

# **METIS NATION OF ALBERTA ASSOCIATION FINAL REPORT NATIVE EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In May 1999, Alberta Learning requested that the Metis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA) assist the department in conducting a provincial Native Education Policy Review.

- The review formed the basis of an outcomes based project under the new Framework Agreement guidelines between the Government of Alberta and the Metis Nation of Alberta Association.
- The original proposal called for a review of policies affecting grades K-12, but with the amalgamation of the two education departments, the review was extended to include policies affecting post-secondary institutions and students.
- The contract to do the work was prepared by Alberta Learning but was not ready for signing until mid-August 1999. Due to the fact that the initiative was an outcomes based project, full funding was given to conduct the review.
- The terms of reference for the post-secondary portion of the review was prepared by the Native Education Project. The MNAA was of the opinion that because the Native Education Project took the lead for the post-secondary policy review, that the Framework funding commitment from Advanced Education would not be a problem.
- In late September 1999, the MNAA was advised that it would be required to submit another proposal to Advanced Education. Even though the policy review initiative was an outcomes based proposal, the funding from Advanced Education was pro-rated for a period of five months.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Purpose**

- To determine and define the role, responsibilities and jurisdiction of Alberta Learning in the education of Metis, First Nation, Inuit and other Aboriginal learners.
- To establish directions in legislation, policy and regulation in the delivery of programs and services to Metis, First Nation and other Aboriginal learners.

### **Work To Be Done**

- To conduct the policy review by holding meetings with communities, Metis Regional Councils, Metis Locals, post-secondary institutions, students and others, but excluding Metis Settlements.
- To provide a representative on the Alberta Learning Native Education Policy Review Committee.
- To submit a progress report by December 31, 1999. Completed.
- To complete the review and submit a final report to Alberta Learning by March 31, 2000.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION (MNAA)**

### ***Our Vision (Our Inspiration)***

“Together we will continue to build a strong Metis Nation”

### **Our Mission (Our purpose)**

To pursue the advancement of the socio-economic, educational and cultural well-being of the Metis people of Alberta.

### **Our Guiding Principles**

- We believe we are continuing to build on the foundation for future generations;
- We believe in fairness and respect for all people;
- We believe we need to work in unity and harmony;
- We believe all Metis people are part of the Nation;
- We believe in Metis participation in building our nation;
- We believe in encouraging and assisting Metis people to achieve their goals;
- We believe in honesty and professionalism;
- We believe we will abide by our governing structure; and
- We believe we will achieve self-government.

### **Our People/Places**

- People of the Metis Nation live and work in virtually every community in Alberta. Most Metis people live in northern Alberta.
- People that belong to our organization include those that live in communities throughout Alberta, including some members that reside on Metis settlements.

### **Rationale for Involvement**

The MNAA agreed to support the review that was initiated by Alberta Learning because we believe that the successful education of our youth will strengthen our people socially, economically, culturally and politically. Alberta, as a province will also benefit through the contributions of Metis people.

### **3.IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING NEEDS**

#### **What is working?**

- The pro-active approach of the Native Education Project has assisted the MNAA with many initiatives including, developing learning resources, assisting the MNAA with the Framework Agreement process and in assisting the organization in dealing with government departments on issues affecting Metis people.
- The partnership approach to developing and publishing Learning resources for and about Metis people. The publication of the Dr. Ann Anderson collection of Cree materials was very important in retaining Metis culture through the written word.
- The establishment of Native Parent Councils in some school jurisdictions has led to increased parental involvement in school matters.
- The Liaison worker program in school jurisdictions throughout Alberta has led to an improvement in student attendance and parental involvement, and has also provided employment opportunities to many people of Metis ancestry.
- The existence of *The Northland Act*, which provides an opportunity for Metis people to be involved in educational decisions that affect the education of their children.
- Colleges such as Keyano College in Fort McMurray and the Vocational Centre in Grouard are to be commended for their efforts to bring off-campus programs to isolated northern communities.

#### **What is not working?**

- Poor parental involvement, especially in those school jurisdictions that do not have formally established Native Parent Councils.
- The drop-out rate at the junior and senior high schools is still high..
- The inadequate training of teachers with regard to the teaching of Metis and other Aboriginal students.
- The failure of school jurisdictions to provide adequate professional development opportunities for staff in Aboriginal education
- The failure of the education system to attract more Metis people into post-secondary programs.
- The recent changes to the Native Education Project and the failure of Alberta Learning to consult with Metis and First Nation people about the changes.

#### **Major Barriers Preventing Successful Learner Outcomes**

*Many Metis people:*

- Live below the poverty line
- Live in northern communities where unemployment is high.
- Do not feel part of the school system
- Are illiterate compared to the rest of the population

- Are not involved in decisions affecting their children
- Come to school with language difficulties
- Face discrimination in the work place and in the school system

*Other factors:*

- Low rate of parental involvement in the school system
- Lack of appropriate role models in the school system
- Few teachers of Metis ancestry
- Insufficient funding for support services in education e.g. Liaison Workers
- Have not been part of the decision-making process.

