



Our Children -
Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge

**Final Report
of the Minister's National Working Group
on Education**

December 2002

This report was written by the Minister's National Working Group on Education as commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada

"We (the Minister's National Working Group on Education) believe that strong cultural identity and equally strong individual academic performance will create First Nations citizens who walk with ease and confidence in two worlds."

– Final report of Minister's National Working Group on Education, Introduction p.1

Cover photo by Fred Cattroll

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRANSMITTAL LETTER	i
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	4
SOME SUCCESSES	8
THE VISION	9
MAKING THE VISION A REALITY	9
JURISDICTION	10
INFRASTRUCTURE	11
FUNDING	14
FACILITATING THE PROCESSES	16
QUALITY IN FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION	17
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE	17
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE	18
PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	19
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT	21
SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION	22
GIFTED EDUCATION	23
TEACHER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION	24
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION	29
RACISM	30
THE ROLE OF INAC	33
THE ROLE OF THE PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES	35
CONCLUSION	39
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	40
ANNEX 1 - LIST OF MNWGE MEMBERS	47
ANNEX 2 - REPORTS COMMISSIONED BY THE MNWGE	49
ANNEX 3 - MNWGE TERMS OF REFERENCE	51

Minister's National Working Group on Education

Ottawa, Ontario
December 12, 2002

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Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, North Tower
Gatineau QC K1A 0H4

The Honourable Stephen Owen, P.C., M.P.
Secretary of State for Indian Affairs and Northern
Development Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Nault and Secretary Owen:

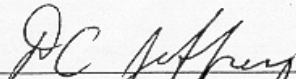
It is our pleasure to provide you with the attached final report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education entitled *Our Children - Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*.

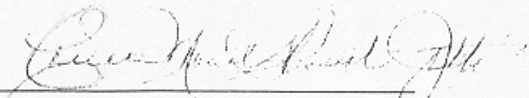
Following our appointment in June, we have met five times and commissioned a series of research reports which are referenced in the final report.

We have engaged in in-depth analysis and discussion to develop a series of recommendations that will help to establish a holistic, high-quality First Nation education system, grounded in indigenous knowledge. This education system will equip our children with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to be full participants in their own First Nation communities and Canadian society.

It is the sincere wish of the Minister's National Working Group on Education that the Canadian government, in collaboration with First Nations and other educational partners, implement our recommendations to foster excellence in First Nation education and improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of First Nation learners which is a goal we all share.

Sincerely,


Deborah Jeffrey


Corinne Mount Pleasant-Jetté

Co-chairs, Minister's National Working Group on Education

INTRODUCTION

This report is presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development without prejudice to the existing and ongoing negotiations in First Nations education.

Throughout history, Aboriginal parents and community leaders have expressed the will and aspirations of the Aboriginal community concerning the education of their children. *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.*¹

First Nations youth must possess the knowledge and skills of contemporary society in order for them to build strong First Nations communities and economies as well as to contribute to Canada's overall economy.

First Nations citizens should be nurtured, developed and educated in a structured and safe educational environment where the school community reflects excellence and aims at nurturing and supporting these values and beliefs. We (the Minister's National Working Group on Education) believe that strong cultural identity and equally strong individual academic performance will create First Nations citizens who walk with ease and confidence in two worlds.

¹Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. **Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 3 - Gathering Strength.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services. pp. 433-4.

Any nation's health and vitality is linked directly to its ability to provide meaningful educational opportunities to its people. Our future as a nation and as First Nations will depend considerably on our citizens' educational achievements and successes. Healthy and sustainable First Nations communities depend on the quality of education programs and services for their members.

Right now, our future as First Nations represents a challenge. First Nations education is in a crisis. With some outstanding exceptions, there is no education system, no education accountability, no goals or objectives and First Nations parents, elders and education leaders lack the authority and the means to remedy the crisis as administered by the federal and provincial and territorial governments. First Nations need to be viable and accountable decision-makers in the planning and implementation of programs designed for excellence in education.

A multitude of reports and studies have been consistent in their recommendations concerning First Nations education. First Nations must have the resources and the means to design, develop and deliver life-long education, on- and off-reserve. Now is the time to act. The potential of our people in so many areas – the social, economic and cultural progress of First Nations communities; the strategic development of Canada; internationally, as members of a worldwide network of Indigenous Peoples – has yet to be fully realized.

Our collective potential and future as First Nations rests with respect for First Nations Natural Law and the redefinition of First Nations education. The Natural Law of First Nations people affirms the responsibility and respect that lies with the present and future generations, as our children are carriers of the language and culture.

Too often in the past, children from First Nations communities endured an education that deliberately or unintentionally attempted to assimilate them. Today, little has

changed. Children from First Nations communities have been educated without any respect or regard for their cultures, languages and diverse histories. The enormous gap between who First Nations are and the education they receive has been expanding now for more than two centuries.

We believe that this cultural disconnect must be eliminated and replaced quickly with a thoughtful and action-oriented strategy for First Nations education. This new education strategy would celebrate our diverse cultures and languages, recognize our histories and communities, focus on student academic success, and reinforce quality through its teachers, curricula, student evaluations and education outcomes.

We also believe that there must be a definitive and legal role for First Nations in all aspects of education, including decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation of education policies and programs in First Nations education from early childhood to post-secondary. Control of First Nations education is integral to the inherent right of First Nations to govern themselves.

First Nations ownership of their learners' education is a crucial theme that is woven throughout our report. We believe that this ownership extends to our learners who attend provincial and territorial schools. We address at length what constitutes First Nations ownership of education and in so doing we believe that our recommendations will create parity of opportunity for First Nations learners where none exists today and lead to academic success in which we can all take pride.

BACKGROUND

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development invited the MNWGE to provide options on strategies and measures required to foster excellence in First Nations elementary-secondary education and to reduce the gap in academic results between First Nations students and other Canadians. The work of the MNWGE is part of the Minister's Education Renewal Initiative and it paves the way for input and active involvement of First Nations parents, elders, and leaders. This report concludes our mandate.

Our report has numerous precedents. In 1968 "A Study of the Contemporary Indians of Canada" (the Hawthorn Report)² referred to the inequality of Indian education in Canada and three chapters focussed on what was required to improve education outcomes in First Nations communities.

In 1976 the Task Force on the Educational Needs of Native Peoples reported to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Ontario Minister of Education that *...any educational system will continue to be unsatisfactory, until the responsibility for education and the potential for improvement in that education is in the hands of the Native peoples themselves.*³

²Hawthorn, H. 1967. **A Survey of Contemporary Indians of Canada, Volume II.** Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

³**Task Force on the Educational Needs of Native Peoples.** Presented in 1976 by the Grand Chiefs of Ontario jointly to Minister of Education of Ontario and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

In 1988 the Assembly of First Nations produced a report “Tradition and Education”.⁴ It represented over four years of research and discussions on First Nations education and included four volumes of recommendations on jurisdiction, resourcing, management and quality.

Other more recent studies, reports and government statements refer directly to the need to reform First Nations education.

