ontario correspondence courses, with the same support services as for its radio courses.

One of the important contributions of Wahsa is its creative organization of student enrolments. The school takes in students six times a year, to complete seven-week terms, each worth half a credit. Through this flexible system, students who have to leave school temporarily can resume their studies without significant loss of time or credit.

Technological difficulties have hampered Wahsa's programming. The Wahsa-serviced communities use analogue telecommunications equipment rather than the more recent digital equipment. Some communities are equipped only with radio phones. Students in some communities have had to attend a teleconference by crossing the lake in the middle of winter to use a radio phone installed outside on a screened porch. Education funding shortfalls have also limited the program's operations.

The greatest deterrent to extending high school education to all Aboriginal communities has been the high cost of offering local services where there are small numbers of students. For parents, it is also a dilemma: should they lobby for local high school services when course options will be limited, or should they send them to a regional centre where there are more choices?

Fortunately, alternatives are emerging. Some distance education projects geared to high school education have shown promising results. With a focus on youth education, the Wahsa Distance Learning High School, initiated by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council in northwestern Ontario, has innovative ideas to encourage completion of high school programs (see box). While distance technologies in Aboriginal education still require much cultural refinement, early results suggest they are a viable option when carefully established under Aboriginal control.

There are also other options. One is to establish regional schools for Aboriginal students in Aboriginal communities. Another is to combine study in the home community with seasonal institutes that bring students from small



communities together for short-term intensive instruction in some subject areas where more specialized facilities are needed. Flexibility and creativity may produce some unique combinations of educational services. The Wahsa Distance Learning High School demonstrates that flexible timetabling can expand the options available for young people.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.11**

High school programs be extended to communities, using cost-effective options agreed upon by parents and families, including

- (a) complete school facilities for local high school delivery;
- (b) regional high schools in Aboriginal communities;
- (c) culturally appropriate, interactive distance education; and
- (d) seasonal institutes.

## **4.3 High School Re-entry**

If large numbers of Aboriginal youth leave the education system, what happens if they want to return? Young people leave school for a variety of reasons. When they find that a low level of formal education blocks their economic opportunities, young people sometimes decide to return to school. However, they frequently find that the road back to school is blocked. Only 22 per cent of drop-outs aged 15 to 24 return to high school; another 11 per cent take adult upgrading. About 63 per cent do not return at all.<sup>44</sup>

Young people who have left school may not have as strong an academic preparation as their peers, but they have acquired considerable life experience. Their particular needs may not be met by rejoining a classroom where the students are younger and less experienced. Young women returning to school may be raising children with a partner or alone. Young men may be working to support a family. To apply the principle of lifelong learning

to youth, it is important to establish secondary education programs that invite youth to return to formal education and that acknowledge that their circumstances differ from those of younger students.

Unfortunately, even established programs considered successful by the Aboriginal community are not immune to education cutbacks. In Calgary, we were told about the plight of the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School (picss):

In 1993 funding for the over-age students at the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School, otherwise known as picss, may be discontinued. This development would affect half the student population. As an alternative high school, picss has successfully met the challenge of enhancing the educational, cultural and personal enhancement of Aboriginal students. Students over the age of 19 need specialized programs if they are to complete grade 12.

Allan Giroux  
Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee  
Calgary, Alberta  
26 May 1993

In consultation with youth, appropriate programs can be developed, including relevant curriculum and co-op programs. Other support may be required, such as flexible timetabling, on-site child care and outreach services such as counselling and peer support groups.<sup>45</sup> In some instances, income support may be required where the young person is living independently and has no other income. Youth should be involved in developing programs that address their needs.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.12**

Aboriginal authorities and all provincial and territorial ministries of education fund programs for Aboriginal youth who have left secondary school before graduation to enable them to resume their studies with appropriate curriculum, scheduling, academic and social support.

## **4.4 Economic Activity and Careers**

The Canadian job market is part of a global economy. Across the country parents and business people have expressed concern about the tenuous relationship between school and the workplace. Provincial and territorial governments are considering better ways to prepare students for the work that will be available in the twenty-first century. Economic analysts predict that in the future, the available jobs will be either low-skill and low-paying, or require 16 years or more of formal education.

Aboriginal parents, elders and leaders are concerned about the job prospects of youth and the preparation of students for these jobs. Young people are worried too. In some regions there is a strong job market for trained Aboriginal graduates. To implement self-government, Aboriginal professionals will be needed. Traditional activities, the arts and trades represent important career options in some regions.

Co-operative education, which combines school studies and related work placements, has a good track record in preparing students for job opportunities. It helps them sample a variety of job options and expand their knowledge of work possibilities. Co-op education introduces students to the demands of the workplace and offers them an opportunity to establish contacts. Co-op programs have kept many high school students in school. These programs are relevant and provide training, particularly in hi-tech fields, that schools cannot match. Both male and female students are exposed to career opportunities that broaden their horizons. In some small communities, it may be more difficult to implement co-op education where there is a shortage of paid employment. Work placements might include non-wage employment, including resource-based activities and training in traditional crafts.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.13**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments encourage co-op initiatives by offering funding inducements to secondary schools that develop active co-op education programs for Aboriginal young people.

## **5. Teacher Education Programs**

Inuit teachers, Inuit culture. To help fully meet our students' educational and cultural needs, we need more Aboriginal teachers from the region within our school system. Right now, just under 20 per cent of our teachers are Inuit and an increased number of Inuit teachers is important for a variety of reasons. Not only will Aboriginal teachers serve as role models for the Inuit youth, but they will have a better understanding of the Inuit student and his or her background and thus be better able to reach our Aboriginal students.

Larry Aknavigak  
Kitikmeot Board of Education  
Cambridge Bay, Northwest Territories, 17 November 1993

Teachers are central to the education experience. An inspiring teacher can set an individual on a path of discovery that lasts a lifetime. An insensitive teacher can scar an individual irreparably. Teachers are so pivotal to what happens in the classroom that Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning termed teachers one of the four engines that will transform the quality of schooling, learning and teaching:

We make the point repeatedly that no positive changes to the system can happen without the enthusiastic co-operation of teachers — a central fact perversely ignored in many attempts at reform — and that teachers simply can't be expected to perform their many functions adequately unless they are properly prepared.<sup>46</sup>

It has been recognized for decades that having Aboriginal teachers in the classroom represents the first line of change in the education of Aboriginal children and youth. The Hawthorn report of 1966 talked about the importance of Aboriginal teachers and non-Aboriginal teachers with cross-cultural sensitivity.<sup>47</sup> The training of Aboriginal teachers has been a top priority for Aboriginal people since the 1960s when they began to lobby for programs that would bring Aboriginal teachers into the classroom. Since the first programs were launched in Ontario and the Northwest Territories in the mid-1960s, there have been at least 34 Aboriginal teacher education programs across the country, many of which continue today.

Aboriginal teacher education programs have registered some important gains. In 1981, about 4,490 Aboriginal people were in teaching and related occupations. By 1991, there were 8,075.<sup>48</sup> While there are many more Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school systems today

than a decade ago, the numbers remain far too low relative to the current and projected need. At least three times as many are needed to achieve parity with the number of non-Aboriginal teachers serving non-Aboriginal children.<sup>49</sup> Recognizing that systematic steps must be taken if things are going to change, several jurisdictions have established targets to boost the number of Aboriginal teachers. The Northwest Territories aims to have 50 per cent Aboriginal teachers by the year 2000, up from 23 per cent in 1991. The Northern Lights school division in Saskatchewan expects to move from 24 per cent in 1992 to a target of 75 per cent Aboriginal teachers, reflecting the proportion of Aboriginal people in the region. As seen earlier, since 1985 the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has required school districts with an Aboriginal population of five per cent or more to establish an action plan in Aboriginal education, including the recruitment of Aboriginal teachers.

## **5.1 Quality of Teacher Education Programs**

Unfortunately, there has not been much systematic evaluation of teacher education programs for Aboriginal people. As a result, it is difficult to comment on the comparative quality of programs or on the degree to which specific teacher education programs have developed specialized curricula to train Aboriginal teachers. What we learn from communities is that not all teacher education programs prepare teachers for the cultural dimensions of teaching in Aboriginal classrooms.

Teaching is a complex transmission of values, behaviours and knowledge. If we recall the teaching traditions of Aboriginal nations, elders are respected teachers with access to knowledge that extends back through countless generations. In oral traditions, stories are a particularly important medium for transmitting knowledge. They contain layers of meaning that listeners decode according to their readiness to receive certain teachings. In the classroom and out on the land, the teacher conveys to students the acceptable rules of behaviour and the values to be honoured through subtle verbal and non-verbal communication. Education is holistic and addresses not only the intellectual but the spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of the individual. The teacher is a role model whose own behaviour and attitudes are absorbed by students. At the same time, the teachers encourage each individual to use the special gifts they have been given and to do so in a way that benefits everyone, not just themselves.

Scholars in Aboriginal education are still studying the subtleties of the

knowledge-transmission process. What is certain is that teacher education programs vary in their attention to the dynamics of teaching in Aboriginal cultural contexts. Many Aboriginal community members and education leaders have expressed frustration that Aboriginal teachers are not fully grounded in the teaching traditions of their nations. They argue that there should be stronger components in teacher education programs to address the language, history, pedagogy and traditions of Aboriginal peoples. It is important to ground teacher education programs in the cultural traditions of the communities in which teachers will eventually be working.

## **5.2 The Need for More Elementary School Teachers**

While the number of Aboriginal elementary school teachers has been growing steadily, the majority of Aboriginal children are still not schooled in classrooms with Aboriginal teachers. This under-representation is acutely apparent in provincial and territorial school systems that serve Aboriginal children. Even where the majority of students are Aboriginal, the number of Aboriginal teachers is far too low. We have recommended that school districts increase their hiring of Aboriginal teachers. The hiring target levels set by the government of the Northwest Territories, the Northern Lights school division, and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission are all indicators of the need to focus attention on training more elementary school teachers and getting them into the classroom.

The immediate concern of this section is increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers being trained. The numbers can be boosted through a strategy that combines an increase in institutional capacity with enough financial and counselling support for students. Many existing Aboriginal teacher education programs have survived through short-term funding that leaves their future uncertain. The federal government, as well as provincial and territorial governments, should intervene to increase funding for teacher education programs that have good track records in the Aboriginal community and that are prepared to train more Aboriginal teachers.

Aboriginal people and post-secondary institutions have entered into partnerships to train Aboriginal teachers, with some remarkable successes. However, Aboriginal teacher education programs are not the same throughout the country. Some have been designed with or by Aboriginal people, with considerable attention paid to Aboriginal styles of pedagogy, Aboriginal history, traditions and values, and Aboriginal language instruction. Others offer

teacher practicums to help Aboriginal people already working in education acquire teaching credentials. Some programs are delivered in Aboriginal communities or in regional centres. Still other programs are campus-based and offer the regular teacher education programs with some enrichment units. It is important to build on the models that represent successful collaboration between Aboriginal people and educational institutions. These programs can be assisted to increase their capacity to train and graduate more Aboriginal teachers.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.14**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments expand financial support to post-secondary institutions for existing and new Aboriginal teacher education programs, contingent on

- (a) evidence of Aboriginal support for the program;
- (b) Aboriginal participation in the governance of the program;
- (c) the incorporation of Aboriginal content and pedagogy into the program; and
- (d) periodic evaluations that indicate that the quality of teacher education conforms to standards of excellence expected by Aboriginal people.

## **5.3 The Need for More Secondary School Teachers**

Most of the Aboriginal teachers trained to date have been trained for elementary education. Many more are needed. At the same time, the number of Aboriginal teachers certified to teach at the secondary school level is abysmally low. This is a serious problem. In the grades where Aboriginal youth are most at risk of dropping out, Aboriginal teachers are unlikely to be among the school staff. Even in band-operated schools committed to hiring Aboriginal staff, non-Aboriginal staff are often hired because there are so few Aboriginal candidates. Attracting more Aboriginal people to secondary

teaching careers is crucial in improving high school retention rates, which in turn is necessary to develop community skills for self-government. (See Volume 2, Chapter 3 for more discussion of strategies to enhance capacity to implement self-government.)

Secondary school teaching programs require that students have a university undergraduate degree in a subject provincial or territorial authorities designate as 'teachable', that is, in an area of concentration that is taught in secondary school. This subject requirement has shut out many potential Aboriginal candidates, either because they have not completed a degree or because their degree is not in a teachable subject. Aboriginal studies is now available as a degree program in at least 10 universities, but Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal languages generally have not gained recognition as teachable subjects in faculties of education.

The lack of Aboriginal teachers at the secondary level inhibits the development of appropriate curricula and pedagogy and deprives students of role models. Youth alienation from the high school experience leads to early school-leaving and a lack of candidates for university education who could in turn become high school teachers. It is a repeating cycle.

Interrupting this cycle requires commitment and urgent co-ordinated action on several fronts simultaneously. We can suggest several ways to produce more teachers in secondary education:

- Special efforts must be made to attract Aboriginal people to secondary school teaching as a career. As early as grades seven and eight, young people must be made aware of secondary school teaching as a career option and the academic requirements necessary to reach that destination.
- Aboriginal educators already in the teaching system who wish to pursue secondary school teaching must be given the opportunity to complete the teachable subject requirements they need for certification at senior grade levels. Community-based delivery of arts and sciences courses coupled with job leaves would improve access of Aboriginal educators to subject concentrations required for teaching at the secondary level. The Northern Professional Access Program (norpac) program in northern Saskatchewan offers the first two years of arts and science in La Ronge, which allows adults with family responsibilities to study closer to home. Community-based delivery allows candidates to complete their teachable subject requirements at the



beginning or end of their education training.

- Financial incentives can be used to encourage both young people and Aboriginal educators to pursue secondary school teaching careers. Aboriginal education authorities could offer scholarships and forgivable loans to those committed to completing programs in secondary school education. In the section on education for self-government in this chapter, we recommended that Aboriginal education authorities establish incentive and bonus programs. Aboriginal educators already in the school system would benefit from job leaves with financial incentives. Such support would make it possible to increase the number of teachers at the secondary school level.

- Teacher education programs could encourage education students to acquire the subjects needed to teach at the secondary level. A flexible option could be developed for students who decide after they enter education that secondary school teaching would be of interest to them. For example, programs might allow students to complete subject requirements concurrently with their education studies or after completing education courses.

For further elaboration of training strategies, see Volume 2, Chapters 3 and 5.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.15**

Canadian governments, Aboriginal education authorities, post-secondary institutions and teacher education programs adopt multiple strategies to increase substantially the number of Aboriginal secondary school teachers, including

(a) promoting secondary school teaching careers for Aboriginal people;

(b) increasing access to professional training in secondary education, for example, community-based delivery of courses and concurrent programs; and

(c) offering financial incentives to students.

## 5.4 Community-Based Teacher Education

Faculties of education have developed some flexible partnerships with Aboriginal people. Many of these post-secondary teacher education programs have field or community components so that students can learn without leaving their communities. The programs are designed to increase the professional qualifications of those with considerable classroom experience as teaching assistants, language teachers, special needs assistants and so on. Following are some examples of post-secondary education programs that go directly to the people.

The Native Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia (ubc) started in 1974. Today it delivers its bachelor of education programs on the ubc campus and at four field centres where students can complete the first two years of their degree. Its newest program is the Vancouver field centre, which trains teachers to work in multicultural cosmopolitan communities such as Vancouver. The students take courses in Aboriginal education and urban studies.

Since 1975 the Kativik school board has worked with McGill University to train elementary school teachers, Inuktitut language specialists, and elementary school teachers working in a second language. Students train in their home communities, and after two years they graduate with a provincial teaching diploma and a certificate in Native and northern education. They can complete a bachelor of education degree by taking additional courses on the McGill campus. McGill has used this model to deliver similar programs to train Algonquin, Cree, Mi'kmaq, and Mohawk teachers.

The Northern Teacher Education Program (nortep) in northern Saskatchewan has been a key element in transforming education in a region where 85 per cent of the student body is Aboriginal. It was started in 1977 with the aim of having northern teachers in northern schools. Nortep offers a community-based program where students can take their classes in La Ronge and practice teaching is done in local community schools. The program initially focused on training elementary school teachers. In 1989 it expanded to include the Northern Professional Access Program (norpac), a university bridging program that offers counselling, tutoring, and two years of arts and science university courses that students can take in La Ronge. Nortep also delivers a bridging program to Dene communities in northern Saskatchewan. As part of their professional development, teachers with many years of

experience may also return to classes and upgrade their skills to a B.Ed. or M.Ed. level. With a strong Aboriginal voice in the governance of these programs, teacher education has a solid component of course work directly related to the cultural aspirations of the region. Cree and Dene languages, northern essential learnings, Aboriginal pedagogy, and field trips such as trapping school or cultural camp are part of the curriculum.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute, in conjunction with the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, offers suntep (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program). Initiated in 1980, this very successful four-year bachelor of education program is delivered in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. The students are primarily Métis and non-status First Nations people.

In 1984 the Inuit communities of Povungnituk and Ivujivik entered into a partnership with the University of Quebec at Abitibi-Témiscamingue (uqat) to deliver community-based teacher education and to participate in a school and curriculum project. Three Inuit instructors work under the direction of six uqat faculty to deliver the courses in Inuktitut. Each 45-hour course is usually delivered in three blocks of 15 hours, with three visits by the faculty member to the community. Inuktitut has had to be extended to include concepts for which there was no existing vocabulary. The students and the faculty members communicate in English — their common second language.

We commend these efforts to deliver teacher education in communities. They extend accessibility to Aboriginal people who cannot pursue post-secondary education by conventional means. We urge the continuation of such programs and encourage post-secondary institutions that have not already done so to consider this form of delivery. If the number of Aboriginal teachers is to increase, community-based education will be an essential facilitator.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.16**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments provide support to increase the number of Aboriginal people trained as teachers by

(a) expanding the number of teacher education programs delivered directly in communities; and

(b) ensuring that students in each province and territory have access to such programs.

## **5.5 The Need for Other Educational Professionals**

The number of Aboriginal people with graduate degrees in education is still small. First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia offers the Ts'kel Program at the master's and doctorate levels in education. Blue Quills College in Alberta offers a part-time master of education program in conjunction with San Diego State University. Blue Quills college students spend six weeks in the summer in San Diego and complete the rest of their work in Alberta. The institution established this program with San Diego because of the American university's willingness to work with them to meet their needs. There continues to be a need for more Aboriginal education administrators, counsellors, psychologists, speech pathologists and other professionals in education-related fields. The certification of language teachers has been a problem because many of the candidates who are richly qualified in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds do not have the academic qualifications required in Canadian teaching systems.

As part of their community-based teacher education initiative, the government of the Northwest Territories is tackling one of the major criticisms of past programs in the n.w.t. and elsewhere — many para-professional courses were offered that do not open career paths to undergraduate degrees or other options.<sup>50</sup> They have implemented a new co-ordinated system of educator training so that Aboriginal language specialists, classroom assistants and special needs assistants can earn course credits from Arctic College and McGill University during their two-year basic teacher training program. These credits can then be applied to teacher education and undergraduate programs. Educators call this 'articulation'; it means that course credits can be counted toward a number of different career programs or toward more advanced certification in the same career area. Further work is being done to articulate courses for school and community counsellors, early childhood educators and interpreter-translators.

The lack of articulation of educator programs is widespread, with many implications for the individuals involved and for the advancement of Aboriginal

education as a whole. Representatives of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (oneca) told us about their concerns.<sup>51</sup> Since 1977 oneca has offered the Native Counsellor Training Program, in collaboration with the Ontario ministry of education and the department of Indian affairs. In 1985 oneca took over the administration of the program. Despite its success in training counsellors for Aboriginal education programs, it lacks the academic and provincial recognition given other guidance and social counsellor training programs.

The experience of oneca, which is not uncommon, points to the need for co-ordinated planning in the training of educators. Aboriginal authorities will have to co-operate with deliverers of teacher education programs to overcome obstacles in education career paths and to map out better articulated educator programs.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.17**

Teacher education programs, in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations and government agencies that sponsor professional and para-professional training, adopt a comprehensive approach to educator training, developing career paths from para-professional training to professional certification in education careers that

(a) prepare Aboriginal students for the variety of roles required to operate Aboriginal education systems; and

(b) open opportunities for careers in provincial education systems.

## **5.6 The Education of Non-Aboriginal Teachers**

Teacher education programs also have a role in preparing non-Aboriginal teachers and school professionals to provide education services. Many Aboriginal children and youth in provincial and territorial schools will spend most of their time in classrooms with non-Aboriginal teachers. The values reinforced by the teacher, the inclusion or exclusion of Aboriginal materials

and perspectives in the course, the type of interaction in the classroom, and the relationship between teachers and parents will all affect the comfort of the Aboriginal student. Other education staff — principals, counsellors and psychologists — make professional decisions every day that affect the lives of children. All these educators must be able to fulfil their professional responsibilities with sensitivity and energy to help their students blossom.