## **Areas That Need To Be Addressed**

- **Decision making and consultation:** Opportunities must be provided to Metis people to enhance their involvement in decision-making relative to the education of their children at the provincial, school board, school and post-secondary levels.
- **Reducing dropout rates:** To provide the necessary programs and support services designed to assist students to stay in school.
- **Delivery of programs:** To improve the delivery of programs and services to Metis students by increasing the number of Metis teachers and paraprofessionals.
- **Improving instruction:** To improve the quality of instruction by providing pre-service and in-service to teachers and other school personnel.
- **Improving curriculum content:** To provide all students the opportunity to study about Metis people in all subject areas.
- **Increasing graduates:** To increase the number of Metis students in post-secondary programs.
- **Increasing the number of high school graduates.** To increase the number of junior and senior high school students that continue and complete school.

# **ACHIEVING OUTCOMES/ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **4.0 WHAT SPECIAL LEGISLATION, CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND JURISDICTION AFFECT YOUR ORGANIZATION?**

### **4.1 Recognition of Metis**

Alberta Learning should acknowledge and recognize the people of the Metis Nation of Alberta as a distinct cultural group with special rights, including self-determination and self-government, and protected under the Constitution.

#### ***Rationale***

*The Constitution Act of 1982 (Section 35) recognizes the Metis people as distinct Aboriginal cultural group of people with certain rights protected under the Constitution. If Metis people are to become part of the decision-making processes within Alberta Learning's policies for and about Metis, people, acknowledging the special status for indigenous groups must be the first step.*

*The federal government's policy on Aboriginal Self-Government (1995), recognizes the inherent right of self-government as an existing right within section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1992. Aboriginal people of Canada "have a right to govern themselves in relation to matters that are internal to their communities, integral to their unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages, and institutions". As such, the Metis Nation of Alberta maintains that until the reality of self-government is reached, that Metis people of Alberta in partnership with Alberta Learning and School jurisdictions, be involved in decisions affecting the education of their children.*

## **5.0 TO IMPROVE METIS, FIRST NATION AND INUIT LEARNER SUCCESS IN GRADES K-12.**

### **5.1 Jurisdiction and responsibility**

Jurisdiction and responsibility for the education of Metis students attending provincial schools should remain with the province but with provisions for greater involvement of Metis people in decision-making on matters affecting the education of their children, both at the provincial and local school level. e.g. representation on curriculum committees, school councils, Aboriginal parents advisory councils, etc.

### **5.2 Aboriginal Controlled Schools**

Alberta Learning should ensure that provincial school boards, planning to establish or have established Alternative Schools serving Metis and First Nation students, have Metis representation on their planning/advisory/steering committees.

## 5.3 CURRICULUM ISSUES

### 5.3a Metis in Decision-Making

Alberta Learning should involve Metis educators in decisions about what students learn in provincial schools by:

- Including Metis people on provincial curriculum review committees.
- Including Metis people on Western Canadian Protocol initiatives.

#### *Rationale*

*Metis people have consistently been excluded from curriculum decision-making at both the provincial and local level. Non-Aboriginal educators have always assumed the role of curriculum decision-makers on behalf of Metis people. Yet, Metis students continue to do poorly in provincial schools.*

### 5.3b Accuracy of Content

Alberta Learning should ensure that content portraying Metis and First Nation people in learning resources approved for use in Alberta schools, is accurate in their portrayal of Metis history and culture.

Alberta Learning should continue to review learning resource by conducting Tolerance and Understanding Audits on new learning resources being considered for approval.

Alberta Learning should continue to conduct Native Content Analysis on learning resources containing content for and about Metis, First Nation and other Aboriginal people.

Alberta Learning should utilize Metis and First Nation teachers in the Tolerance and Understanding, and Native Content Analysis review processes.

#### *Rationale*

Alberta Learning should provide the training to Metis and First Nation teachers that will be conducting learning resource reviews.

*Metis people maintain that many learning resources are still inadequate with respect to portraying Metis people in a positive light. Likewise, some resources omit Metis people as a distinct Aboriginal cultural group even though they have had a great influence in the development of Canada. It is essential that Metis educators be given the opportunity to review and evaluate learning resources for and about Metis people to ensure accuracy of content.*

### 5.3c Developing Resources

Alberta Learning should work in partnerships with Metis and First Nation people in the development of quality learning resources for and about Metis, First Nation and other Aboriginal groups.

Alberta Learning should continue to contract services with the Metis Nation in the development of quality learning resources for and about Metis people in all curriculum areas, including: social studies, art, music, etc.

Alberta Learning and the Metis Nation of Alberta should work in partnership to develop the Mitchif language spoken by Metis people.

### ***Rationale***

*Metis people must be involved in the development of learning resources for and about Metis people in all subject areas. For too long, learning resources dealing with First Nation and Metis people have been developed by non-Aboriginal people. As well, there must be an increase in the number of resources available to students on Metis history, culture and language.*

### **5.3d Copyright**

Alberta Learning should continue it's current policy of transferring copyright to the Metis and First Nation groups that develop learning resources.

