

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background Information.....	2
Methodology	3
Hiring Researchers	3
Identifying Stakeholders.....	3
Data Collection.....	4
<i>Student Questionnaires</i>	4
<i>Administrator Questionnaire</i>	4
<i>DIAND Questionnaire</i>	4
<i>Educator Questionnaire</i>	5
Data Analysis.....	5
Limitations of Study	6
<i>Time and Money</i>	6
<i>Our Sampling Methods</i>	7
<i>Student Sample & Population Statistics</i>	7
<i>Student Questionnaire</i>	7
Findings	8
Demographics of the Educators, Administrator and Student Samples	8
<i>Demographic Information of the Post-Secondary Educator Sample</i>	8
<i>Funding Administrators</i>	8
<i>Demographic Information of the Student Sample</i>	8
Academic Information of Student Respondents	10
Accessibility	11
Portability & Transferability.....	13
Quality of PSE Programming	14
Student Support Services.....	19
Student Outcome Measures	21
Student Finances.....	22
Current Links between PSE, HRDC and Social Assistance	27
Linking Education and Employment	27
Jurisdiction & Authority	29
<i>Control in the hand of DIAND</i>	29
Recommendations	32
Summary & Conclusions.....	32
Bibliography	
Appendix A: Student Interview Guide	
Appendix B: Administrators of Post Secondary Funding Interview Guide	
Appendix C: DIAND Interview Guide	
Appendix D: Post-Secondary Educator Interview Guide	

Appendix E: Post-secondary Education and First Nations: The Perspective from First Nations Educational Institutions

Appendix F: Post-secondary Review: Treaty 7 Tribal Council

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years Alberta First Nations have been demanding funds to conduct research that

- a) examines the adequacy of our Indian Student Support Program (ISSP) as well as
- b) investigates the quality of education our students receive through their Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Programs.

To a certain extent, our demands came to fruition in 1999 when studies to examine the education of First Nations were being organized and undertaken by three independent bodies: the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND), and Alberta Learning.

It then became crucial that First Nations from Treaty 6, 7, and 8 maintained control over each of these projects at the regional and local levels. To that end, an ad hoc committee selected by Treaty areas 6, 7 and 8 chose the First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC¹) to act on their behalf. FNAHEC then sought to assume control over each of these projects and amalgamate them into one that could respond to First Nation research questions, needs and goals.

Assembly of First Nations Research

In the late 1990s, the Chiefs in Assembly mandated AFN to undertake a national review. The AFN received direction to conduct a thorough examination of the Post Secondary Education Policy (PSEP), the Post Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the Indian Student Support Program (ISSP) managed by DIAND. The purpose of the national AFN review was as follows:

- To assess the effectiveness of the PSEP, PSSSP and ISSP in relation to quality of programming, accessibility, equity, portability, transferability, and accountability for the distribution of program resources;
- To make recommendations on the improvement of services, program development, resourcing levels and methodologies that best accommodate the needs of First Nations; and
- To identify strategies for implementing and resourcing program and institutional improvements.

DIAND Research

In the fall of 1999, FNAHEC discovered that in our area DIAND was conducting its own independent research study of post-secondary education. We met with DIAND in mid-October to discuss whether we could assume control over their study and link it with our work with the AFN. This way, we could accumulate sufficient financial resources to ensure Treaty 6, 7 and 8 could assume meaningful control over both the DIAND and AFN research studies.

Alberta Learning Research

At the same time as we were negotiating with DIAND, we realized that Alberta Learning was also undertaking a study of the education of “Aboriginals”. While their research dealt with First Nations, Inuit, Metis and other persons of Aboriginal descent, FNAHEC sought to take control over

¹ FNAHEC was founded in 1997 with the mandate of providing adult and higher education as defined and controlled by First Nation people. Its members include all eight First Nation controlled post-secondary institutions in Alberta.

those aspects of their post-secondary research that affect our Nations. Their goals that directly relate to post-secondary education are as follows:

- To improve First Nation learner success in post-secondary institutions;
- To strengthen partnerships and relationships between First Nation people, post-secondary institutions, apprenticeship providers, vocational skills and government; and
- To foster greater appreciation and understanding by all Albertans of First Nation people.

We felt that by being included in their study, we would be able to access information that would not be available to us through the AFN study. However, we have had some difficulties gathering all of our ‘educator’ data. Unfortunately, not all of the information we hoped to include in this report is available for this submission.

FNAHEC Research

FNAHEC received support from our leaders within each treaty area as well as by the federal and provincial governments to take control of these initiatives. In large part, this document focuses on those aspects of our research that pertain directly Alberta Learning goals and objectives.

METHODOLOGY

Continuing the tradition of community control, much time and effort has been devoted to ensuring as many people from our respective treaty areas participate. FNAHEC sought the input and direction of First Nation funding administrators and students from each of our treaty areas throughout our research process. This included, but was not limited to:

- ☑ creating questionnaires which addressed identified research questions in our areas;
- ☑ having representatives from each of our Treaty areas hire their own local researcher;
- ☑ encouraging as many stakeholders (students, funding administrators, educators as well as Alberta Learning and DIAND representatives) as possible to respond to our questionnaires; and
- ☑ holding workshops for the funding administrators to assist first in questionnaire development and again in the interpretation of results and creation of recommendations on the basis of findings.

Hiring Researchers

In October of 1999, the research coordinator from Alberta and the researcher for Treaty 7 were hired. Representatives of Treaty areas 6 and 8 chose a researcher from their respective treaty areas in November.

Identifying Stakeholders

In Alberta region, we decided to target four key stakeholders: First Nation students, their educators, their funding administrators and representatives from the DIAND, federal government branch responsible for distributing funding to the region. Considering time and funding constraints, the researchers felt it necessary to create and distribute questionnaires to as many persons from each of these target populations as possible using purposive rather than random sampling.

Data Collection

Student Questionnaires

Student questionnaires were circulated in each of treaty areas 6, 7 and 8 commencing in early November in Treaty 7 and in late November for Treaty 6 and 8 (as their researchers had not been hired by their respective treaty areas until then.)

Administrators from each of the treaty areas received drafts of student questionnaires with requests for feedback prior to them being pilot tested by researchers from each of the treaty areas in the beginning of November. Once feedback was received and the draft modified, each researcher was given the responsibility of conducting the pilot study in their treaty area to ensure questions reflected the local needs.

Researchers from Treaty 6 and 8 chose to go to the various educational institutions and do face-to-face interviews with the student population. They advertised their presence and made arrangements with key people to meet in areas the students frequented or to receive permission to attend their classes and hand out the questionnaires. These researchers chose to interview all First Nation members attending that institution, although their primary focus has been members of their own treaty areas. In addition, some post-secondary administrators of funding indicated their support of the project by mailing out questionnaires to all of the students they finance.

The researcher from Treaty 8 made arrangements with the administrators in her area to mail out questionnaires to 100% of the student population they financed. The researcher provided the administrators with the questionnaires, which they mailed out in early to mid-December.