The quality of education Aboriginal students receive in provincial and territorial schools depends on the willingness of school personnel to create a supportive learning environment for them. This will not happen in a vacuum. School staff in various education roles must have the opportunity to develop this commitment to high-quality education, based on understanding of Aboriginal culture and values and on issues in Aboriginal-Canadian relations. We emphasize the need to correct erroneous assumptions and to dispel stereotypes that still abound in the minds of many Canadians, distorting their relationships with Aboriginal people. Accurate information about the history and cultures of Aboriginal peoples and nations, the role of treaties in the formation of Canada, and the distinctive contributions of Aboriginal people to contemporary Canada should form part of every Canadian student's education.<sup>52</sup> A presenter at Cranbrook, British Columbia, articulated the goal of Aboriginal educators and many other Aboriginal people:

When we speak of education it is not only meant that the Aboriginal person must become better educated in the non-Aboriginal school of thought. The non-Aboriginal person must be made aware of our history, our traditional lifestyle and the downfall and resurgence of our peoples as history has evolved today. This information must become a compulsory component in the teaching of all Canadians.

Gwen Phillips Clement  
Ktunaxa Independent School System  
Cranbrook, British Columbia, 3 November 1992

Teachers cannot convey accurate information about Aboriginal people and instil respectful attitudes unless they have been prepared to do so. In training future educators, a compulsory component focused on Aboriginal people will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of what is at stake in their relationships with Aboriginal students and will prepare them to teach Aboriginal subject matter. Educators already in the school systems must have an opportunity to learn about Aboriginal people through professional development programs that foster cultural sensitivity.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.18**

Provinces and territories require that teacher education programs

(a) in pre-service training leading to certification include at least one component on teaching Aboriginal subject matter to all students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal;

(b) develop options for pre-service training and professional development of teachers, focused on teaching Aboriginal students and addressing Aboriginal education issues; and

(c) collaborate with Aboriginal organizations or community representatives in developing Aboriginal-specific components of their programs.

## **6. The Adult**

By adulthood an individual attains status as a responsible member of the family and community, contributing to economic, social, political and spiritual life. Many adults, however, reach this stage ill-prepared to be active participants in the economy. Some still lack the education and skills needed to take available employment or, as we suggest in Volume 2, Chapter 5, to create their own employment through business development.

Assuming there are jobs, one solution to under-employment is for people to return to school for more education and training. Those who have completed high school and technical, college or university programs stand a much better chance in the job market. But it is not only the individual who reaps the rewards of higher education. Communities are attempting to build the local skills pool they require for Aboriginal self-government. Education, then, is an investment with long-term benefits for the individual, for Aboriginal communities, and for Canadian society.

Over the past 10 years, the number of Aboriginal people attending and

completing post-secondary education programs has increased. Most of the increase is in the non-university post-secondary category, as shown in Figure 5.1. Unfortunately, current statistical information does not distinguish between someone who has completed a six-week certificate in a preparatory course and someone who has received a two-year diploma in a technical subject. The figure also demonstrates that, although more Aboriginal students are attending university, the proportion completing university programs has risen by only one per cent over the last decade. The figure is around three per cent — one-quarter of the proportion of non-Aboriginal persons who receive a university degree.

Obstacles continue to block Aboriginal people from achieving higher levels of education. Adults who left high school without graduating may be admitted to post-secondary studies as mature students, but they usually have to complete qualifying or bridging programs. Many students live in remote or isolated areas that require them to relocate for education programs; this may not be feasible if a person has family responsibilities and financial obligations. Any individual or family living at the edge of survival requires solid financial assistance to make a significant life change, and few people who live in poverty will risk taking out loans for post-secondary education.

In addition to these barriers, there is the question of the training and education programs themselves. Many ignore Aboriginal perspectives, values and issues and give scant attention to the work environment in which students will use their professional knowledge and skills. In the informal culture of the institution, there may be little or no affirmation of Aboriginal identity, and the environment may replicate the negative features that led students to drop out of school in the first place. Aboriginal support systems — peer networks, family activities, financial, personal and academic counselling, or daycare services — may not be in place. The lack of institutional readiness to develop these supports is a significant deterrent to the completion of programs for students who do enrol. Lack of Aboriginal control, strongly evidenced in the education of children and youth, is also encountered in the education of adults.

We envisage a world where the representation of Aboriginal people among doctors, engineers, carpenters, entrepreneurs, biotechnologists, scientists, computer specialists, artists, professors, archaeologists and individuals in other careers is comparable to that of any other segment of the population. Aboriginal leaders who signed treaties earlier in our history sought education that would give their children the knowledge and skills to participate as equals



in the Canadian economy that was emerging. We are still far from realizing that goal. We have not achieved equal opportunity or equal results in the post-secondary education now available to Aboriginal people.

Removing barriers is urgently needed. Over the past two decades, Aboriginal populations have been rebounding, following a growth pattern similar to the non-Aboriginal population but about 10 years behind. Between 1991 and 2016, the population aged 15 to 24 is expected to grow from 142,400 to 175,500 as the children of today's young adults become youths and young adults. Within the next decade, they will reach an age when post-secondary education and job opportunities must be accessible. The demand is expected to expand even further until the year 2011, when the 20-to-24 age group will be the largest segment of the Aboriginal population. After that, growth rates should decline and gradually converge with those of the non-Aboriginal population. (For further discussion of population projections and employment needs, see Volume 2, Chapter 5.)

In the next section we discuss difficulties in access to and completion of higher levels of education and training, the strides made in recent years, and the directions that need to be pursued to advance the education of Aboriginal adults. We also analyze how post-secondary institutions are responding to the educational needs of Aboriginal adults and how they can contribute in the future.

## **6.1 Getting in the Door**

### ***Academic upgrading, adult basic and literacy programs***

After being out of school for some years, returning to the classroom takes courage and determination. The pursuit of further training and education represents a big step for Aboriginal adults whose own school experience was negative and degrading. Many adults go back only to provide a better life for their children.

When taking training and higher education programs, adults who left school must usually begin with academic upgrading, adult basic or literacy programs. Most of these programs, unfortunately, are not designed with the particular needs of Aboriginal people in mind. Métis people feel especially affronted:

Métis...people are students in programs but their particular needs have not

been recognized nor addressed. The input of the Metis...organizations has not been sought nor have programs designed and proposed by them been supported....It became clear in speaking with officials involved with literacy programming that the distinctions between the needs of Metis...people were often confused with needs of Status Indian peoples.<sup>53</sup>

Where Aboriginal-run programs do exist, they survive on unstable project funding. This discourages program and curriculum development. Student funding is frequently a problem. Because of past schooling history, the student may have considerable ground to cover for which the training period is simply too short. Training allowances that sustain the student and dependents during the program period come to an end, and the student is unable to continue.

Aboriginal programs in academic upgrading, adult basic education and literacy often include elements that strengthen Aboriginal identity and self-esteem and build support networks among the students. These elements appear to be essential components of successful programs. They begin to heal the wounds the individual has accumulated over years of failed schooling, and they establish a stronger basis for the individual to pursue further training and education. Aboriginal adult programs must have the resources to include these components. The testimony of a student in an Aboriginal literacy program explains why such programs are so significant in forming new attitudes toward education:

This year at Nokee Kwe we have been able to have the opportunity to experience a brief look back into our past and saw what we have lost as Native people and what we have maintained to survive this far. We have upgraded our math, English, communications and work skills, and some of us have learned computer skills for the very first time. The staff and instructors of Nokee Kwe have taught us all that and more....

We are not savages as some have been led to believe. Our land was taken, promises were broken, and our children were stolen from their homes to be taken to schools far away. At these schools they were robbed of their heritage, they were beaten for speaking their own language....We were even led to believe that it was bad to be an Indian. We have had to endure so much since Columbus landed here 500 years ago; yet, we still have to endure a lot, but still we survive and we will continue to survive. Our language is still alive as well as our culture, and we are very proud to be Indian.

Roly Williams  
Nokee Kwe Adult Education Centre  
London, Ontario, 12 May 1993

Those who work in academic upgrading, adult basic and literacy services have been consistent in criticizing

- the absence of Aboriginal control over the design of programs;
- fragmented, project-by-project funding for programs;
- fragmented funding sources for student training allowances;
- inadequate community facilities to support programs;
- the lack of financial support for Aboriginal language literacy; and
- the arbitrary separation of literacy, adult basic education, and academic upgrading from job training services.

All these difficulties can be traced to the single reality that adult education services are not under the direction of Aboriginal self-governing authorities. A variety of Aboriginal agents have emerged to deliver specific programs in either the literacy or upgrading field or job training services. Many of them survive precariously, exercising administrative responsibilities devolved from federal, provincial and territorial authorities.

In contrast, it seems that most of the problems described above have been overcome in Nunavik, where the Kativik school board has been responsible for adult education and job market training.<sup>54</sup> Through control of these services, school authorities have been able to blend academic and job skills creatively, responding to the needs of the adults they serve. Literacy is also offered in English, French and an Aboriginal language.

The Kativik experience suggests what changes must take place. Aboriginal people must be able to design adult education services that meet the needs of students.<sup>55</sup> Students must be able to obtain training moneys at one access point rather than negotiate a maze of federal and provincial programs, all with their own regulations. Program agents need a stable funding base and must have the flexibility to combine adult education and job training in locally

appropriate ways. (We speak more about this in the section on job training.) Community learning centre facilities are crucial to creating an environment where adult students can reconnect with formal learning processes. And finally, Aboriginal people must be able to obtain literacy services in the language of their choice.

There are many organizations with the capacity and desire to assume responsibility for integrated adult education services, much as Kativik has done. Other communities and organizations may move more slowly toward full control. Federal, provincial and territorial governments should move quickly to negotiate the delivery of integrated adult education services through the Aboriginal organizations and governments that are ready for them. Multi-year agreements, with control over the design of

programs, could be negotiated in the transition to self-government.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.19**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with Aboriginal governments and organizations to facilitate integrated delivery of adult literacy, basic education, academic upgrading and job training under the control of Aboriginal people through

(a) delegating responsibility for delivery of training under current jurisdictions by concluding agreements with Aboriginal governments, their mandated education authorities, or voluntary organizations representing Aboriginal communities of interest;

(b) supporting adaptation of program design, admission criteria, language of instruction, and internal allocation of funds by Aboriginal delivery agents, to accommodate Aboriginal culture and community needs;

(c) acting promptly to conclude agreements for multi-year block funding agreements to enable Aboriginal nation governments, during the transition to self-government, to assume primary responsibility for allocating funds to meet training needs through programs of Aboriginal design.

## ***Access and university or college preparation programs***

Students who complete high school may find college and university still beyond their reach. Many students will have been streamed into non-academic programs in secondary school. Their skills, course completions or grade point standing may not satisfy entry requirements to post-secondary institutions. Courses needed may include communications, mathematics, science and computing skills; knowledge of Aboriginal history and issues to build a strong base for Aboriginal identity; and exploration of career possibilities to which the student has not yet been exposed.

### **University of Alberta's Access Program**

The University of Alberta has developed perhaps the most comprehensive access program in public post-secondary education. They have established quotas of five per cent for Aboriginal enrolments in all faculties, representing the proportion of Aboriginal people in the Alberta population. They have also established a transition year that opens access to eight programs: arts, agriculture and forestry, business, education, engineering, Native studies, nursing and science. All credits earned in the program are transferable. New students are required to have an average of at least 50 per cent in all prerequisite high school subjects and a minimum overall average of 60 per cent. Through the Office of Native Student Services, students can obtain personal, academic, financial and career or employment counselling.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions are increasingly offering such programs under a variety of labels — university and college entrance programs, access programs, transition programs, bridging programs. They may be general in nature, or they may have a specific focus, for example, access to health careers, science or engineering. They may be offered in the local community through learning centres or at regional centres through a college or Aboriginal institution. Sometimes a program requires attendance at the host institution in an urban setting. The recent proliferation of such programs indicates that they are making a difference in preparing people for further studies.

The admission as mature students of Aboriginal applicants who do not necessarily have secondary school diplomas has allowed many older people

to enter college and university. It is not unusual for parents and grandparents to return to school, sometimes at the same time as their children and grandchildren.

### ***Student funding***

Financial support for post-secondary education is a key issue. Concerns are likely to escalate as more Aboriginal youth and adults search for promising career and job options. The next decade and a half will be crucial, as larger numbers of young people reach the age for post-secondary education and the job market. At the same time, more Aboriginal adults over 25 can be expected to return to education and job training to improve their financial opportunities.<sup>56</sup> These demographic trends highlight the importance of strategic policy interventions to increase access to post-secondary education now.

The federal government has been the most important source of financial assistance for First Nations and Inuit students. The Northwest Territories has funded university education for all residents, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-Aboriginal students. The Yukon also provides funding subsidies for all residents, but at a lower rate than the Northwest Territories. But for Métis people and for First Nations people without strong ties to their communities of origin, funding is extremely limited. Most must take out loans to pay for their education. In some instances, Métis organizations, provincial governments and corporate donors have established bursaries and scholarships, but these are minimal relative to tuition and living costs.

One funding issue that arouses passionate and bitter debate is treaty rights to education. The numbered treaties promised education. Treaty nations and the federal government have been locked in a battle grounded in two widely divergent views of history. For treaty nations, education is a right that was negotiated in exchange for giving up large tracts of traditional territory. In their view, this includes all levels of schooling, and that understanding is strongly embedded in the oral history that has come down from Aboriginal elders who were present at treaty negotiations and signings.

The federal government has denied that post-secondary education funding is a treaty right. It has applied the *Indian Act* provisions and its post-secondary education funding policy to treaty nations on the same basis as First Nations that did not sign the numbered treaties. Students who do not live on a reserve

often do not receive post-secondary education funding. Treaty nations argue that every treaty member should be entitled to the benefits, regardless of residence — in other words, that the right to education is guaranteed and portable.

Over the past two decades, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled in various cases that broad, just and liberal interpretation of treaties is in order, with due regard for the historical context in which they were signed. The historical context for Aboriginal peoples was one in which the buffalo and other animals that had sustained a migratory land-based economy were disappearing. Oral history tells us that Aboriginal leaders negotiating treaties were seeking education that would provide a livelihood sufficient to put them on an equal footing with the settlers in the new economy. Treaty nations argue that they were guaranteed an outcome from education that is not being honoured. Pauline Pelly, a Saskatchewan elder, voiced this view at the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations treaty rights education symposium in October 1991:

Education was given to us. They promised us that you will be very smart, like the cunning of the white man. The highest education that you can get, that is what they promised to us. That is what we wanted.

First Nations maintain that the spirit and intent of the treaties are as significant as the actual wording. The promise of a ‘schoolhouse on every reserve’ represented what was state-of-the-art education when the treaties were signed. And elders maintain that it was state-of-the-art education that Aboriginal peoples negotiated. Supreme Court interpretations have lent support to Aboriginal contentions that the representations of government at the time are as important as the actual words written down.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.20**

The government of Canada recognize and fulfil its obligation to treaty nations by supporting a full range of education services, including post-secondary education, for members of treaty nations where a promise of education appears in treaty texts, related documents or oral histories of the parties

involved.

Federal government policy has been to contribute post-secondary education funding for First Nations students who have status under the *Indian Act*, whether or not they have treaty entitlements. Inuit in northern Quebec and Labrador and other Inuit living outside the Northwest Territories and the Yukon are also eligible for assistance under this policy. Nevertheless, some Inuit have not been able to obtain funds, particularly if they have no ties to the organization administering the funds or if they have lived away from their community for some time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, federal government funding was capped for First Nations and Inuit students, and many were unable to find other sources of funding to pursue post-secondary education.

Aboriginal education authorities and post-secondary institutions told the Commission they simply could not serve the students who wanted to attend programs but could not find funding assistance. This suggests that Aboriginal enrolments in post-secondary education have been limited because there has not been enough financial support. Demand rose when First Nations students who regained status under Bill C-31 became eligible for post-secondary education benefits. The inadequacy of education funding was one of the most pressing concerns youth and many leaders brought before the Commission.

Our analysis of federal expenditures on Aboriginal people indicates that the budget for the post-secondary education assistance program in 1992-93 was \$201 million. (See Volume 5, Chapter 2 for our discussion of economic disparities, government expenditures and the cost of the status quo.) This was increased by \$20 million in 1994-95 and by a further \$14 million in 1995-96.

The challenge over the next 20 years will be to find adequate support for the larger numbers of youth who will require post-secondary education in order to become productive in the labour force. As career opportunities with Aboriginal self-governments open up, as Aboriginal colleges and training institutions extend services closer to home, and as the impact of Aboriginal control over education takes root, more youth will be using post-secondary education as a path to a better future. Demand for services will certainly rise.

The policy environment for funding will merit careful monitoring. The federal government has reduced support for post-secondary education in federal-provincial transfer payments, and the impact of this has yet to be assessed.<sup>57</sup>



Should it result in higher tuition fees, as many observers anticipate, fewer Aboriginal people will be able to attend post-secondary institutions unless there is more financial assistance. Métis and other Aboriginal students who are not now eligible for federal funding will be even further removed from the possibility of a post-secondary education. The needs will be far beyond what can be supplied by the organizations that currently provide small bursaries for these students.

Students with no other recourse — particularly Métis and other Aboriginal students who cannot obtain assistance through their communities of origin — have sometimes turned to student loans. The resulting level of debt has been crushing:

Upon graduation as a teacher, [the Métis person] will not be joining the middle class but will be in the ranks of the working poor. A single student with no dependents in the B.Ed. program in 1990 with no other source of income would accrue \$13,008 of debt that was eligible for remission and \$21,138 to be repaid in full. Another student in the same class, single with three children, deemed to be more in need, would incur an even greater debt load. This individual would owe \$17,280 eligible for remission and \$56,260 to be repaid in full.<sup>58</sup>

About 50 per cent of full-time Aboriginal students and 72 per cent of part-time students are over the age of 24. A majority have family responsibilities and many — mostly women — are single parents. The cost of tuition has been far outweighed by the cost of daily living, at least until now. Reliable child care and other support services are often essential to a student's academic success. The cost of attending a post-secondary institution is much higher in an urban setting where housing is more expensive. Most Aboriginal students do not come from socio-economic backgrounds where their parents can be expected to contribute financially.

Having to rely on student loans to finance their education is a serious disincentive for many potential students. Already functioning at the margins financially, and with family responsibilities, they simply cannot countenance the prospect of assuming debt in an atmosphere of such uncertainty. If a mature student is to borrow enough to sustain the family through years of study, the debt burden will be overwhelming, regardless of the student's job circumstances later on.

The numbers of Aboriginal youth and young adults will increase over the next 15 years, and they will be prime candidates for post-secondary education services. The next generation should have the chance to break the cycle of poverty that has confined Aboriginal people to the margins of Canadian society. Post-secondary education is a critical link in the chain of transformation. We must encourage the momentum that is gathering. In years to come, we expect to see Aboriginal people in every valued occupation and profession in the country.

The preparation of human resources for Aboriginal governments must accelerate. The persistent gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in access to post-secondary education completion must be erased. Without adequate student funding, that gap could increase rather than diminish as a larger number of Aboriginal youth come of working age and proportionally fewer have access to post-secondary education.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.21**

The federal government continue to support the costs of post-secondary education for First Nations and Inuit post-secondary students and make additional resources available

(a) to mitigate the impact of increased costs as post-secondary institutions shift to a new policy environment in post-secondary education; and

(b) to meet the anticipated higher level of demand for post-secondary education services.

We recognize that present assistance does not extend to all Aboriginal people. Métis students have great difficulty obtaining funding, as do First Nations people and Inuit who do not have sustained communication with their communities of origin. The financial assistance programs already established by Aboriginal organizations, provincial governments and corporations are desperately needed, but they are clearly not enough.

A scholarship fund could extend benefits so that Aboriginal people not

covered by the current federal program would have improved access to post-secondary education. Funding for this should come from federal and provincial sources, corporate sponsors and individual contributors. It is beyond the Commission's scope to determine the best way to establish such a fund — for example, whether a trust fund or some other vehicle would better suit long-term needs. It will be important to establish an administrative structure that optimizes the use of existing programs and structures rather than overlapping or duplicating them. The planning work for the fund will best be undertaken by Métis and other Aboriginal education leaders and students for whom it is intended.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.22**

A scholarship fund be established for Métis and other Aboriginal students who do not have access to financial support for post-secondary education under present policies, with

(a) lead financial support provided by federal and provincial governments and additional contributions from corporate and individual donors;

(b) a planning committee to be established immediately,

(i) composed of Métis and other Aboriginal representatives, students, and federal and provincial representatives in balanced numbers;

(ii) given a maximum two-year mandate; and

(iii) charged with determining the appropriate vehicle, level of capitalization, program criteria and administrative structure for initiation and administration of the fund; and

(c) provisions for evaluating demand on the fund, its adequacy and its impact on participation and completion rates of Métis and other Aboriginal students in post-secondary studies.

### ***Location of program delivery***

Many Aboriginal adults simply cannot relocate to the urban centres where most post-secondary education opportunities are available. Offering studies in the community or closer to home has been one way to improve access. In an increasing number of communities, there are adult or community learning centres that provide adult education at many levels. Literacy, adult basic and academic upgrading courses, job training courses, university and college entrance programs, and college or university courses may all be offered at the community learning centre or at a nearby regional centre to which the student can commute. Some of these community and regional centres have become highly organized post-secondary institutions operated by Aboriginal people with an admirable degree of success in seeing students through to completion of their programs.

Such centres have also been established in large urban areas. Some universities have begun to deliver courses and programs through their continuing education departments using local delivery centres, although these arrangements inevitably require a minimum enrolment of students.