### ***Rationale***

*Transferring copyright to the Aboriginal group that developed the learning resource, gives Aboriginal people a sense of ownership.*

## **5.4 TEACHERS AND TEACHING ISSUES**

### **5.4a Improve Quality of Teaching?**

Alberta Learning should take steps to ensure that all teachers have a basic understanding of the histories and cultures of Metis, First Nation, Inuit and other Aboriginal people in order to improve quality of instruction for and about Aboriginal people.

Alberta Learning should mandate that all Alberta universities and colleges offering B.Ed. degree programs, include a minimum of one course in Aboriginal Studies as part of teacher training.

Alberta Learning should provide grants to school jurisdictions for professional development activities designed to improve the quality of teaching in the area of Aboriginal education. A "Consortium for Aboriginal Education" should be considered to parallel the existing six Regional Consortia established to provide such a service. This might be done in partnership with The Alberta Teachers' Association.

Alberta Learning should encourage school jurisdictions to utilize Elders and Metis teacher assistants when teaching Metis history, culture and their contributions to Canadian society.

### ***Rationale***

*Metis, First Nation and other Aboriginal students comprise a significant enrollment in provincial schools. Yet, teachers lack the necessary knowledge and understanding of Metis and First Nation people and their cultures. In order to deal with Aboriginal students effectively, pre-service and in-service of teachers is essential.*

## 5.5 PROGRAMS/SERVICES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS?

### 5.5a Funding

Alberta Learning should provide Native Education Grants to all school jurisdictions serving Metis and First Nation students.

#### *Rationale*

*Due to insufficient grant monies allocated to Alberta Learning, all school jurisdictions have not been able to access Native Education Grants. This is not right. There should be equitable funding provided to all jurisdictions.*

*Alberta Learning should provide adequate Native Education grant Funds to school jurisdictions to support the Native Liaison Worker Program.*

- *Grants should be increased to reflect the serious need for the service.*
- *School jurisdictions should be mandated to employ Metis and First Nation people as liaison workers, and not non-Aboriginal people.*
- *Liaison workers must be appropriately compensated for their work.*

#### *Rationale*

*The current grants to school jurisdictions are inadequate. As a result Native Liaison Workers are underpaid. It is reported that many work long hours for minimum wage. Most school jurisdictions don't have a pay scale policy for liaison workers, but pay according to the grant they receive. If the need for the service is high, and insufficient dollars are provided through grants, salaries are lowered to in order that more workers can be employed.*

### 5.5b Cultural Programs

Alberta Learning should provide adequate resources to school jurisdictions for cultural programs:

- Elder in residence program
- Metis music, dance, art, crafts
- Learning resources for and about Metis and First Nation people.

#### *Rationale*

*Programs such as the Elder in residence is vital to dealing with behavioral problems in the school. Elders are respected and will have a positive influence on behavior. Cultural activities will assist students with creating a positive self concept.*

## 5.6 ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES

### 5.6a Local Aboriginal Education Policy

School jurisdictions should develop a local Aboriginal Education Policy outlining the jurisdictions plan with regard to:

- Hiring of Aboriginal teachers and paraprofessional staff;
- Addressing pay equity for liaison workers and other paraprofessional staff;
- Defining liaison worker responsibilities;
- Aboriginal Language instruction;
- Cultural programs;
- Parental involvement;
- Parent Advisory Councils;
- Aboriginal representation on School Councils;
- Others.

Three Year Business Plan school jurisdictions should be required to submit a strategic plan for the improvement of student success, parental involvement and improving partnerships with the Aboriginal community in their Three Year Business Plans.

### *Rationale*

*School jurisdictions should be accountable for the success of all students in their schools. This includes students of all Aboriginal backgrounds. A strategic plan for Aboriginal education in their Three Year Business Plan will hold the school jurisdiction more accountable for results relative to the achievement of Aboriginal students.*

### 5.6b Accountability to Parents

All school jurisdictions with significant Metis and other Aboriginal student enrollment should be mandated to establish Aboriginal Parent Councils to provide input on issues, programs, services and other initiatives for and about Metis and First Nation Students.

### *Rationale*

*For 160 years non-Aboriginal people have been given the task to educate Metis and First Nation students. In large measure, they have failed. One of the reasons for this failure is that Metis people themselves, have never been given the opportunity to become involved in decisions affecting the education of their children. Decision-making has rested with non-Aboriginal educators who believe that "they know what is best for Aboriginal children". This attitude has to change and input from the Metis community has to be accepted.*

### 5.6c Achievement Tests

Alberta Learning should be providing assistance to those school jurisdictions with high Aboriginal student enrolments in order to improve performance of Provincial Achievement Tests.

Alberta Learning should be modifying Achievement Tests to more reflect Metis content that is or should be taught in the current Social Studies Program.

All school jurisdictions with significant Metis student enrollment should include achievement results of Metis students in grades 3, 6, & 9 in their Three-year Business Plan.

### ***Rationale***

*Schools must take a proactive role in improving achievement of Metis and other Aboriginal students whose educational standards are below provincial norms. Metis people have indicated that school jurisdictions do not put enough effort in improving Metis and First Nation student achievement results.*

### **5.6d Special Education**

Alberta Learning should ensure that sufficient resources are in place for school jurisdictions to provide early intervention programs in basic skills for those students that are not meeting acceptable standards.