Administrator Questionnaire

In mid-December we held a two-day workshop in Edmonton for administrators of PSE funding designed to receive input from the administrators regarding what content they want included in the questionnaires and have the administrators complete the questionnaires they helped design. At that time, revised questionnaires were circulated amongst all of the funding administrators who were present. Unfortunately, most administrators did not have access to all of the statistical information we requested so many returned home with their questionnaires and the promise of submitting their completed copies in early January. In mid-December, shortly after the workshop ended, questionnaires were faxed to all of the funding administrators who were unable to attend.

In February we held another two-day workshop in Edmonton for administrators of PSE funding, this time to

- a) review the results;
- b) identify further analyses to be completed;
- c) seek input regarding the interpretation of results;
- d) establish recommendations on the basis of results; and
- e) identify what to highlight in the final report to ensure local relevancy is maintained.

DIAND Questionnaire

One key DIAND representative completed the government questionnaire. As Manager of Strategic Planning, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations, this person deals with all of the post-secondary funding administrators in Alberta and has done so for the past four years. Unfortunately, he was not able to obtain all of the statistics we requested within this timeframe.

Educator Questionnaire

The educator questionnaire was circulated to people from First Nations institutes and non-First Nation colleges and universities that our post-secondary students attend. Potential respondents were chosen for one of three reasons:

- a) the person may have been recommended by a First Nation student or funding administrator;
- b) the person, program, or faculty was known to deal with many First Nation students; or
- c) the person sat on the Alberta Learning advisory committee to review Native Education policy.

Unfortunately, as a result of that process only four persons returned their completed questionnaire.

Additional information was to be gathered during community meetings organized by Alberta Learning in February and March 2000. The research coordinator attended two meetings in both Edmonton and Calgary as well as one in Red Deer. Unfortunately, discussion at these meetings primarily concerned K – 12 rather than post-secondary issues. The researcher then discovered that the college and university presidents had instead arranged private meetings with the researcher from Alberta Learning, meetings to which our coordinator was not invited.

Given the lack of information gathered from the educators using these two methods, in March and April our research coordinator attempted to gain the input of educators once again. This time she contacted the presidents and chairs of the boards of all post-secondary institutions in Alberta directly with the request that they complete the questionnaire and ask that other members of their staff do the same.

Data Analysis

Information from each of the questionnaires was entered and analyzed by Microsoft Excel, using the StatPlus package. Frequency analyses were done on all close-ended questions. Researchers from Treaty 6, 7, and 8 worked with the Research Coordinator to qualitatively analyze the open-ended questions into thematic clusters. The results of these analyses were presented to our funding administrators in a two-day workshop in February 2000. The funding administrators identified further analyses for the researchers to conduct, including several cross-tabulations. Many of these cross-tabulations were completed during the two-day workshop, with results immediately available to the administrators. Administrators and researchers openly discussed the findings, interpreted the findings, and made recommendations on the basis of results. Information from these discussions was incorporated into the body of this document.

Given the lateness of the Educator submissions, and the promise by more post-secondary institutions that they will complete their questionnaires within the next few weeks, the FNAHEC researcher was unable to complete her analysis of the educator data prior to the Alberta Learning deadline for this draft. However, First Nations have a right to know how much money universities and colleges access on their behalf (e.g., through ISSP dollars, ACCESS grants, tuition fees), track how the PSE institutes spend this money, and receive evidence of how the services and programs provided to First Nations benefit our people. Treaty 6, 7 and 8 First Nations perceive the input of our educators to be vital in our goal of improving the quality of education provided to First Nations across the country. Therefore, the information provided by the educators will be incorporated into the final draft of this report, possibly as soon as June 1, 2000. At this point, however, our paper simply reflects the opinions and ideas of our First Nation students and funding administrators as well as those of the DIAND representative.

Limitations of Study

Time and Money

There were several limits to our study. First and foremost, extremely limited funding and the three-month timeframe to complete the study (extended, by necessity, from our deadline of March 31st to June 1st) made it extremely difficult to conduct the thorough, in-depth research demanded by our students and our educational leaders. First Nation educators, students and funding administrators from our region had been requesting research be conducted for many years. They had specific questions they wanted answered, necessitating the inclusion of questions above and beyond those which would fulfil the mandate of the AFN, DIAND or Alberta Learning. Much research time was devoted to creating questionnaires for each target population that would ensure relevancy to our local First Nation students and funding administrators. This time, though well spent, narrowed the small time interval researchers had to circulate and receive completed questionnaires. Our researchers also had to seek permission from the various post-secondary institutions or from the funding administrators in their area before they approached our students with the research.

In Treaty 8, our researcher was faced with yet another barrier: geographic distance. Unable to travel extensively with our limited budget, she sought the assistance of Treaty 8 Tribal Councils and funding administrators. However, they were unable to provide her with a list of students they sponsor. To avoid compromising the students' right to privacy, she provided each funding administrator with the questionnaires, envelopes and stamps, which they, in turn, forwarded to their students. She had no control over when the questionnaires would be mailed. In some cases, mailing occurred in early to mid-December.

Even with assistance from our Tribal Councils, funding administrators, and educators from various post-secondary institutions, it was easy to predict our researchers would have a difficult time getting feedback from our student populations. During the time that our researchers were requesting that students complete our questionnaires, the students were nearing the end of their semester. Faced with deadlines for major papers and final exams, it was difficult for many students to take the time to complete our questionnaires. Unfortunately, we received many student questionnaires in late February after we conducted the analyses. (While these questionnaires could not be included in these analyses, they have been retained in case further analyses will be completed at a later date.)

We had much the same problem with our funding administrator, educator and government questionnaires. All of these people found it very difficult to complete our questionnaires in the limited timeframe available. Three administrator questionnaires could not be included because they were sent after the analyses were complete. Many administrators indicated they could have provided more in-depth statistics had more time been granted and had they the adequate program resources to allocate staff to this task. Even the DIAND official had difficulty gathering the requested statistical information within this tight deadline. And, of course, the task of receiving information from our educators proved to be virtually impossible, necessitating repeated requests for submission and resulting in analysis of this questionnaire being postponed until a later date.

Our Sampling Methods

One hundred percent of the funding administrators received an opportunity to respond to their questionnaire and participate at all levels of the research. Presidents and chairs of the boards of every post-secondary institution in Alberta were also invited by mail, e-mail, or fax to complete a questionnaire (sometimes repeatedly).

The DIAND representative with whom we negotiated funding determined that only he would submit a questionnaire on behalf of his federal department.

We used convenience, not random sampling, to gather information from our First Nation students. Our choice in sampling method for our students was due, in part, to our limited timeframe for completion and our limited funding.