In 1998, “Gathering Strength – Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan” indicates that *[Aboriginal youth] leave the school system without the necessary skills for employment, and without the language and cultural knowledge of their people.*

The 1998 federal Agenda for Action with First Nations refers to *Investing in Aboriginal education to improve the quality of education*⁵

The 2000 Auditor General’s Report, Chapter 4 included the comment, *We believe that success in providing education to Indian students can be achieved only if their needs and aspirations are appropriately identified and served by an **education system** [emphasis added] that is designed to meet them.*⁶

⁴National Indian Brotherhood, Assembly of First Nations, 1988. **Traditions and Education, Towards a Vision of Our Future (Volumes 1,2,3)**. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations.

⁵**Gathering Strength – Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan**. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services. 1997.

⁶Auditor General, April 2000. **Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons. Chapter 4: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - Elementary and Secondary Education**. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Chapter 5 in the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples summarized a range of well-researched topics on Aboriginal education to emphasize the need for essential reforms to achieve more equitable student academic achievements.⁷

The 2002 Speech from the Throne identified the objective of the government to improve educational outcomes for First Nations children.⁸

We respect the work and share the objectives of these recent and earlier reports and documents. They represent a body of evidence for reforming First Nations education that is substantive and continuous. However, to date, there has been very limited or no political will to implement these changes. Educational success for First Nations young people is more important today than ever before.

In 15 years, First Nations students will represent between 25% and 50% of the entire elementary student population in several provinces and territories. In four years, the Aboriginal workforce will be just shy of one million people, with young men and women under the age of 35 representing the bulk of that number. Success in school and post-secondary institutions means jobs for graduates. However, in 1999-2000, INAC statistics indicate that the high school graduation for on-reserve First Nations students was only 32.1%.⁹ We recognize that this statistic reflects the number of First Nations students entering and exiting a graduating grade and not the cohort number entering grade one and graduating at the appropriate year. The employment prospects for First Nations young people will be almost non-existent as the Conference Board of Canada in

⁷Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. **Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 3 - Gathering Strength.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services.

⁸**Speech from the Throne to Open the Second Session of the Thirty-Seventh Parliament of Canada.** September 30, 2002.

⁹Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 2002. **Basic Departmental Data 2001.** Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. p37.

1998 estimated that for half of the jobs created in Canada a secondary school diploma will become the bare minimum for employability.

Nationally, this low level of academic achievement underscores the urgency to reform First Nations education and fuels our concerns over the critical state of First Nations education.

SOME SUCCESSES

It is important to acknowledge several efforts by First Nations to achieve positive changes in education. For example, The National Indian Education Council of the Assembly of First Nations, working closely with the First Nation Education Council (FNEC) in Quebec, produced a substantive analysis of Special Needs for First Nations students that resulted in budget increases to First Nations schools and education authorities.

Several regional organizations have emerged to provide leadership and an environment to respond proactively to many issues in First Nations education. The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in British Columbia, the Mi'kmaw-Kina'matnewey in Nova Scotia and the First Nations Education Resource Centre in Manitoba as well as strong education components in several provincial and territorial First Nations organizations and treaty organizations have served their constituents by assembling teams of First Nations educators and professionals to take progressive actions for a range of education issues.

There are several examples of innovative First Nations urban secondary schools and immersion schools on-reserve, as well as emerging on-line e-learning communities that are addressing the needs of remote communities, where First Nations cultures are celebrated in a positive and supportive learning environment. The Amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton and the Onion Lake Immersion School in Saskatchewan are excellent examples of First Nations schools where First Nations cultures are successfully infused throughout the education program.

As vital and important as these examples are, they are vastly outnumbered by the unresolved education issues that inhibit progress and remind us that a considerable amount of work remains to be done. But they also indicate that positive and healthy changes in First Nations education are achieved under the leadership and direction of First Nations parents, elders and communities.

THE VISION

According to First Nations Natural Law, we believe that every First Nations learner is gifted. We believe that every First Nations learner must have access to an education from early childhood to post-secondary. That education must be characterized by quality and excellence of instruction, appropriate academic content, safe learning environment, and adequate professional and fiscal resources. That education must be equal to or exceed the standards of education received by other Canadian learners. Moreover, a First Nations education system grounded in the wisdom of Indigenous knowledge, that respects the vision of parents and elders and reinforces the teaching of language and culture will measure its success through the development of caring and respectful people who are valued contributors to their communities and live in harmony with their environment.

Our vision is a holistic, quality First Nations education system that begins in early childhood and includes adult education and training and post-secondary education, where the weight of education decision-making rests with First Nations in an appropriately funded infrastructure where parents, elders, professionals and leaders at the community, regional and national level come together to plan their learners' education.

We also envision a First Nations education system where parents, elders, education leaders, and other members of First Nations communities are responsible for identifying the goals and objectives of their learners' education to help create culturally and linguistically competent learners.

MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

Realizing the vision requires three immediate actions: transferring the jurisdiction for education to First Nations; creating a First Nations education infrastructure with supporting mechanisms that enable First Nations to exercise education jurisdiction; and

a revised education budget that reflects the actual costs of a comprehensive First Nations education renewal and reform.

These three actions are interconnected and interdependent. The key to successfully transforming First Nations education requires that the three principal recommendations on jurisdiction, infrastructure and funding be implemented simultaneously.

JURISDICTION

We believe the jurisdiction that First Nations require to govern and manage the education of their learners should be exclusive and all encompassing. This translates into total and complete control over lifelong learning for all First Nations learners regardless of where they reside or where they attend school. Given the reluctance of provincial and some territorial authorities to recognize First Nations jurisdiction over education, First Nations education authorities, parents and elders would have the unencumbered legal authority to negotiate the appropriate education agreements and arrangements with provincial and territorial authorities to improve educational opportunities for their members.

The review of the literature and recent education negotiations by several regional First Nations reinforce the importance that the MNWGE and First Nations place on First Nations ownership of education. Without jurisdiction, First Nations cannot legally determine basic requirements for their learners' education such as curricula, language of instruction, education standards (academic, space, etc.) teacher qualifications, the school calendar and pedagogical methods, or the creation of more First Nations schools and education facilities.

Jurisdiction allows for accountability for academic results, system performance, teacher performance and school evaluations. First Nations require the support and means to

monitor and audit the education of First Nations students, on and off-reserve. If academic results and outcomes are unsatisfactory, parents, elders and leaders must first know who is responsible and then they must have access to the authority and power to apply accountability measures.

Putting jurisdiction for First Nations education in the hands of First Nations is a critical first step to making our vision a reality. Therefore, we recommend that:

- 1. Canada commit to jurisdictional discussions with First Nations concerning lifelong education for First Nations learners on and off reserve. This shall include capacity building at the community and regional level that would encompass a strategy and resources for implementation. Steps should be taken immediately to enhance or develop First Nations organizations that would facilitate this process.**

We believe that the process should be led and implemented by First Nations with the appropriate support of the Minister, INAC and other federal officials. The process should:

- prepare options for establishing First Nations jurisdiction;
- establish benchmarks and an operational plan for transfer of jurisdiction;
- support First Nations to determine the appropriate option for jurisdiction;
- respect the diversity of First Nations, the existing and evolving models of jurisdiction in First Nations education, and the current regional negotiations on jurisdiction in First Nations education; and,
- conclude the transfer of jurisdiction within a five year time frame.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Our second recommendation addresses the need for an education infrastructure that enables First Nations at the community and regional levels to design, develop and manage a First Nations education system that is holistic and inclusive from early

childhood to post-secondary and at the same time to exercise the rights and responsibilities that jurisdiction would confer upon them.