### ***Rationale***

*Many Metis students enter school with less than acceptable skills in the three R's. Early intervention can improve basic skills. A good example can be found in Father Turcotte School in the Ft. McMurray Catholic School District. The school receives funding from Syncrude Canada and the Athabasca Tribal Council for intervention programs. The Metis and First Nation students in that school can boast that they are achieving at a level equal to that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts on Provincial Achievement Tests. Father Turcotte School has an Aboriginal population of 45 percent.*

### **5.6e Hot Lunch Program**

The current hot lunch program that is being administered by Northland School Division to selected Metis and First Nation communities, should be extended to all schools with a high Metis student enrollment.

### ***Rationale***

*All children attending school within the Northland School Division and some attending schools in other jurisdictions do receive funding for a Hot Lunch Program. The program was put into place in the 1980's but was limited to schools that served an Aboriginal enrollment over 50 percent. However, not all schools with a 50 percent enrollment could be funded because of insufficient funds allocated to the program.*

*Research clearly indicates that students learn best if their bellies are full. Many of our people are poor and their children may not get the proper nourishment. The hot lunch program fills this need.*

*Originally, the program was administered by Social Services. It was then transferred to Alberta Education, who in turn transferred the administration of the program to Northland School Division #61. This program is one that should be addressed through the Department of Children's Services in conjunction with Alberta Learning and departments that have responsibility for Aboriginal student initiatives.*

## **6.0 TO RECOGNIZE AND INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF METIS, FIRST NATION AND INUIT LEARNERS.**

### **6.1 Parent Councils**

Alberta Learning should direct school boards that receive Native Education Grants to re-establish Native Parent Councils in order that parents have input into local Native education projects.

#### ***Rationale***

*When the Native Education Grants were introduced in 1987, school boards were required to establish Native Parent Councils. The role of Parent Councils was to work with the school board and/or school to determine programs and services that would best meet local Aboriginal students needs. Parents indicate that this was one way for school boards to involve parents in decisions affecting their children. With the introduction of Block Funding in 1993, some school boards discontinued Parent Councils and have since made programming decisions without input from Aboriginal parents. Liaison workers and parents report that some school boards are very secretive and will not indicate the amount of grant monies the board receives, from Alberta Learning.*

### **6.2 School Councils**

Alberta Learning should find a way to involve Metis and First Nation parents on School Councils.

#### ***Rationale***

*There are several school boards that are to be commended for encouraging their schools to involve Metis and First Nation parents on School Councils. Many Aboriginal parents still view the school as a “white man’s building” and do not feel comfortable in pursuing a position on the School Council. As a result, there are schools that do not have Metis representation on School Councils.*

### **Differential Staffing**

Alberta Learning should provide school jurisdictions with sufficient funding to allow for greater flexibility in providing the necessary support services for Metis students. Programs include:

- Liaison workers;
- Native counselors;
- Native teacher aides;
- Elder in residence programs;
- Mentoring.

#### ***Rationale***

*Metis and other Native parents would much prefer dealing with Native people. Employing Metis and other Aboriginal people will open the lines of communication between parents and the school. Currently, the need for liaison workers far exceeds what is being provided.*

*The Elder in residence program / service will also assist schools in dealing with children that may have problems stemming from the home. Students respect Elders and it is likely that many behavior problems would improve.*

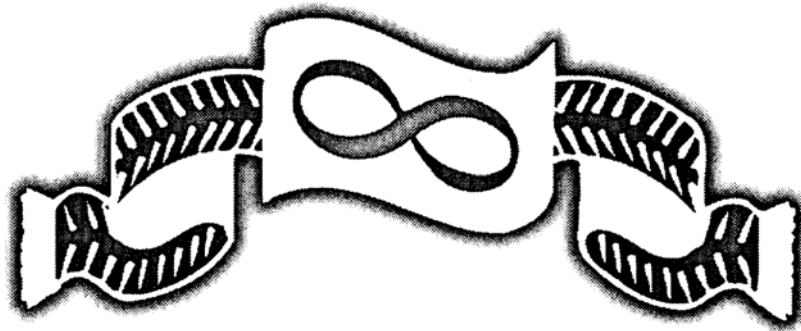
*Native school based personnel could also be used in a mentoring program, whereby non-Aboriginal teachers could benefit from the wisdom and knowledge of Metis and First Nation people.*

## **Literacy Program**

Alberta Learning should provide resources to school jurisdictions for adult literacy programs.

### ***Rationale***

*Adult illiteracy rates in Metis and First Nation communities are high. Many mothers and fathers cannot attend post-secondary institutions outside the community. Offering adult literacy programs at the local school would not only help parents to improve their literacy skills, but would also improve parent involvement in the education of their children.*



**7.0 TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN METIS, FIRST NATION AND INUIT PEOPLE AND SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS, ALBERTA LEARNING**

**7.1 Partnership & Decision-Making**

Alberta Learning should lead by example and institutionalize processes that would ensure consultation with Metis and First Nation people on matters affecting the education of their children.