Student Sample & Population Statistics

Many factors impeded our ability to access and adequately compare our student sample with population statistics. First and foremost of concern was the fact that it was impossible to obtain an exact population count of our post-secondary students, thereby putting in question our estimate of percentage of population sampled. Not all of the funding administrators responded to their questionnaire, and of those that did complete it, very few provided population statistics for the 1999-2000 sponsored students. DIAND only submitted population statistics for the students enrolled in the 1999-2000. No demographic information was available for them, forcing researchers to compare the information provided by our student respondents with the government demographics of a year earlier cited in their ***Overview of DIAND Program Data: IMB/CIMB August 1999 Report***. At the February workshop, funding administrators who were present identified possible incongruency in the numbers cited by DIAND. (They felt the government numbers cited were too high, due, in part, to the fact that government statistics reflect the student count near the beginning of semester, not the end, at which time the study was conducted.)

Secondly, all of the numbers we do cite are a reflection of the First Nation students who were studying in Alberta and who received some funding through the PSSSP program. Researchers at the regional and national level never resolved how to identify those First Nation students who were attending post-secondary without sponsorship. Similarly, there was no way to find out how many students who did not (and would never) meet DIAND eligibility requirements (e.g., not on band membership list; entered ineligible program) and their post-secondary status.

Finally, our ability to quickly access our student population was impeded by legislation protecting our students' right to privacy which prevented funding administrators from releasing names, addresses and telephone numbers of the students they sponsor. Thus, our researchers from Treaty areas 6 and 7 had to rely on random encounters with First Nation students at their post-secondary institutions. Our researcher from Treaty 8 had to rely on funding administrators to mail out her questionnaires as face-to-face encounters were impossible (or improbable as well as extremely costly) due to great geographic distance.

Student Questionnaire

One problem with the wording stuck out like a sore thumb once data analysis was underway. Question 6 of the Student Questionnaire should have been phrased in line with funding policy (e.g., married with dependent spouse, married with employed spouse, single with dependents). The current wording made it impossible to do some of the more in-depth comparisons

requested by funding administrators. It is highly recommended that the wording for this question be changed to reflect current policy if used again for further research.

FINDINGS

Demographics of the Educators, Administrator and Student Samples

Demographic Information of the Post-Secondary Educator Sample

FNAHEC received responses from staff of seventeen post-secondary institutions. Thirteen of the mainstream colleges and universities around the province submitted one questionnaire on behalf of their institution with another institution forwarding two. Three out of four of the First Nations controlled PSE institutions also completed surveys.

Ten of the institutions indicated they provided U.C.E.P., college and university transfer programs to First Nation students. Two only provide college programs. Another two provide only university programs and two provide a combination of college and university programs.

Responsibility for completing questionnaires tended to lie with a group of staff from an institution rather than by a sole individual. Six of the respondents indicated they were of First Nation descent.

Funding Administrators

In all, fifteen funding bodies responded to this questionnaire. Three (of 14) represented funding bodies from Treaty 6, 5 (of 5) were from Treaty 7 and 3 (of 13) were from Treaty 8. One respondent represented Bill C-31 students from the respective treaty areas. The funding bodies acted as the following:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (5) Chief and Council Committees | (2) First Nation Institute |
| (2) Elected Educational Authorities | (1) INAC Contractor |
| (2) Chief and Council | |

Of these, 12 had modified DIAND's PSE policies and 7 (of 13) had changed DIAND's UCEP (University and College Entrance Preparation Program) policies.

Nine respondents identified themselves as Coordinators, Directors or Administrators of the program. One was a College President. Four were Counselors: two Student and two Academic. One considered herself a Funding Officer. Twelve (86%) indicated they were First Nations.

Demographic Information of the Student Sample

In total, 431 students responded to our questionnaires. Almost 40% (170) were from Treaty 6; 36% (154) indicated they were from Treaty 7; and another 18% (76) were from Treaty 8. According to DIAND statistics² for this academic year, there were 1337 PSE students from Treaty 6, 885 from Treaty 7, and 705 from Treaty 8 sponsored through PSSSP (Post-Secondary Student Support Program³). These statistics were used to arrive at the percentage of the student population

² Population statistics are taken from *PSIS 1999/2000*. All other DIAND statistics cited in this section can be found in the *Overview of DIAND Program Data, IMB/CIMD, August 1999 Report*. All DIAND "opinions" or "recommendations" cited in our document were provided by one DIAND official from Alberta region in their DIAND questionnaire.

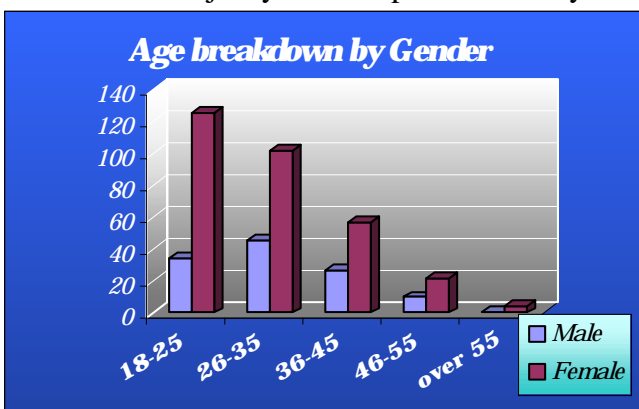
³ At this point, it becomes clear that, for those readers who are not aware of this program, it is crucial that we provide some background. PSSSP is a program set up by the federal government as a means of carrying out its fiduciary

sampled in this study: Treaty 6: 13%; Treaty 7: 17%; and Treaty 8: 11%. The remaining 31 students surveyed came from other treaty areas or did not identify their treaty area.

First Nation funding administrators estimate the population of PSE students sponsored in their areas to be much lower for the 1999-2000 academic year. For example, Tribal Councils from Treaty 8 indicated there were 478 students attending PSE full-time in 1999-2000, excluding those in UCEP, the University and College Entrance Preparation program. This means that 16% of the population from Treaty 8 responded to this questionnaire, rather than the 11% cited above. However, only four administrators⁴ from Treaty 6, 7 and 8 provided information regarding numbers of students sponsored for the 1995-96 academic year, 5 provided statistics for 1996-97 and 7 gave numbers for 1997-98 and 1998-99, leaving population estimates from this source impossible. All three First Nation post-secondary institutions were able to provide these statistics; however only three of the seventeen mainstream institutions carried such information pertaining to their “Aboriginal” students⁵.

Over 39% of the student responding to our survey ranged in age from 18 to 25, with an additional 33% between the ages of 26 and 35 and 20% from 36 and 45. Only four people indicated they were over 55 years of age. DIAND statistics from 1998-99 reflects this skew toward youthfulness, identifying 34% within the 18 to 24 age group, 20% from 25 to 29 and the remainder over 30 years of age. Half of the administrators and seven of the educator respondents feel the average age of entry has decreased over the last decade. Nevertheless, three educators pointed out that the “Aboriginal” population has a higher proportion of mature students than the rest of the student body.