Our vision of an education infrastructure is basically a structural framework – a system – with resources, i.e., professionals, facilities, technical and research capacities, and decision-making structures at the community and regional levels that facilitate parents, elders, educators and leaders taking active roles and decisions on every facet of First Nations education.

The primary purposes of a First Nations education infrastructure would be to:

- govern, operate and account for quality in First Nations education concerning:
 - early childhood development programs, elementary and secondary schools and First Nations post-secondary institutions, on and off reserve;
 - school administrators and teachers;
 - school boards, superintendents and trustees.
- participate in the governance of other post-secondary institutions;
- develop education standards;
- include an education auditing function;
- research, plan and implement a quality First Nations education system from early childhood to post-secondary, including adult education and vocational training;
- establish and coordinate education data gathering and reporting;
- implement education policies, regulations and education laws;
- establish benchmarks, performance indicators and an operational plan for establishing an education infrastructure;
- provide and support a framework for First Nations parents to exercise jurisdiction in education; and,

- provide support for increased programs and services for parental participation.

Canadian parents and students benefit from their systems of education – from local parent councils, school boards or districts, a range of educational organizations, Ministries of Education with their vast planning and research resources and the Council of Ministers of Education (Canada). It is essential that First Nations have the same secondary and tertiary levels of educational support mechanisms that a quality system of education provides. Without this system, it is almost impossible to narrow the gap in academic results of First Nations students and other Canadian students.

We recommend that:

- 2. The Minister begin immediately a process to create a First Nations education infrastructure that encompasses decision-making structures, administrative capacity and program design and delivery capability at two levels: First Nations communities and regional education bodies.**
- 3. To improve the quality of First Nation programs and services in the long term, government funding be integrated and delivered under education programming at the community level. In particular, Early Childhood Development funding and programming should be transferred from Health Canada and Human Resources Development Canada and delivered through education programs. An improved, integrated process would result in streamlined reporting for First Nations communities.**

We believe that this process should also be led and implemented by First Nations with the appropriate support and resources from the Minister, Indian and Northern Affairs

Canada (INAC) and other federal departments and officials. The process should focus immediately on the infrastructure components at the community and regional levels.

FUNDING

We believe that increased funding for First Nations education is essential for the development and implementation of a quality, holistic education and a First Nations comprehensive education system.

There is an erroneous perception that recent annual budgets for First Nations education are more than adequate to meet the needs of First Nations students. But the misconception should not obscure the reality – First Nations education is under-supported and under-resourced. First Nations schools operate largely independently without a systematic supportive infrastructure to enable parents and educators to address broader educational issues collectively. This situation has produced several generations of chronically under-educated First Nations young people who have been denied an opportunity to achieve their full potential. Funds intended for the education of First Nations learners must be used in a fully transparent and accountable process for education purposes.

We believe that putting jurisdiction for First Nations education in First Nations hands and creating an education infrastructure where none exists today will produce parity in education outcomes. More resources, time and the implementation of the following recommendations will be also essential to achieving that objective.

Therefore, we recommend that:

- 4. The Minister and First Nations, working with departmental and other officials, identify the real and projected costs of a First Nations holistic education system with a special focus on:**
- **costs associated with First Nations jurisdiction and jurisdictional issues in education;**
 - **costs to establish and maintain a First Nations community and regional education infrastructure;**
 - **costs of a quality First Nations education including:**
 - **assessment, review and remediation of student achievement levels;**
 - **additional new dollars to offset the inequities and changing requirements, such as the salaries and compensation benefits of teachers and staff in First Nations schools;**
 - **educational facilities that are safe, well-equipped, well-maintained and culturally appropriate, and reflect Indigenous knowledge in the physical structure of the building (e.g., including space in schools for parents and elders, as well as for early childhood development);**
 - **education dollars from First Nations communities to the provinces and territories for students attending provincial and territorial schools;**
 - **First Nations developed and approved language instruction and curricula;**
 - **culturally relevant curricula for all subject areas that are developed and approved by First Nations;**
 - **curricula and resources designed to address the identified weaknesses in mathematics, sciences and literacy; and,**
 - **the development of culturally appropriate pedagogical methodologies and evaluation.**

We recommend that:

5. **A single parliamentary vote be established for First Nations education that includes all money approved by Parliament for First Nations education by all federal departments and agencies.**

We recommend that:

6. **All levels of government ensure that quality educational facilities exist for First Nations students. New capital funds are necessary to reduce the current backlog of new construction and repairs, to keep pace with facilities' maintenance needs, and, more importantly, to begin immediately to construct new schools to ensure First Nations students have the opportunity, like other students in Canada, to be educated in their own community.**

FACILITATING THE PROCESSES

All three actions referred to in the recommendations should occur simultaneously with the principal activities taking place at the regional and community levels. It will be necessary to allocate resources and funding at the regional levels to facilitate the research and discussions that will follow.

QUALITY IN FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION

Education is a primary vehicle for perpetuating a culture. Identifying the factors of a quality First Nations education is a difficult task. Everyone has a different perspective on the factors that contribute to quality in an education program and system. Education authorities around the world arrive at a quality education for their learners by different means and with a variety of definitions about quality. Despite these differences what is common to all good systems of education everywhere is academic outcomes – student graduation rates and competitive student academic achievements.

We examined several topics that we considered essential to the identification, development, implementation and evaluation of a quality First Nations education.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

(Knowledge) is a process derived from creation, and as such, it has a sacred purpose. It is inherent in and connected to all of nature, to its creatures, and to human existence. Learning is viewed as a life-long responsibility that people assume to understand the world around them and to animate their personal abilities. Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible for their own lives, develops their sense of personal relationship to others, and helps them model competent and respectful behaviour. Knowledge is a resourceful capacity of being that creates the context and texture of life.¹⁰

When we examine First Nations education historically, a pattern emerges that consists of a system of education that for the most part has been imposed on First Nations

¹⁰Battiste, Marie, 2002. **Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education - A Literature Review with Recommendations**. p. 11.

students with blatant disregard for First Nations languages, cultures and collective knowledge and wisdom.

Centuries of commerce, cultural evolution and social interaction among First Nations have produced a vast body of knowledge worthy of inclusion in all schools and post-secondary institutions as valid and important learning material. The integration of First Nations knowledge and wisdom into curricula and pedagogy in education systems, both in First Nations and provinces and territories, will provide First Nations learners with a positive learning environment and encourage student success. In addition, non-First Nations learners will have an opportunity to develop a more respectful and balanced view of Canadian history and culture, with a place for First Nations in it.