**7.1a Provincial Aboriginal Steering Committee**

Alberta Learning should establish an Aboriginal Steering/Advisory Committee to advise Alberta Learning on policies, issues and initiatives that have a bearing on the success of Aboriginal student success in grades K-12.

***Rationale***

*During the past year, Alberta Learning has made numerous internal changes in Native Education without consulting Aboriginal people. This is contrary to the spirit of the current Native Education Policy. If Alberta Learning is serious about improving the success of Metis and First Nation students, they should be part of the decision-making process.*

**7.1b Aboriginal Education Branch**

Alberta Learning should establish an Aboriginal Education branch to ensure that Aboriginal education policy, legislation and regulations is being followed and implemented.

Alberta Learning should consult with Metis and First Nation people in determining the nature of the new branch and its functions.

***Rationale***

*Recently, there have been internal changes within Alberta Learning in the way education is delivered to school boards, and Metis and First Nation people. The Native Education Project has been practically disbanded, without consultation with Metis and First Nation people. Both Metis and First Nation people indicate that they felt ownership of the Project, because of the partnering that the Project promoted with Aboriginal people. Although, Alberta Learning is to be commended for increasing staff of Aboriginal ancestry throughout the department, the department has to be careful not to fragment the delivery of programs and services.*

**7.1c Local Decision-Making  
Northland School Division  
#61**

Alberta Learning should continue to support the *Northland School Act*.

***Rationale***

*The Northland School Act is the one vehicle that gives decision - making power to Metis and First Nation people. Metis people maintain that the current state of education within the Northland School Division is better than it ever was. This includes previous administrative arrangements when boards were appointed and in those instances where the school division was administered by an Official Trustee. All Northland communities are vehemently opposed to joining neighboring school jurisdictions. In the past, some communities have had the experience of belonging to neighboring school jurisdictions, and found the arrangement unacceptable. Those that did, also report that those school jurisdictions did little to involve the community in the education of their children.*

**7.2 Reciprocal Tuition  
Agreements**

Alberta Learning and provincial school jurisdictions should support all Metis students that wish to attend First Nation schools by providing First Nation schools with provincial student grants to educate those students.

***Rationale***

*Some Metis parents choose to send their children to First Nation schools. Metis people indicate that they should have that choice and that the province should take responsibility for funding those students. Although Alberta Learning recently introduced a regulation that allows school jurisdictions to collect instructional grants on behalf of those students and pass the grants on to the First Nation School Authorities. However, many school jurisdictions are not cooperating with First Nations with such an arrangement. A policy mandating school jurisdictions to meet such requests is required.*

## **8.0 TO FOSTER A GREATER APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING BY ALL ALBERTANS OF METIS, FIRST NATION AND INUIT PEOPLE.**

### **8.1 What students should learn?**

Alberta Learning should provide opportunities for all students in elementary and junior high schools to learn about the histories and cultures of Metis and First Nation people in the social studies curriculum.

Aboriginal Studies 10 should be a mandatory course for all high school students.

#### ***Rationale***

*Most students graduating from high school, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, know little about the first people of this country; nor do they know and appreciate the Metis people who played a significant role in the development of Canada. Given the fact that both cultures are here to stay, all Canadians should have a basic knowledge and understanding Aboriginal cultures and lifestyles, their histories, and the special rights accorded to them.*

### **8.2 Content in Programs of Studies**

Alberta Learning should ensure that Metis history and culture, both past and present, is reflected in all subject areas.

#### ***Rationale***

*The study of Metis history and culture should go beyond that of the social studies curriculum. Metis culture is alive and vibrant, and is reflected in our music, art, and dance. All students should have the opportunity to study Metis culture in all its forms. This will lead to a better understanding of our people.*

*Alberta Learning and the Metis Nation should continue to work in partnership in developing the Mitchif language, a form of Cree spoken by Metis people.*

*Metis people should also be involved in the development of all learning resources for and about Metis people.*

#### ***Rationale***

*Metis people who have lived the Metis culture should be involved in the development of learning resources for and about Metis people. For too long, resources about them have been developed by non-Aboriginal people.*

### **8.3 In-service**

Alberta Learning and school jurisdictions should provide a wide range of in-service opportunities to all staff involved in the education of Metis and First Nation people including: teachers, administrators, school board members, students, parents, and all Alberta Learning personnel.

## ***Rationale***

*In order to eliminate discrimination and misconceptions about Metis people, a comprehensive effort will have to be made to educate people about Metis culture and life styles and their contributions to Canadian society.*

## 9.0 POST-SECONDARY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1 Funding

#### 9.1a Metis Development Fund

The Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada should support the Metis Education Foundation that will provide Metis post-secondary students with financial assistance in the form of bursaries, scholarships and loans.