The majority of our post-secondary student respondents (72%) were females. This also



approximates population statistics cited by DIAND that indicate 1993 of 2839 (or 70%) of all First Nation students sponsored in 1997-98 were females. Nevertheless, some funding administrators and educators believe there are more male students than ten years ago. When gender and age of students are examined together, it becomes readily apparent that there are many more young women entering our post-secondary institutions than men. As the chart to the left indicates, there are higher numbers of females than males at all age levels who are

obligation to First Nations. While our treaty right to education guarantees all First Nations the right to receive an education, this program falls short of meeting its obligations. For example, in the last decade, when more and more First Nations are seeking to further their studies, DIAND capped the funding for the program. In addition, in 1989 the federal government unilaterally narrowed its definition of what “rights” PSSSP would cover. To a great extent, we argue in the body of this paper, PSSSP policies (including the program’s eligibility requirements, its restrictions regarding where one can study and for how long, and the amount students are eligible to receive) greatly impact how well our students do, what levels of achievement they obtain, and, at times, even what courses they enroll in.

⁴ Administrators who did not respond to the statistics requested in the Outcomes & Impact section of their questionnaire indicated that this information was not readily available and they lacked the time and resources to dedicate to the analysis of information. At their December workshop they suggested that DIAND provide these statistics at the macro level for two reasons: (a) DIAND has this information as all administrative bodies are required to submit it to them; and (b) they have more resources to dedicate to this task. The request was made to DIAND, but the DIAND official never submitted the information, citing the same reasons as the administrators.

⁵ These mainstream post-secondary institutions indicated they had students self-identify as “Aboriginal,” a term which reflected “Metis, Inuit, status Indian or non-status Indian.” No separate categorization was maintained.

sponsored. Two educators also reported having a higher ratio of females to males at their institution.

Almost half (203) of our student respondents indicated they were married or in common-law relationships. Another 184 indicated they were single. Of the remaining 10%, 19 students were separated, 11 were divorced and 9 widowed. Some funding administrators indicated there appeared to be more single students than a decade ago.

Two hundred and eighty-four (66%) of our students had at least one dependent living with them. Seventy-six had one dependent. Ninety-one had two. An additional 61 had three dependents and 62 indicated they had four or more dependents living in their household. Of these, 105 (37%) had one preschooler. Thirty-two (11%) had two preschoolers, and 8 (3%) had three or more preschoolers living with them. Familial responsibilities for many of our students are further compounded by the fact that they are in single parent households. One educator also remarked that there were more First Nation students who were single parents than reflected in the general student body. Obviously almost two-thirds of our student population has immediate kinship obligations that they have to meet while they are taking post-secondary education.

Attention must also be given to those of our student population who have a disability. While only 7% (28) of the student sample we interviewed indicated they have a disability, this, we feel, does not (or should not) adequately reflect reality. It is important that we identify and support those members of our Nations who have a disability and who wish to obtain a post-secondary education.

I am diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome. Taking more courses (enrolling as a full-time student) affects the way I perform on courses.

Finally, the researchers felt that identifying where the student lived while they attended post-secondary may also effect their education. Half (209) of our students live in the same city as the post-secondary institution they attend. It is interesting, however, to note that almost one-third (123) of our student respondents live on reserve and travel back and forth to the city to attend classes. An additional 13% (56) live on reserve with the post-secondary courses/institution based on reserve.

The majority (64%) use a car to get to and from class. Fourteen percent (60) take the bus. Still others use a variety of forms of transportation, including walking, riding their bike, taking the bus, or catching a ride, whatever mode of transportation that is available to them at the time.

For 28% of our students, it takes less than 15 minutes to get to or from class (one way). Forty percent (168) indicated it took them about a half an hour to get to class one way. Almost one-quarter (96) of them travel at least one hour each way, with the remaining 9% (39) travelling one and one half hours or more in either direction. Thus, for many of our students, travelling to and from class takes up a great portion of their school day.

I'm taking a full course load, travelling back and forth from the reserve and have 2 1/2 hours of homework every night.

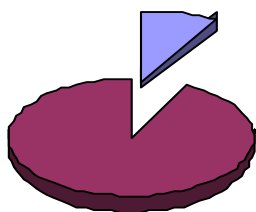
Academic Information of Student Respondents

In this section, we discuss where our First Nation students are pursuing their post-secondary studies, whether they are enrolled in full-time or part-time studies, how many students withdraw from their studies mid-stream, and why. We also take a look at graduation rates at the various levels of PSE studies and how many of our students are finding employment within their field of study.

Approximately half (218 or 51%) of the students sampled attend First Nation controlled post-secondary institutions.

Almost all of those interviewed (393 or 91%) are enrolled as full-time students. This finding is congruent with 1997-98 DIAND statistics in which only 171 out of 2839 (6%) of the total

number of sponsored First Nations are enrolled in part-time studies. According to DIAND, “the percentage of students undertaking full-time studies has remained virtually constant over the past five years, making up about 93% of total enrolment.” (p. 159)



It is interesting to note, as the pie to the left suggests, that having dependent children does not prevent very many of our people from attending full-time. Only 8% (as indicated by the blue wedge) of those with dependents were enrolled part-time in their studies. The hesitation to enroll part-time may be due, in part, to funding restrictions in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSS) Policy which limit sponsorship of part-time students to covering the costs of tuition and books, with no provision for a living allowance.

In reality, 58% (or 18) of those attending part-time indicated they were eligible for less post-secondary funds if they attend part-time. Seventy-four percent (304) felt obliged to take a full course load in order to maximize the financial benefits received. Over half (157 or 53%) agreed that taking more courses negatively affecting their GPA. Students also stated that taking extra courses caused high stress and made it difficult for them to meet family obligations. At times, some students have found that having to carry a full course load has forced them to take classes they didn't really want or which did not apply directly to their career choice. They enrolled simply to meet the requisite number of courses within a schedule that conforms to their needs (e.g., when childcare is available or whatever courses are available at the local institute).

If you don't get enough funding to cover expenses, you have to find work. This pulls the student away from studies, sometimes during crucial times (e.g., employer requires you to work extra hours during pre-exam period when every minute studying has a direct impact on grades). Unfortunately, GPA is everything for anyone with post-graduate dreams or hopes of getting scholarships.

Accessibility

Post-secondary educators were asked a variety of questions reflecting the extent to which they attempt to provide program and services to our First Nation student population. To this end, we requested information pertaining to a) the types of advertising they do in First Nation community, b) the extent to which they provide bridging programs and broker programs to our communities as well as c) their perception of potential barriers which might prevent our student's from entering their institution.

Thirteen educators indicated they provided at least one type of information to First Nation communities. This information ranged from issuing calendars and posters (12), advertising in the local media (3), attending local events such as career fairs (3), doing mass mail-outs (2), hosting a website (2) or annual community meetings (1), and providing tours (1) to sending their Aboriginal students to the communities to promote the college (1). Eleven stated they have promotional material that is specifically targeted to programs and services for First Nation students.

With respect to admissions criteria, seven educators responded that their institution has special provisions within its admissions criteria to increase the number of First Nation students in particular disciplines. First Nation and mainstream PSE institutes indicated they provided remedial classes in reading, writing and math (5), set aside specific numbers of classroom seats for Aboriginal students in designated programs (2), and provided an “unclassified status” (1). One indicated they had an “open-door” policy.