We recommend that:

- 7. Canada must affirm Indigenous Knowledge as an integral and essential part of the national heritage of Canada that must be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of current and future Canadians. Under the leadership and direction of First Nations communities, Canada must work together with all stakeholders to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge is respected and promoted in all funded educational programs and services.**

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Language is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous languages and their symbolic, verbal and unconscious orders structure and embody Indigenous knowledge. (...) Where Indigenous languages, heritages and communities are respected, supported and connected to elders and education, educational successes among Aboriginal students can be found. Aboriginal languages are irreplaceable resources in any educational reform. (...) Educational reforms need to

*redefine literacy to affirm Aboriginal languages as essential to Aboriginal learning and identity.*¹¹

We are confident that with the appropriate resources, First Nations will ensure that more culture and language curricula and pedagogy, and teaching specialists will become integral to teaching programs, from early childhood development to post-secondary programs.

We recommend that:

- 8. The Minister develop legislation in full partnership with First Nations that acknowledges First Nations languages as the first languages of Canada and, in addition, create an endowed foundation to ensure adequate resources for delivery of quality First Nations language and culture programs at the community level for both on- and off-reserve students. This should include, at a minimum:**
 - **teacher training; and,**
 - **appropriate pedagogy, texts, finance, buildings, equipment and traditional and innovative technology.**

PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A healthy education system or program relies on the active participation of parents and the community. Parental leadership in First Nations education for both on and off reserve students is an essential element to a healthy education system. Parental and community involvement in First Nations education has neither received the proper attention from federal, provincial and territorial authorities nor the resources to facilitate

¹¹Battiste, Marie, 2002. **Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education - A Literature Review with Recommendations.** pp.12-13.

it, despite the policy being recognized and adopted by the federal government in 1973 when it accepted the policy of “Indian Control of Indian Education”.

Evidence shows that parental trust and involvement in school is critical to success. It leads to increased attendance, positive attitudes, higher grades, and increased participation in post-secondary education. *Parents are their children’s first teachers. They have the greatest influence on the early development of children, and the importance of effective early childhood development for later school success is well recognized. That is the time during which the child acquires language and develops trust, bonds with others, intellectual and social skills and values. (Studies) emphasize the importance of parental practices for early development and school success; children at the age of 2 to 3 who had been read to several times a day did substantially better in kindergarten than those whose parents read to them a few times a week or more. Furthermore, children who had early exposure to books and reading were also better at performing mathematical skills. The study also found that features of children’s home environment and participation in easily implemented educational activities can have substantial combined effects on children’s future vocabulary skills.*¹²

With the appropriate resources and encouragement First Nations can and should develop strategies that stimulate parent and community participation in education, in an informal non-threatening environment.

We recommend that:

9. Canada provide resources to affirm the revitalization of First Nation Indigenous Knowledge in the development of parental, family and community capacity-building.

¹²Kavanagh, Barbara, 2002.. *The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in the Success of First Nations Learners: A Review of the Literature.* p.11.

10. **First Nations and Canada affirm the importance of parental, family and community involvement, based upon informal and non-threatening settings where parents are made to feel comfortable when dealing with schools, where the extended family is recognized, where the role played by grandparents is integral and valued, where opportunities are created for students to serve in community, where community dialogue with youth is promoted, and where parents are engaged through practical measures. Canada must provide the necessary resources to support First Nation parents and grandparents to provide supportive mechanisms to effectively address this area of school programming.**

11. **Elders be engaged and involved in the planning and implementation processes respecting their wisdom and role as professional advisors.**

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In education, as in health, childhood is the foundational stage. Traditional family life provided a firm foundation of security and encouragement for Aboriginal children. Aboriginal families of today are not always able to provide this. Parents may be hampered by the effects of poverty, alienation, residential school experience, and dysfunctional family or other relationships.¹³ Poor socio-economic conditions provide additional challenges or barriers to education success. These conditions must be improved.

¹³Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. **People to People, Nation to Nation. Highlights from the Report of the Commission on Aboriginal People.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services. pp.83-84.

We recommend that:

- 12. The federal government commit to fund universal First Nation early childhood development programming.**
- 13. First Nations, with the support of the federal government, develop community-based strategies to address the full spectrum of early childhood services based on Indigenous principles and benchmarks. This should include the development of early identification strategies, a process for communication and integration of findings into program development.**

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

As stated in the AFN First Nations Special Education Policy, 'All learners have a right to be educated in the education setting most appropriate for their needs...' The AFN document further declares 'First Nation learners also have a right to access an education that encompasses their spiritual, physical, social, emotional, cultural and intellectual development and their education should prepare them for life long learning.' The FNEC document philosophy is reflected in the statement 'All First Nations children have the right to be educated in their community school, integrated with their peers in a regular classroom, that is, in as normalized and as least restrictive a classroom environment as is possible.' The First Nation view of inclusion has historical roots from the residential school era, but is also influenced by the lack of special education funding. Many First Nation students have been and some are still forced to attend provincial schools to receive services because special education services are not funded in First Nation schools.¹⁴

¹⁴Hurton, Gerry. 2002. **A Review of First Nations Special Education Policies and Funding Directions within the Canadian Context.** p.14.

We recommend that:

- 14. The Minister provide necessary resourcing for the delivery of special education programs to meet the needs of learners in First Nation schools, as identified in the Assembly of First Nations' November 2000 submission on Special Needs Education.**

- 15. Due to over-representation of First Nation students in special education programs in provincial and territorial schools, the quality and effectiveness of special education programs be the subject of an immediate joint investigation to ensure First Nation learners are accurately identified and receiving effective and relevant support and remediation to ensure improved academic success in the long-term.**

- 16. Every five years, subject to the above recommendation on required resourcing for special needs education, the Minister and First Nations undertake a joint review, led by First Nations, of the effectiveness of programs, policies and services for First Nations special needs education.**

GIFTED EDUCATION

Giftedness is a dynamic area that is evolving. With the new millennium and the age of globalization, there is no longer a focus only on identifying genius and prodigy, which really identify themselves, but rather on the identification and education of as many gifted children and adolescents as possible. One common thread runs throughout all of the literature, there must be programming designed to meet the needs of the gifted and talented. This programming is also the subject of much debate and research.¹⁵

¹⁵McKee, Darren, Ahenakew, Brenda. 2002 **Gifted Education in First Nations Education**. pp.3-4.

We recommend that:

- 17. Further research be undertaken by First Nations to develop effective policies and programs for gifted education for First Nations learners.**

TEACHER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION

Quality in First Nations education will depend to a large extent on the quality of teachers in First Nations and provincial and territorial schools. Evidence indicates that many teachers are turning away from First Nations schools because of disincentives – lack of systemic supports, less pay than their provincial or territorial colleagues, and less benefits than what the provinces and territories offer. In some cases, their service in First Nations schools is often discounted if they transfer to a provincial or territorial school. First Nations teachers in provincial and territorial schools are often teaching in challenging situations, with very little support, which sometimes leads to individuals leaving the teaching profession early. We must work to better support First Nations teachers in both First Nations schools and provincial and territorial schools.

The following tables clearly indicate the low percentage of First Nations teachers and education professionals in provincial and territorial schools and emphasize the urgent need to rapidly increase the number of First Nations teachers through creative and innovative strategies.

