

# FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Education is the fundamental building block of any society. Alberta trades worldwide with its natural resources (petroleum products, forestry products, agricultural products, etc.), but aspires to broaden the base of its economy to include knowledge and knowledge-based products and services.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Albertans, whether resident on First Nations reserves, Métis settlements or other parts of rural or urban Alberta, form an integral part of Alberta's society and must have access to all the opportunities available to other Albertans.

The Ministry of Education, through its leadership, partnerships and work with the public, strives to inspire, motivate and create the necessary tools and opportunities for every child to attain the knowledge, skills and attributes required for lifelong learning, self-sufficiency, work, and good citizenship.

A key priority for the Government of Alberta is to enhance opportunities, including educational opportunities, for all Albertans, including FNMI peoples. Recent work to improve FNMI learner success has been guided by the *FNMI Education Policy Framework (2002)*, *A Learning Alberta (2006)*, and the *Aboriginal Policy Framework (2000)*.

FNMI education is also a priority for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), Ministers of Aboriginal Relations/Affairs, the Government of Canada, and FNMI leaders both nationally and locally. Despite some improvements in this area, there remains a significant gap in educational achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students across all Canadian jurisdictions.

First Nations and Métis leadership in Alberta has also recognized and agreed that education is important for the FNMI population in Alberta, and is an essential foundation to ensure FNMI peoples have the ability to reach the same socio-economic status as all Albertans. Treaty Grand Chiefs and Presidents of the Métis Settlements General Council and the Métis Nation of Alberta Association agree that success in education for FNMI students and communities requires leadership from all levels, in order to build community and family values that embrace education and encourage and provide the opportunity for success for FNMI students.

For this reason, the Minister of Education, in collaboration with the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology and the Minister of Aboriginal Relations, and leaders of First Nations represented by the Grand Chiefs of Treaties 6, 7 and 8, together with the Presidents of the Métis Nation of Alberta Association and the Métis Settlements General Council, have established a First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Partnership Council that will help guide the future direction of FNMI education in Alberta. This will be a true partnership, owned by participants, that will help to identify and complement the work we all must undertake within our respective areas and organizations to reduce and ultimately eliminate the gap in educational achievement for FNMI learners.

## **PURPOSE**

The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Partnership Council will work to encourage every First Nation, Métis and Inuit community and family to value education as a foundation for the success of their people. We acknowledge that education is one of the most important gifts we can give our families and communities in order to improve our quality of life and ensure that every member of our communities has the opportunity to participate fully in the economy and as a citizen of this province. The Partnership Council will share guidance, advice and a broad representation of perspectives on FNMI education issues among its members. Members will work together to identify and co-ordinate strategic actions to which First Nations, Métis, Inuit and government partners can commit, individually and collectively, in order to improve the educational success of FNMI students.

The Partnership Council work will complement ongoing education initiatives led by partner organizations, including work undertaken by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada Summit on Aboriginal Education; *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans*; *Speak Out*; and *Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta*. The Ministry of Education's FNMI Education Advisory Committee will work closely with the Partnership Council as a working group to provide policy options and involve and include broad stakeholder and community involvement in promoting FNMI educational opportunities and success.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Partnership Council will be comprised of partners/elected officials from Treaties 6, 7, and 8; the Métis Nation of Alberta Association; the Métis Settlements General Council; the Government of Alberta (Education, Advanced Education and Technology, and Aboriginal Relations); and other representatives from the community selected by the elected officials. Permanent members of the Partnership Council will include Government Ministers, Treaty Grand Chiefs and Métis Presidents (or designated representatives from each of the above-mentioned entities), together with selected FNMI community members who are known to be role models and education leaders, as well as educational, business and community leaders.

The Partnership Council will be co-chaired by three partners – one Government Minister, one Métis President, and one Treaty Grand Chief. The Minister of Education will serve as the Government of Alberta co-chair for the first year, with the possibility of alternating this responsibility in the future. The remaining co-chairs will be identified by council partners. In addition to the Ministers, Grand Chiefs and Métis Presidents, other members may be appointed to serve for up to three years.

## **MEETINGS**

At least two Partnership Council meetings will be held each year, one in spring and one in fall, with the possibility of additional sessions upon request and approval of the co-chairs or other partners.

The co-chairs and Partnership Council members may identify two or three priority areas annually for discussion. Partnership Council meetings should precede the meetings of the FNMI Education Advisory Committee to facilitate communication of priorities, strategic actions, and issues to this committee.

## **ROLE OF THE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBERS**

1. The Partnership Council is established for a term of five years, beginning in October 2009. This term would be followed by an external evaluation to determine continuation.
2. Partners/elected officials will jointly identify and appoint additional representatives, such as FNMI community members, to sit on the Partnership Council for a term of three years (membership to be reviewed annually or as required).
3. Co-chairs will co-ordinate agendas, host meetings and provide other supports to the Partnership Council as identified.
4. Members will serve as role models and education leaders in their communities.
5. Members will provide timely input into the work of the Partnership Council and set annual priorities.
6. Members will provide input/feedback to each other on community and family issues and work related to FNMI education.
7. Members will provide broad perspectives on behalf of the communities they represent.
8. Where appropriate, members will keep their organizations/affiliations informed about the activities of the Partnership Council and the overall progress made in FNMI education in Alberta.
9. Members may assist the Ministry of Education, Advanced Education and Technology, and other partners with consultation and collaboration on education issues and ongoing work, where appropriate.

## **PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

*Eight partners/elected officials:*

- Government of Alberta Ministers (Education, Advanced Education and Technology, and Aboriginal Relations);
- First Nation Grand Chiefs of Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8;
- Métis Nation of Alberta Association President; and
- Métis Settlements General Council President.

*Eight community representatives* (appointed for a three-year term) based on the following competencies:

- Knowledge of FNMI education at K-12 and/or post-secondary levels.
- Knowledge of how to overcome barriers to educational success for FNMI learners.
- Ability to contribute to Council discussions and decision making.