Thirteen of the fifteen educational institutions responding to this question indicated they had bridging programs available to our students, with 11 offering programs specifically designed for them. In addition, thirteen of the institutions brokered programs to First Nation communities (One First Nation PSE institute indicated irrelevancy to this question as they were **part** of the community). They brokered a variety of programs, from short-term skills training to upgrading to certificate and diploma courses with a few offering college and university level courses.

When asked what has worked well or did not work with the bridging courses they offered or the courses they brokered to the communities, educators tended to focus on strengths. These strengths revolved around community ownership (3), “taking the program to the students” (3), offering programs in response to identified needs (4), and adapting curriculum and learning strategies (2). On the other hand, educators pointed out that offering night or summer courses (1), or offering individualized home study did not work. Administrative difficulties such as organizing applications, admissions, and registration (1) or doing accurate placement testing (1) also did not work. One indicated offering “academic upgrading in communities if no supports are available and goals are unclear” is also problematic.

Fourteen of the sixteen respondents indicated there were barriers that limited students’ acceptance into PSE institutions. Twelve identified some academic preparedness as a concern. Two others spoke more generally of rising admission requirements. Three spoke of cultural differences, especially for those students for whom English was a second language as courses are not available in Aboriginal languages. Personal issues, transportation, family and childcare, and having to relocate were also mentioned by one respondent respectively. In contrast to addressing barriers that focused on the student, two educators spoke of the lack of ACCESS programs for Aboriginal people and one discussed the lack of funding available for the development of culturally relevant and community-driven programs within PSE institutions.

Administrators were also asked if there were barriers that prevented students from attending either First Nations or non-First Nations PSE institutes. Twelve (100% of those responding to the question) said yes with respect to First Nations institutes. They cited insufficient institutional funding and recognition, lack of student transportation, familial obligations and a lack of childcare as limiting factors. Eight administrators out of 10 indicated there were barriers that prevented students from attending non-First Nation institutes. Three wrote of the culturally insensitive environment for the student of the non-First Nation institution. Two mentioned the higher cost incurred by the student. Four spoke of the apparent lack of qualifications of some students while another three indicated some students lacked awareness of funding opportunities, requirements and deadlines as preventing some students from accessing either educational institution.

In order to increase the number of First Nation learners enrolled in post-secondary programs, administrators suggest the following actions be undertaken.

Recommend: Organize a national “Stay-in-School” program which promotes retention rates of First Nations students, K – 12.

Recommend: Provide more funds for upgrading.

Recommend: Offer an academic readiness course.

Recommend: Promote post-secondary education within First Nation communities.

Recommend: Offer a “bridging” course to prepare students for the non-First Nation’s educational environment.

Recommend: Offer information to students about career opportunities and study options.

Recommend: Provide funding administrators with dollars for incentive and achievement grants for students attaining high marks during the course of their studies and upon graduation.
Recommend: Support First Nation Colleges financially and through accreditation.
Recommend: Establish bachelor and graduate programs at First Nation controlled institutes.
Recommend: If transportation is a problem at First Nation institutes, offer bus service.
Recommend: Establish role model programs promoting the achievements of prior First Nation graduates.

Portability & Transferability

Eighty-three percent (339) of the students we sampled indicated they were attending the university and program of their choice. Of the 17% who were not in their program/university of choice, some cited reasons similar to the woman's comment cited to the right. Caught between wanting an education from a First Nations institution for herself and for her children, this woman, like many others, finds herself taking a program of study out of the limited course offerings of her local PSE institute.

Under DIAND policy, "post-secondary institutions are required to be recognized by a province. Eligible institutions include those affiliated with other post-secondary institutions. Programs that are not portable often are delivered by institutions that are not

I would like my children to go to Indian schools. Therefore I stay on reserve to go to school. I am a single parent. I cannot afford to save up on a vehicle and, because Red Crow Community College is not affiliated, I cannot get a student loan.

recognized by a provincial or professional authority". (p. 4 of 5, DIAND questionnaire) Thus, a student may only receive funding if the local authority has changed this policy. However, none of the administrators indicated that their PSSSP policy covered all costs in these situations. Nine administrators indicated their local policy covers some portions of the cost. One stated that in cases such as these, the student must cover their own expenses. Two administrators indicated how much of the cost covered varies from situation to situation. According to the half (7) of the administrators, institutional ineligibility is sometimes a barrier to PSSSP funding. Four stated it was rarely a factor. Only one administrator said it was always a barrier to funding. Almost all (89%) of the students surveyed said their program of study was recognized outside their institution.

Three quarters (317) of the student respondents believe their program is transferable (e.g., if they are in a diploma program, the courses they take count toward a more advanced degree program if they decide to continue their studies). Only 31% of the students had attempted to transfer credits from one PSE institute to another. Eight funding administrators agree (with one of them strongly agreeing) that students are able to transfer credits from one institute to another. One holds no opinion. Two disagree and one strongly disagrees. Educators responded similarly: ten strongly agreed, 5 agreed, one had no opinion and 2 disagreed with the statement. By and large, students did not indicate whether they had any problems transferring credits.

We also asked educators if they had articulation agreements or other course transfer arrangements with First Nation post-secondary institutions. Seven indicated they did (Two of these were First Nations PSE, indicating that they had established course transfer agreements with mainstream institutions). When funding administrators were asked if their First Nation institutes encountered any difficulties when seeking to establish course transfer agreements with other PSE institutions, two noted the fact that accredited PSE institutes have stringent requirements and provisions in their transfer agreements. One administrator felt that non-First Nations PSE institutions view First Nations institutes as "competition." Another said it appeared as if the quality of First Nation programming is questioned by non-First Nation PSE institutes. Still another pointed

out that sometimes the First Nation institute is offering a course that isn't readily transferable because there is no other course that exists in non-First Nation country to transfer to.

Recommend: Offer more First Nation courses and programs at non-First Nations institutes.

To ease negotiations between First Nations and non-First Nations controlled PSE institutions regarding in such areas as credit transfer agreements, areas of specialization, developing graduate programs and obtaining accreditation, our educators had the following pieces of advice.

Recommend: Publicly recognize and support First Nation PSE institutes and national accreditation board through legislation,

Recommend: Give First Nation PSE institutions the same status as mainstream colleges and universities.

Quality of PSE Programming

It is not enough for First Nations to celebrate the fact that more of our students are enrolling and completing post-secondary education. First Nations must also examine the extent to which the education students receive meets our students' needs. At the same time, we need to investigate how much their education reflects and promotes First Nations culture, history, language, present circumstances, ways of life and ways of knowing. In this section, we discuss these issues, using the input and opinions of our students and funding administrators as our judge and jury.

Educators were asked if PSE institutions provide quality programs and services to First Nation students. Seven strongly agreed, nine agreed and only one disagreed⁶.

