

**Aboriginal Teacher Education in British Columbia
A Plan for 2006-2011**

Submitted to the Association of BC Deans of Education

By the Aboriginal Teacher Education Task Force

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Rationale

The Association of British Columbia Deans of Education (ABCDE) was created in 2001 to strengthen cooperation among the Faculties of Education and teacher education programs throughout the province. It exists to improve the quality of education in the schools of British Columbia, inclusive of all students.

We acknowledge the resilience of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia who are our contemporary links to thousands of years of knowledge, language, and culture. We know that historically the formal education system has been an assimilative factor in the colonial treatment of Aboriginal peoples. Classrooms where no points of reference are made to the culture and lives of Aboriginal children are all too well-known. We are aware that children of Aboriginal heritage are among the few school-age populations that are actually expanding. The Ministry of Education annual Aboriginal student data show that the public school system has not been as successful as it could be in graduating sufficient numbers of Aboriginal students ready to proceed to post-secondary education. In addition, Faculties of Education in British Columbia have not been as successful as they could be in graduating sufficient numbers of Aboriginal pre-service teachers nor have they provided adequate knowledge of Aboriginal education for all pre-service teachers.

For these reasons and more, we are committed as an Association to: ensure that all pre-service teachers in our programs benefit from learning more about Aboriginal knowledge and education; work together to increase the number of teachers of Aboriginal heritage in British Columbia; and similarly, work together to increase the number of faculty members in our programs who are of Aboriginal heritage. At least three times the number of current Aboriginal teachers is needed in order for the teaching profession to reflect the population demographics of Aboriginal people.¹

The Association of BC Deans of Education is committed to working cooperatively with educational partner groups involved in Aboriginal education at all levels, locally and provincially, which includes Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organizations. The recent signing of the First Nations educational jurisdiction agreement between First Nations, the federal government, and the BC provincial government signals the importance of working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples. In order to facilitate

¹ See Edudata Canada, "Tracking Education Career Path and Employment Status of BC Teachers of Aboriginal Ancestry Report" (submitted to the BC Ministry of Education, 2005); Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Volume 3: Gathering Strength* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1996), 574.

progress on our commitments, we will rely upon the existing knowledge expertise of effective educators involved in Aboriginal education. We will also use and expand upon the small but growing corpus of Aboriginal curriculum and educational resources.

The ABCDE dedicated its January 23, 2006 afternoon meeting to presentations and discussions on “Preparing Teachers to Meet the Needs of Aboriginal Students in British Columbia.” Based on the interest and need to improve ways that Faculties of Education could better address increasing the numbers of Aboriginal people entering and completing teacher education and increasing the knowledge that all pre-service teachers have about Aboriginal education, the Deans agreed to convene a Working Group to prepare a terms of reference and preliminary strategy/proposal for establishing a Task Force on Aboriginal Teacher Education. On March 1, 2006, the Working Group submitted a proposal to the Deans that identified key questions and information for the Task Force to address. The Task Force was given the responsibility for developing a multi-faceted five-year plan. Meetings were held on March 27, 2006, April 27, 2006, and July 27, 2006, which were supplemented with conference calls and email discussions. The Task Force included members from the Faculties of Education, Aboriginal organizations, and Professional educational associations (see p. 1). In May-June 2006, a survey was sent to all BC Faculties of Education requesting information about Aboriginal student and faculty enrollment and retention data; program philosophy; how Aboriginal knowledge was addressed in their programs; issues related to student access, recruitment, and retention; short and long term plans to address the aforementioned issues; and suggestions for the five-year plan. The information from the survey, the various discussions of the Task Force, and their wealth of experience in Aboriginal teacher education and Aboriginal education were used to shape the plan and its subsequent recommendations presented in this report.

The Five-Year Plan for strengthening Aboriginal Teacher Education in British Columbia is based on the work of the Task Force on Aboriginal Teacher Education and it is reinforced in this rationale. The term “Aboriginal Teacher Education” refers to teacher education programs for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal education in teacher education programs. The plan includes goals, principles, and recommendations.

A. Goals

1. To increase substantially, the numbers of Aboriginal people enrolling in and completing teacher education programs that have respectful and welcoming learning environments and that instill a sense of belonging.
2. To improve the quality of knowledge all pre-service teachers gain about Aboriginal education and Indigenous knowledge systems in order to work more effectively with Aboriginal learners, their families, and their communities.
3. To increase ways that BC teacher education programs and education partners work cooperatively for quality Aboriginal teacher education and teacher education

programs that meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and all learners in any education context.