Aboriginal Population and Teacher Representation by Province and Territory¹⁶

	Aboriginal Peoples Share of Overall Population		Aboriginal Teachers Share of Employment
	All Ages	0-14 years	
Canada	3.9 %	6.4 %	1.3 %
Newfoundland	4.5 %	7.1 %	1.7 %
Prince Edward Island	1.8 %	3.1 %	1.2 %
Nova Scotia	3.0 %	4.8 %	1.1 %
New Brunswick	2.3 %	3.7 %	1.1 %
Quebec	2.0 %	3.0 %	0.9 %
Ontario	2.3 %	3.6 %	0.5 %
Manitoba	12.6 %	21.4 %	5.1 %
Saskatchewan	12.0 %	21.4 %	6.9 %
Alberta	5.8 %	9.3 %	2.4 %
British Columbia	5.0 %	8.2 %	1.2 %
Yukon	21.0 %	27.7 %	6.1 %
Northwest Territories	62.2 %	75.2 %	30.6 %

Note: Teachers refer to both secondary and elementary school teachers.
Sources: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Canada, HRDC Special Data.

¹⁶Taken from Archibald et al.,2002. **Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention: Implications for First Nations Teachers' Education.** p.6.

Aboriginal Share of Employment in Key Education Occupations Across Canada¹⁷

Occupations	Aboriginal Share
Aboriginal share of overall Canadian population	3.9 %
Main ten education related professions	1.7 %
Administration in post-secondary	1.6 %
Principals: elementary & secondary	1.9 %
University professors	0.5 %
Post-secondary teaching & research assistants	0.8 %
College and vocational instructors	1.5 %
Secondary school teachers	0.9 %
Elementary & kindergarten teachers	1.6 %
School & guidance counsellors	7.6 %
Instructors/teachers of disabled persons	1.0 %
Elementary & secondary school teacher assistants	4.6 %

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Canada, HRDC Special Data.

18. We reiterate recommendations 3.5.14 to 3.5.18 of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which deal with:

- **Expanded Teacher Education Programs (3.5.14): The Commission recommends that 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**

¹⁷Taken from Archibald et al., 2002. **Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention: Implications for First Nations Teachers' Education.** p.5.

- d) **periodic evaluations that indicate that the quality of teacher education conforms to standards of excellence expected by Aboriginal people.**
- **Aboriginal Secondary School Teachers (3.5.15): The Commission recommends that 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.**

 - **Teacher Education Accessible in Communities (3.5.16): The Commission recommends that 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.**

 - **Career Paths (3.5.17): The Commission recommends that 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.**
- **Aboriginal Component in All Teacher Education Programs (3.5.18): The Commission recommends that 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, focussed on teaching Aboriginal and addressing Aboriginal education issues; and**
 - c) collaborate with Aboriginal organizations or community representatives in developing Aboriginal-specific components of their programs.¹⁸**

We also recommend that:

- 19. The Minister immediately review and revise the formula for band-operated schools to eliminate the salary inequities between teachers in First Nations schools and provincial and territorial schools and to provide a variety of incentives to encourage teachers to teach in First Nations schools.**

¹⁸Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. **Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 3 - Gathering Strength.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services. pp. 493-500.

- 20. First Nation and education partners work collaboratively to significantly enhance working conditions, and to devise recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of First Nations teachers and other educators, including working with school-age children to encourage them to enter the teaching profession.**

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

It is impossible to address First Nations education without reference to post-secondary education, including adult training, vocational schools, colleges and universities. Our mandate focussed on elementary-secondary education but post-secondary is so vital to First Nations education that we are obliged to include a recommendation. Our vision also includes graduates who also exemplify the best and brightest professionals and tradespeople equipped with the skills and expertise to lay the foundation for economic and community development in a knowledge-based society.

We recommend that:

- 21. The Minister and First Nations work with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and individual institutions to identify immediate and long-term strategies to:**
 - improve access for First Nation students to academic programmes in all disciplines;**
 - achieve equitable representation of First Nations scholars as faculty and administrators in academia;**
 - establish equitable First Nation representation on senior governing boards;**

- **expand opportunities for First Nation students to pursue second and third cycle degrees;**
- **work in partnership with First Nations to conduct research in support of improved educational services; and,**
- **support existing and emerging First Nation post-secondary institutions, including facilitating the process for accreditation and portability.**

22. We support the development of First Nations post-secondary institutes. We recommend that:

- **equitable enrolment and graduation rates of First Nation students in post-secondary education be increased;**
- **new dollars be allocated to meet the demand of students entering post-secondary training, adult education and vocational training programs; and,**
- **First Nations' post-secondary, adult education and training programs be funded at levels which reflect inflationary costs and enrolment increases.**

RACISM

Systemic racism, racist remarks and racist attitudes have a profound affect on academic success. They may also contribute to a lack of parental support for students to stay in school. Whatever the impact, too many First Nations students are exposed to racism in different forms throughout their elementary, secondary and post-secondary school experiences. Teachers who hold low expectations for First Nations students are possibly the most pervasive example of racism that many students encounter.

Schools can and should play a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between First Nations and Canadian society by actively opposing personal, institutional and systemic racism that is directed at First Nations students, parents and teachers. We believe that a multi-purpose strategy on racism can assist students to deal with racism, equip teachers, administrators and support staff to reduce racism and motivate school boards to address racism in the curricula, pedagogy and school policies. We also support the development of school and school board policies and codes of conduct in all jurisdictions to confront and eliminate racism.

We commend both the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies for the publication of “Learning About Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms.”¹⁹ This report highlights the need to improve the current curricula in schools to ensure “broad inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in school curricula.” The report will be extremely useful to draw attention to the marginalization of First Nations people in the school curricula, and the report should be broadly disseminated to assist with the elimination of discrimination and racism in public schools.

We are also aware that racism and discrimination exist in some First Nations communities. Support and resources must be provided to enable communities to confront and respond to these unhealthy actions as part of a larger healing process that many First Nations communities are currently undergoing.

We recommend that:

¹⁹**Leaning about Walking in beauty: placing Aboriginal perspectives in Canadian classrooms: a report from the Coalition for the advancement of Aboriginal studies (CAAS) presented to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF).** 2002. Toronto:CRRF.

- 23. Canada acknowledge that racism and discrimination directed at Aboriginal people is a national problem that must be addressed immediately. In particular, in light of the Statement of Reconciliation issued by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on January 7, 1998, Canada, in cooperation with First Nations, must examine all departmental policies and practices to identify and eliminate those that are discriminatory or racist.**

- 24. Schools can play a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between First Nations people and Canadian society. Schools must actively oppose personal, institutional and systemic racism directed at First Nations students, parents and teachers. Compulsory training and resources must be provided to all teachers, administrators, trustees and support staff to address racism (pre-service and in-service training). Programs and resources, especially with regards to advocacy, aimed at assisting students and parents to deal with racism must be developed and implemented.**

- 25. Aboriginal people are integral to the social fabric of Canada. Curricula in all subjects and grades must be developed and implemented to respectfully reflect this.**

The time frame for our work limited the scope of the topics we were able to examine in First Nations education. We are confident that a First Nations-controlled system of education would thoroughly cover all the elements that contribute to and affect the quality of education for First Nations students.