#### *Rationale*

*The Metis Education Foundation has been established. Currently, the Education Fund has assets of \$51,000. A Board of Governors is being established and will be comprised of business leaders, educators and Metis people. The corporate community has given positive indication that it will support the Education Foundation. What is missing, is support of the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada. Government buy-in to the Foundation is essential to its success. Most Metis people live below the Canadian poverty line and families cannot possibly provide financial support for their children to attend post-secondary institutions. Members belonging to First Nation communities can access financial support through policies supported by the federal government. Metis students cannot do so. Until such financial support is forthcoming, Metis people will continue to be under-represented in the work force.*

#### 9.1b Student Upgrading/ Skill Development Program

Alberta Learning and Human Resources and Employment should re-evaluate the current policy with regard to the “Skills Development Program” grants that are aimed at up-grading student academic skills.

The Skill Development Program Grants should not be limited to upgrading and should be extended to support students in career certificate programs.

#### *Rationale*

*Many Metis students and their families do not have the financial resources to continue in a career program after they complete upgrading. To continue, students have to rely on student loans and many are reluctant to do so. This is because most adult students have families and their first priority is to their family.*

*The “ready, willing and able” benchmarks that are often used to determine whether students can pursue a career program places the student into a compromising situation. The student may be ready. The student may be willing. However, he might not be able. Often, the student will choose going to work to support the family, rather than go to school.*

#### Administrative Procedures

The administrative procedure in paying students from the Skill Development Program grants should be changed by paying the student at the end of the month, rather than at the beginning of the month as is the current practice.

## ***Rationale***

*The practice of paying students at the beginning of the month works against the student. One reason is that it is contrary to the normal practice of being paid by any employer in this province. The practice also does little to encourage attendance.*

*The Skills Development Program grant guidelines should recognize northern variables, which adds to the cost for those students coming from northern communities. Variables include such items as travel, moving, etc.*

### **9.1c Apprenticeship**

Alberta Learning should support a pre-apprenticeship employment program for Metis and students that live in the more isolated northern communities.

## ***Rationale***

*The apprenticeship program has never taken into account cultural differences or life-styles of Metis and First Nation peoples. The program was designed to serve the needs of non-Native students in the central and southern parts of the province. It is a program that is not well suited to serve Aboriginal people who have to move and live in downtown Edmonton. It should be also recognized that Aboriginal people have far greater difficulty in getting hired by non-Aboriginal employers. A pre-employment apprenticeship program would greatly improve the chances of employment.*

### **9.1d High School Student Eligibility**

Alberta Learning should re-evaluate and change its policy to eliminate the required one-year waiting period for high school students in northern communities that are accessing adult upgrading courses and programs and wish to continue with college programs once they reach the age of nineteen.

## ***Rationale***

*There are many instances in Northern Alberta communities where high school students are permitted to enroll in post-secondary adult courses because the student does not fit in the regular high school program. In many instances, this practice works well and at the same time keeps the student in school. However, current policy is that students must wait one year before they can enroll in a post-secondary institution when they reach the age of nineteen. Often, the one-year waiting period has a negative outcome on a student's return to school.*

## **9.2 Admission Procedures**

### **9.2a Application Forms**

Post-secondary institutions should re-evaluate the current complex procedures and application forms for admitting students to their institutions.

## ***Rationale***

*It was reported by both students and college staffs that current application forms and procedures in place are difficult for a third year university or college student. The process is painstakingly difficult and requires a great deal of time. Many Metis do not have the skills to go through the process and often abandon their career goals.*

### **9.2b Student Assessment**

Alberta Learning should introduce a policy that would require pre-screening of potential candidates before they are accepted to a college program.

## ***Rationale***

*Each year, post-secondary institutions accept candidates that are not ready for further study. Some of these students are learning disabled and cannot cope with programs they enroll in. Others are in need of health related aids such as eyeglasses, hearing aids etc.*

## **9.3 Ear-Marked Funding-Support Services**

### **9.3a Liaison workers**

Post-secondary institutions should provide adequate human resource support services to assist Metis students that come from the more remote northern communities to adjust to a new environment.

## ***Rationale***

*Post-secondary institutions are to be commended for employing Aboriginal counselors and liaison workers to assist students at colleges and universities. However, there is a need to provide more assistance to those students that are having difficulties with everyday living.*

### **9.3b Day Care**

Alberta Learning, and post-secondary institutions must work in partnership with other Alberta government departments and agencies to provide support for pre-school aged children of parents enrolled in post-secondary programs.

## ***Rationale***

*Many Metis students returning to pursue a post-secondary education are single parent families. Baby sitting is a great concern of these parents. Financial resources are limited and many students are forced to quit because of a lack of support.*

### **9.3c Addictions Counselors**

Post-secondary institutions should provide the services of an addictions counselor for those students that have problems with addictions.

### **9.3d Tutoring**

Metis and first Nation students should have access to tutorial services to increase graduation success rates.

## ***Rationale***

*Many Metis students do not achieve the academic standards in the K-12 school program. As a result, those students that are admitted to colleges and universities are in need of assistance in order to bring them up to the average standards. Tutorial services would help increase student success.*

**9.3e Elder in Residence**

Post-secondary institutions should strive to establish an “Elder in Residence” program to provide counseling support to Metis and other Aboriginal students.