Although still in its infancy, distance education is also proving useful for delivering post-secondary education services.<sup>59</sup> Not all distance education formats are effective; correspondence education, for example, does not have high completion rates. Interactive approaches have been quite successful, however, particularly those using video and television. The problem with many distance education programs is that they offer standard Canadian content with little or no adaptation to the values, perspectives or issues of Aboriginal peoples. Most courses are taught in English or French rather than in Aboriginal languages, even in regions where an Aboriginal language is widely used in the community. Nevertheless, distance education has shown promise, and it is now a matter of finding appropriate configurations of technology, instructional methods, instructors and curriculum content. We return to distance education in the section on education for self-government later in this chapter.

### ***Credit for Aboriginal language competency***

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the marginalization of Aboriginal languages in the education systems of Canada. We recommended that Aboriginal language competency be recognized for course credits in the public

school system. It is equally important that it be recognized for credits at the college and university level. High school credits in Aboriginal languages should be considered equivalent to other modern language credits for entrance into post-secondary programs. Where students are seeking higher level credits for language competence, appropriate procedures should be established to verify fluency and grant credits in a way that ensures equality with other modern languages.

Aboriginal languages are already being taught at some universities, as regular course offerings or as special courses where Aboriginal people from specific linguistic communities come together to study. Recognizing these languages by granting credits not only affirms the knowledge and self-worth of those who speak them but also accords them their rightful place as the original languages of the Americas.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.23**

Canada's post-secondary institutions recognize Aboriginal languages on a basis equal to other modern languages, for the purpose of granting credits for entrance requirements, fulfilment of second language requirements, and general course credits.

## ***Conclusion***

Over the past two decades there have been positive advances in access to education for Aboriginal students. These include the establishment of bridging mechanisms; more programs offered closer to students' homes; more local facilities for community learning; and the introduction of interactive distance education. There are other issues still to be resolved, however, such as the need for stable, adequate financing for adult education services; recognition of the treaty right to post-secondary education; continuation and enhancement of funding support for post-secondary students; the extension of funding to Métis and other Aboriginal students now excluded from post-secondary benefits through a scholarship fund; increased support for community learning centres; and Aboriginal control of adult services and job training so they can be blended in appropriate ways to prepare adults to live productive economic

lives.

Some Aboriginal educators have warned that increasing exclusivity of university education for the general population of Canadians may mean restricted access for Aboriginal people. Any policy changes that have the effect of limiting Aboriginal people's access to post-secondary education must be promptly counterbalanced by policies to secure access, if equitable participation of Aboriginal people in Canadian society is to be achieved and maintained.

## **6.2 Inside the Door: Institutions Serving Aboriginal Adults**

Once Aboriginal students have begun post-secondary education, what are their experiences? Do they complete their studies? How relevant is their education to the job opportunities and professional demands they will face?

Figure 5.1 shows that more students completed non-university programs in 1991 (13.3 per cent) than in 1981 (8.9 per cent), although the 1991 figure is still below that of non-Aboriginal people (15.8 per cent). The proportion of the Aboriginal population undertaking university programs increased to 8.6 per cent by 1991, but the record of completion was very low (three per cent) and increased by only one per cent between 1981 and 1991.

These results raise questions about how Canada's post-secondary institutions are accommodating the needs of Aboriginal students. Dr. Ray Barnhardt, a professor at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, has classified universities according to the degree of control Aboriginal people have over the education offered. He puts post-secondary institutions into three categories — assimilative, integrative and independent.<sup>60</sup> We use these categories to examine the post-secondary arrangements that serve Aboriginal students in Canada, and we add a fourth category — affiliated — to describe an organizational variation that offers an enhanced degree of autonomy for Aboriginal institutions short of full independence. The four options — assimilated, integrated, affiliated and independent — are displayed in Figure 5.5.

### ***Mainstream and public post-secondary institutions***

Barnhardt's first category is assimilative — that is, the post-secondary institution offers a fixed menu of programs, courses and services. Everyone is expected to fit in. This accurately describes post-secondary education as it was constituted two decades ago, and much professional training still follows this model. But gradually the assimilative approach has been giving way to more integrative approaches. Within their education mandate, integrative institutions recognize Aboriginal peoples as a distinct group, and many have made significant shifts in their program offerings.

For example, there are now Aboriginal studies (or Native studies) departments in at least 10 universities across Canada. Faculties of law have instituted courses and programs that address the legal issues and concerns of Aboriginal peoples. Teacher training programs have been implemented in most provinces, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. As these programs have demonstrated their value, additional ones have been developed in Aboriginal management, business and economic development, and social work. Access programs are being designed to attract Aboriginal students to health sciences, engineering and science. Distinct co-ordinating mechanisms have also been implemented; for example, the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia is the home away from home for Aboriginal students and has contact with students in all departments of the university.

Post-secondary institutions have also entered into arrangements with Aboriginal people to deliver courses in regional centres and at the community level. Several such arrangements were mentioned earlier in the chapter, and there are many other examples. For small communities, this kind of arrangement becomes difficult if the number of students falls below the institution's minimum numbers for delivery.

Aboriginal peoples are still vastly under-represented in the sciences and mathematics. Many spokespersons have signalled the need to attract more students to technical professions that are increasing in importance in the global economy.

The last two decades have taught us about the environment and support systems that can help Aboriginal students succeed. Involvement in the governance of the institution is a significant symbol of intent and a vital force shaping program development. Programs tailored to the values and needs of Aboriginal people are the starting point for inviting students to follow a

successful path. The recruitment of Aboriginal faculty and instructors, the presence of elders, the sponsorship of Aboriginal cultural events, and appropriate counsellors and support staff are all ingredients for success.

The students must have opportunities to give voice to their concerns and to develop leadership skills. A growing number of institutions have an Aboriginal students' union that not only represents students within the institution but also links Aboriginal student groups regionally and nationally.

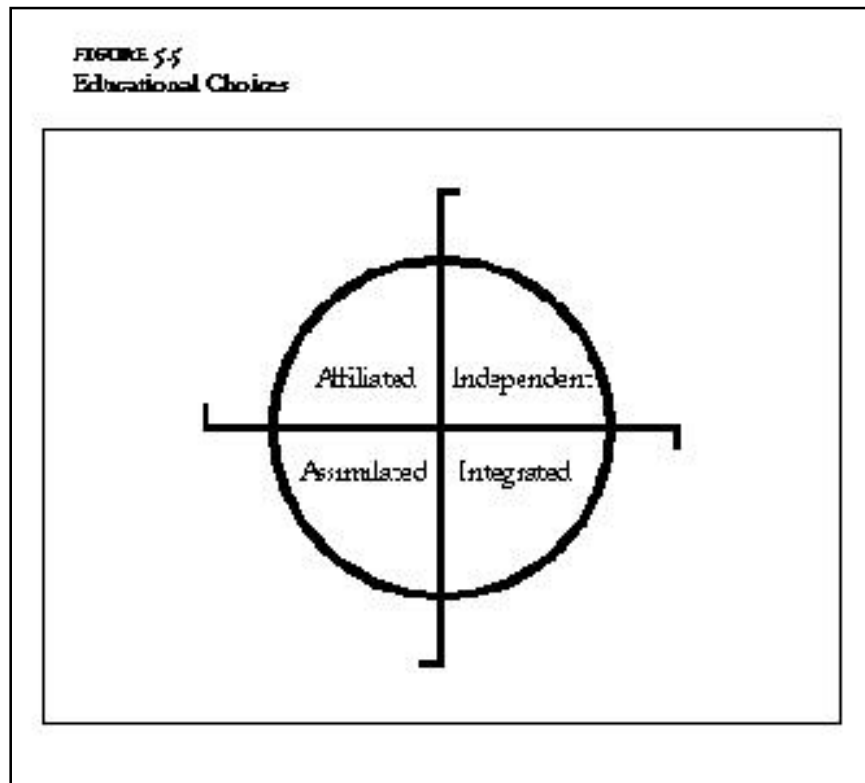
The government of Ontario's Aboriginal post-secondary policy, initiated in 1991, is a good example of strategic intervention to promote education partnerships. Its goals are to increase the participation of Aboriginal students in Ontario's public post-secondary education institutions and to optimize completion rates. Grants are available to offset the special costs of designing and delivering Aboriginal programs. Funds are also designated to increase the number of Aboriginal counsellors and special support services. Institutions that receive grants are expected to integrate funded initiatives into regular program delivery and base budgets by the end of the funding period to maintain continuity. Representation of Aboriginal organizations on governing bodies and establishment of an Aboriginal committee to guide programs and services are also required. Costs of participation by Aboriginal organizations are offset by the program (see Appendix 5A).

Post-secondary institutions in all jurisdictions are reeling from funding cutbacks imposed by governments in pursuit of deficit reduction. It might be argued that they are in no position to introduce Aboriginal-specific initiatives without special funding. We acknowledge these pressures, and later in this chapter we propose that federal, provincial and territorial governments allocate resources for new initiatives by post-secondary institutions in fields of study related to the implementation of self-government.

We maintain, however, that recognition of the distinct place of Aboriginal nations in the Canadian federation and accommodation of Aboriginal culture and identity should be regarded as a core responsibility of public institutions rather than as a special project to be undertaken after other obligations are met. Educational institutions have a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society.



FIGURE 5.5  
Educational Choices



## Recommendation

The Commission recommends that

### 3.5.24

Public post-secondary institutions in the provinces and territories undertake new initiatives or extend current ones to increase the participation, retention and graduation of Aboriginal students by introducing, encouraging or enhancing

- (a) a welcoming environment for Aboriginal students;
- (b) Aboriginal content and perspectives in course offerings across disciplines;
- (c) Aboriginal studies and programs as part of the institution's regular program offerings and included in the institution's core budget;
- (d) Aboriginal appointments to boards of governors;

- (e) Aboriginal councils to advise the president of the institution;
- (f) active recruitment of Aboriginal students;
- (g) admission policies that encourage access by Aboriginal applicants;
- (h) meeting spaces for Aboriginal students;
- (i) Aboriginal student unions;
- (j) recruitment of Aboriginal faculty members;
- (k) support services with Aboriginal counsellors for academic and personal counselling; and
- (l) cross-cultural sensitivity training for faculty and staff.

There are many accounts of students feeling isolated in a hostile environment where professors and fellow students express racist attitudes and opinions. Aboriginal students are silenced by unthinking remarks in the college or university classroom:

My English teacher said, when one of the students put up her hand and asked “Are Indian people really vicious and barbaric like these journals say?”...she said, “Yes, most are all accurate and correct....The journals are correct. Anthropologists and sociologists knew what they were saying and recording.”<sup>61</sup>

Daily encounters with racism are emotionally exhausting, particularly when the student is in the minority and feels too vulnerable to challenge the views expressed.

Within the integrated environment, the establishment of Aboriginal colleges may provide a way to mobilize effective supports in some locations.<sup>62</sup> Colleges are a time-honoured tradition in many universities. Sometimes the whole campus is organized into colleges; in other instances, just a few colleges exist, organized according to religious affiliation. The purpose of a college is to provide a community environment conducive to academic and social life. Colleges are usually residential, with their own faculty, visiting

scholars, libraries and other facilities. Faculty and students are in an atmosphere that promotes personal interaction. This environment would be attractive to some Aboriginal students, providing social support and fostering academic success. It would also be a suitable base for offering cultural programs, which could be made available to students regardless of their academic specialty.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.25**

Where there is Aboriginal support for an Aboriginal college within a university, and where numbers warrant, universities act to establish an Aboriginal college to serve as the focal point for the academic, residential, social and cultural lives of Aboriginal students on campus, and to promote Aboriginal scholarship.

Innovative directions in Aboriginal program delivery must continue to be implemented. Funding, however, is often tenuous. Some post-secondary institutions have expressed their commitment to Aboriginal programs and support services by integrating the costs into operational budgets. Too often, however, programs or services depend on external funding that is available for a limited period, after which there is no guarantee of institutional funding. Many Aboriginal programs have foundered as a result of this instability. The Ontario Aboriginal post-secondary education funding policy has encouraged institutions to start new programs in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and gradually to absorb the costs into their budgets.

### ***Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions***

Canada's post-secondary institutions are important players in education for Aboriginal adults, but increasingly vital are the Aboriginally controlled colleges, institutes and community learning centres that have developed over the past two decades. In Barnhardt's categorization, these fit best into the category of independent arrangements. The fourth category, affiliated, describes the most common arrangement, however, whereby Aboriginal institutions establish links with institutions recognized by provincial and territorial ministries of higher education. Aboriginal institutions delivering post-secondary education, like American tribal colleges, have their roots in the determination of communities

and nations to see relevant education services offered close to home.

Four identifiable types of institutions have evolved. The first resembles a full-fledged college. It attracts students from many nations and offers a wide range of programs, usually accredited through a partnership or affiliation with one or more post-secondary institutions. The largest and best known of these is the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (sifc), controlled by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Sifc offers its own bachelor programs that include language studies, fine arts, Aboriginal studies and business. All sifc courses are provincially accredited through a federation agreement with the University of Regina. In 1995, sifc, in partnership with the Business College of the University of Saskatchewan, launched the first Aboriginal m.b.a. program in Canada. With more than 1,200 students from nations across Canada, sifc offers a unique opportunity to study in an Aboriginally defined environment. The Association of Universities and Colleges has recently accepted sifc as a member.

Other large and well-established colleges are Blue Quills, Maskwachees Cultural College, and Old Sun at Gleichen in Alberta, Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in British Columbia, and Yellowquills in Manitoba. The Association of First Nations Post-Secondary Institutions in British Columbia has recently been formed (with 14 full members and two upcoming members) to co-ordinate efforts to secure the resources and policy structures these institutions need to operate effectively and independently.

### **Yellowhead Tribal Council**

The Yellowhead Tribal Council in Spruce Grove, Alberta, serves the post-secondary needs of its five member tribes. At its central campus at Spruce Grove, it houses administration offices, classrooms, a computer laboratory and a student lounge. It has offered a variety of on-site programs, including a 40-week university and college entrance preparation program, a university transfer program with the University of Alberta and Athabasca University, a health development administration program delivered by Athabasca University, a bachelor of social work program from the University of Calgary, a social worker diploma program from Grant McEwen Community College, and a business administration certificate program from Athabasca University. The centre offers a full range of support services to students, including tutoring,

financial and peer counselling, financial support, emergency funding, library facilities and an orientation week. In 1992-1993, it had a student body of 268.

The second type of affiliated institution is smaller and more locally focused. It serves primarily the members of a tribal council or a regional area. One example is the Yellowhead Tribal Council in Alberta, which represents a joint effort to offer preparatory and university programs close to home in a comfortable supportive setting (see box). The key to the success of smaller Aboriginally controlled institutions is having cash in hand to shop for the best programs for their students. They can approach a variety of mainstream post-secondary institutions, outline their needs, and negotiate for the educational services they want. Colleges and universities, eager to increase their student counts, tend to respond positively when there is financial assistance to support non-conventional delivery of courses. This type of institution, for example, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisg\_a'a in British Columbia, often crosses the conventional boundaries of universities, colleges and technical institutes by offering a wide range of courses.

The third type of Aboriginal institution is the community learning centre. These are the hub of local adult education in the communities they serve. A variety of institutions deliver programs in the learning centre, including adult basic education, academic upgrading, distance education courses, language courses, vocational training, and community-delivered programs from larger institutions. Some programs are accredited and others are not. The local community controls the learning centre, but its operations are usually dependent on external grants in connection with program services. Sometimes the facility is owned by an outside college and sometimes by the community. Course sponsors often pay for someone from the community to act as a site co-ordinator, program facilitator or course tutor. The campuses of Alberta Vocational Centre — Lesser Slave Lake, located in Aboriginal communities in northern Alberta, started out as local adult centres offering upgrading and short courses. They have since evolved into a network of campuses offering a variety of education services, including distance education courses. In Ontario, Contact North delivers courses using a network of community learning centres. Similar centres exist in the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and elsewhere.

The fourth type of Aboriginal institution, which comes closest to Barnhardt's independent model, is the non-profit institute that offers training in

communities or to a group of communities. There are many of these under Aboriginal control in all parts of Canada; they offer training relevant to Aboriginal self-government. Some operate province- or territory-wide, and some nationally. Some specialize in particular types of training. Unfortunately, the training they offer is often not accredited. They may also act as brokers for programs in partnership with public post-secondary institutions. Examples of these training institutes include the First Nations Technical Institute in Tyendinaga, Ontario, and the First Nations Justice Institute in Mission, British Columbia.

Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions of all four types enjoy strong grassroots support. They offer programs valued by Aboriginal communities and they provide a supportive environment that encourages students to persist with their studies. Many programs are custom-designed to address the priorities and values of Aboriginal communities. The number of colleges and institutes continues to multiply, but they share two serious problems: chronic lack of funding and the reluctance of mainstream post-secondary institutions and professional organizations to recognize their courses and the degrees or certificates they offer.

#### Funding Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions

Aboriginal post-secondary institutions live on precarious federal and provincial funding. The department of Indian affairs provides the only stable financial support received by the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. But as the college has documented repeatedly, this funding is far less than that received by comparable public post-secondary institutions.<sup>63</sup> The other schools depend on small program grants, which are short-term, often project-specific and always subject to change. This instability unsettles operations and makes long-term planning difficult. Aboriginal post-secondary institutions must be recognized and given stable funding.

#### Accreditation and transfer of credit

The second difficulty is the struggle to get recognition from other institutions for the courses students complete. While Aboriginal colleges may accept the students' learning, conventional post-secondary institutions have been reluctant to recognize programs they have not developed and that depart from standard college or university course design. So their students can earn transfer credits, Aboriginal institutions have been compelled to enter into

agreements with colleges to grant concurrent credit with the Aboriginal institutions. This arrangement is far from ideal, as one presenter explained to the Commission:

We've utilized a variety of affiliation models with our local community college. This has required surrendering some autonomy, but it has allowed students to gain some transfer credits. This is one of our dilemmas in the area of affiliation and accreditation. Presently, in order for our courses to be accredited, we have to turn over control to one of the local colleges or universities....We are frustrated by our inability to fully accredit our programs. We have designed some excellent and innovative programs which have no precedent. Indeed, other community colleges are modelling some of their programming after our approach....

Christie Clifton  
North Coast Tribal Council Education Centre  
Prince Rupert, British Columbia, 26 May 1993

The ability to design and offer relevant programs is one good reason to promote Aboriginally controlled institutions. There is another: their success rate in seeing students through to completion of their programs far surpasses that of mainstream post-secondary institutions. The Gabriel Dumont Institute reports a program completion rate of 70 per cent; the North Coast Tribal Council Education Centre stated at our hearings that 80 per cent of students complete their courses; and the Secwepemc Program at Simon Fraser University reported that 80 per cent of its students graduate.<sup>64</sup>

The u.s. experience is very similar to Canada's. There are 24 tribal colleges in the United States funded under the *Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Assistance Act*. They offer baccalaureates or shorter programs. Despite chronic funding shortages, tribal colleges produce graduates who go on to good jobs or further studies in non-Aboriginal institutions.<sup>65</sup>

Aboriginally controlled education institutions normally build student support mechanisms into their operations. Most of their staff are Aboriginal and serve as role models for students. They have strong ties with local Aboriginal communities, elders and resource people, and they collaborate with these groups in cultural programs. We heard about several proposals to start Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. For example, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada believes there should be an independent Inuit post-secondary educational

institution. Métis people in Manitoba are establishing a multi-purpose institution they call the Louis Riel Institute.

Aboriginal post-secondary institutions play a unique role in the education of Aboriginal adults. For 20 years, they have shown durability and resilience. They will not supplant the services of non-Aboriginal institutions, which many Aboriginal students will continue to attend. Canadian post-secondary education institutions provide a wide range of programs that Aboriginal post-secondary institutions could not possibly replicate. Canadian colleges and universities should continue their efforts to create a more hospitable environment for Aboriginal students. At the same time, Aboriginal institutions offer a milieu that supports student success and offers programs that reflect the distinct perspectives and values of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. As Aboriginal governments come forward with unique needs for service programs, Aboriginal institutions will be able to respond to these requests with innovative programs defined by Aboriginal people.

Governments and the Canadian educational community should recognize Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions by supporting them and giving them the opportunity to gain the same respect accorded public post-secondary institutions. This recognition should be translated into core funding for the services they provide and accredited status within provincial and territorial post-secondary systems so that students can transfer between Aboriginal and provincial or territorial institutions without penalty. Such arrangements already exist between institutions in different provinces, each of which has its own standards.

We are aware that respect has to be won, not legislated. However, policies can secure the resources and establish the conditions in which Aboriginal people can develop credible, autonomous post-secondary institutions. In our view, these institutions have the greatest potential for erasing the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people discussed in this chapter and in our analysis of economic issues in Volume 2, Chapter 5.

To move ahead with the development of autonomous Aboriginal institutions, co-operation between Aboriginal and mainstream educators and institutions will be essential. We urge professional organizations such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and professional associations of college and university teachers to encourage their members to enter into collaborative relationships with Aboriginal planners, educators and institutions.



(See Chapter 3 in this volume for elaboration of the role we recommend for mainstream institutions and voluntary organizations in the development of Aboriginal institutions.)