Administrators were asked the similar question but were asked to respond with regard to both First Nations and mainstream institutions as separate sections. Eight administrators agreed this was the case at First Nation institutes. One had no opinion. Four disagreed. Disagreement was associated with the perceived lack of transferability from First Nation colleges to other PSE institutes. Administrators also indicated that the limited funding First Nation institutes receive hinders their ability to provide quality programming and prevents them from hiring the most qualified instructors. As well, they also pointed to the limited range of course offerings our First Nation colleges are able to provide as an underlying rationale for some disagreement with the above statement.

With respect to non-First Nation PSE institutes, 4 administrators agreed that they provide quality programming to First Nations while 9 disagreed. Administrators identified a deficiency in the number of First Nation instructors and administrative staff as one of their underlying reasons for disagreement.

Recommend: Provide First Nation PSE institutes with sufficient funding to ensure they can provide highly qualified instructors as well as increase the services and course offerings they are able to provide to their students.

Recommend: Hire First Nation graduates as instructors and support staff.

We asked students if PSE institutions they attend provide culturally appropriate courses and services that incorporate First Nations languages, traditions, cultures and knowledge. Forty percent (172) of students agreed with an additional 20% indicating they strongly agreed. Twenty-one percent (89) held no opinion. Twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

When we examined whether the student attended a First Nations or non-First Nations

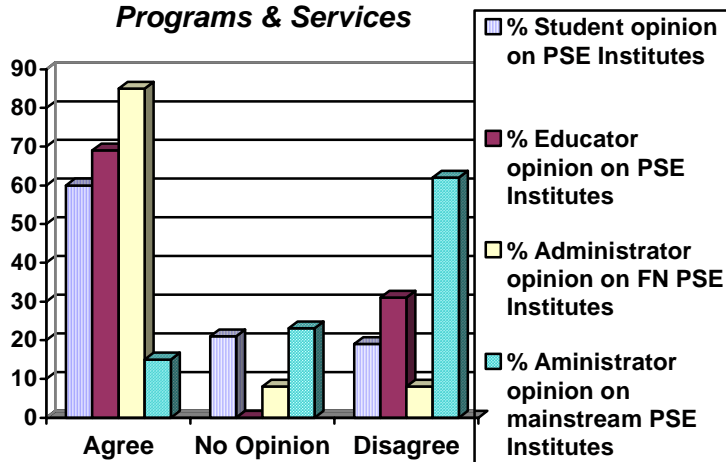
I believe I had lost my culture. Coming here has really helped me make it clear who I am as an Indian and as a person. (Student, First Nation College)

⁶ The person who disagreed was non-First Nations, working in a mainstream institution.

PSE institute with how student opinion on this matter varied, we noticed that students perceive the First Nations institutes as providing more culturally appropriate courses and services than the non-First Nations colleges and universities.

As you can see from the graph to the right, administrators were much more likely to have an opinion. When asked the question with regard to First Nation institutes, 8 agreed, one held no opinion and four disagreed. In contrast, only 4 administrators agreed that non-First Nation colleges and universities provided culturally appropriate courses and services. Nine disagreed.

Perception of Culturally Appropriate Programs & Services



Unfortunately, the graph doesn't fully display the extent to which opinions of educators

Most non-First Nation PSE institutions do not have First Nation staff and do not incorporate particular First Nation epistemology, pedagogy or ontology. (Administrator)

varied with regard to this question. All three educators from the First Nation controlled institutions agreed. However, differences of opinion were clear with educators from mainstream institutions.

Eight educators agreed, two of them strongly, that their PSE institution provides culturally appropriate courses and services that incorporate First Nation languages, traditions, cultures and knowledge. In contrast, five of the educators of mainstream institutions disagreed, four of them strongly. When asked to explain their opinion on the cultural relevance of their institution, six

The college promotes Native classes but the lack of Native representation by employees there makes it hard to incorporate culture. (Student, non-FN institute)

educators indicated they developed courses specific to First Nations culture, e.g., languages. Five said they incorporate Aboriginal content into their curriculum. Others indicated they designed diploma programs specifically to meet the needs of Aboriginal students and communities (1), use qualified Aboriginal instructors whenever possible (1), or consult with First Nation PSE educators and institutes for curriculum development and for guidance (2). One indicated that Aboriginal content is only provided in programs delivered specifically for First Nations and other Aboriginal learners. Only one said their institute made “no concerted effort to introduce and teach Native culture.”

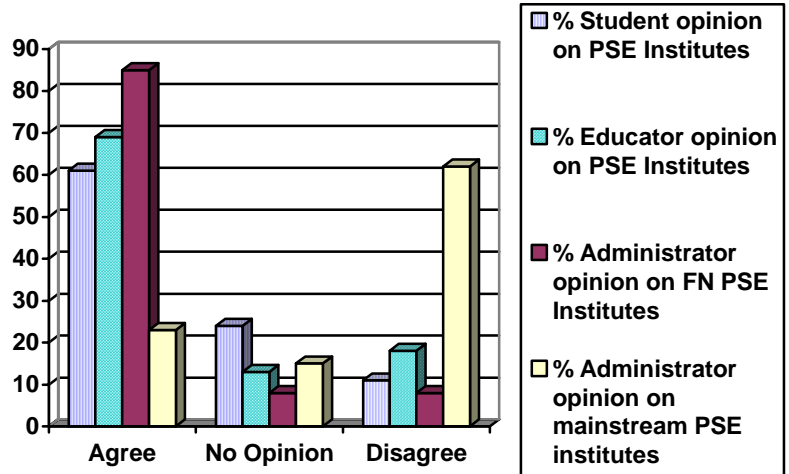
Recommend: Offer Native language instruction and other First Nation culturally specific courses at non-First Nation Colleges and universities too.

Recommend: Hire better instructors and more educated staff at First Nation institutes, preferably with First Nations heritage.

We also asked students if their program of study promoted First Nation participation and involvement. Two hundred forty-nine students agreed, 97 voiced no opinion and 63 disagreed. When we examined whether the student attended a First Nations or non-First Nations PSE institute with how student opinion on this matter varied, we noticed that students attending the First Nations institutes tended to agree (144). Those attending the non-First Nation colleges and universities had more of a mixed reaction, with twice as many agreeing (112) to the statement than disagreeing (49).

Administrators showed a much clearer pattern of responses as you can see in the graph to the right. When asked the question with regard to First Nation institutes, 11 agreed, one didn't have an opinion, and another disagreed. However, only 3 agreed that non-First Nation institutes promoted First Nation participation and involvement. Two indicated no opinion on the subject while 8 disagreed.

Perception of Participation & Involvement



Eleven educators agreed, 2 of them strongly, that their PSE institution promotes First Nation participation and involvement. Two had no opinion while three disagreed. When we asked the extent to which students, leaders, Elders and the community were involved, we received the following pattern of response.