***Rationale***

*Elders are revered and respected in the Metis and First Nation communities. Elders are regarded as the cultural teachers. The Elder program would provide students with another vehicle of support in their daily lives.*

**9.3f Integrated Services  
Alberta for Students**

Alberta Learning should implement an “Integrated Services for Students Initiative” that would parallel the current “Integrated Services for Children” initiative at the K-12 level.

***Rationale***

*Many of the problems that post-secondary Metis students face is similar to those of the K-12 students. Likewise, the issues facing students are not the responsibility of only one department. The issues cut across several departments and an integrated approach is required to solve them.*

**9.3g Transitional Programs**

Post-secondary institutions serving the more remote northern communities should introduce and implement a “Transition Program”, where students receive the support of a community worker in making the adjustment from living in a small northern community to that of the larger community where the school is located.

***Rationale***

*Many students from Metis communities have a difficult time in adjusting to a new environment and way of life in the city. Those students do not have family in the city to offer support and assistance in making that transition. Community liaison workers should be assigned to assist students in adapting to the new environment.*

## **9.4 Teacher Training**

### **9.4a Native Teacher Education Program**

Alberta Learning should work with universities to increase the number of teachers of Metis ancestry, by supporting an on and off-campus Aboriginal Teacher Education Program to serve Metis and First Nation communities in Alberta.

#### ***Rationale***

*Alberta is the only province that does not offer an Aboriginal Teacher Training Program. Saskatchewan has three, one each in Regina, Saskatoon and LaRonge. The number of Metis and First Nation graduate teachers in Saskatchewan far exceeds the number of graduates in Alberta.*

*In view of the large Metis population in this province, it appears that a similar teacher-training program is essential if Aboriginal people are to move ahead in today's society*

Alberta Learning should provide incentives to post-secondary educational institutions to increase the number of Metis and First Nation people entering the teaching profession and conducting research in those institutions.

#### ***Rationale***

*The practice of hiring Metis and First Nation people as teachers, instructors, professors and researchers has largely been confined to those programs dealing with Aboriginal studies. Aboriginal people should have the opportunity to teach and conduct research in all faculties.*

### **9.4b Pre-service of Teachers**

Alberta Learning should mandate that all teacher education programs include courses of study in Aboriginal Studies.

#### ***Rationale***

*Given the increasing numbers of Metis and First Nation students attending provincial and First Nation schools, virtually every teacher will come into contact with Metis and First Nation children. A basic understanding of Aboriginal culture will better equip teachers to teach Aboriginal students.*

### **9.4c In-service of Teachers**

Alberta Learning, The Alberta Teachers' Association, provincial school jurisdictions, colleges and universities should work in partnership to provide on-going professional development opportunities for all teachers teaching Aboriginal students. An Aboriginal Consortium in partnership with The Alberta Teachers Association should be considered as a vehicle to provide this service to all educational institutions in the province.

#### ***Rationale***

*The lack of teacher and instructor awareness of Aboriginal people, culture and life-styles was one of the major issues identified by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The issue was common to both K-12 and post-secondary schools. In order to improve the quality of instruction, all teachers and college teaching staff should have a greater awareness Metis and First Nation people.*

#### **9.4d Computer Literacy**

Alberta Learning in partnership with universities and colleges should revise teacher certification requirements to include computer literacy courses as part of the B. Ed. Degree program.

School jurisdictions should include technology integration planning into their regular program in their Three-Year Business Plan.

#### ***Rationale***

*Computer technology is the wave of the future. However, in Metis communities throughout Alberta, computer technology is not part of a way of life as it is in most non-Aboriginal homes. Current research indicates that the computer is not only a tool that can increase knowledge and understanding of the world, but that it can be used as an effective teaching instrument. Teachers should be able to use computer software programs to increase competencies in the teaching of basic skills.*

#### **9.5 Partnerships**

##### **9.5a Decision-Making**

Alberta Learning should establish a post-secondary Aboriginal Advisory Committee to assist the department with policy and implementation initiatives at the post-secondary level.

#### ***Rationale***

*Post-secondary institutions have not done a good job in graduating Metis and First Nation students. This in part, is due to a lack of effort on the part of universities and colleges to address the problems Aboriginal students face in pursuing a post-secondary education. An Aboriginal Advisory Committee to the department may help in solving some of the obstacles.*

##### **9.5b Metis Education Resource Center Institute**

The Government of Alberta, Alberta Learning and the federal government should work in partnership with the Metis Nation in establishing a Metis Educational and Cultural Institute governed by Metis people and would deliver programs to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, as well as conduct research.

The Government of Alberta should support the concept of an Aboriginal curriculum resource centre to conduct research.

#### ***Rationale***

*The Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan is a Metis run and controlled educational institution that works in partnerships with the University of Saskatchewan, public and Catholic schools and other educational institutions in the delivery of programs for and about Metis people. It is funded jointly by the provincial and federal governments. The institute provides the Metis people of Saskatchewan with a vehicle to become fully involved in the education of Metis and non-Metis people.*

*The resource center would, for the first time in Alberta, be able to conduct research on issues affecting Metis people by Metis educators and scholars. For too long, non-Metis scholars with a non-Metis perspective have conducted research on Metis people. It is time that such research be conducted by Metis people for Metis people.*

### **9.5c Integrating Delivery**

School jurisdictions and colleges in northern Alberta should work in partnership in sharing teachers to deliver teaching services to K-12 and post-secondary students.