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.26**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with Aboriginal governments and organizations to establish and support post-secondary educational institutions controlled by Aboriginal people, with negotiated allocation of responsibility for

- (a) core and program funding commensurate with the services they are expected to provide and comparable to the funding provided to provincial or territorial institutions delivering similar services;
- (b) planning, capital and start-up costs of new colleges and institutes;
- (c) improvement of facilities for community learning centres as required for new functions and development of new facilities where numbers warrant and the community establishes this as a priority; and
- (d) fulfilment of obligations pursuant to treaties and modern agreements with respect to education.

### **3.5.27**

Aboriginally controlled post-secondary educational institutions collaborate to create regional boards and/or a Canada-wide board to

- (a) establish standards for accrediting programs provided by Aboriginal post-secondary institutions;
- (b) negotiate mutual recognition of course credits and credentials to facilitate student transfer between Aboriginal institutions and provincial and territorial post-secondary institutions;

(c) establish co-operative working relationships with mainstream accreditation bodies such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and professional associations such as the Canadian Association of University Teachers; and

(d) pursue other objectives related to the common interests of Aboriginal institutions.

## **6.3 Preparing for the Job Market**

We discussed job market and training issues in some detail in Volume 2, Chapter 5, where we noted that Aboriginal communities experience high levels of unemployment and that Aboriginal people, even in urban areas, endure higher rates of unemployment than other Canadians. Job training often provides what an individual needs to find and keep a job.

Non-university training has been used effectively by Aboriginal people in recent years. More than 13 per cent of Aboriginal people 15 years of age and older have a post-secondary certificate or diploma, compared with about 16 per cent of the total Canadian population. As shown in Figure 5.1, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal completion rates narrowed between 1981 and 1991, from 4.9 per cent in 1981 to 2.5 per cent in 1991.

Presenters before the Commission spoke of continuing barriers, however, to securing training and matching skills with jobs:

- In small communities, often there are simply no jobs available and no opportunities for individuals after they complete their training.
- Individuals sometimes lack the academic pre-requisites for training and need first to complete these courses. Adults find this separation of academic and job training very frustrating. For mature students, it is often harder to get into apprenticeship and college programs than it is to gain access to university courses because of the academic pre-requisites for some training programs.
- There are gaps in the availability of training support and a confusing array of sources for training funds, differing for First Nations (status and non-status, on-reserve, off-reserve), Inuit and Métis people. Funding periods for training programs may be too short for students to complete their programs. Federal

programs are seldom co-ordinated with provincial and territorial programs.<sup>66</sup> For an individual searching for funding support, it is hard to know where to go.

- Training programs are not flexible. Program guidelines prevent Aboriginal delivery agents from engaging in creative custom-designed programs such as combining academic and job training components or setting up work-study or co-op programs.
- Individuals who want to tackle long-term studies at colleges and universities are excluded from funding support. If they want the support, they are locked into studying in short-term programs, which may not suit their needs or lead to well-paying jobs in the long run. Deeply entrenched in current government mandates are sharp distinctions between employment-oriented training and college and university programs.

The interrelationship of job training and upgrading, as well as the complicated dynamics of funding, were described by one presenter:

We have many members wanting to go into upgrading classes in order to qualify for post-secondary schooling. This is where the biggest problem arises. The band does not receive any funding to support these students. They are told to see Canada Employment and Immigration Centre or go to Alberta Vocational Training for their support or any type of training allowance. Avt will not help students living on-reserve and going to school on-reserve. So that leaves ceic. Ceic has limited seats available. Then, again, that is only a solution for a handful of our students.

Clarence Fournier  
Beaver First Nation  
High Level, Alberta, 29 October 1992

Employment training programs have been important sources of training for many Aboriginal people. In the 1990s, the federal government has attempted to fine-tune its employment programs so that Aboriginal people have more say in decisions about training in their communities. The Pathways to Success program, initiated in 1990 with a five-year mandate, is the most recent initiative in decentralized administration of federal programs. Under this program, national, regional and local decision-making boards were set up with equal numbers of Aboriginal people and federal officials. The Pathways interim evaluation indicated that although the involvement of Aboriginal people

in decision making was positive, programs funded under Pathways have remained the same as previously, with little flexibility for the redesign of programs to meet community needs.<sup>67</sup> More recently, the federal government completed a consultation process with program users and decided to develop a subsequent program that recognizes Pathways as a transitional phase leading to more Aboriginal control of employment development services. The successor program, to take effect in fiscal year 1996-97, is the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Strategy.

The Commission was told that Kativik Regional Government in Nunavik has overcome the restrictive structures in most job training with control over adult education and training under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.<sup>68</sup> This has enabled Inuit to design community training programs, including those that combine academic and work skills, and literacy training in the language of the individual's choice (Inuktitut, French or English). Their experience suggests that Aboriginal people will be best served by programs that place under their control the design of adult education and job training. More flexibility is required so that communities can do what is best for their citizens.

Another concern in training for the job market has been the under-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the trades, in technology programs, and in the sciences and maths. One of the barriers has been a funding gap, as communities have been unable to direct funds where they are needed. The following quotation is representative of many presentations that addressed this problem:

People assume that we get all kinds of dollars to run our programs. The reality is that it doesn't even get close to the mark. There are many, many different gaps in the post-secondary area. The tribes don't even get funded to provide assistance to vocational and trade students, for example. Students who are in trades programs, in electrical programs at SAIT [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology], and so on, for example, quite often never know where to turn because our post-secondary departments and adult education departments do not get that kind of funding.

Vivian Ayoungman  
Director of Education, Treaty 7 Tribal Council  
Calgary, Alberta, 27 May 1993

Again, with an adequate pool of funding for human resources development

and with the ability to use it according to local priorities, communities would be able to address training concerns. The need to establish a flexible approach to training is echoed in the following submission.

In a Pathways introduction workshop...one participant stood up and asked in regards to the limited education offered that 'You mean to say that you'll make my son a welder but you won't make him a doctor?' Pathways to Success, then, has the ability to appear racist in the eyes of many of the grassroots people.<sup>69</sup>

We have already made recommendations to address some of these concerns, such as our recommendation earlier in this chapter for Aboriginal control of job training services, with the flexibility to integrate delivery of literacy, adult basic education and academic upgrading. In Volume 2, Chapter 5, we recommended a 10-year special training initiative involving partnership among Aboriginal nations, governments, private sector employers, and education and training institutions, with an emphasis on closely linking training with real, sustainable jobs. The careful matching of training with jobs, the use of co-operative education with alternating study and work terms, and the emphasis on training for Aboriginal people in science-based and technological fields are all essential elements of a strategy to prepare Aboriginal people for the job market. We elaborate on these themes and others in our discussion of education for self-government later in this chapter.

## **7. Elders**

As we turn our attention to the role of elders in education, we complete the life cycle displayed in the medicine wheel introduced at the beginning of our analysis. Elders have always played a central role in Aboriginal education, which is fundamentally an inter-generational process. Elders are keepers of tradition, guardians of culture, the wise people, the teachers. In Aboriginal societies, elders are known to safeguard knowledge that constitutes the unique inheritance of the nation. They are revered and respected. While most of those who are wise in traditional ways are old, not all old people are elders, and not all elders are old (see Volume 4, Chapter 3).

To interpret the perspectives of elders and other Aboriginal people who testified before the Commission, it is critical to understand the meaning and significance of traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge is a discrete system of knowledge with its own philosophical and value base. Aboriginal

peoples hold the belief that traditional knowledge derives from the Creator and is spiritual in essence. It includes ecological teachings, medical knowledge, common attitudes toward Mother Earth and the Circle of Life, and a sense of kinship with all creatures.

Each nation also has its own body of knowledge that encompasses language, belief systems, ways of thinking and behaving, ceremonies, stories, dances and history. Through thousands of years in the Americas, nations have evolved intricate relationships with their lands and resources. While western academics and intellectuals have begun to give some credence to Aboriginal understandings of the universe, including ecological knowledge in particular, the gatekeepers of western intellectual traditions have repeatedly dismissed traditional knowledge as inconsequential and unfounded. They have failed to recognize that their approach to knowledge building is also defined by culture and that Aboriginal intellectual traditions operate from a different but equally valid way of construing the world. Aboriginal people have particular difficulty with the western notion that knowledge can be secular or objective, divorced from spiritual understanding and deeply imbedded values and ethics.

Traditional knowledge also has its own forms of transmission. Rooted in an oral tradition, knowledge is frequently passed on in the form of stories, which are rendered in accurate detail to preserve their authenticity. These stories, often simple on the surface, are multi-layered and address complex moral and ethical issues. Traditional knowledge is also transmitted through one-to-one instruction and by modelling correct behaviours. Often, traditional knowledge is intended to be conveyed only at particular times or locations and in specific contexts.

Elders expressed deep concern to Commissioners about the current state of education. While they do not reject participation in Canadian education, they question the exclusion of traditional knowledge and its methods of transmission. They see that young people and adults emerge from school with a confused sense of Aboriginal identity and without the basic cultural knowledge to participate fully in the traditions of their society.

To the despair of the elders, when they try to become involved in the education process, they find many obstacles. There have been few resources in the school systems to support the involvement of elders. The fact that they are not given compensation comparable to that of other teachers and professionals sends a clear message that their knowledge and expertise are

not valued. The programs where they teach are underfunded, with few resources to support their efforts in curriculum development and for supplies and teaching materials. Elder Rhoda Karetak, an Inuk, expressed her frustration:

The Aboriginal people and the elders, we know that they are not recognized in terms of the education, in terms of their knowledge....Also as the climate here is as much as 50 or 60 below, we are not to teach our own children as to how they are to start making their own clothes that are warm because we have no papers which would recognize that we have abilities. There are still people out there today who are still alive who can teach these things. Because we don't have papers or maybe because of our lack of education, it seems that is the way it is. [translation]

Rhoda Karetak  
Rankin Inlet, Northwest Territories  
19 November 1992

Innu Elder Simeo Rich spoke of the indignity of seeing non-Aboriginal people in the school system taking over the teaching of traditional activities:

As a matter of fact, the Innu kids are not taught by the elders how to make a canoe, how to do traditional skills. Non-Native people are teaching our kids how to do the traditional skills, the things that the elders know. There is another rumour going around in Happy Valley that there is a program going to be run, how to make snowshoes. Non-Native people are stepping all over our lives and we're unable to do such things, to teach the younger generation these things....Half of the elders are all gone and you know it could have been the elders teaching us sufficiency skills that we could have learned from them.

Simeo Rich  
Sheshatshiu, Newfoundland and Labrador  
17 June 1992

In other instances, teachers are not experienced in involving elders effectively in their classrooms. They are bound by their own schedules and lesson plans, and elders report that they are not able to teach what they would like to share with the children. Often, school timetables conflict with the proper time to transmit traditional knowledge and skills, for example, in ceremonies or in land-based activities.

A further insult has been difficulties in getting non-Aboriginal school boards, colleges and universities to recognize the qualifications of elders to teach in areas where they have unique cultural knowledge.<sup>70</sup> The insistence of education authorities on paper qualifications has prevented many elders from becoming instructors in formal education systems. The Northwest Territories has taken a lead in developing a certification program for teachers of Aboriginal languages, but the program has not been operating long enough for this Commission to determine whether it has opened the classroom door to more language teaching by elders. Education authorities mandated by self-governing Aboriginal nations will determine the qualifications required for specialists in Aboriginal languages, culture and history in their own schools and education institutions. Their expertise in establishing standards of competence and excellence in these areas undoubtedly would be of value to mainstream institutions as well.

If intergenerational education processes are to be restored, obstacles to elders' participation must be overcome. Elders must become an integral part of the learning process for Aboriginal children and youth. This will require changes in the way Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school systems approach elders and traditional knowledge. They could reach out to elders by

- asking elders for their advice;
- establishing a place in the school that elders can call their own, where they can meet, conduct ceremonies and counsel students;
- reviewing and amending school policies to ensure that elders are valued and respected;
- consulting with elders to ensure that traditional activities and ceremonies are given appropriate recognition, time and significance in the school calendar;
- providing support and resources to record, publish and disseminate materials elders provide for the school;
- dedicating a portion of the space in school resource centres to traditional knowledge under the direction of the elders in the community;
- initiating traditional knowledge workshops for school staff;



- involving elders in planning for curriculum projects; and
- in collaboration with elders, conducting community discussion groups to reach consensus between the school and the community on the role of elders.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.28**

Elders be reinstated to an active role in the education of Aboriginal children and youth in educational systems under Aboriginal control and in provincial and territorial schools.

### **3.5.29**

Elders be treated as professionals and compensated for their education contribution at a rate and in a manner that shows respect for their expertise, unique knowledge and skills.

### **3.5.30**

Provincial and territorial education ministries, boards of education and educators recognize the value of elders' knowledge to all peoples' understanding of the universe by

(a) giving academic credits for traditional Aboriginal arts and knowledge whether acquired in the classroom or through non-formal means in cultural activities, camps and apprenticeships; and

(b) collaborating with elders to determine how traditional Aboriginal knowledge can be made accessible in the education of all students, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, in institutions under Aboriginal, provincial or territorial control.

### **3.5.31**

Educational institutions facilitate opportunities for elders to exchange

traditional knowledge with one another and to share traditional knowledge with students and scholars, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in university settings.

In the Aboriginal Peoples' International University, the creation of which we recommend below, elders would hold the place of honour as the keepers of knowledge of the Aboriginal world.

## **8. Aboriginal Institutions**

The Commission received submissions indicating that there are institutional gaps in education services, particularly those that support self-determination in education. While the primacy of local control in education was emphasized repeatedly in testimony to the Commission and in Aboriginal education studies for nearly three decades, certain objectives in Aboriginal education can be achieved only by co-ordinating efforts at local and regional levels. The challenge is to find the right mechanisms to support cultural, linguistic and regional diversity, to ensure accountability to Aboriginal people, and to promote exchange, communication and information-based services that require widespread co-operation among nations and organizations.

In the twenty-first century, Aboriginal peoples will live in a shrinking world of near-instantaneous exchange of information and knowledge. At the same time, the world will become more homogeneous through dissemination of a common popular culture by the mass media and transnational industries. Aboriginal communities have already joined this world culture and can be expected to continue as active participants. These trends make it even more critical to ensure that Aboriginal cultures have support to preserve and transmit the core of language, beliefs, traditions and knowledge that is uniquely Aboriginal.

Presenters before the Commission offered creative suggestions on how to do this. We address five areas: the teaching and promotion of traditional knowledge; applied research; residential schools scholarship and collective memory; information exchange; and statistical data bases.

### **8.1 Aboriginal Peoples' International University**

The Commission must seek not only immediate solutions to current problems

but also responses that will serve future generations. The Aboriginal Peoples' International University (apiu) is proposed as a twenty-first century mechanism to promote traditional knowledge and scholarship, undertake applied research related to Aboriginal self-government, and disseminate information necessary to the achievement of broad Aboriginal development goals. We see the apiu as an Aboriginal network of co-ordinated regional institutions and programs representing diverse cultural and linguistic traditions — those of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

### ***Promotion of traditional knowledge and scholarship***

Because of the geographical, cultural and linguistic diversity of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, no single institution could properly represent all traditions. Since traditional knowledge is rooted in particular parts of the biosphere, it makes sense to seek a model that draws on the strengths of regional and localized knowledge. A network of institutions and programs, affiliated as the Aboriginal Peoples' International University, would reflect local priorities, values and traditions, and at the same time, promote a broader understanding of traditional knowledge among nations. The backbone of this initiative has already solidified with the creation of Aboriginal institutions and programs and specialized fields of advanced study.

The idea of an Aboriginal Peoples' International University is not new. The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and the Canadian Council on Aboriginal Business have proposed a national university, and elders, educators, and traditional people from Canada have been involved in meetings for a proposed International Indigenous University of the Americas. In Canada and throughout the world, there are universities dedicated to education through distance or that function with several widely dispersed campuses. An Aboriginal university is being discussed in Australia.<sup>71</sup> We are developing the concept here, knowing that further discussion will be needed among elders, educators and leaders in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to elaborate and implement it.

We have spoken about elders as the guardians and keepers of traditional knowledge, the unique philosophical and spiritual traditions of Aboriginal peoples. For thousands of years, they transmitted knowledge formulated within the ancient wisdom of indigenous values and understandings. Today, few Aboriginal people have access to this knowledge in their pursuit of learning. An apiu would create the opportunity for elders, traditional people

and bicultural scholars from many Aboriginal nations to study together.

What would an apiu offer beyond courses provided in Aboriginal programs and mainstream post-secondary institutions? It would articulate a unifying vision within which diverse traditions could promote the study of traditional knowledge at its most complex levels. It would contribute to the dedicated efforts of many communities and leaders to restore elders to a place of honour as the first teachers and scholars of Aboriginal peoples. It would give Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, professionals and scholars opportunities to meet elders and study with them. It would push outward the boundaries of knowledge by developing frameworks of analysis and interpretation defined by Aboriginal values and perspectives. It would offer advanced studies, complementing Aboriginal undergraduate programs. Aboriginal graduate students, who now have few choices beyond the western intellectual tradition, would have options rooted in Aboriginal intellectual and spiritual traditions. Research undertaken in association with an apiu would address the specific concerns of implementing Aboriginal self-government.

The university would benefit not only Aboriginal people. Throughout the world, the importance of indigenous knowledge to humankind has been recognized by leading scholars in the sciences and humanities. The new university would be a place where non-Aboriginal people could study with the acknowledged experts of the Aboriginal world: the elders. Internationally, elders are already sought for their understanding of local environments and for their expertise in botany and ecological relationships. Environmental scholars and policy makers, medical researchers, healers and other scholars could meet with elders in gatherings that are respectful of their unique knowledge.

We see an apiu as a university without walls, depending largely on existing facilities in post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities. While a small core facility would be required, its educational activities would be undertaken in regional locations, with elders, students, scholars and others converging for agreed purposes. Through institutes, conferences and workshops, an apiu would bring together elders and Aboriginal scholars with seekers of knowledge. In addition to on-site learning, telecommunications technology would allow virtual communities to form, so that students in all parts of Canada could study with elders anywhere in Canada and the Americas.

For example, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and the First

Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia might offer a summer institute with the Aboriginal Peoples' International University, linking classrooms in both locations and other parts of the world. The Mohawk Nation might offer an institute, focusing on its traditional system of governance and its international activities, with Aboriginal students across the country participating through audio- and videoconferencing. The Grand Council of the Crees might initiate a discussion group with Aboriginal law students and others across the country to share their experiences as participants in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations at the United Nations. All of these learning events could be co-sponsored by the Aboriginal Peoples' International University, which could undertake the linking work and negotiate accreditation and transfer of credits, where appropriate.

An apiu should be a co-operative venture that bolsters initiatives already under way and does not compete with them. Potential affiliates of the Aboriginal Peoples' International University might include

- Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal units in provincial and territorial institutions, with proposed Métis and Inuit colleges as part of the network;
- the Centre for International Indigenous Studies and Development at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College;
- the Centre for Traditional Knowledge, sponsored by the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Canadian Commission for unesco and the United Nations World Decade for Cultural Development;
- the Native Philosophy Project and Rockefeller Foundation visiting humanities fellowships at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario;
- the Ts'kel program for graduate-level education at First Nations House of Learning, University of British Columbia; and
- the University of Alberta's proposed doctorate program in indigenous knowledge.

Collaborative relationships could be forged with like-spirited programs in other countries, such as the University of California at Berkeley's doctoral program in indigenous knowledge, the Centre for World Indigenous Studies in Olympia,

Washington, Harvard's graduate programs in education administration, and indigenous institutions in other parts of the Americas.

### ***Applied research***

In addition to its focus on traditional knowledge, an apiu would create an important opportunity to unite its research capacity with the needs of Aboriginal governments. Joint research projects could be undertaken, both on a consultancy basis and as part of partnerships in research. For example, a community may wish to have the apiu involved in establishing a research project on economies or on education. The university would not only offer communities the very richest of Aboriginal intellectual resources; it would also enrich its own knowledge bases through learning in the community. Cadres of graduate students could work with communities on community projects while refining methods of inquiry within participatory research frameworks. In establishing an applied research capacity, the apiu should work collaboratively with Aboriginal professional organizations that share a commitment to knowledge building and community.

### ***A planning process***

The planning of the university should be mandated by national and regional Aboriginal organizations. Aboriginal education leaders from across Canada have developed considerable expertise in post-secondary institution building over the past two decades. Their assistance should be sought in developing the operating structures of the apiu and its components and preparing the plans for implementing it. The apiu will potentially have affiliates in every province and territory. With implementation of self-government, federated Aboriginal structures to charter an institution serving all regions of Canada may well emerge. In the interim, federal legislation to charter the institution and concurrent recognition of degree-granting functions by the provinces should be explored. (A precedent exists: Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, was established by an act of Parliament in 1874 and empowered by provincial statute in 1959 to grant degrees.)

We propose that a steering group with a three-year mandate take responsibility for consultation and design. In addition, we propose that a number of key information and knowledge functions be located in the apiu. We see the need to establish working groups to do detailed planning for these functions and to determine whether the international university would be the

best location for them. The steering group would oversee the establishment of working groups and receive their reports. A two-year mandate for these working groups would allow for integrated strategic planning.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.32**

A university under Aboriginal control, which could be called the Aboriginal Peoples' International University, with the capacity to function in all provinces and territories, be established to promote traditional knowledge, to pursue applied research in support of Aboriginal self-government, and to disseminate information essential to achieving broad Aboriginal development goals.