<u>Students</u>	<u>Leaders</u>	<u>Elders</u>	<u>First Nation Community</u>
5 very involved	_2_ very involved	_1_ very involved	_4_ very involved
5 somewhat involved	_5_ somewhat involved	_5_ somewhat involved	_3_ somewhat involved
2 very little	_2_ very little	_4_ very little	_4_ very little
3 not at all	5 not at all	5 not at all	4 not at all

We [First Nation College] are there to provide a service to our community, to assist First Nations in developing our most valuable resource – our members. (FN educator)

People tended to respond similarly to each category. First Nations PSE institutes consistently chose “very” or “somewhat” involved.

Eight of the educators noted that the participation of First Nations had a great impact on the quality of education First Nation students receive. Five others indicated some impact. Four said it improves cultural sensitivity and the ability to meet both student and community needs. Three indicated it fosters student recruitment and retention. One respondent felt even more input was needed from First Nation stakeholders. Two of the First Nation controlled PSE institutes indicated their sole purpose was to serve their community.

Fourteen institutions also indicated that they custom design programs in direct response to requests from First Nation communities. Nine felt these programs had worked out very well. Five indicated their arrangement was “acceptable.”

Recommend: Increase student, Elder and First Nation community involvement at non-First Nation institutes.

The student questionnaire also requested students identify if they had ever encountered

Many students at university view Native people in post-secondary institutions as getting a “free” ride on taxpayer’s money.

bigotry or racism in their post-secondary institution. Forty-one percent (132) of the students had experienced racism by other students. In contrast, only 53 (17%) identified bigotry or racism directed by their

instructors. In part, the lower frequency of racism from instructors may be related to

One professor commended me for my ability to write well because she had never come across an Aboriginal student who can write English properly.

Administration staff gives Native students the brush off or just rush the Native student out as fast as possible... provides second rate service.

attempts to orient non-First Nation Educators providing instruction to First Nation students. Although fewer in number, it is obvious from the comment of the student to the right that subtle remarks by their teachers leave a racist aftertaste that stays in the mind of their student. Somewhat more students (75 or 24%) indicated they had experienced racism at the hands of administrative personnel.

Some students provided comments that suggest how they respond to these racist attacks. One brushed off their impression that others view her as inferior, stating, “I often feel looked down upon as a savage. Well, at least I’m an educated savage.” One student stated they had gone so far as to switch disciplines (out of B. Comm.) because of racism.

When asked specifically if they ever felt compelled to inform your instructors and/or other students in their program of First Nation rights, history or present circumstances (or correct their misconceptions), 174 (40%) students indicated they had. Students varied in their explanations of how they dealt with misconceptions of others. Some do not discuss their concerns. Others, like the student commenting on the right, make quick judgements regarding how much confronting the individual head-on will make a difference. Still others take a proactive stance, attempting to inform students and instructors of First Nation issues

An individual’s perception can’t always be changed by confrontation. Sometimes it takes too much energy that could be directed elsewhere.

Yes. – I have since learned, however, to keep my mouth shut. I have found negative sanctions imposed on me when I have spoken up (never called upon in class; professors who tell me I must prove them wrong).

whenever they can. One student in particular indicated that she used to try to inform people of their

misconceptions, but that it had gotten her into trouble, especially with her instructors.

Administrators appear to be aware of the uncomfortable educational environment experienced by many of their First Nation students. According to 9 administrators, students have identified a need to improve the cultural awareness and sensitivity of other students and their instructors. One administrator disagreed with the fact that instructors needed to improve⁷. Eleven indicated the need to improve the sensitivity of administrative staff at their PSE institutions.

Educators also appear sensitive to the cultural conflicts faced by students. Eight indicated students had expressed a need to improve the cultural awareness and sensitivity displayed by other students. Eleven said the same was true of instructors. Nine said students had also identified a need for administrators to become more sensitive and culturally aware. Even where the majority of students, administrative staff and instructors are First Nations or Aboriginal, two educators have concerns regarding course material.

Recommend: Provide culturally relevant information in curriculum at both First Nation and non-First Nation PSE institutions.

Recommend: Provide instructors and deans at non-First Nation institutes with information regarding First Nation culture, kinship, etc.

Recommend: Increase the awareness of the non-First Nation student population about First Nation issues, rights and history.

Recommend: Provide an advocate for First Nations students.

⁷ This is true despite the efforts of some PSE institutes to provide orientation to instructors of First Nation students. Eight indicated they provided instructor orientation while 5 said no such orientation exists at their institution. Three also explained their expectations to instructors and offered them cross-cultural training. Two said when they were choosing instructors, they examined the extent to which they had studied First Nation courses or had experience working with First Nations. Two held Aboriginal events and ceremonies such as pow-wows, sweats and feasts: they invited staff to participate in these and other community events.

In addition to experiencing cultural conflicts at their PSE institution, researchers were

I experienced culture shock when I first moved to Edmonton from the reserve. It took time to get used to the environment and different lifestyle.

interested in examining the extent to which students experienced cultural

conflicts between school and home. An overwhelming 82% did not. However, of the 75 students who did experience conflict, they tended to express concerns related to isolation from their family and friends.

Nine of the administrators indicate students have told them of cultural conflicts between

Family is far away, deaths, moving, etc. In the meantime, I have to attend classes and maintain my GPA. (Student)

school and home. They tended to cite a student's kinship obligations as a reason. Clearly familial and cultural responsibilities (e.g., to attend funerals of

community members, to participate in community events and traditional ceremonies) weigh heavily on students who have the extra burden of being far from their family and community.

Eleven educators also indicated students had experienced cultural conflicts. They cited cultural obligations (2), child care (2), kinship obligations (2), relationship issues (1), medical (1) and financial (1) concerns as well as culture shock moving from an Aboriginal community to a non-Aboriginal urban setting. Two also indicated some students show confusion regarding how the college worked (who to contact, what to do).

When you examine where the students who experience conflict attend post-secondary, it becomes clear that very few of those students who attend a First Nations controlled PSE institute experience cultural conflict between school and home.

Recommend: Offer bridging programs for First Nation students before they enter a non-First Nation PSE institution.

Recommend: Provide family, community and peer support services for students.

Offering students the option to have community-based post secondary educational program delivery becomes an obvious solution for those students who cannot or who do not want to leave home to obtain their education. All of the 13 administrators who responded to this question felt there was a need for community-based PSE programming. Administrators felt community-based programming would be more appropriate with regard to culture, language and history and provide both students and the local community with access to First Nations instructors. They also suggested students would have no need to leave home. Tuition fees would remain within the community, resulting in lower living expenses for students. In addition, PSE students wouldn't have to worry about school fees (they have problems covering these fees if they live off reserve).

Thirteen educators also supported community based program delivery. One indicated it already existed in their community. No one disagreed. They cited similar reasons as administrators. Educators were concerned about students' lack of support in urban areas (2). They felt it was "the best approach" (2), with five commenting that it would mean an easier transition to post-secondary education because it would not involve having students relocate. Three indicated that it was less expensive. One spoke of the more appropriate culture, language and history and their impression that some students felt more comfortable with their First Nation peers. Two also indicated current communications and instructional technology facilitates local program delivery.