4. To ensure that Aboriginal identity is supported and flourishes during the educational process.

B. Principles

The ABCDE supports the following principles for all teacher education programs:

1. Beginning teachers have sound knowledge about Aboriginal education, which includes the effects of colonization, the forms of Aboriginal knowledge, and the self-determination movement of Aboriginal peoples.
2. An Aboriginal holistic approach is supported in which the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual domains of human development and the interrelationships among the individual, family, community, land, and society are valued.
3. Meaningful and collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal knowledge holders are integral components.
4. Quality teacher education programs honour each other's strengths. Cooperation among teacher education programs and educational partners will result in better utilization of resources and supports.
5. Pre-service teachers will use an appreciative rather than a deficit approach in order to view Aboriginal students as capable of learning and to engage them effectively in learning.

C. Recommendations

The ABCDE agree to work on the following recommendations that address access, recruitment, retention, employment, Aboriginal knowledge, program review, in-service to faculty and sponsor teachers, data collection, retention of Aboriginal faculty members, partnerships, research and knowledge mobilization, policy/monitoring, and funding.

Access

To increase the numbers of Aboriginal people enrolling in teacher education through:

1. Broader-based admission policies that consider work experience, prior learning, and community leadership;
2. A flexible process for transferring credits from one teacher education program to another or enabling course enrollment in a teacher education program that is different from the one in which the student is enrolled (such as the Western Deans' agreement for graduate studies);

3. Setting aside 10 percent of enrollment for Aboriginal people, which reflects the Aboriginal student population in this province;
4. Offering community-based teacher education courses and programs;
5. Working more closely with colleges and adult learning centres to offer bridging and transition programs;
6. Offering teacher education programs in partnership with Aboriginal organizations that includes accredited laddering programs such as the Developmental Standard Term Certificate²;
7. Consulting with various Aboriginal education committees and then offering teacher education specializations that meet Aboriginal community and Aboriginal education (K-12) needs. Examples may include Aboriginal language and culture, mathematics and science, literacy, and special education; and
8. Institutional cooperation among universities, school districts, and educational partners to address Aboriginal community driven educational needs.

Recruitment

To ensure that effective recruitment occurs:

1. Teacher education programs need to be proactive by going to public and band schools, post secondary institutions, trades' programs, and urban and rural communities to recruit Aboriginal people to their programs;
2. Teacher education programs and education partners need to provide Aboriginal learners with encouragement, information on attaining career goals, and mentorship initiatives;
3. Teacher education programs together with education partners need to develop tools that promote teaching as a profession;
4. Teacher education programs and education partners need to be more proactive in recruiting Aboriginal men; and

² In 1999, the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the BC College of Teachers developed a framework for a "Developmental Standard Term Certificate in First Nations Language and Culture(DSTC)" that qualifies Aboriginal teachers to teach Aboriginal languages and culture after completion of a three-year 90 credit teacher education program. The DSTC is valid for up to eight years provided that annual fees are paid. The DSTC holder may increase the qualification to a non-expiring teaching certificate. See First Nations Education Steering Committee web site for more information, <http://www.fnesc.ca/> (accessed September 29, 2006).

5. Teacher education programs and education partners need to be more proactive in recruiting Aboriginal people to secondary education programs.

Retention

To increase the numbers of Aboriginal people completing teacher education through:

1. Increasing and promoting bursaries and scholarships, and facilitate access to them;
2. Creating and maintaining a teacher education learning environment that is caring, safe, hospitable, and respectful;
3. Caring and knowledgeable faculty (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal);
4. Including Elders for student support and culturally sensitive student counseling;
5. Recognizing and accommodating the multiple responsibilities that Aboriginal students have to their families and communities; and
6. Acknowledging and creating opportunities for Aboriginal people to work through the effects of colonization in their learning environments (i.e., Aboriginal studies courses and cultural activities).

Employment

To increase the numbers of Aboriginal teachers entering the teaching field:

1. Deans and education partners will work together to eliminate current seniority barriers, create opportunities for Aboriginal teachers to become enrolling classroom teachers, and support career advancement in educational leadership roles;
2. Education partners will facilitate culturally sensitive education for public school district personnel who interview Aboriginal applicants through mechanisms such as university leadership courses; and
3. Teacher education programs will assist with interview preparation for Aboriginal pre-service teachers.