### **3.5.33**

First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders in collaboration with the federal government establish a steering group funded by the federal government, with a three-year mandate

(a) to explore options, conduct consultations and prepare a plan to implement an Aboriginal Peoples' International University by the year 2000; and

(b) to collaborate with other working groups in determining the appropriate location of a documentation centre and archive, an electronic information clearinghouse, and statistical data bases.

## **8.2 Information Exchange: An Electronic Clearinghouse**

In virtually every area of the Commission's concern, there were calls for the establishment of clearinghouses and mechanisms to promote the exchange of information among agencies and communities doing similar kinds of work. Curriculum development, language projects, classroom practice, early childhood education and counselling approaches are just a few of the education-oriented fields where practitioners, academics and students are seeking to exchange information. The same thirst for information was evident in the areas of economic development, health and law, to name a few. Young

people also spoke of the importance of being in touch with one another and with data bases relevant to their concerns and priorities.

Infrastructure to support these functions has begun to emerge on the Internet. The u.s.-based NativeNet is an electronic clearinghouse that illustrates some possibilities for electronic exchange. NativeNet already has lists where practitioners can exchange information about education, language, health and other topics. A list has also been established for Native American professors. In addition, there are user groups through which Aboriginal people in Canada are discussing a wide range of issues; some are seeking approaches to teaching about stereotypes; teachers want to link their classrooms with other Aboriginal classrooms around the world; Aboriginal teachers are looking for jobs; and community projects are searching for information on Aboriginal Head Start. The number of home pages of Aboriginal educational institutions, cultural education centres, businesses, museums, art galleries and resource collections is rising rapidly on the World Wide Web. In addition, the World Center for Indigenous Studies in Olympia, Washington, has established an archive that makes important documents available on-line. Political happenings, economic development, legal issues, social concerns and international indigenous events are all lively conversation topics in various user groups.

The establishment of an electronic clearinghouse would be a possibility for Canada. But would it be inclusive? There are a number of concerns. First, there is the issue of cost. At present, connecting to the Internet could be expensive for communities that are far from a service provider. Long-distance telephone charges would be prohibitive and would discourage use. This technological problem could create urban communities rich in information and rural communities shut out of the electronic information flow. Moreover, many geographically isolated communities have minimal telecommunications infrastructure that would barely support information services reliant on digital and emerging technologies. Inuit Tapirisat of Canada has presented a brief to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission explaining its fears that telecommunications companies will invest in research to diversify their services in large, lucrative markets rather than providing a reliable service in small, isolated communities.<sup>72</sup>

Second, the languages of exchange on the Internet are English and French, not Aboriginal languages. Despite the assimilative potential, a language of mutual exchange is required for dialogue across nations. This need not



interfere with the goal of establishing networks in Aboriginal languages for exchange within linguistic communities.

Third, communicating through the Internet requires some computer and keyboarding skills. This may be a problem for those who have not been exposed to computer technology, but increasingly, Aboriginal children and youth are acquiring computer skills and embracing electronic technology. So have many Aboriginal professionals in all fields of work. The federal government's decision to include schools under federal jurisdiction in the SchoolNet project will accelerate access to the Internet for Aboriginal young people served by these schools. (In 1995, Industry Canada and the Assembly of First Nations launched a joint project, First Nations School Access Project, to connect First Nations schools through SchoolNet, the national network of educational contacts and resources and an entry point for the Internet.) Of course, there will continue to be other forms of exchange, including teleconferences, gatherings, conferences, workshops and seminars. For those not inclined to use the Internet, there will undoubtedly be intermediaries who extract information and feed it into community and professional circles.

An electronic clearinghouse could offer a highly decentralized network linking rural and urban communities across the country, with participation from a wide variety of leaders, grassroots workers, researchers, students, youth and citizens at large. Important resources could be available from electronic archives, and the resources of various Aboriginal centres and libraries across the country could be obtained through on-line catalogues. Users would be able to locate relevant resources and contact communities directly for material communities wish to control themselves. Within Aboriginal communities, access could be ensured by installing public computer terminals in a school, adult education building, library or other public facility.

In planning for a clearinghouse, access for geographically dispersed communities and the state of community telecommunications should be analyzed with a view to upgrading facilities where needed. The appropriateness of establishing a clearinghouse as a part of an Aboriginal Peoples' International University should also be considered.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.34**

An electronic clearinghouse be established to facilitate the free flow of information among Aboriginal communities, education and self-government workers and individuals, the planning and development of this clearinghouse to be carried forward by a working group

(a) established in collaboration with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders;

(b) funded by the federal government and given a two-year mandate; and

(c) attentive to the need for Canada-wide and international communication as well as exchange in Aboriginal languages within linguistic communities.

## **8.3 Statistical Data Bases**

Aboriginal governments, businesses and organizations will require solid information on which to base planning, analysis and research. At present, Aboriginal data bases to support these functions are localized and fragmentary. Many existing data bases have been generated because of government reporting requirements. These requirements will change, and as self-government is implemented, it will be important to put in place a strategy to ensure that data bases provide access to information required by Aboriginal institutions.

Which institutions produce more Aboriginal graduates in given areas of study? Are Aboriginal incomes keeping pace with those in the general population? What effect are youth empowerment programs having on school completion rates? What is the state of Aboriginal language retention levels — or the housing stock, or patterns of health and disease — relative to those of other communities? If there is no co-ordinated strategy for establishing data bases, the capacity to answer these kinds of questions will shrink as non-Aboriginal governments vacate their administrative role.

The gathering of information and its subsequent use are inherently political. In the past, Aboriginal people have not been consulted about what information should be collected, who should gather that information, who should maintain it, and who should have access to it. The information gathered may or may not have been relevant to the questions, priorities and concerns of Aboriginal peoples. Because data gathering has frequently been imposed by outside

authorities, it has met with resistance in many quarters. This is particularly true of the census, which is Canada's primary mechanism for gathering consistent information at regular intervals.

Aboriginal governments, businesses and organizations need reliable information, and a common strategy is needed for co-ordinating data bases. The challenge is defining what information should be collected in a consistent way across communities, who should do it, and how it can be maintained in a way that respects confidentiality. The information currently collected may not be the most relevant for community planning purposes, and it is important to plan data bases from the community level up.

Timing is important, because Aboriginal governments will be putting in place management information systems, if they have not already done so.

We believe that the gathering of information should be controlled by Aboriginal people, although the co-operation of non-Aboriginal agencies and institutions such as Statistics Canada will be essential to develop a complete picture of Aboriginal life in rural and urban Canada. Access to information at a grassroots level should be maximized, and electronic and on-line data bases are the best way to achieve this. There needs to be a mechanism for gathering and maintaining this information through a small core operation. We refer to this mechanism as the statistical clearinghouse.

The statistical clearinghouse could be part of the Aboriginal Peoples' International University and could co-ordinate efforts to agree upon a standardized data base, organize periodic data collection, and develop an online electronic data base for Aboriginal communities and organizations. As proposed later in this chapter, an Aboriginal human resources inventory could be established and maintained. Communities and businesses would have access to the most up-to-date information for program and business planning, feasibility studies, operations, proposal writing and strategic decision making. Moreover, the clearinghouse could have a multiple training function: to help communities and organizations set up standardized and customized information-gathering approaches and data bases; to facilitate training of nation and community personnel in the use of statistical information in their operations; and to build a pool of Aboriginal people with skills in statistics, demography and economic analysis so that statistical data bases can be used to the fullest. Aboriginal communities could enter into agreements with the statistical clearinghouse for the mutual exchange of information. Depending

on its mandate, the clearinghouse could pursue co-operative arrangements with government and with Statistics Canada in furthering shared objectives, under conditions agreed upon by Aboriginal communities. The appropriateness of establishing the clearinghouse as a function of the Aboriginal Peoples' International University should be considered.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.35**

First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders establish a working group, funded by the federal government, with a two-year mandate to plan a statistical clearinghouse controlled by Aboriginal people to

(a) work in collaboration with Aboriginal governments and organizations to establish and update statistical data bases; and

(b) promote common strategies across nations and communities for collecting and analyzing data relevant to Aboriginal development goals.

## **8.4 Aboriginal Documentation Centre**

The history of residential schools and of the relocation of Aboriginal people is recorded in government, church, school and corporate archives throughout the country. While their experiences are etched in the memories of thousands of Aboriginal people today, these events are only partially documented. In our discussions of residential schools and relocations in Volume 1, Chapters 10 and 11, we recommended that this unique and historically significant information should be collected, preserved and made accessible. We believe that a national Aboriginal documentation centre could provide appropriate leadership by establishing an active program of research and dissemination and by maintaining a suitable facility for such a collection.

The documentation centre would have as its focus historical information on residential schools and relocations. However, there are many important archival collections relevant to Aboriginal life in Canada that do not have an appropriate home and to which the public and scholars have limited access, if

any. The documentation centre could be a repository for diverse historical collections. A plan outlining acquisition and collections priorities would need to be developed.

Today, electronic media offer the opportunity to make collections available on-line from access points around the globe. By co-ordinating its efforts with other archives that house collections important to the history of Aboriginal people and relations with Canada, the documentation centre would become a key access point for collections and electronic data bases of other institutions as well as its own holdings.

As a priority, the documentation centre should address the issue of gathering oral history on residential schools and relocations. Aboriginal people who experienced these first-hand should have the opportunity to tell their stories for the benefit of present and future generations. A video archive of testimony should be established to preserve these accounts. This will become a lasting legacy to all Canadians. In addition to initiating its own research, the documentation centre should be able to fund both community-based and scholarly projects on residential schools and relocations.

Gathering documentation will not alter Canadians' awareness of Aboriginal history; it must be complemented by public education. Many Canadians are just becoming aware of residential school and relocation policies, and even today there are few teaching materials for adults and children. The documentation centre could spearhead the production of materials, including multi-media and travelling exhibits, for public education.

The appropriateness of establishing the centre as a function of the Aboriginal Peoples' International University should be considered in the planning process.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.36**

The federal government fund the establishment of a national documentation centre to research, collect, preserve and disseminate information related to residential schools, relocations and other aspects of Aboriginal historical

experience, the planning and development of the centre to be carried forward by a working group

(a) established in collaboration with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders; and

(b) having a two-year mandate.

## **9. Education for Self-Government**

Preparing Aboriginal people to assume the complete range of responsibilities associated with self-governance must be recognized as a top priority in post-secondary education. At this historical juncture, Aboriginal people, governments, educational institutions and professional organizations all have crucial roles in building the capacity of Aboriginal nations and their communities to exercise self-government.

Over the past two decades, as the determination to re-establish self-governing nations has gathered momentum, Aboriginal people have repeatedly stressed the importance of building their capacity to operate contemporary self-governing structures. Much of our earlier discussion of adult and post-secondary education was devoted to structural and operational barriers. We have made recommendations to increase the prospects of educational success. The recommendations focused on

- strengthening the contribution of Canada's post-secondary institutions to the education of Aboriginal people;
- increasing the number, capacity and stability of Aboriginal institutions;
- increasing access for students through financial and other supports; and
- creating culturally based, relevant learning opportunities.

These changes will not happen overnight, although many of them can advance quickly with the political determination and the resources to bring about change. On the other hand, education for self-government cannot wait. Aboriginal communities and organizations urgently require trained personnel to plan and implement self-government.

## 9.1 Planning for Self-Government

For more than two decades, Aboriginal administrations have been growing steadily in scale and complexity. Today, many Aboriginal communities run multi-million-dollar administrations, economic development projects and businesses. Local administrations manage social services, education, sport and recreation, health, housing, public works, public safety and security, job creation and training while at the same time planning for self-government. Aboriginal administrators contract consultants of various sorts as needed — lawyers, evaluators, specialists — much as other governments do. To the extent possible, most communities try to hire local or other Aboriginal people to fulfil these responsibilities. Where there is no land base or where communities combine their efforts, Aboriginal organizations have been established to administer a variety of services, sometimes single services like health or education and, other times, multiple services. These, too, need administrators and specialized personnel.

While the pool of trained Aboriginal people has increased in recent years, particularly with the introduction of college and university programs that better reflect the needs of Aboriginal administrations, there remains a severe shortage of skilled Aboriginal personnel for the number of jobs in Aboriginal administrations. Self-government will open up an even broader selection of jobs. Education is essential to hone the talents needed to assume the responsibilities of the present and future, as we were told in Winnipeg:

Education — the objective of Métis self-government and economic development — cannot be achieved in the absence of educated and technically trained individuals within our Métis communities who must administer and operate the sophisticated bureaucratic systems that our political leadership will require. We will need more trained managers, engineers and technicians than we now have. We have identified the problems and the roadblocks but unless governments are prepared to work with us on this vital issue, then our deliberations will have taken us no further.

Claire Riddle  
Vice-President  
Winnipeg Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 23 April 1992

The number of Aboriginal graduates in fields related to Aboriginal self-

government must increase very soon. Unfortunately, as land issues are being settled — as in the Yukon and the Nunavut agreements — federal government policy has been to negotiate training dollars that are made available only after agreements have been concluded. This policy is short-sighted given the number of years of training required for many senior positions in Aboriginal governments. The experiences of Nunavut's implementation training committee and the Council for Yukon First Nations, both acting on recent self-government agreements, are instructive for understanding aspects of planning human resources for self-government.

In both the Yukon and Nunavut, self-government training funds are quite limited, so they are seen as supplementing existing human resource development programs, sponsored by the federal government, which are expected to provide the bulk of training dollars. In both instances, a systematic approach has been taken to analyzing human resource needs.

In the Yukon, provision was made for each First Nation community to examine the skills and competencies required to implement the agreement at the community level, to take stock of the trained people already available in the community, and to identify the gaps and the number of individuals required in various areas.<sup>73</sup> A training policy committee is responsible for helping the council and the First Nations community meet these training needs by using existing programs where appropriate or by developing new programs if necessary. The committee is charged with keeping in mind the values and cultural dimensions of First Nations communities, as well as the non-academic needs of trainees, including transportation, daycare, housing, counselling, financial and other support. In addition, the committee is to explore the feasibility of a single-window concept for training funds, that is, whether a single pot of money should be pooled from various training funding sources, much as we recommended earlier in this chapter.

In Nunavut, researchers noted that 51 different organizations and their 198 employees would be involved in implementation.<sup>74</sup> They examined the existing and anticipated jobs and concluded that high school and college programs were producing sufficient candidates to fill the administrative support positions in these organizations. But there was a need to train internal administrators, program administrators, scientists and other professionals, and senior executives. Training of community members to direct implementation of the agreement by serving on boards and committees is essential. While researchers recommended that on-the-job training and educational leave be



used to make professional development available to current employees, they pointed out that training for youth must also be a priority, given high rates of unemployment among Inuit 15 to 24 years of age.

Taken together, the Nunavut and Yukon examples are helpful in identifying some of the dynamics involved in training for self-government that may be applicable elsewhere.

- Self-government education must be addressed in connection with two distinct groups: those now employed in community administrations and organizations, and a large population of youth who are ready to enter the labour force. These groups may have unique, if overlapping, educational needs, which may include on-the-job training, professional development, job leaves, distance education and local delivery as well as more conventional methods of education in regional and urban centres.
- Students must have adequate financial support for academic and non-academic needs if they are to be successful.
- Self-government training needs can be pinpointed through planning by local and regional organizations. This will ensure that investment in training programs and support for student choices are adapted to the particular skill requirements and contexts of Aboriginal self-government while not neglecting generic skills that can be used anywhere in the labour market.
- It cannot be assumed that Aboriginal self-government jobs will be identical to those in other government organizations. Thus, adapted training programs must be provided.
- Funding mechanisms for self-government training and education should result in easy access for workers and students and should be simple to administer. A one-stop funding approach is preferable to the current fragmentation of program funding, involving multiple government departments, each with a narrow mandate and its own program guidelines.

## **9.2 Programs That Work**

Aboriginal communities, tribal councils and other organizations have been inventive in providing training and education for self-government. Among the design principles that can contribute to the success of programs are these:

- Aboriginal people are central decision makers.
- The programs address the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people.
- The programs include Aboriginal perspectives and methodologies.
- They open doors for the participation of Aboriginal people.
- They emphasize partnerships and mutual understanding.
- They find creative ways to overcome obstacles.

We have discussed many of these in our examination of Aboriginal adult education, and we summarize them by offering a few examples of existing programs that are designed to foster the success of Aboriginal students in self-government education. These examples are intended to exemplify the principles and represent only a few of the programs that could be described.

Concordia University in Montreal launched an education support services project for Aboriginal students in 1992. As in other post-secondary institutions with similar services, the aim is to offer practical assistance and an environment in which students are encouraged to complete their programs in areas of study related to self-government as well as in other academic fields. Concordia's support services include an academic adviser, a study centre, tutors, computers, cultural programs, and an annual orientation program for Aboriginal students. Overseeing this project is the Concordia Council on First Nations Education, which is composed of university and Aboriginal representatives (including two elders) and Aboriginal student representatives. Concordia has a First Nations student association and a student centre that has attracted Aboriginal students not only from Concordia but from other Montreal post-secondary institutions as well. When they appeared before the Commission in November 1993, Concordia officials were considering a bridging program and more active recruitment of Aboriginal faculty. They estimated that they had 100 Aboriginal students and three Aboriginal faculty members. The previous spring, 12 students had graduated, including two masters of fine arts. For more than two decades, other public post-secondary institutions have pursued similar initiatives (as well as providing daycare) to meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

Not all Aboriginal people can leave their homes and relocate to urban centres for their education. Many are already employed in their communities. Access programs and bridging programs have reached students who need to begin their studies at home. In Saskatchewan the Northern Teacher Education Program (nortep) expanded its efforts through the Northern Professional Access Program (norpac):

In 1989 we had to expand our program. We had been busy keeping elementary teachers trained....Our high schools were growing in the north, so now we needed to provide high school teachers. In order to provide high school teachers we needed arts and science programs. There wasn't enough high school teacher involvement or applicants, so what we did was we tied it on to a university bridging program called norpac. It's called professional access to college and we provide two years of arts and science in La Ronge, along with secondary teacher [education].

The university bridging program provides services such as counselling, tutoring....It is also a work study program where if somebody is interested in the legal profession, we have had people at work in the prosecutor's office, we have had people work at the legal aid office. People who are interested in administration will work at village offices or band offices. If they were interested in health, they will work in medical clinics. It's a work study program that works quite sufficiently in providing University of Saskatchewan classes and also University of Regina classes.

Rick Laliberté  
Chairperson, Nortep/norpac Board of Directors  
Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan, 8 December 1992

Nortep and norpac are examples of collaborative relationships that lead to programs attentive to Aboriginal people's varying needs. These programs open the door to a range of career options that relate to Aboriginal self-government. Other access programs were described earlier in the chapter.

Professional development programs also help those already employed in Aboriginal administrations. Six tribal councils in northwestern Ontario have joined forces with the continuing education division of the University of Manitoba to offer a certificate in the management of community, economic and organization development. The part-time program is geared to senior managers who meet 15 times for one week at a time over a two-year period.<sup>75</sup> The atii pilot project experimented with the delivery of a series of management

training workshops to communities across Nunavut, northern Quebec and Labrador using interactive televised instruction. Programs provided in the community, combined with distance education and periodic institutes, extend the reach of post-secondary institutions into communities.

Incentives and bonuses may be necessary to make programs viable for Aboriginal people who are the major breadwinners in their families. As part of its community-based teacher education program, the government of the Northwest Territories provides training incentives to encourage para-professional staff to earn professional credentials. Many Aboriginal people supporting families cannot afford to leave their jobs, nor can they live on the subsistence allowances paid to students. The government of the Northwest Territories has responded by offering bonuses to increase student financial assistance to 50 to 60 per cent of employees' salaries.<sup>76</sup>

Aboriginal people have persistently sought partnerships with Canada's public post-secondary institutions. Over the past decade, some post-secondary institutions anticipated the range of education needs associated with Aboriginal self-government. The Donner Canadian Foundation, for example, funded the start-up of Aboriginal management and economic development programs at Trent University, the University of Lethbridge and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. A self-government diploma program was initiated at the University of Victoria in the school of public administration. Carleton University has offered a master's degree in Aboriginal community economic development. The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College is launching an Aboriginal m.b.a. program. Since 1973, the University of Saskatchewan has operated a pre-law program that has been the first step in the academic careers of many of today's Aboriginal lawyers, and the University of Ottawa has offered a similar program for francophones in civil law since 1990. There are many examples across the country of one- and two-year certificate and diploma programs offered in a broad range of professional and technical areas relevant to self-government.

Other programs train specialized para-professional and professional staff to deliver community services such as education, health, justice and social services. In Chapter 3 of this volume, we discussed the successful community health representative model. One problem is that many more trained Aboriginal people are needed in a great variety of areas, with increasingly higher levels of formal qualifications. A second problem has been creating culturally appropriate and relevant education and training. Programs designed

for mainstream settings often fail to prepare students for professional responsibilities in Aboriginal surroundings. Programs designed in close collaboration with Aboriginal people are grounded in the social, cultural, legal and political contexts that graduates will actually encounter.

