



BACKGROUND ON THE CMEC ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

Introduction

In September 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) declared Aboriginal education to be a priority issue deserving targeted activity.

By declaring Aboriginal education to be a priority, ministers have acknowledged the need to find new and varied ways of working together and in partnership with the federal government and Aboriginal leaders to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students across both the education systems. They know that improved education outcomes for Aboriginal students will enable them to be active participants in their communities, strengthen their attachment to the labour force, and prepare them for the complexity of a knowledge-based economy.

Context

Despite many gains across provinces and territories in recent years, student dropout rates among Aboriginal young people remain high and high-school-to-postsecondary transition rates remain low. This situation exists at a time when the number of Aboriginal young people is rapidly increasing, with an expectation that in the next 15 to 20 years, First Nations students will represent over 25 per cent of the elementary student population in some provinces and territories. In jurisdictions such as Nunavut, Inuit are already 96 per cent of the student population.

Along with the rapid increase in the number of Aboriginal children and youth in our school systems, several other factors must be considered:

- Aboriginal students, both male and female, perform at lower levels than other students (and this gap is not closing).
- Transience levels are very high for Aboriginal students as individuals and families move frequently on and off reserve.
- A well-trained Aboriginal teaching force remains small.
- Existing curricula and teaching delivery methods do not sufficiently reflect Aboriginal needs and values.

Purpose of the Aboriginal Education Action Plan

An Aboriginal Education Action Plan will lead to the development of a more coordinated strategic approach for provinces and territories to work together, with the federal government and Aboriginal leaders and the Aboriginal learning sector.

Scope

For the purposes of the action plan, Aboriginal education is considered to be a lifelong process of learning for Aboriginal students from early childhood through school age (elementary, secondary), transitions to postsecondary education, and transitions to the labour market.

Consultation

Within provinces and territories, activities related to each objective of the action plan will be conducted in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal communities and education stakeholders, as determined by each jurisdiction.

Long-Term Goals of the Action Plan

- Positive Aboriginal learning experiences
- Improved student well-being
- Increased success for Aboriginal students
- Improved labour market attachment for Aboriginal peoples

Objectives

These three objectives represent the first phase of an ongoing commitment to Aboriginal education, which may include additional objectives in the future.

Objective 1 (Led by Nunavut) To identify and share provincial/territorial/federal “best practices for Aboriginal education” in early childhood, elementary-secondary, postsecondary, and adult education

Objective 2 (Led by Manitoba) To strengthen the capacity for evidence-based decision making through actions that include (a) establishing an approach to encourage Aboriginal students to self-identify, (b) coordinating common data and indicator definitions, and (c) initiating parallel data-collection procedures

Objective 3 (Co-led by Saskatchewan and Yukon) To develop a framework for action related to teacher training, in collaboration with provincial faculties of education, school boards, departments, and professional associations, and in consultation with provincial and territorial Aboriginal education organizations to (a) strengthen and share measures initiated to ensure that relevant teacher training related to helping new teachers understand the needs of and challenges faced by Aboriginal students is undertaken, (b) establish mechanisms to recruit and train more Aboriginal teachers, and (c) offer ongoing, in-service training opportunities to teachers to provide current information and enable them to upgrade their skills

Long-Term Outcome Measures

Students

- Improved graduation rates of Aboriginal secondary (high school) students
- Smooth student transitions between elementary-secondary programs, such as between First Nations and provincial education systems
- Increased numbers of Aboriginal students proceeding into postsecondary education
- Improved graduation rates of Aboriginal students in a broad range of postsecondary studies

Teachers

- Increased numbers of Aboriginal teachers — those entering as well as remaining in the profession
- Aboriginal perspective and content incorporated into education materials and teaching methods (K-12 and PSE)

Link to the economy

- Work with the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) to increase labour market participation for Aboriginal people

Each of these outcomes is measurable over time, and provinces and territories will develop a set of indicators for each, to determine a set of baselines and to show improvements over time.

Three Deliverables

The primary targeted deliverables for the plan include

- A “Best Practices in Aboriginal Education Guide” that contains an inventory of practices, programs, and policies that have successfully contributed to student success and teacher training across Canada
- The ability to develop and report reliable sets of pan-Canadian Aboriginal education indicators (elementary-secondary and postsecondary) that are based on enhanced self-identification rates and common data elements across all jurisdictions — regularly reported indicators will help to inform both the public and ministries/departments of education on how success is being achieved
- A framework that can be used in all provinces and territories to enhance the teacher pre- and in-service training programs for Aboriginal teachers and for teachers who work in Aboriginal communities

Additional information on the Aboriginal education initiative can be obtained on the CMEC Web site (www.cmec.ca) or by calling Boyd Pelley at the CMEC Secretariat (416-962-8100, ext. 241, or b.pelley@cmec.ca).

Additional information on the specific objectives under the action plan can be obtained by contacting the following people:

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