THE ROLE OF INAC

We believe that the role of the department is to contribute to the development of a quality, holistic First Nations education system. Canada must support First Nations to achieve the required measure of legal authority, education dollars and infrastructure capacity to enable First Nations parents, elders and leaders to identify and implement the necessary reforms, programs and policies in First Nations schools and in the appropriate provincial and territorial schools.

We recognize that the process to accomplish these basic and fundamental reforms will require the participation of INAC and other federal officials. Without their commitment and support, the efforts of First Nations to renew education will take more time than can be afforded. As vital as their role in this historic process will and must be, we emphasize again that the process to transfer jurisdiction, to determine an appropriate comprehensive education budget and to create an education infrastructure must be led and driven by First Nations.

The 2000 Auditor General's Report identified a series of shortcomings in First Nations education for which INAC bears partial or full responsibility. These included:

- a failure to demonstrate that INAC meets its stated objectives to assist First Nations students in achieving their educational needs and aspirations;
- few if any implementation plans for remediation of major education issues such as retention of Aboriginal languages, enhanced First Nations curriculum, improved teacher training, and so on;
- a lack of an articulated and formalized role in First Nations education; and,

- few if any appropriate performance and results indicators.²⁰

We believe that the Auditor General's report indicates clearly that the department, among other things, lacks the capacity to provide the direction and professional support to achieve a quality First Nations education where student academic success is comparable to provincial and territorial rates.

The report underlines what many First Nations have known for some time – the department is the least able among possible contenders to bring about the required reforms in First Nations education.

We recommend that:

26. Canada and First Nations undertake a joint process to review Canada's role regionally and nationally in First Nations education, inclusive of:

- **First Nations treaty rights;**
- **INAC policy and legislation;**
- **validating the mandate for First Nations to undertake responsibility for education;**
- **advocacy role of INAC to challenge other federal departments to address gaps in First Nations education;**
- **diminished role of INAC in First Nations education as First Nations assume jurisdiction; and,**
- **fiduciary responsibility for First Nations education.**

²⁰Auditor General, April 2000. **Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons. Chapter 4: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - Elementary and Secondary Education.** Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

THE ROLE OF THE PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

The provinces and territories must recognize the inherent right of First Nations to self-government. They can affirm and support First Nations inherent right and the primacy of First Nations parents in the education of First Nations learners by assisting in the development and implementation of a First Nations controlled education system.

An effective data collection and reporting process concerning First Nations education outcomes would greatly assist with improving academic results in the long term. It will help focus attention on learners whose needs have been too long ignored. The RCAP Final Report identified elements of a comprehensive plan that could include but not be limited to:

- *accountability indicators tied to board or district funding; and,*
- *public reports of results by the end of the International Decade of Indigenous People in the year 2004.*²¹

We suggest that there are several important areas where provincial and territorial education authorities can continue to contribute to First Nations education.

The provincial and territorial influence and presence in First Nation education is substantive. The texts, learning materials, curricula and pedagogy, standardized tests and student standards that are often used in many First Nation schools are generally provincially-approved and provincially-produced with very little community input from or accountability towards First Nations.

²¹Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. **Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 3 - Gathering Strength.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services. pp. 474-5.

The provinces and territories receive substantial federal dollars for First Nation students. The drop-out rates of First Nation students in provincial and territorial schools are unacceptably high. Presently, First Nations lack the means to hold provinces and territories accountable for the money they receive to educate First Nation learners and for the high student drop-out rate.

We recommend that:

27. First Nations working with INAC and the provinces and territories create appropriate mechanisms for:

- **accountability to First Nations;**
- **the development of a quality education system for First Nation students in provincial and territorial schools;**
- **the inclusion of culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy;**
- **the support and involvement of elders; and,**
- **the development of First Nations language immersion programs.**

The training of teachers is largely a provincial responsibility and we believe that teacher training institutions can and should better prepare teachers to a) teach First Nations learners effectively, b) teach in First Nations schools and c) teach all students accurately and positively about First Nations. As stated in the Final Report of the RCAP,

We emphasize the need to correct erroneous assumptions and to dispel stereotypes that still abound in the minds of many Canadians ... Teachers cannot convey accurate information about Aboriginal people and instill respectful attitudes unless they have been prepared to do so.²²

²²Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. **Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 3 - Gathering Strength.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services. p. 499.

There are also programs that focus exclusively on the training of First Nations teachers. These programs should be supported and monitored periodically to ensure that First Nations teachers are trained and prepared to teach First Nations learners effectively and to teach in First Nations schools. The demand for First Nations teachers persists, especially secondary school teachers. We encourage provincial and territorial authorities to develop innovative strategies to recruit First Nations students for teaching careers at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Curriculum guidelines and resource guides for provincial and territorial schools seldom reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of First Nations learners. Some territories and provinces have made limited headway to introduce First Nations languages into their curricula but more examples are required. Provincial and territorial authorities need to be aware constantly of the portrayal of First Nations and First Nations history in textbooks and learning materials to ensure that young Canadians receive accurate information and knowledge about First Nations.

We cannot emphasize too strongly the important role for provinces and territories in dealing with racism faced by First Nations learners. Approximately 40% of on-reserve First Nations students in the provinces attend provincial schools and almost all First Nations students in the territories attend territorial schools. Sooner or later the remainder will attend a provincial/territorial secondary school. The vast majority of First Nations learners attending post-secondary education do so in a provincially- or territorially-run institution. Provincial and territorial authorities must develop the policies and provide the resources to enable schools and school boards to address racism that is directed at First Nations students.

We believe that a dialogue between First Nations and the provinces and territories is a component of the renewal and reform of First Nations education. We believe that the work of the provinces and territories in all those education areas that overlap First

Nations schools can be enhanced for the benefit of First Nations students and parents when First Nations educators, elders and leaders can work cooperatively with provincial and territorial education officials in an environment where the legal authority of both parties to develop and implement policies and programs is affirmed and equal.

The successful results of our recommendations will facilitate this. In the meantime, we believe that the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada can begin to lay the groundwork for this development by including First Nations education representatives in their annual meetings and we encourage the Council to begin this process immediately. Examples of topics that need to be pursued at these sessions include:

- the inequity of funding for special needs students between provincial schools and First Nations schools;
- curriculum development and pedagogy;
- data gathering and the reporting of that data with First Nations;
- post-secondary institutions and First Nations;
- a coordinated strategy for First Nations education by the provinces and territories; and,
- the relationship between provincial and territorial education officials and First Nations in all matters related to First Nations learners who reside or attend school off-reserve.

Until such time as the jurisdiction in First Nations education is fully exercised by First Nations in the territories, the development and implementation of a quality education for their students will depend on the leadership and participation of First Nation parents, elders and educators working closely with territorial education officials.

CONCLUSION

We commend the Minister for undertaking this important and timely initiative. The recommendations put forth are consistent with previous reports and studies and underscore the urgency to respond to the call for change in First Nations education. Implementation of the recommendations will significantly improve academic success for First Nations learners and assist with the creation of healthy, self-sustaining societies in the future.