Aboriginal training institutes and organizations have emerged as important providers of training in areas related to self-government. Institutes such as the First Nations Tribal Justice Institute in British Columbia, the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan, the First Nations Technical Institute in Ontario, and Atii Training Inc. in Nunavut are examples of Aboriginally controlled training programs in tribal policing, natural resource management, computer technology and management. These institutes and others like them have faced challenges in obtaining recognition of their programs from mainstream institutions. As a result, many have had to negotiate joint accreditation arrangements for specific programs. We have already discussed difficulties with respect to accreditation and transfer credit arrangements.<sup>77</sup> These institutes will continue to play an important training role, first, because of their track record in developing programs suited to the needs of Aboriginal people, and second, because they create a learning environment that nurtures Aboriginal identity. At the provincial and territorial levels, mechanisms must be found to promote more open learning systems that respect the diverse education paths chosen by Aboriginal nations.

Institutions are not the only means to prepare people for self-government. Aboriginal people and the corporate sector have developed internship and scholarship programs to increase the interchange of expertise. The internship program of the Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business has been particularly successful in allowing Aboriginal students and young people to acquire expertise and contacts highly relevant to Aboriginal self-government. Several of Canada's chartered banks have instituted training and scholarship programs that bring Aboriginal people into their organizations. Corporations in the energy sector have established scholarship and work placement programs. For example, Nova Corporation told us:

We participate in an educational awards program, again to assist Aboriginal students to obtain post-secondary education relevant to the oil and gas industry and to increase the number of Aboriginal professionals in the petroleum industry in general and in nova specifically. We provide an award each year at southern Alberta colleges. Our bursaries are \$3,500 each, awarded to Aboriginal students enrolled in two-year business or technical

programs.

Barbara Tate  
Vice-President, Nova Corporation  
Calgary, Alberta, 27 May 1993

Such programs have mutual benefits: corporate sponsors can diversify their organizational culture by bringing in Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people can gain important training and experience.

In addition, for many years Canadian Executive Service Overseas (ceso) has offered its services in Aboriginal communities. In its brief to the Royal Commission, ceso explained that the retired executives who make up the organization have often been involved in one-on-one training and have brought important skills to projects where specific expertise has been required. The transfer of skills has been an important aspect of their work in the past and will be even more so in the future as they place an added emphasis on partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations.<sup>78</sup>

Developing human resources for self-government is not simply a matter of acquiring knowledge and skills from outside the Aboriginal community. Successful programs also help students find their own paths as Aboriginal citizens and professionals. There is Aboriginal knowledge that only elders and other people rooted in Aboriginal cultural traditions can provide. Apprenticeships, community work placements and co-operative education open avenues to integrating knowledge and skills in culturally appropriate ways.

In summary, experience over two decades has identified critical factors that contribute to the success of students and the creation of a pool of human resources suited for work in Aboriginal governments. The challenge is now to accelerate capacity building in order to produce enough graduates, particularly in fields where Aboriginal people are under-represented.

### **9.3 Self-Government Personnel Needs**

Canada lacks a country-wide assessment of Aboriginal human resources to guide the establishment of a detailed human resources development strategy for self-government. Such data would greatly assist in planning and policy development for Aboriginal nations, regions and communities.

While national statistical requirements may be hard to specify, we know that there have been many local and regional efforts to evaluate the human resource requirements of self-government. Some of this information is available to help identify training and education priorities (see Chapter 3 of this volume and Volume 2, Chapter 5). In addition, important characteristics of Aboriginal human resources development help in setting potential requirements:

- Human resources capacity has been growing in areas where special initiatives have been launched, particularly in law, elementary education, social work, management and some areas of community health. In other fields, there have been modest gains, and in still others, Aboriginal people are virtually absent. Table 5.2, using demographic, social and economic data from the 1991 Aboriginal peoples survey, describes the post-secondary training and education received by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women and men. The most common training for Aboriginal women is in the commerce, management and administration field, at 30.9 per cent (29.7 per cent for non-Aboriginal women), followed by training for health services at 16.6 per cent (19.5 per cent for non-Aboriginal women), and education-related careers at 15.3 per cent (15.8 per cent for non-Aboriginal women). Aboriginal men are trained mainly in the engineering, applied science and trades fields, at 57.1 per cent (41.6 per cent for non-Aboriginal men), with the number of men trained in the social sciences at 10.4 per cent (8.3 per cent for non-Aboriginal men), and commerce, management and administration at 10 per cent (15.6 per cent for non-Aboriginal men). As we will see, the commerce, management and administration category includes clerical positions, an important point when we examine where people work after training.

- Many more Aboriginal women than men enter university programs, yet women and men graduate in approximately the same proportion. Many of the women are sole-support mothers. In the 25 to 49 age range, 9.2 per cent of Aboriginal women have some university education, and 4.2 per cent have completed a university program. Of Aboriginal men of the same age, 6.2 per cent have some university education, and 3.9 per cent have completed university programs.<sup>79</sup>

- Table 5.3 gives an indication of how training has translated into jobs. Aboriginal women work primarily in clerical and service positions, with only 7.6 per cent in management and administration positions in 1991. Aboriginal men are concentrated in construction (20.3 per cent), other trades and land-based

activities, with others working in the service sector (11.3 per cent), and only 6.9 per cent in management and administration. These patterns reveal not only the distribution of employment but also the persistent under-representation of Aboriginal women and men in management and administrative positions, jobs Aboriginal people must hold to implement self-government. As discussed in Volume 2, Chapter 5, Aboriginal personnel are concentrated in low level clerical and administrative positions. They can, however, be trained through professional development opportunities.

- Few Aboriginal people complete university programs. We saw earlier in this chapter that the proportion of Aboriginal students graduating from university programs remained low, at around 3 per cent between 1981 and 1991, compared to nearly 12 per cent of non-Aboriginal people. However, a growing number of Aboriginal people complete post-secondary education programs at technical institutes and colleges.

- Much of the training Aboriginal people have been able to take in their communities has combined academic upgrading and short skills courses sponsored by federal and provincial human resource development programs. Many para-professional and on-the-job training programs have been closely tied to specific job requirements, such as how to administer government programs. Regardless of how useful they are in offering practical skills and knowledge, the courses are usually not recognized by educational institutions for transfer credit, nor do they advance the person along a career path or broaden opportunities for job mobility. Self-government education in the future must be forward looking, providing career possibilities for Aboriginal people and an ever widening repertoire of relevant skills.

- It is instructive to consider the kinds of skills that Aboriginal communities and organizations purchase from consultants. The fact that they contract with consultants reveals capacities that need to be developed internally, including program development specialists, program evaluators, comptrollers, auditors and economic development consultants. External staff include teachers, education administrators, social workers, lawyers, engineers, housing consultants, nurses, doctors, dentists, optometrists and business managers. The wide range of outside expertise suggests that the building of internal capacity needs to be across many fields of expertise. (It is true that some externally hired staff are Aboriginal people from outside the community. It is unrealistic to expect small communities or organizations to supply expertise in every area.)



**TABLE 5.2**  
**Comparison of Demographic, Social and Economic Characteristics,**  
**Total Canadian and Aboriginal Populations, 1991**

	Total Canadian		Total Aboriginal		North American Indian Registered	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
<b>Education</b>						
<i>Population that quit high school (age 15-49)</i>	—	—	92,960	83,820	57,515	50,700
Returned (%)	—	—	28.1	17.9	27.2	17.7
<i>Population that quit high school (age 15-49)</i>	—	—	14.4	13.1	15.4	13.5
<i>Major field of post—secondary study, population age 15+ (%)</i>						
Education, recreation, counselling	15.8	5.4	15.3	6.4	16.5	7.4
Fine and applied arts	8.0	3.4	7.8	3.0	6.4	3.0
Humanities	7.0	5.2	3.7	2.7	3.6	2.5
Social sciences	8.8	8.3	12.5	10.4	13.5	11.2
Commerce/management/administration	29.7	15.6	30.9	10.0	30.1	10.8
Engineering/applied sciences	4.5	4.9	5.7	4.3	4.6	4.7
Agricultural/biological science/technology	0.7	6.7	—	1.3	—	1.3
Engineering/applied science technology/trades	3.5	41.6	6.2	57.1	5.9	54.2
Health science and technology	19.5	4.2	16.6	3.1	18.5	3.3
Math/physical sciences	2.1	4.3	0.4	1.0	—	0.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Financial assistance</i>			14,519	9,250	9,755	4,920
Applied/received (% of total)	—	—	54.7	57.2	65.2	65.8
Applied/did not receive (% of total)	—	—	7.3	10.9	5.6	9.7
	—	—	32.6	30.4	24.3	20.7

TABLE 5.2

**Comparison of Demographic, Social and Economic Characteristics,  
Total Canadian and Aboriginal Populations, 1991 (continued)**

	North American Indian Non-Registered		Metis		Inuit	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
<b>Education</b>						
<i>Population that quit high school (age 15-49)</i>	11,275	10,050	18,490	17,705	6,190	5,845
Returned (%)	34.6	19.6	33.1	20.8	11.7	10.0
<i>Population that quit high school (age 15-49)</i>	11.4	13.3	11.9	10.8	17.6	17.5
<i>Major field of post—secondary study, population age 15+ (%)</i>						
Education, recreation, counselling	12.2	5.3	15.2	5.3	20.4	5.2
Fine and applied arts	10.0	2.7	10.1	3.6	—	—
Humanities	4.9	4.0	2.6	2.3	—	—
Social sciences	12.3	9.5	11.4	10.2	—	5.8
Commerce/management/administration	29.6	9.8	31.6	9.5	41.9	6.9
Engineering/applied sciences	8.0	3.7	6.3	4.2	6.0	—
Agricultural/biological science/technology	—	1.8	—	1.3	—	—
Engineering/applied science technology/trades	7.8	59.6	6.3	58.0	7.6	70.5
Health science and technology	14.3	2.2	14.5	3.7	12.9	—
Math/physical sciences	—	1.1	0.9	0.9	—	—
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00
<i>Financial assistance</i>	2,565	1,920	3,095	2,215	325	260
Applied/received (% of total)	26.3	23.3	45.5	42.4	—	—
Applied/did not receive (% of total)	13.4	14.2	9.0	8.0	—	—
	56.3	57.0	38.0	47.1	34.0	57.9

*Source:* Statistics Canada, 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations; Statistics Canada, 1991 Census, catalogue no. 93-329.

TABLE 5.3

## Occupations of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Populations Age 15+ in the Experienced Labour Force, 1981 and 1991

	Aboriginal				Non-Aboriginal			
	M		F		M		F	
	1981	1991	1981	1991	1981	1991	1981	1991
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Management/ administration	5.8	6.9	4.1	7.6	11.3	14.0	5.5	10.3
Natural science/ engineering/math	2.4	2.5	0.7	0.7	4.9	5.9	1.2	1.8
Social science	2.0	2.2	4.9	7.1	1.3	1.6	2.1	3.0
Religion	0.1	0.2	0.1	—	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1
Teaching	1.7	1.6	5.8	6.1	2.9	2.9	6.3	6.3
Medicine and health	0.8	0.8	5.9	6.1	1.7	2.0	8.7	9.1
Arts and literature	1.8	1.8	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.4	1.7
Clerical	5.0	5.8	27.3	27.9	7.1	7.1	36.5	31.7
Sales	3.7	4.5	6.5	5.9	8.7	9.1	9.4	9.5
Service	9.9	11.3	27.4	25.6	9.6	10.1	15.6	15.8
Farming and related	4.1	3.7	1.6	1.3	5.3	4.4	2.2	2.1
Fishing/trapping	2.8	3.0	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1
Forestry and logging	5.3	4.2	0.6	0.3	1.0	0.9	0.1	0.1
Mining and related	2.4	1.3	0.1	—	1.1	0.8	0.1	0.0
Processing	6.0	3.8	3.2	2.0	5.3	3.9	2.2	1.7
Machinery	3.8	2.6	0.5	0.3	4.1	3.2	0.5	0.3
Production/fabrication	7.5	6.3	4.5	1.8	10.2	8.8	4.9	3.2
Construction	18.1	20.3	0.9	0.7	10.8	10.3	0.3	0.4
Transportation/equipment	7.0	6.4	1.3	1.3	6.2	5.9	0.6	0.7
Material handling	4.3	3.1	1.5	0.7	2.7	2.2	1.2	0.8
Other crafts	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.5	0.7	0.6
Other	4.3	6.8	1.0	1.5	1.8	2.9	0.5	0.9

*Source:* Statistics Canada, 1981 Census and 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations; Statistics Canada, 1991 Census, Major Fields of Study of Post-Secondary Graduates, catalogue no. 93-329 (1993).

In summary, the human resource indicators suggest that the groundwork has been laid for Aboriginal self-government, particularly in building up administrative capacity. However, communities and organizations possess these capacities in unequal amounts. Senior and executive management skills are scarce, as are a wide range of professional skills requiring university education. At the same time, there are Aboriginal people with the relevant skills and experience to provide the backbone of Aboriginal self-government. The challenge will be to create opportunities for them to acquire a variety of skills that will support new, higher levels of responsibility.

There is an urgent need to open up opportunities for youth in Aboriginal self-government. Young people must be made aware that as Aboriginal governments resume responsibility for areas of life that have been controlled by others, new opportunities will emerge, for example, in justice administration and law enforcement, finance and investment, science and health, economic and business development, environmental and natural resources management, and technology. As noted in Chapter 3 of this volume, there are many careers in the health professions alone in which there are almost no Aboriginal people.

## **9.4 What Needs to Be Done**

The next two decades will be critical for boosting the number of Aboriginal graduates who can work in Aboriginal governments. In this section, we outline a number of strategies for generating sufficient capacity to implement self-government.

### ***Funding for institutional partnerships***

It is important to increase the number of institutions preparing Aboriginal people for self-government. We have already recommended government funding of Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions as one way to do this. At the same time, we recognize the critical role of Canada's public post-secondary institutions. We believe that partnerships between Aboriginal people and public post-secondary institutions are extremely important for broadening the range of professional skills Aboriginal people will acquire.

In the immediate future, it is critical that post-secondary institutions turn out graduates in fields related to the core administrative areas of Aboriginal self-government: management (including resource management and education administration), public administration, economic development, finance and planning. Such programs should be tailored to the requirements of Aboriginal governments and designed to provide students with a number of progressively more advanced credentials at the diploma, three- and four-year bachelor's degree and master's degree levels. Executive m.b.a. and master of public administration (m.p.a.) programs geared to Aboriginal self-government should also be encouraged to produce as many graduates as possible. In some cases, multi-disciplinary programs of two, three or four years could be created with a specific focus on training for Aboriginal self-government. Wherever possible, co-operative education should be built into the program.

From experience to date, we believe that Aboriginal people must be involved as full decision makers in education processes and projects intended to address their needs. Public post-secondary institutions that enter into partnerships with Aboriginal people and demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal self-government education deserve support.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.37**

Federal, provincial and territorial governments establish funding programs to support education for self-government, to be available to

(a) public post-secondary institutions that have entered into partnerships with Aboriginal people to initiate or expand training and education in areas identified as priorities by Aboriginal governments, organizations and communities for the implementation of self-government; and

(b) Aboriginally controlled post-secondary institutions for program innovation to enhance capacity for self-government.

### ***Incentives for students***

We have identified three types of candidates for self-government education: those already employed in Aboriginal government and related services; the substantial number of young people who are in the job market but are undereducated; and those who will be joining the labour force in the next two decades.

In our discussion of capacity building for self-government (see Volume 2, Chapter 3), we noted that if 'professional' behaviours are defined to conform to the demands of non-Aboriginal bureaucracies, they may bring the Aboriginal public servant into conflict with community standards of behaviour. In our discussion of the child in the formal education system earlier in this chapter, we noted the potential for a similar conflict between the Aboriginal culture and the culture of the school. In both cases the conflicts tend to inhibit personal investment in learning, skills development and advancement to higher levels of education and responsibility. When they assume control over education and public services, Aboriginal nations have the opportunity to reinforce traditional cultural norms of achievement and excellence in roles that have been dominated for generations by non-Aboriginal people.

In traditional Aboriginal societies, each member's capabilities were considered spiritual gifts; individuals had a responsibility to discover, develop and share those gifts to sustain the life of the community. Mohawk tradition teaches that the practice of politics is the highest form of spirituality, because exercising power to affect future generations carries with it the highest spiritual responsibilities. A similar ethic can be found in the traditions of other Aboriginal nations. We believe that the most powerful incentives for adults and young people to invest in education for self-government will come from communities and kin who publicly and privately celebrate their members' diverse gifts and honour those who serve.

Young people must discover that the future holds rewarding career possibilities. Counsellors must be made aware of the career options for Aboriginal youth in self-government fields. This will require good working relationships between Aboriginal governments and career counsellors. Young people must receive early career guidance so that their school programs will contain the prerequisites they will need to realize their career goals.

Tangible rewards and incentives will also have a place in encouraging students to undertake and complete higher education and professional training in management and public administration, teacher education and

education administration, recreation leadership, economics, accounting, health fields, social work, natural resource management and other programs considered important to Aboriginal self-government and self-reliance.

For Aboriginal people now employed, completion of education and training should lead to career advancement and improved compensation; program and services budgets should accommodate leave to allow people to study while they work and paid leave for more extensive training. Other strategies for capacity building and career enhancement are discussed below and in Volume 2, Chapter 5.

Although we have already addressed student funding, we believe that there should be additional incentives to reward student choice and completion of programs related to Aboriginal self-government. The funding guidelines of the department of Indian affairs permit First Nations and Inuit education authorities to designate up to five per cent of their post-secondary funding as incentives to students enrolled in studies related to self-government and for scholarships rewarding academic excellence.<sup>80</sup> This is a very progressive policy in principle. However, it assumes sufficient funds are in the authority's annual budget to meet the basic demand for post-secondary assistance. Given the pressures on educational assistance budgets, it is unlikely that significant incentives can be provided from existing resources.

Additional funding is required to permit First Nation and Inuit governments and education authorities to offer incentives in designated occupations and careers. These could include scholarships to reward exceptional achievement, top-up funds for students who must be separated from their families and therefore incur additional costs for lodging during training; and loans forgivable on completion of a period of employment in the service of self-government. The incentives would provide resources over and above regular student funding. For Métis and other Aboriginal students, incentives for self-government studies could be part of the scholarship fund recommended earlier.

During the transition to self-government, Aboriginal nations with jurisdiction over education will be able to allocate funds and designate scholarships in study areas of priority in their human resources development plans.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.38**

Aboriginal governments and organizations collaborate to launch a Canada-wide campaign to make youth aware of the opportunities to serve their nations that will open up with the advent of self-government and of the tangible and intangible rewards that accompany public service.

### **3.5.39**

The federal government make funds available to First Nation and Inuit governments and organizations to support incentives to encourage students to complete bachelor's and master's level studies and professional training in areas of priority to self-government, including such measures as

- (a) employee release time for concurrent work and study;
- (b) paid leave to pursue full-time study;
- (c) scholarships in studies related to self-government;
- (d) top-up of educational assistance for family needs, including exceptional housing costs; and
- (e) student loans that are forgivable on completion of a period of employment in the service of self-government.

### ***Co-op programs, internships and executive exchanges***

A 1994 study by the federal department of human resources found that students who study in co-operative work-study programs at the college and university levels have higher rates of employment upon graduation and earn more than those who did not follow co-op programs.<sup>81</sup> These findings attest to the advantages of work placements and internships in preparing students for employment.

Programs meant to meet self-government needs should include work placement and internships. Efforts should be made to create opportunities for



students to work in placements related to their program of studies.

In addition to Aboriginal governments and small businesses, Canada's federal, provincial and municipal governments can provide important training grounds in public administration. Corporations can also make a substantial contribution to education for self-government by offering placements and internships. We have mentioned opportunities offered by banks, resource industry companies and other corporations. With the co-operation of the public and private sectors, Aboriginal students can sample a range of valuable work experiences. These jobs can also be a significant source of job contacts for students, as well as a supplement to student income.

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **3.5.40**

Canada's corporations, small businesses and governments become active partners in Aboriginal self-government education by identifying co-op placement and internship opportunities in their organizations, in consultation with Aboriginal people.

Interchanges between corporate executives and senior staff of Aboriginal administrations can provide mutually beneficial professional development experiences. Such exchanges help to promote an understanding of the management environments and cultural milieu in which decisions are being made, and they provide practical skills and invaluable contacts. Executive m.b.a. and m.p.a. programs should adopt such exchanges as part of their offerings.

### **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

#### **3.5.41**

Canada's corporations and governments at all levels establish executive interchange opportunities in partnership with Aboriginal governments.

## ***Leadership and professional development for Aboriginal self-government***

So far, we have talked about training and educating people to work in Aboriginal governments and related services. But the Aboriginal political and public service leadership will also require professional development.

New leaders and Aboriginal leaders whose responsibilities are expanding into new areas need to develop skills in many areas, including negotiation, media relations, community development and government relations. Aboriginal leaders, like politicians everywhere, must have an opportunity to keep their skills current with their evolving responsibilities, as must members of newly established self-government institutions.

For Aboriginal people whose jobs involve the implementation of holistic, integrated service delivery, there must be a team emphasis in developing planning, management, communications and other professional skills across disciplinary boundaries. Workshops on community development, strategic planning, government relations, conflict resolution and other areas of public administration and management will increase the knowledge of staff and their ability to work toward community goals as an integrated team.