Aboriginal knowledge

To increase the knowledge pre-service teachers need to have about Aboriginal education and Indigenous knowledge systems:

1. Implement core Aboriginal course requirement for all pre-service teachers;
2. Infuse learning modules about Aboriginal education in various courses;

3. Develop Aboriginal education specializations through cohort programs;
4. Implement comprehensive student and faculty orientation programs about Aboriginal pedagogy and Aboriginal ways of knowing;
5. Create authentic experiential learning opportunities for students, faculty, and school associates to learn first hand about Indigenous teaching and learning (i.e., land-based learning and traditional ways of teaching and learning);
6. Collect and share information about what each teacher education program offers regarding Aboriginal programs, courses, learning modules, and cultural awareness for faculty through mechanisms such as a brochure or website on effective practices in Aboriginal teacher education;
7. Offer an annual provincial symposium to share information and to create opportunities for dialogue and cooperative endeavors; and
8. Include Aboriginal teacher education in the annual teacher education round table sponsored by the ABCDE.

Program review

To ensure that Faculty of Education institutional review and planning documents address Aboriginal teacher education:

1. Every review, evaluation, and strategic planning initiative will contain an examination of how the Faculty of Education addresses Aboriginal education and Aboriginal teacher education, including progress made between reviews; and
2. Opportunities will be provided that create awareness among faculty members of Aboriginal education and Aboriginal teacher education resources available throughout the institutions.

In-service to faculty and sponsor teachers

To provide faculty members and sponsor teachers with relevant in-service information about Aboriginal education, the teacher education programs will:

1. Develop workshops and opportunities for faculty members and sponsor teachers to dialogue about Aboriginal teacher education;
2. Use research to inform teaching practice, program development and evaluation, and community relations; and

3. Seek advice from Aboriginal education and Aboriginal knowledge holders about the courses faculty teach and the research they conduct.

Data Collection

To ensure that relevant Aboriginal student and Aboriginal faculty data are collected and used ethically, teacher education programs will:

1. Develop consistent definitions of “Aboriginal” and use a common identification through consultation among teacher education programs and mechanism such as the Provincial Education Number (PEN) that is used by the Ministry of Education for Aboriginal students in the K-12 school system;
2. Develop ethical protocols and procedures to ensure that Aboriginal data is protected and used only for program and policy development and review purposes;
3. Report annually on Aboriginal student admissions, enrollment, retention, and completion; and
4. Report annually on Aboriginal faculty appointments and retention, which includes sessional lecturers, 12-month lecturers, tenure-track, tenured, and Elders.

Retention of Aboriginal faculty members

To address the retention of Aboriginal faculty members, the teacher education programs will:

1. Create opportunities for Aboriginal faculty members to establish a network for support purposes, to share information, and to develop cooperative initiatives; and
2. Ensure that Deans take a leadership role in recognizing, as part of the tenure and promotion process, the many added responsibilities that Aboriginal faculty must take on such as program development, policy change, and Aboriginal community service.

Partnerships

To enhance networking and collaboration, the teacher education programs will work with education partners to:

1. Establish networking relationships with other groups involved in Aboriginal teacher education, such as the Education Partners’ Group and the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium;
2. Develop mechanisms to share expertise in all aspects of Aboriginal education and Indigenous knowledge; and

3. Establish an annual partnership gathering of Committees, groups and organizations involved in Aboriginal Teacher Education in BC.

Research and knowledge mobilization

To mobilize useful knowledge from research to improve Aboriginal education, the teacher education programs and education partners will:

1. Create research collaborations among teacher education programs and education partners for large-scale research projects (i.e., identify priority topics);
2. Publish monographs and research newsletters, and develop websites, in addition to journal articles that highlight results of research; and
3. Sponsor dialogue sessions to discuss research with education partners, the general public, and Aboriginal communities.

Policy/Monitoring

To support policy development to advance the ABCDE Aboriginal teacher education plan and to review its plan, the ABCDE will:

1. Work with the provincial government (Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation) and education partners to develop policy on Aboriginal teacher education and Aboriginal teacher employment; and
2. Dedicate one of its meetings, annually, to the Aboriginal teacher education plan to establish priorities and to review progress made on those priorities.

Funding

To ensure that there is adequate funding for Aboriginal teacher education, the ABCDE and education partners will:

1. Lobby for long-term program and Aboriginal student funding;
2. Lobby universities to provide core operating funding for Aboriginal education initiatives that also include bridging programs and Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) programs; and
3. Lobby for adequate faculty and student service staffing for DSTC, bridging and teacher education programs.