Canada must end the agenda of conformity and assimilation of First Nations people. First Nations education is at a critical stage. First Nations can no longer continue to sacrifice the potential of our young people. As the Auditor General stated in his April 2000 report on First Nations elementary/secondary education:

*(...) action is urgently needed. Today's urgency will be exacerbated by increasing demands for education services as a result of demographic changes in Aboriginal communities. In the absence of satisfactory progress, there will be an increased waste of human capital, lost opportunities, high financial cost in social programs and a degradation of the relationship between the government and First Nations peoples.*²³

The implementation of the three primary recommendations of jurisdiction, infrastructure and funding with the support of the additional recommendations from the other topics dealing with quality education will significantly transform First Nations education. First Nations education is extremely complex and will require a sustained commitment from **all** to support the recommendations and to ensure that ownership and responsibility rests with First Nations parents, elders and communities.

²³Auditor General, April 2000. **Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons. Chapter 4: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - Elementary and Secondary Education.** Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. para 4.97.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that:

The Vision

Jurisdiction

1. Canada commit to jurisdictional discussions with First Nations concerning lifelong education for First Nations learners on and off reserve. This shall include capacity building at the community and regional level that would encompass a strategy and resources for implementation. Steps should be taken immediately to enhance or develop First Nations organizations that would facilitate this (Pages 11)

Infrastructure

2. The Minister begin immediately a process to create a First Nations education infrastructure that encompasses decision-making structures, administrative capacity and program design and delivery capability at two levels: First Nations communities and regional education bodies. (Page 13)
3. To improve the quality of First Nation programs and services in the long term, government funding be integrated and delivered under education programming at the community level. In particular, Early Childhood Development funding and programming should be transferred from Health Canada and Human Resources Development Canada and delivered through education programs. An improved, integrated process would result in streamlined reporting for First Nations communities. (Page 13)

Funding

4. The Minister and First Nations, working with departmental and other officials, identify the real and projected costs of a First Nations holistic education system with a special focus on:
 - costs associated with First Nations jurisdiction and jurisdictional issues in education;
 - costs to establish and maintain a First Nations community and regional education infrastructure;
 - costs of a quality First Nations education including:
 - assessment, review and remediation of student achievement levels;

- additional new dollars to offset the inequities and changing requirements, such as the salaries and compensation benefits of teachers and staff in First Nations schools;
 - educational facilities that are safe, well-equipped, well-maintained and culturally appropriate, and reflect Indigenous knowledge in the physical structure of the building (e.g., including space in schools for parents and elders, as well as for early childhood development);
 - education dollars from First Nations communities to the provinces and territories for students attending provincial and territorial schools;
 - First Nations developed and approved language instruction and curricula;
 - culturally relevant curricula for all subject areas that are developed and approved by First Nations;
 - curricula and resources designed to address the identified weaknesses in mathematics, sciences and literacy; and,
 - the development of culturally appropriate pedagogical methodologies and evaluation. (Page 14)
5. A single parliamentary vote be established for First Nations education that includes all money approved by Parliament for First Nations education by all federal departments and agencies. (Page 15)
6. All levels of government ensure that quality educational facilities exist for First Nations students. New capital funds are necessary to reduce the current backlog of new construction and repairs, to keep pace with facilities' maintenance needs, and, more importantly, to begin immediately to construct new schools to ensure First Nations students have the opportunity, like other students in Canada, to be educated in their own community. (Page 16)

Quality in First Nations Education

Indigenous Knowledge

7. Canada must affirm Indigenous Knowledge as an integral and essential part of the national heritage of Canada that must be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of current and future Canadians. Under the leadership and direction of First Nations communities, Canada must work together with all stakeholders to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge is respected and promoted in all funded educational programs and services. (Page 18)

Language and Culture

8. The Minister develop legislation in full partnership with First Nations that acknowledges First Nations languages as the first languages of Canada and, in addition, create an endowed foundation to ensure adequate resources for delivery of quality First Nations language and culture programs at the community level for both on- and off-reserve students. This should include, at a minimum:
 - teacher training; and,
 - appropriate pedagogy, texts, finance, buildings, equipment and traditional and innovative technology. (Page 19)

Parental and Community Participation

9. Canada provide resources to affirm the revitalization of First Nation Indigenous Knowledge in the development of parental, family and community capacity-building. (Page 20)
10. First Nations and Canada affirm the importance of parental, family and community involvement, based upon informal and non-threatening settings where parents are made to feel comfortable when dealing with schools, where the extended family is recognized, where the role played by grandparents is integral and valued, where opportunities are created for students to serve in community, where community dialogue with youth is promoted, and where parents are engaged through practical measures. Canada must provide the necessary resources to support First Nation parents and grandparents to provide supportive mechanisms to effectively address this area of school programming. (Page 21)
11. Elders be engaged and involved in the planning and implementation processes respecting their wisdom and role as professional advisors. (Page 21)

Early Childhood Development

12. The federal government commit to fund universal First Nation early childhood development programming. (Page 22)
13. First Nations, with the support of the federal government, develop community-based strategies to address the full spectrum of early childhood services based on Indigenous principles and benchmarks. This should include the development of early identification strategies, a process for communication and integration of findings into program development. (Page 22)

Special Needs Education

14. The Minister provide necessary resourcing for the delivery of special education programs to meet the needs of learners in First Nation schools, as identified in the Assembly of First Nations' November 2000 submission on Special Needs Education. (Page 23)
15. Due to over-representation of First Nation students in special education programs in provincial and territorial schools, the quality and effectiveness of special education programs be the subject of an immediate joint investigation to ensure First Nation learners are accurately identified and receiving effective and relevant support and remediation to ensure improved academic success in the long-term. (Page 23)
16. Every five years, subject to the above recommendation on required resourcing for special needs education, the Minister and First Nations undertake a joint review, led by First Nations, of the effectiveness of programs, policies and services for First Nations special needs education. (Page 23)

Gifted Education

17. Further research be undertaken by First Nations to develop effective policies and programs for gifted education for First Nations learners. (Page 24)

Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention

18. We reiterate recommendations 3.5.14 to 3.5.18 of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which deal with:
 - Expanded Teacher Education Programs (3.5.14): The Commission recommends that 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.
 - Aboriginal Secondary School Teachers (3.5.15): The Commission recommends that 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.
- **Teacher Education Accessible in Communities (3.5.16):** The Commission recommends that 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.
 - **Career Paths (3.5.17):** The Commission recommends that 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.
 - **Aboriginal Component in All Teacher Education Programs (3.5.18):** The Commission recommends that 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, focussed on teaching Aboriginal and addressing Aboriginal education issues; and
 - c) collaborate with Aboriginal organizations or community representatives in developing Aboriginal-specific components of their programs. (Page 26)
19. The Minister immediately review and revise the formula for band-operated schools to eliminate the salary inequities between teachers in First Nations schools and provincial and territorial schools and to provide a variety of incentives to encourage teachers to teach in First Nations schools. (Page 28)

20. First Nation and education partners work collaboratively to significantly enhance working conditions, and to devise recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of First Nations teachers and other educators, including working with school-age children to encourage them to enter the teaching profession (Page 28)