This kind of professional development can be achieved through specialized and custom-designed workshops. Participants in such training events in business and the professions are often able to accumulate credits toward professional credentials.

In Volume 2, Chapter 3, we recommended establishing an Aboriginal government transition centre to facilitate nation building and citizen participation during the transition to self-government. The centre would work in association with universities, post-secondary education facilities, and other organizations across Canada.

### ***Professional organizations***

The Commission was pleased to see the number of professional organizations that made presentations on Aboriginal issues. Many expressed their support for improving the quality of life of Aboriginal people under conditions where Aboriginal people can determine their own direction. Professional organizations in general expressed their desire to establish good working

relationships with Aboriginal people. We are hopeful that doctors, nurses, teachers, professors, mental health professionals, lawyers, business people, bankers and other members of professional organizations will play an active and supportive role in seeing that our recommendations are implemented.

Some professional organizations have already established Aboriginal committees or working groups to provide direction and advice. This is an encouraging step. It shows that members of the professions recognize their role in promoting entry of Aboriginal people to their ranks. It also provides the opportunity to discuss whether professional practice in Aboriginal environments requires different kinds of training and knowledge. We encourage professional organizations that have not yet built links with Aboriginal people to do so. As noted in Chapter 3 of this volume, Aboriginal people are themselves engaged in creating definitions of professionalism, based on Aboriginal knowledge and values as well as ideas from mainstream society.

Because some professional organizations play pivotal roles in regulating and licensing practitioners, it is important that they understand Aboriginal perspectives on the bodies of knowledge they regulate. Through dialogue, professional organizations and Aboriginal people can find ways of working together to extend credentials to recognize Aboriginal knowledge. We have already recommended the organization of scholarly exchanges between elders and academics. The Aboriginal Peoples' International University could play a facilitating role in such events.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.42**

Professional associations and self-governing bodies in the professions actively support the professional training of Aboriginal people by

(a) entering into dialogue on such issues as credentials, recruitment, mentoring, career paths linking para-professional and professional training, education based on Aboriginal culture, systemic discrimination and racism;

(b) establishing scholarships for Aboriginal people;

(c) encouraging their members to gain an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives;

(d) spearheading initiatives to introduce Aboriginal cultural perspectives into professional training programs; and

(e) providing leadership by encouraging implementation of the recommendations in this report that are relevant to their areas of expertise.

### ***Professional education using distance education***

Options for education must expand for Aboriginal people already engaged in self-government activities in their communities who cannot leave for extended periods. It is time to push further on the promises offered by distance education technology. As discussed earlier, the atii pilot project's cost-effective delivery of management education across four time zones provides experience upon which Aboriginal people and post-secondary institutional partners can build. We propose a more extended test of this model at a more advanced level of study, including such fields as management, health and economic development. Using curriculum developed by Aboriginal people and interactive video technologies, a program of professional studies could be delivered, perhaps in conjunction with summer institutes. The model could test various combinations of technologies and teaching methods, as well as support services intended to encourage students to complete courses. The project could create unique resources that could be shared electronically. Using videoconferencing, elders and other resource persons could participate in the program.

We see this kind of project as ideal for the applied research agenda of the Aboriginal Peoples' International University (apiu). Such a project has broad implications for Aboriginal self-government education and would establish from the outset the networking capabilities of the apiu, its multi-nation character, and its commitment to research that advances the practice of self-government. To carry out the project, it would be necessary to create a consortium of apiu members, Aboriginal governments, professional associations, media partners and Aboriginal education researchers. Members of Mokakit, an Aboriginal education research association that draws its membership from among Aboriginal educators with graduate degrees, as well as non-Aboriginal associates, could play a pivotal role in such an undertaking.

A carefully documented research study would produce important data to underpin models for the future.

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.43**

The federal government, media corporations, provincial and territorial governments and private donors provide funding and/or gifts in kind (for example, access to facilities and technology) to establish a distance education model of professional training suitable for Aboriginal people who wish to pursue post-secondary studies from their communities.

#### ***Aboriginal human resource development inventory and strategy for self-government***

We emphasize again our belief that education for self-government is an urgent priority. Concerted efforts are required on many fronts to increase local capacity to implement Aboriginal self-government. The initiatives we have proposed should be launched immediately.

At the same time, it is crucial to establish a comprehensive inventory of Aboriginal people available for work across Canada that will serve as the data base for human resources planning and policy. Current labour force information does not describe Aboriginal human resources in sufficient detail, particularly because there are so few Aboriginal people in many employment categories. The data base would allow Aboriginal governments, employers, post-secondary institutions and Canadian governments to pinpoint Aboriginal human resources requirements more accurately, establish target levels in specific areas, track the number of graduates in relevant fields, and monitor progress toward human resources development goals. For example, the inventory would establish the number of Aboriginal secondary teachers, dentists, carpenters, system analysts, archaeologists, marine biologists, trappers, professional foresters, nurses, certified general accountants, and so on. Specific policy strategies can be developed to increase the number of graduates in priority areas.

The establishment of a comprehensive and accurate data base would be the

first step toward that end. We believe that the national Aboriginal organizations, through their memberships, would be well-positioned to carry out this initiative. The data base could be housed at the proposed clearinghouse and could be updated regularly by the clearinghouse. For this reason, it is critical from the outset to develop a single, co-ordinated approach with mutually agreed tracking categories. The inventory should be available in formats that facilitate local, regional and Canada-wide human resource planning. (For further discussion of the human resources inventory, see Chapter 3 in this volume.)

## **Recommendation**

The Commission recommends that

### **3.5.44**

The federal government provide funding for national Aboriginal organizations to co-ordinate establishment of a Canada-wide Aboriginal human resources inventory that is amenable to regular updating.

Education is a lengthy process. It takes time to build local capacity. Education for self-government cannot and should not wait until self-government agreements are concluded. Aboriginal communities and organizations must proceed now with preparing personnel. The pace of education and training must gather momentum so that Aboriginal nations can assume their self-governing responsibilities with a full complement of trained Aboriginal people.

## **10. New Partnerships in Aboriginal Education**

### **10.1 A Shift in Authority**

Throughout this chapter we have urged that education in all its dimensions be placed under the control of Aboriginal people. To initiate phase one of a shift in authority, we recommended that federal, provincial and territorial governments act promptly to acknowledge that education is a core area of self-government jurisdiction, that is, one in which Aboriginal nations and their communities can take initiatives. Such acknowledgement would open the door to adaptation and flexible interpretation of existing legislation and funding conditions and would allow Aboriginal nations and communities that are ready

to proceed with fundamental change to get started.

In phase two, Aboriginal nations will reconstitute themselves and gain recognition under the proposed Aboriginal Nations Recognition and Government Act. They will then be able to exercise jurisdiction in core areas, preferably agreed upon with the federal and provincial governments, in the context of a Canada-wide framework agreement, or with the federal government and those provinces ready to act. We have no doubt that education will be one of the areas in which Aboriginal nations will wish to assume jurisdiction at an early date and that it will be readily recognized by federal and provincial governments as an area of vital concern to the life and welfare, the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples.

## **10.2 Learning from the Past, Building for the Future**

The educational reforms implemented in the past 25 years have laid a solid foundation for the shift in authority that we propose. As we have documented in this chapter, First Nations and Inuit communities have assumed administrative responsibility for local schools. They have introduced changes that have made curriculum and school culture more relevant to community experience and encouraged young people to stay in school longer. Tribal councils and regional governments have established education authorities to lead the process of change; provincial and territorial organizations have negotiated policy frameworks with provincial governments; national organizations have represented their constituents in federal forums, conducted major research projects and promulgated policy documents on education; and Aboriginal post-secondary institutions and training institutes have emerged, negotiating a variety of funding agreements with governments and affiliations with provincial institutions.

Aboriginal people have become more active in influencing provincial and territorial education, negotiating tuition agreements, forming advisory groups and seeking representation on school boards. Provincial and territorial institutions have adapted curriculum, introduced special programs and delivery methods, and in some cases have set targets for increasing student access and retention. Provincial and territorial governments have turned their attention to how policy can enhance Aboriginal participation and success in provincial institutions.

Aided by special initiatives in teacher education since the 1960s, Aboriginal

people have gained a foothold in the teaching profession, and many have taken their place in schools on-reserve and in northern communities, although representation in provincial schools is still low. Education has been a prominent choice of Aboriginal people pursuing graduate studies. Educators with post-graduate credentials and those who have moved from the classroom to administrative roles now constitute a corps of mature Aboriginal professionals taking leadership in educational policy and reform.

All of these changes are welcome. But as we have shown, they are not enough to close the gap between the education obtained by Aboriginal students and that of other Canadians. As the skills requirements of a post-industrial, globalized economy rise, the marginalization, poverty and relative disadvantage of Aboriginal people are in danger of increasing unless success in education can be radically improved.

Equipping successive generations with the skills to participate in a global economy is a major goal of Aboriginal people and their educators, but it is only part of the story. Aboriginal people are determined to sustain their cultures and identities, and they see education as a major means of preparing their children to perceive the world through Aboriginal eyes and live in it as Aboriginal human beings. Aboriginal education therefore must be rooted in Aboriginal cultures and community realities. It must reinforce Aboriginal identity, instill traditional values, and affirm the validity of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of learning.

The evidence we have reviewed indicates that education under the control of Aboriginal people typically pursues the dual objectives of fostering skills relevant to participation in contemporary society and reinforcing cultural identity. It also produces better outcomes according to objective measures of academic achievement and contributions to the community and subjective assessments of personal growth and satisfaction.

### **10.3 New Partnerships**

The implementation of Aboriginal self-government will add momentum to change already under way and will introduce a new dimension of Aboriginal control. Self-government will permit the establishment of Aboriginal education systems under the jurisdiction of Aboriginal nations and the authority of laws adopted by the nation.



Once recognized, Aboriginal nations can exercise jurisdiction in core areas of jurisdiction. They can establish education authorities to make policy on education goals and standards, the administration of community schools, tuition agreements and purchase of provincial or territorial services. Some nations will be able to develop infrastructure for autonomous policy development, access to specialist services, hiring of personnel, training and professional development of educators, curriculum development and research. Some will want to join with other nations to carry out these functions, as we describe below.

In the transition period following recognition, nations will receive federal funding according to the responsibilities they assume in core areas of self-government. When established as a third order of government, they will receive revenue from sources within the nation and intergovernmental transfers. They will allocate resources for government services, including education systems and community schools. Nations will participate in negotiating province-wide or territory-wide policy frameworks with provincial or territorial governments, normally through representation in multi-nation organizations.

Aboriginal public governments will exercise jurisdiction in education under their constitutions or the mandates negotiated to define their roles as communities or regions within provincial or territorial boundaries. Aboriginal community of interest governments, which come together in urban centres or rural districts to seek recognition and act in education, will exercise authority delegated by provincial or nation governments with which they affiliate or for which they deliver services.

Table 5.4 displays the levels of organization that might be developed in an Aboriginal education system and the way authority and responsibility might be distributed. For the sake of simplicity, the model refers primarily to nation governments.

**TABLE 5.4**  
**Model of An Aboriginal Education System**

### **Local Community**

- Participates in policy making through representation in Aboriginal nation governing bodies and nation education authority
- Makes decisions on instruction of local students
- Implements nation policy in local Aboriginal institutions
- Negotiates tuition agreements in accord with nation policy and
- Participates in decision making in post- local institutions under provincial/ programs territorial jurisdiction institutions

### **Aboriginal Nation**

- Enacts or adopts laws on Aboriginal education
- Establishes an education authority to make policy on
- education goals and means of achieving them in the nation
- administration of schools and colleges within the nation
- tuition agreements
- purchase of provincial/ territorial services
- Receives revenues and distributes funds for government services including education
- Participates in establishing policy framework province-wide through representation in multi-nation organizations

### **Multi-Nation Organization**

- Negotiates policy framework with the province or territory
- for tuition agreements
- access to provincial or territorial services
- transfer between Aboriginal and provincial or territorial academic programs
- Develops curriculum
- Monitors academic standards in Aboriginal system
- May co-ordinate nation support of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions
- Advises provincial ministers of education, colleges and universities and training
- Provides an umbrella for representation of community of interest governments administering education

### **Canada-Wide Networks**

- Federated organizations reflecting nation interests
- Aboriginal Peoples' International University
- electronic clearinghouse
- statistical clearinghouse
- documentation centre
- associations for setting standard programs and accrediting secondary institutions

Local Aboriginal communities would continue, as they do now, to make decisions about education: they would decide whether students would attend Aboriginal schools or provincial or territorial institutions. They would implement policy in local schools, negotiate tuition agreements for their students and participate in decision making in local school boards, post-secondary

institutions and training programs under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Under self-government, the authority to deliver education, implement policies and fund local education will derive from the Aboriginal nation. Communities will participate in policy making through representation in Aboriginal nation governing bodies and nation education authorities.

Multi-nation organizations will constitute a third level of organization in Aboriginal education systems. The rationale for a third level of organization is set out by Common and Frost in a recent publication drawing on First Nations education experience in Ontario. The authors refer to a Native Ministry of Education (nmoe) as the locus for functions we see as appropriate for multi-nation organizations.

No single First Nation could hope to mount costly research projects, thus necessitating a regional or provincial organization to investigate such areas as: efficacious Native learning styles, language acquisition models, or intervention approaches to reduce drop-out rates. The research department should search for appropriate pupil-teacher ratios for Native schools, develop culturally appropriate intelligence tests and numerous other educational issues.

The curriculum development and implementation branch would design curricula to meet locally identified needs and integrate Indian values in curricula, pedagogy and teaching materials....As well, the Ministry could also have an evaluation branch for providing audits and evaluation of First Nation-operated systems.

Further, the Ministry would have an adult and continuing education branch for developing programs to meet individual First Nation's needs. The nmoe could facilitate and co-ordinate distance education approaches and use of technology to deliver secondary and post-secondary programs to remote, small, isolated Native communities (i.e., interactive television and computers).

Without a third level structure, the issues of accreditation will become problematic. If a First Nation operated system declares itself independent from provincial curricula and standards, the provincial institutions and post-secondary programs may challenge or not recognize the credentials of the products of First Nation-operated systems. A Native Ministry of Education could develop its own standards and inspect systems to ensure set standards are being met.<sup>82</sup>

Educational innovation to date has been led by community schools and nation or tribal council education authorities. These bodies may be reluctant to relinquish their autonomy to participate in larger coalitions. Common and Frost acknowledge that there could be conflicts between the interests of the local community and the priorities of a third-level organization. In our view, however, the benefits of having an agency at the provincial level that can negotiate the development of Aboriginal education systems outweighs any disadvantage to nations and their communities from sharing authority with an Aboriginal organization of broader scope.

In summary, we would see a multi-nation organization negotiating a policy framework with the province governing tuition agreements, access to provincial services and transfer between Aboriginal and provincial academic programs. It would develop curriculum, monitor academic standards in the Aboriginal education system, advise provincial ministers of education, colleges and universities, and provide training. It could also represent community of interest governments administering education in urban centres.

The fourth level of organization for which we see a need under self-government is Canada-wide networks. We anticipate that governance structures will take a federated form rather than a centralized hierarchy. At the Canada-wide level, the need for federated structures in education that reflect the interests and priorities of constituent nations and institutions is particularly important.

It is no accident that there are no examples of Canada-wide institutions of educational governance. Education in all parts of Canada is recognized as a process that must be rooted in the local community, even while global economic forces exert pressure for more uniformity. In proposing Canada-wide vehicles to support Aboriginal education in the twenty-first century, we emphasize that these institutions must sustain dialogue with and between local communities even as they test the possibilities of advanced technologies and links with other nation-states. Emerging telecommunications technologies offer an unprecedented opportunity for Aboriginal institutions to transcend distance and at the same time give primacy to grassroots priorities and participation. Local diversity and nation autonomy must be respected if Canada-wide institutions are to mobilize and sustain support and function effectively.

Our recommendations include establishing an Aboriginal Peoples'

International University, an electronic information clearinghouse, a statistical clearinghouse, and a documentation centre. We also recommend the formation of a Canada-wide board or association to set standards and accredit Aboriginal post-secondary programs. In each case we see the Canada-wide institutions facilitating networking among local and regional programs and institutions and providing a broader perspective on the current status and future possibilities of Aboriginal education.

While we see Aboriginal institutions leading the way and setting the pace for innovation and increased effectiveness in Aboriginal education, we wish also to emphasize the continuing importance of provincial and territorial institutions in Aboriginal education. As Aboriginal people participate more fully in every facet of Canadian life, they will become more visible in colleges, universities and professional schools. Urban elementary schools and district high schools will continue to serve Aboriginal students in significant numbers. Employment-oriented training programs will contribute to Aboriginal people's entry or re-entry into the labour market.

Local education and training institutions under provincial or territorial jurisdiction should continue their efforts to accommodate Aboriginal students, deliver culturally sensitive services to Aboriginal communities under contract, establish Aboriginal programs, designate Aboriginal schools or delivery sites under Aboriginal management, consult with local Aboriginal communities, and engage Aboriginal representatives in governance and decision making in their institutions. In Volume 4, Chapter 7, we argued that provincial governments should ensure that their fiduciary obligations to Aboriginal people are fully honoured and respected. When the debate regarding the level of government responsible for Aboriginal services is laid to rest, we expect the provinces to support strongly the capacity of local institutions to deliver culturally appropriate Aboriginal services.

As shown in Table 5.5, provincial and territorial governments will contribute greatly to Aboriginal self-government in education. They will negotiate a policy framework with Aboriginal nations and multi-nation organizations, establish Aboriginal policy for provincial and territorial institutions, delegate authority and provide financial support for education services delivered by Aboriginal community of interest governments in urban centres and consult regularly with Aboriginal nations and multi-nation organizations.

TABLE 5.5

# Federal, Provincial and Territorial Roles in Aboriginal Education

## **Local Institutions**

- District school boards
- Post-secondary institutions
- Human resource training programs

## **Roles include**

- accommodating students
- delivering services under contract
- establishing Aboriginal programs
- designating Aboriginal schools, program units or delivery sites under Aboriginal management
- consulting with Aboriginal community
- engaging Aboriginal representatives in governance and decision making

## **Provincial/Territorial Ministry**

- Negotiates policy framework with Aboriginal nations and multi-nation organizations
- Establishes Aboriginal policy for implementation in provincial and territorial institutions
- Delegates authority and provides financial support for service delivery by Aboriginal agencies and community of interest governments

## **Federal Role In Aboriginal Education**

- Accommodates self- starting initiatives of Aboriginal nations and their communities within current legislation
- Encourages the development of education authorities consistent with the emergence of self-governing Aboriginal nations, confederacies and communities of

interest

- Allocates resources to recognized Aboriginal nations during the transition to self-government for exercise of jurisdiction in agreed-upon core areas
- Supports the establishment of Canada- common goals of Aboriginal nations and communities of interest

In Volume 2, Chapter 3, we recommended the reorganization of federal government structures for the conduct of Aboriginal affairs. Even in advance of those changes, however, the federal government can act to support the implementation of self-government in Aboriginal education by accommodating initiatives by Aboriginal nations and their communities under current legislation; encouraging the development of education authorities consistent with the emergence of self-governing Aboriginal nations, confederacies and communities of interest; allocating resources to recognized Aboriginal nations during the transition to self-government for exercise of jurisdiction in education; and supporting the establishment of Canada-wide institutions serving the common goals of Aboriginal nations and communities of interest. These federal government roles, summarized in Table 5.5, will support and facilitate the work of Aboriginal governments and education authorities, extending and accelerating the move already in progress to transfer responsibility for education to Aboriginal control.

Education is an area where considerable Aboriginal expertise, personnel and organizational infrastructure are already in place. Our recommendations build on these foundations and propose vigorous partnerships among Aboriginal, federal, provincial and territorial governments and shared effort among Aboriginal nations, governments and communities of interest to usher in a new era in Aboriginal education.

---

## Notes:

\* Transcripts of the Commission's hearings are cited with the speaker's name and affiliation, if any, and the location and date of the hearing. See *A Note About Sources* at the beginning of this volume for information about transcripts and other Commission publications.



**1** Northwest Territories, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, *Dene Kede æ Education: A Dene Perspective* (Yellowknife: August 1993).

**2** Alberta, *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Investigate the Conditions of the Half-Breed Population of Alberta* (Edmonton: Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, 1936), p. 7.

**3** Tim Borlase, *Labrador Studies: The Labrador Inuit* (Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador: Labrador East Integrated School Board, 1993), p. 203.

**4** Bernard Gauthier, “Évaluation des interventions gouvernementales en matière d’éducation au Nouveau-Québec inuit”, *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 19/1 (1989), p. 64.

**5** Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development [diand], *Basic Departmental Data æ 1994* (Ottawa: Supply and Services 1995).

**6** A political accord was signed by the Mi’kmaq Chiefs of Nova Scotia and the minister of Indian affairs on 4 November 1994, committing both parties to actions that will result in Mi’kmaq jurisdiction over education. A formal agreement will lead to legislation to create a Mi’kmaq education authority.