#### ***Rationale***

*The sharing of staff between the K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions is one area that should be considered. There are many small K-12 schools in northern Alberta, where staffing can be problematic. Likewise, some of the colleges have difficulty in recruiting staff with expertise in certain curriculum areas. It makes imminent sense for both parties to plan and share teaching and paraprofessional staff to meet student needs in both institutions. It would not only be cost-effective, but would provide more alternatives in the delivery of specific curricula, programs and services.*

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# **RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT**

## **1. Government of Alberta**

*It is recommended:*

### **Recognition of Rights**

- That on the basis of the Constitution Act of 1982 (Section 35), the Government of Alberta acknowledge and recognize the people of the Metis Nation of Alberta as a distinct cultural Aboriginal group with special rights, including those of self-determination and self-government.

### **Policy Review Process**

- That all provincial government departments that are involved or shall be involved in proposing and developing legislation and policies affecting Metis people, adopt the consultation process model established by Alberta Learning for the Provincial Native Education Policy Review.

### **Policy Validation**

- That Alberta Learning continue to involve the Metis people of Alberta in formulating and validating all policy recommendations that will be submitted to the Minister of Learning.
- That Alberta Learning approve the continuation and completion of the Native Education Policy Review as one of the initiatives to be funded under the Framework Agreement between the Metis Nation of Alberta and the Government of Alberta.
- The Alberta Learning provide the Metis people of Alberta with opportunities to validate all Native Education policies approved by the Minister of Learning, before they become official government policy.

### **Department Structures**

- That the Government of Alberta establish a separate branch within Alberta Learning to work with school boards, post-secondary institutions, Metis and First Nation and other Aboriginal people to implement the new policy directions, as a result of this review.
- That Alberta Learning establish an Aboriginal Education Advocates Office, to assist Metis, First Nation and other Aboriginal people in dealing with Alberta Learning, school jurisdictions and other government agencies involved in the education of Aboriginal people.

### **Funding Programs and Services**

- That Alberta Learning increase the grades K-12 Native Education Grants to school jurisdictions on a per-Aboriginal student count, in order that the policy recommendations identified in this report can be implemented.
- That Alberta Learning establish a per-Aboriginal student funding formula at the post-secondary level, so that post-secondary institutions can implement many of the recommendations contained in this report.

## **1. Governments of Alberta/Canada**

*It is recommended:*

### **Metis Education Institute**

- That the Government of Alberta addresses the proposed Metis Education and Cultural Institute by funding it and by providing the necessary legislation, should it be required.
- That the Government of Alberta in partnership with the Metis Nation of Alberta negotiate a tripartite funding arrangement with the federal government to fund the Metis Education and **Cultural Institute**.

### **Metis Education Foundation**

- That the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada become participating partners with Corporate Alberta in providing financial support to the established Metis Education Foundation, designed to provide Metis post-secondary students with bursaries, scholarships and loans, in order to improve the education standards of Metis students.

## **IMPLEMENTATION/MONITORING RECOMMENDATIONS**

*It is recommended that:*

- Alberta Learning utilize a representative of the Metis Nation of Alberta in assisting with implementation of Native education policy initiatives.
- The Metis Nation of Alberta through it's Regional Councils and member Metis Locals play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the New Native Education Policy at the local to ensure that Metis people's concerns are being addressed.

**METIS NATION OF ALBERTA  
ASSOCIATION  
PROGRESS REPORT  
NATIVE EDUCATION POLICY  
REVIEW  
CONSULTATIONS**

Zone III Regional Council:

Medicine Hat Local #8  
Red Deer Local #84  
Rocky Mountain House Local #845  
Stettler Local #492  
Calgary Local #87  
Lethbrige/Pincher Creek Local #2003  
Foothills Local #333

Zone IV Regional Council:

Edmonton Local #97  
Edmonton Local #1888  
Edmonton Local #1928  
Edmonton Local 1886  
Edmonton Local 1885  
Edmonton Local #2085  
St. Albert Local #2359  
Grande Cache Local #1994  
Battle River Local #94  
Hinton Local #474  
Drayton Valley Local #888  
Parkland Local #71  
Blue Ridge Local #167

Zone I Regional Council

Ft. McMurray Locals # 1935 & 2020  
Buffalo Lake  
Lac LaBiche Local #777  
Calling Lake Local 1549  
Elinor Lake Local #111

Metis Nation Locals

Lethbridge/Pincher Creek Local #2003  
Longview/Okatoks Local #333  
Drayton Valley Local#888  
Edmonton Locals # 1928,  
Wetaskiwin

Community Meetings (Follow-up meetings)

Medicine Hat  
Grande Prairie  
Conklin  
Peace River  
Red Deer  
Edson

Athabasca  
Edmonton

Other Meetings  
Grouard AVC  
Keyano College  
Grant McEwan Community College