Post-Secondary Education

21. The Minister and First Nations work with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and individual institutions to identify immediate and long-term strategies to:
- improve access for First Nation students to academic programmes in all disciplines;
 - achieve equitable representation of First Nations scholars as faculty and administrators in academia;
 - establish equitable First Nation representation on senior governing boards;
 - expand opportunities for First Nation students to pursue second and third cycle degrees;
 - work in partnership with First Nations to conduct research in support of improved educational services; and,
 - support existing and emerging First Nation post-secondary institutions, including facilitating the process for accreditation and portability. (Page 29)
22. We support the development of First Nations post-secondary institutes. We recommend that:
- equitable enrolment and graduation rates of First Nation students in post-secondary education be increased;
 - new dollars be allocated to meet the demand of students entering post-secondary training, adult education and vocational training programs; and,
 - First Nations' post-secondary, adult education and training programs be funded at levels which reflect inflationary costs and enrolment increases. (Page 30)

Racism

23. Canada acknowledge that racism and discrimination directed at Aboriginal people is a national problem that must be addressed immediately. In particular, in light of the Statement of Reconciliation issued by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on January 7, 1998, Canada, in cooperation with First Nations, must examine all departmental policies and practices to identify and eliminate those that are discriminatory or racist. (Page 31)
24. Schools can play a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between First Nations people and Canadian society. Schools must actively oppose personal, institutional and systemic racism directed at First Nations students, parents and

teachers. Compulsory training and resources must be provided to all teachers, administrators, trustees and support staff to address racism (pre-service and in-service training). Programs and resources, especially with regards to advocacy, aimed at assisting students and parents to deal with racism must be developed and implemented. (Page 31)

25. Aboriginal people are integral to the social fabric of Canada. Curricula in all subjects and grades must be developed and implemented to respectfully reflect this. (Page 32)

The Role of INAC

26. Canada and First Nations undertake a joint process to review Canada's role regionally and nationally in First Nations education, inclusive of:
- First Nations treaty rights;
 - INAC policy and legislation;
 - validating the mandate for First Nations to undertake responsibility for education;
 - advocacy role of INAC to challenge other federal departments to address gaps in First Nations education;
 - diminished role of INAC in First Nations education as First Nations assume jurisdiction; and,
 - fiduciary responsibility for First Nations education. (Page 34)

The Role of the Provinces and Territories

27. First Nations working with INAC and the provinces and territories create appropriate mechanisms for:
- accountability to First Nations;
 - the development of a quality education system for First Nation students in provincial and territorial schools;
 - the inclusion of culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy;
 - the support and involvement of elders; and,
 - the development of First Nations language immersion programs. (Page 36)

ANNEX 1

MINISTER'S NATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION LIST OF MEMBERS

Deborah Jeffrey (co-chair)

Past President of Tsimshian Tribal Council
British Columbia

Corinne Mount-Pleasant Jetté (co-chair)

Concordia University
Quebec

Harvey McCue (facilitator)

Contractor
Ontario

Robert Beaudin

Executive Director, Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute
Ontario

Phyllis Cardinal

Principal, Amiskawaciy Academy
Alberta

Terry Fortin

Retired Superintendent, Edmonton Catholic School Board
Alberta

Darren Googoo

Director of Education, Membertou First Nation
Nova Scotia

Laura Horton

Director, Post-Secondary Education Programs
Seven Generations Education Institute
Ontario

Lucy Jackson

Past Chair of Sahtu Board of Education
Northwest Territories

Colleen Joe

Manager of Education, Employment and Training for Champagne & Aishihik First Nations
Yukon

Harry Lafond

Education Director, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation
Saskatchewan

Gordon Martell

Superintendent of Saskatchewan Roman Catholic School Board
Saskatchewan

Edna Mason

Education Administrator, Kitasso Community School
British Columbia

Norbert Mercredi

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth
Manitoba

Kenneth Paupanekis

Brandon University
Manitoba

Gilbert Whiteduck

Director of Education, Kitigan Zibi Education Council
Quebec

ANNEX 2

MINISTER'S NATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION REPORTS COMMISSIONED

Early Childhood Development – Models and Studies. Sarah Cox, Education Renewal Secretariat, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Gifted Education in First Nations Education. Darren McKee, Brenda Ahenakew. Saskatoon Tribal Council.

If Not Now, Then When? First Nations Jurisdiction over Education: A Literature Review. Nancy A. Morgan, Barrister and Solicitor, prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education - A Literature Review with Recommendations. Dr. Marie Battiste, Director, Apamuwek Institute.

Infrastructure and Funding in First Nations Education - A Literature Review and Summary Recommendations. Robert Breaker, Buffalo Signal Associates.

Literature Review - Language and Culture. Mary Joy Elijah, M. Ed., National Confederacy of Cultural Centres.

Literature Review on Racism and the Effects on Aboriginal Education. Dr. Verna St.-Denis, University of Saskatchewan, and Dr. Eber Hampton, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

Neuroscientific Research and Education - An Overview for the Education Working Group. Jim Muckle.

A Review of First Nations Special Education Policies and Funding Directions within the Canadian Context. Gerry Hurton, B. Ed., M. Ed. Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in the Success of First Nations Learners: A Review of the Literature. Barbara Kavanagh, Director of Research and First Nations Schools. First Nations Education Steering Committee.

Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention: Implications for First Nations Teachers' Education. Jo-ann Archibald, Michelle Pidgeon, Shelley Janvier, Heather Commodore, Rod McCormick, University of British Columbia.

ANNEX 3

MINISTER'S NATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose:

The Minister's National Working Group on Education will provide recommendations to the Minister of Indian Affairs on strategies and measures required to foster excellence in First Nation elementary and secondary education, to celebrate some of the successes in First Nation education and to reduce the gap in academic results between First Nation students and other Canadians. The work of the Working Group will be at the centre of the Minister's Education Renewal Initiative and will pave the way for input and active involvement of First Nation citizens and leaders.

Working Group's Mandate and Scope of Activities

The Minister's National Working Group will sit from June 2002 to December 2002.

The Working Group will present to the Minister of Indian Affairs a final report containing overall recommendations and papers in the six following areas pertaining to First Nation elementary and secondary education:

1. jurisdiction/legal direction;
2. pedagogy, curriculum development and academic results measurement, teacher training and special education;
3. teacher recruitment and retention and distance education;
4. language and culture, and community, parental and youth empowerment;
5. the development of First Nation education institution capacity including infrastructure, standards, data collection management and funding allocation;
and
6. early childhood education.

In order to do so, the Minister's National Working Group will review existing relevant research and papers dealing with both First Nations and mainstream education, and, if need be, commission additional papers and research. The Working Group will be free to seek the advice of outside experts in education and related matters to present their findings.

As its work evolves, the Working Group may decide to examine other areas, including linkages with other relevant federal and provincial initiatives. While the direct focus of

the work of the Advisory Group will be elementary and secondary education, the work of the Group may touch upon issues that relate to post-secondary education, such as the need for better linkages between Post Secondary Education institutions and First Nation schools, teacher training issues, and academic research in Aboriginal education issues.

Deliverables

The Working Group will present its preliminary report to the Minister by mid-October 2002.

The Working Group will present its final report by the end of December 2002.