**7** *Yukon First Nations Land Claims Settlement Act*, S.C. 1994, c. 34.

**8** Mary Jane Norris, Don Kerr and François Nault, “Projections of the Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada, 1991-2016”, research study prepared by Statistics Canada for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [rcap] (1995). For information about research studies prepared for rcap, see *A Note about Sources* at the beginning of this volume. For a general discussion of the sources of data used by the Commission in this report, see Volume 1, Chapter 2, particularly the endnotes

**9** Diand, *Basic Departmental Data æ 1994* (cited in note 5).

**10** 23.9 per cent had less than grade 9, and 33.6 per cent had high school/no certificate, for a total of 57.5 per cent with less than high school graduation. The 43 per cent figure assumes that those undertaking post-secondary

certificate programs have achieved the equivalent of high school graduation, although in fact many in the latter category participate in specialized vocational programs or studies to qualify for regular post-secondary programs.

**11** The Commission consulted numerous national, provincial and community reports and studies addressing Aboriginal education concerns, contemporary as well as historical. We also commissioned a content analysis of concerns in 22 education studies contained in the Commission's review of previous commissions and task forces. (Roy Vermillion, "Chart of Previous Commissions and Task Forces Recommendations", research study prepared for rcap (1994)). The 22 education studies can be found in the reviews undertaken by Carleton University for rcap, *Public Policy and Aboriginal Peoples, 1965-1992, Volume 2: Summaries of Reports by Federal Bodies and Aboriginal Organizations; Volume 3: Summaries of Reports by Provincial and Territorial Bodies and Other Organizations* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1994). The studies are as follows:

Excellence in Education: Improving Aboriginal Education in New Brunswick (1992) Closing the Gap: The Native Indian Students' Achievement Study (New Brunswick, 1991) Literacy for Métis and Non-Status Indian Peoples: A National Strategy (1991) You Took My Talk: Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment. Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990) Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (British Columbia, 1990) A Review of the Post-Secondary Student Assistance Program of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1989) Breaking Barriers: Report of the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People (Nova Scotia, 1989) Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future (Assembly of First Nations, 1988) Native Education in Alberta: Alberta Native Peoples' Views on Native Education) (1987) Final Report: Working Group on Native Education, Training and Employment (Alberta, 1987) Kwiya: Towards a New Partnership in Education (Yukon, 1987) Speaking Out: Consultations and Survey of Yukon Native Languages: Planning, Visibility, Growth (1986) Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages (Northwest Territories, 1986) Improved Program Delivery: Indians and Natives Study Team Report to the Task Force on Program Review (the Nielsen task force report, 1985) Inner City Dropout Study (Saskatchewan, 1985) Reaching Out: Report of the Indian and Métis Education Consultations (Saskatchewan, 1985) Education Equity: A Report on Native Indian Education in Saskatchewan (1985) Indian Education: Everyone's Concern (New Brunswick, 1984) Learning: Tradition and Change (Northwest Territories, 1983) Indian Control of

Indian Education (1972) Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on the Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1967-68 and 1968-69 (1971) Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada (the Hawthorn report, 1966)

**12** Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Education Commission, "Educational Principles", quoted by Vice Chief E. (Dutch) Lerat and Del C. Anaquod in *A Brief to the Strategic Planning Working Group of the Department of Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment on the Future of Education, Training and Employment in Saskatchewan* (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 1993).

**13** We use the term 'elder' in two separate but inter-related senses in this chapter. First, elder refers to someone who is moving toward the end of the life cycle. In Canadian society the term 'senior' is frequently used. An elder has acquired a lifetime of experience that embodies not only the individual's own life story but also the social-political history of the nation. In general, Aboriginal societies treat the knowledge and experience of elders with great respect. We will also refer to elders in the sense of individuals trained in traditional knowledge and responsible for safeguarding and transmitting traditional knowledge, ceremonies and beliefs from one generation to the next. In this sense, not every old person is an elder; not every elder is an old person. Elders are highly revered in Aboriginal societies. (See Volume 4, Chapter 3, for further discussion of the role of elders in various areas of community life.)

**14** See Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1994). The task force found that the influence of early environment on brain development is long-lasting and that stress during the first three years of life has a negative impact on brain function. "By ensuring a good start in life, we have more opportunity to promote learning and prevent damage than we ever imagined."

**15** Clare Brant, a Mohawk psychiatrist, documented the practice of 'non-interference', a prominent characteristic of parenting and social interaction in many Aboriginal cultures. Non-interference entails not criticizing or attempting to control the behaviour of others by direct intervention. This applies not only in peer relations, but also in relations between parents and children. His work appears in Clare C. Brant, "Native Ethics and Rules of Behaviour", *Canadian*

*Journal of Psychiatry* 35/6 (August 1990), p. 534.

**16** David P. Weikart, *Quality Preschool Programs: A Long-Term Social Investment*, Occasional Paper No. 5 (New York: Ford Foundation, 1989).

**17** Carnegie Task Force, *Starting Points* (cited in note 14). In 1990 the u.s. Congress passed the first legislation addressing early childhood issues in fifty years, and funding for Head Start programs had reached the highest level since their inception. See Alice S. Paul, *Early Childhood Education in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities* (Washington, d.c.: Department of Education, Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, 1991).

**18** Ontario, *For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning, A Short Version* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1994), p. 12.

**19** Assembly of First Nations, *National Overview of First Nations Child Care* (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 1989); Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (formerly Native Council of Canada), *Native Child Care: The Circle of Care* (Ottawa: Native Council of Canada, 1990); National Association of Friendship Centres, "Final Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples" (1993). For information about briefs submitted to rcap, see *A Note About Sources* at the beginning of this volume.

**20** For a discussion of the importance of Aboriginal language in establishing cultural patterns of perception and world view, see Volume 1, Chapter 15. See Volume 4, Chapter 3 for elders' perspectives on culture, language and values. For a discussion of the role of education programs in retaining and revitalizing Aboriginal languages, see Chapter 6 in this volume.

**21** Researchers such as Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey and Pasta (1991) and Reyes (1992) emphasize the importance of fluency in a primary language, that is, a first language. See J. David Ramirez et al., "Final Report: Longitudinal Study of Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit and Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual Educational Programs for Language-Minority Children, Volume 1", submitted to u.s. Department of Education (San Mateo, California: Aguire International, 1991); and Maria de la Luz Reyes, "Challenging Venerable Assumptions: Literacy Instruction for Linguistically Different Students", *Harvard Educational Review* 62/4 (1992), p. 427.

**22** British Columbia, Royal Commission on Education, *A Legacy for Learners*

(1988), is the basis for the provincial pre-school program in British Columbia. It is a child-centred, active learning approach that focuses on language development. Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child's education.

**23** There are provincial and territorial variations in this age, ranging from age five in British Columbia to age seven in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For further information, see Austin J. Harte, *Improving School Attendance: Responsibility and Challenge* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1994), pp. 17-18.

**24** Brant, "Native Ethics and Rules of Behaviour" (cited in note 15).

**25** Statistics Canada, custom tabulations, 1991. See Volume 2, Chapter 5, Table 5.20, which displays educational attainment of Aboriginal people no longer in school, by age group. In the 15-24 age group, 20.7 per cent of young people no longer in school had attained grade 8 or less, and 47.8 per cent had some high school education but no certificate. In the 25-49 age group the proportion with less than grade 8 remains almost constant, at 19.9 per cent, while the proportion with no certificate drops to 30.5 per cent. The proportion of the more mature group with high school certificates is comparable to the younger group (15.1 per cent of those 15-24 and 13.2 per cent of those 25-49), but fully 18.1 per cent of the 25-49 age group has a non-university certificate, indicating that re-entry to educational programs classified as post-secondary is an important avenue for raising attainment levels.

**26** A standard clause in a diand education contribution agreement in British Columbia reads: "The Recipient shall ensure that registered Indian students ordinarily resident on reserve---have access to one or more of the following: instructional and support services in a band-operated or an independent/private school that provides provincially recognized programs of study and employs only teachers who are members in good standing with the British Columbia College of Teachers---".

**27** Sheila Watt Cloutier, "Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future: Education in Northern and Remote Communities", Discussion Paper No. 7 on Education, prepared for rcap, National Round Table on Education (1993).

**28** The Akwesasne science and maths project estimates that \$200,000 a year for five years is required to undertake a similar process of curriculum

development, covering three or four grade levels, with two curriculum writers. The Dene Kede project recommended a budget of approximately \$130,000 a year for five years to develop the kind of framework their project created, with one curriculum writer and extensive travel and consultation. Thereafter, travel costs (50 per cent of the budget) can be expected to decline and more costs can be assumed regionally and locally as implementation proceeds.

**29** Pierre-Étienne Laporte, "Connaître la situation des langues autochtones du Québec: une préoccupation du clf [Knowing the status of Aboriginal languages of Quebec: a concern of the clf], *Bulletin du Conseil de la langue française* 9/3 (Fall 1992). See also Jacques Maurais, ed., *Les langues autochtones du Québec* (Quebec City: Publications du Québec, 1992).

**30** Rcap staff communication with Lorna Williams, First Nations specialist, Vancouver School Board, September 1995.

**31** Lynn Drapeau, "Issues in Language and Education for Native Populations in Quebec", research study prepared for rcap (1995).

**32** Information supplied by the department of education, culture and employment of the Northwest Territories, 30 March 1995.

**33** Transcripts of the hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (hereafter, rcap transcripts), Port Alberni, British Columbia, 20 May 1992.

**34** Verna J. Kirkness and Sheena Selkirk Bowman, *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1992), p. 47.

**35** The Nunavut Implementation Training Study offers the following figures: People who do leave school do so later as demonstrated by a dramatic decline in the proportion of school leavers who leave at grade 8 level or less--- For Nunavut as a whole, the decrease in the proportion of students leaving school at a grade 8 or lower level decreased from 43 per cent in 1986-87 to 2 per cent in 1990-91. In all regions and for Nunavut as a whole, there was a correspondingly large increase in the proportion for students leaving between grade 9 and grade 11---from 27 per cent to 63 per cent for Nunavut as a whole. (Nunavut Implementation Training Committee, "Nunavut Implementation Training Study: A Study on Training for Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement", Volume 2: Main Report, prepared by

Consilium (December 1994), p. 91.)

The Southwest Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation's "Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples" cited a 1988 study from the University of Manitoba in which 55 per cent of Métis respondents had only grade 9 or less education and a further 25 per cent had grade 10 or 11. In northern Quebec, 70 per cent of Cree and Inuit students drop out before completing high school. Bernard Lamothe and Louise Lemire, "Scolarité, développement et activité économique chez les Inuit du Québec arctique", *Recherches sociographiques* 35/3 (September-December 1994), p. 559. Diand's annual report, *Basic Departmental Data æ 1994* (cited in note 5), "On-Reserve Students Remaining Until Grade 12 for Consecutive Years of Schooling", indicates an increase in students remaining until grade 12, from 53.6 per cent in 1991-92 to 77.7 per cent in 1993-94. We cannot confirm whether this dramatic increase in grade 12 enrolments has translated into grade 12 graduations. Nor can we ascertain whether this sizeable change is also reflected in the schooling of other Aboriginal students, or whether perhaps there has been a change in the method of calculating statistics at diand.

**36** Statistics Canada, "Educational Attainment and School Attendance: The Nation", 1991 Census, catalogue no. 93-328 (1993), Table 7.

**37** Nunavik Educational Task Force, *Silatunirmut. The Pathway to Wisdom*, Final Report of the Nunavik Educational Task Force (Lachine, Quebec: Makivik, 1992), Recommendation 47.

**38** Réginald Vollant and Bernard St-Onge, Nutshimiu-Atusseun training centre, rcap transcripts, Sept-Isles, Quebec, 19 November 1992.

**39** The significance of this approach for Aboriginal education is documented in a video entitled *The Mind of a Child: Working with children affected by poverty, racism and war*, National Film Board, 1995.

**40** Alwyn Morris, untitled report (commissioned by Fitness and Amateur Sport Canada, 1992), p. 45.

**41** See New Economy Development Group, *First Nations Children: Success Stories in Our Communities* (Ottawa: Children's Bureau, Health and Welfare, 1993).

**42** The theoretical works of Paulo Freire in Brazil, Ira Shor and Henry Giroux in the United States, Roger I. Simon, and Rick Arnold et al. of the Toronto-based Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action belong to the critical pedagogy and transformative education schools of thought. *Theater of the Oppressed*, founded by Brazilian Augusto Boal, is a particularly powerful tool for working with youth to explore issues that are of priority to them. Readers should consult Rick Arnold et al., *Educating for a Change* (Toronto: Between the Lines and the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, 1991); Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leah McBride (New York: Urizen Books, 1979); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Henry Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Granby, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987); and Roger I. Simon, *Teaching Against the Grain: Texts for a Pedagogy of Possibility*, ed. Henry A. Giroux and Paulo Freire (Toronto: Oise Press, 1992).

**43** Northwest Territories, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, "Preparing for Tomorrow: Departmental Directive on Community Senior Secondary Schooling" (Yellowknife 1994).

**44** Statistics Canada, 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, custom tabulations, 1994.

**45** See United Nations, *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995, un Doc. a/conf. 177/20. The "Platform for Action" (Strategic Objective B.4) calls on governments and educational authorities to "Remove all barriers to access to formal education for pregnant adolescents and young mothers, and support the provision of child care and other support services where necessary".

**46** *For the Love of Learning* (cited in note 18), p. 1.

**47** H.B. Hawthorn, ed., *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: A Report on Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies*, 2 volumes (Ottawa: diand, 1966-1967).

**48** "Population 15+ in the Experienced Labour Force Showing the Number in



Teaching and Related Occupations, for the Aboriginal Identity and Non-Aboriginal Population, 1981 and 1991". These figures likely include an unknown number of individuals working with paraprofessional qualifications. See Don Kerr, Andy Siggner and Jean Pierre Bourdeau, "Canada's Aboriginal Population, 1981-1991", research study prepared for rcap (1995).

**49** In 1991 there were 612,415 non-Aboriginal people in teaching and related occupations serving 3,637,150 school children (age five to 14). At the same time, there were 8,075 Aboriginal people in teaching and related occupations and 148,135 Aboriginal school children (age five to 14). This means that there was one non-Aboriginal teacher for every six non-Aboriginal children, but only one Aboriginal teacher for every 18 Aboriginal children. To bring the ratio of Aboriginal teachers to Aboriginal children to the same level as that for non-Aboriginal people, about 24,000 more Aboriginal teachers would have to be working in the various education systems. See Kerr, Siggner and Bourdeau, "Canada's Aboriginal Identity Population, 1981-1991" (cited in note 48); and Statistics Canada, 1991 Census, "Mother Tongue: 20% Sample Data", catalogue no. 93-333.

**50** Northwest Territories, *Teacher Training in the n.w.t.: Department of Education, Culture and Employment Programs* (Yellowknife: 1992).

**51** Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (oneca), "An Evaluation of the Long-Term Effectiveness of the Native Counsellor Program", brief submitted to rcap (1993).

**52** In 1994, the Royal Commission on Learning in Ontario (cited in note 18) put forward the following recommendation: That the province include in its requirements for pre-service and in-service teacher education a component related to teaching aboriginal students and teaching about aboriginal issues to both Native and non-Native students.

**53** Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research and Metis National Council, *Literacy for Metis and Non-Status Indian Peoples: A National Strategy* (Saskatoon: no date).

**54** Staff communication with Annie Popert, former executive director, Kativik School Board, May 1994.

**55** Lamothe and Lemire, "Scolarité, développement et activité économique"

(cited in note 35).

**56** In the year 2011, the 20 to 24 age group will represent the single largest five-year age cohort in the Aboriginal population, at a projected 98,900 persons; the 15- to 19-year-olds will be the second largest, at 90,300. In contrast, these two five-year cohorts are expected to be the seventh and eighth largest in the Canadian population as a whole.

**57** *Budget Implementation Act, 1995*, S.C. 1995, c. 17.

**58** This passage is quoted by Cecil King in “The State of Aboriginal Education in Southern Canada”, research study prepared for rcap (1993), quoting a paper by the Gabriel Dumont Institute, “A Post-Secondary Education for Metis People”.

**59** Lynne Davis, “Electronic Classrooms, Electronic Highways: A Review of Aboriginal Distance Education in Canada”, research study prepared for rcap (1994).

**60** Eber Hampton and Steve Wolfson have built on Barnhardt’s categories in their paper, “A Vision of First Nations Controlled University Education in Canada: The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Model and Beyond”, brief submitted to rcap (July 1993).

**61** Ethel Gardner, “First Nations House of Learning: A Continuity of Transformation”, research study prepared for rcap (1994).

**62** The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and the First Nations House of Learning, as well as academic departments of Aboriginal or Native studies, fulfil some but not all of the functions of a college.

**63** Blair Stonechild, “Short Paper on Research Priorities in the Areas of Indian University and Urban Education, and Museum Training”, paper prepared for rcap (1992).

**64** Giselle Marcotte, rcap transcripts, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 28 October 1992; Christie Clifton, North Coast Tribal Council Education Centre, rcap transcripts, Prince Rupert, British Columbia, 26 May 1993; and John Hart, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, rcap transcripts, Kamloops, British Columbia, 14 June 1993.

**65** A good overview of the American tribal college system can be found in Schuyler Houser, "Underfunded Miracles: Tribal Colleges", United States Government, Indian Nations At Risk Task Force Commissioned Papers, 1991, Eric document ed 343 772. Houser notes that while every college is locally controlled and reflects its own tribal character, the colleges have joined forces to form the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (aihec) to act in their common interest. By 1978, aihec had successfully lobbied Congress to pass the *Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Assistance Act*, which legislated funding assistance. Unfortunately, they have never been funded to the level permitted by the legislation.

**66** Secretary of State for Youth and Training and Human Resources Canada, *Pathways Structural Review, Stage II: Strategic Directions, Options for Consideration* (Ottawa: 1995). This review confirms our findings that fragmentation of funding and lack of co-ordination among training programs remain a weakness in present approaches to employment development services for Aboriginal people. The report cites the partnership between Pathways' Regional Aboriginal Management Board of Ontario and the provincial Jobs Ontario program as a promising example of trilateral approaches to human resources development.

**67** Universalia, "Assessment of the Pathways to Success Strategy, Final Report to the National Aboriginal Management Board", draft #2, March 1994.

**68** Rcap staff communication with Annie Popert, former executive director, Kativik School Board, May 1994.

**69** South West Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation, "Report to the Royal Commission" (cited in note 35), p. 21.

**70** Universities are generally reluctant to appoint elders to teaching positions because they do not have the formal qualifications normally required. Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, has shown leadership in this area by appointing elders as regular tenured faculty members.

**71** See Errol West, "Australian First Nations University: A discussion on the establishment of an Aboriginal university", *Australian Universities' Review 2* (1994), pp. 52-54. Establishment of a national Aboriginal education institute was recommended in House of Commons, *Report of the Standing Committee*

*on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development*, Sub-Committee on Aboriginal Education (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, June 1996). The institute, as proposed, would fulfil many of the co-ordination and information functions that we envisage for the Aboriginal Peoples' International University, but it is not identified as an institution of higher learning.

**72** The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (crtc) has released a report, *Competition and Culture on Canada's Information Highways: Managing the Realities of Transition* (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services, 1995), acknowledging the need for government involvement in decisions on infrastructure development in high-cost areas and the importance of the information highway in helping to deliver social and commercial services in remote areas. Further, the crtc recognizes people's concern that there be public access to certain on-line services at minimal or no charge.

**73** Council for Yukon Indians, *Umbrella Final Agreement Implementation Plan, Annex E: Arrangements for Training and the Training Policy Committee* (Ottawa: diand, 1993).

**74** Nunavut Implementation Training Committee, *Nunavut Implementation Training Study: A Study on Training for Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Final Report*, Volume 1: *Summary Report*, Volume 2: *Main Report* (September 1994). Atii Training Inc. estimates that 2,300 new jobs will be created by the establishment of Nunavut. See "Northern Education and Training Systems for Inuit: A Strategy Analysis", research study prepared for rcap (1993).

**75** Diand, *Indian/Inuit Training Opportunities, 1993-1994* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1992), p. 129.

**76** Northwest Territories, *Teacher Training in the n.w.t.* (cited in note 50), pp. 18-19.

**77** The Institute of Indigenous Government (iig), established by the Union of b.c. Indian Chiefs, opened its doors in Vancouver in September 1995, offering programs in political development and leadership; indigenous government administration; economic and social development; and international indigenous relations. The iig was designated a provincial institute under the

*College and Institute Act* in May 1995 and grants its own certificates and a two-year associate degree in indigenous government studies. Through a two-year arrangement with the Open Learning Agency (ola), students can earn course credits that are recognized as open university credits and are transferrable to other post-secondary institutions with transfer credit arrangements with the ola. Such reciprocal relationships æ in which Aboriginal authority is recognized æ are needed between Aboriginal and public post-secondary institutions.

**78** Ceso Aboriginal Services, "Lessons from the ceso Experience: Helping People to Help Themselves", brief submitted to rcap (1993).

**79** Statistics Canada, 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

**80** Diand, *Post-Secondary Student Assistance Program* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1989).

**81** Human Resources Development Canada, Program Evaluation Branch, "Evaluation of the Co-operative Education Option: Final Report" (Ottawa: 1994).

**82** See Ron Common and Lorraine Frost, *Teaching Wigwams: A Modern Vision of Native Education* (Muncey, Ontario: Anishinaabe Kendaaswin Publishing, 1994), pp. 35-36.