Sixty-six percent (271) of student respondents also agreed there was a need. Twenty-six

It would help me to learn more about my community, knowledge of myself, the people, programs, etc.

percent of students did not have an opinion. Only 6 % (25) of them did not see a need. In fact, when students were asked if they would attend a First Nations controlled institution,

I believe that as Indian people we have an inherent right to determine our destiny through an educational system that puts greater emphasis on our language, our traditions, which would work synergistically with basic academic skills. (Student)

over four-fifths (83%) said they would. One interpretation of the difference between the 66 % perceiving a need and the 83% who said they would attend relates to the fact that for many the former is not relevant as a First Nation post-secondary institution already exists in their community. In fact, of those currently attending a non-First Nation institute, 140 (73%) of the students indicated they would attend a First Nation controlled institute whereas 51 said they would not. Those who said they would not attend a First Nations institution cited reasons such as “political interference at the community level,” “sub-standard instructors,” or the “lack of qualified instructors in my field”.

Recommend: Provide highly qualified instructors in a broad range of programs.

Recommend: Establish bachelor’s and graduate level degrees at First Nation controlled institutions.

Regardless of where our students study, it is vital that their education is culturally appropriate. The knowledge and insights of a student’s instructors will greatly influence how and if this happens. Therefore, it is important that non-First Nation instructors who provide instruction and/or training to members of our communities receive some orientation to our culture. However, administrators indicated that no orientation exists at non-First Nation institutes or at some First

Indian Studies Support Program helps post-secondary institutions, particularly First Nation colleges, to develop programs and courses relevant to the needs of First Nation post-secondary students. (DIAND official)

Nation institutes at present. Others indicated that at their First Nation institutes, instructors must study First Nation courses or have experience working with First Nations in order to teach. Some First Nation

institutes have mandatory professional development courses for their instructors. In the future, First Nation orientation must happen across the board, whether it takes the form of professional development courses, volunteerism on reserve, or by whatever means possible for all instructors of First Nation students, at First Nation and non-First Nation institutes alike. It could also occur as a mandatory component of their teacher training prior to their certification.

Recommend: Non-First Nation institutes should broker courses from First Nation controlled institutes to take professional development courses and inservices that teach cultural sensitivity.

Recommend: Offer a wide range of programs addressing the distinct languages and cultures of various Nations at the non-First Nation institutes.

Student Support Services

The quality of education our First Nation students receive depends, in part on the quality of support services the have access to. In this section we examine the types of services students have available to them at their Nation level and at their post-secondary institution. Their levels of participation are noted in the table below.

SERVICE	AT NATION LEVEL			AT PSE LEVEL ⁸		
	YES	NO	NOT AVAILABLE	YES	NO	NOT AVAILABLE
Career Counseling	177	163	25	201	137	9
Academic Counseling	199	146	22	217	120	9
Elder Advisor/ Visiting Elders	191	139	39	154	139	50
Tutoring	136	190	35	149	170	19
Native Student Council	130	188	43	153	156	30
Aboriginal Education Council	110	209	39	115	182	41
Aboriginal Meeting Place	127	203	33	154	149	34
Lifeskills	112	217	34	96	198	40
Pow-wows and events	257	92	17	204	110	27

At the Nation level, students are more likely to seek academic counseling (58%), the advice of their Elders (58%) or attend pow-wows and the other First Nation educational events (74%) than the other services available to them. Only 40% of the students who had access to tutors at the Nation level used them. At the post-secondary institute, students were more likely to seek career and academic counseling and attend pow-wows and other First Nation educational events than any other support service. As you can see from the

I don't think anything is wrong with them [services at the PSE institute]. I haven't had to really use them. I've been very busy. (Student)

I am in class or at work. I never have time for extra activities. I'm usually too tired to even go to a movie on my night off. (Student)

two comments provided, many of our students either perceive that they do not need to participate in many activities and services organized by their educational institution or their Nation or that they lack the time and opportunity to do so. The fact

that many of our students have dependents, travel for long periods back and forth to their classes affects how much time they have to seek out support services.

Given the fact that many students may not initiate contact themselves, it is important to examine the extent to which people monitor student progress or refer students to support services. Some funding administrators indicated they reviewed transcripts, had a mandatory attendance rule and/or maintained personal contact with their students. Only one administrator said they did not check their students' progress in any way. When administrators noticed students were experiencing difficulties in their studies, some would refer their students to tutors, peer support services and/or personal or academic counselors. They also indicated they might hold a conference with the student and their instructors or administrative staff, depending on the type of concern. Five administrators said they would send a letter to the student, informing them that their academic performance was being monitored. When administrators did this, however, it was always done in combination with other steps, such as those mentioned above.

Most educators (16) also monitor student progress. Five have regular contact with their students. Four monitor progress through assignments and examinations. Three provide

⁸ Educators also completed this question. Fourteen of the mainstream institutions and 3 of the First Nations ones offered career counseling and academic counseling. Thirteen of the mainstream and three of the First Nation colleges and universities offered tutoring. Eleven of the mainstream and three of the First Nations offered lifeskills. Ten mainstream and all three First Nation PSE institutes sponsored pow-wows and other events. Eight mainstream and three First Nation institutes had an Elder Advisor or visiting Elders; the same number also had a Native Student Council. Six mainstream and two First Nation institutes had an Aboriginal Meeting Place. Three mainstream institutions also had an Aboriginal Education Council.

progress and attendance reports to students' funders. Two monitor student progress indirectly, through their own involvement in Aboriginal activities on campus. One monitors the number of graduates while yet another conducts student satisfaction exit surveys and graduate follow-up employment surveys.

Recommend: Become aware of students' real needs by asking the students themselves.

Recommend: Establish liaison services at the PSE institute to channel student concerns.

Recommend: Provide daycare facilities and cover all day care costs.

Recommend: Provide recreational facilities and increase social activities at First Nations institutes.

Recommend: Provide better counseling services, including hiring Native counselors.

Recommend: Access funding for Native counselors and Elders to visit the students at non-First Nation institutions.

Recommend: Voice for First Nation students such as a First Nation Student Union.

Student Outcome Measures

Rates of Withdrawal

Thirty-four percent of our student respondents indicated they had withdrawn from a post-secondary institution for one semester or more. Almost one-third (32%) cited personal reasons. The remainder identified health (11%), family (8%), finances (7%), employment (4%) or some combination thereof as the reason for their withdrawal.

I was attacked by five Caucasian boys and the school hadn't done anything to help me. Also, I was given a death threat, and again, the school had put my life at risk. (Student)

Ways to Improve Completion Rates

Administrators also suggest that several steps be taken so that more First Nation learners successfully complete their post-secondary programs.

Recommend: Place a stronger emphasis on First Nations traditions and culture in class curriculum.

Recommend: Fund and otherwise increase the accessibility of tutoring, counseling and other support services.

Recommend: Improve library and study facilities as well as science and computer labs at First Nation institutes.

Recommend: Increase PSSSP dollars to reflect the current cost of living.

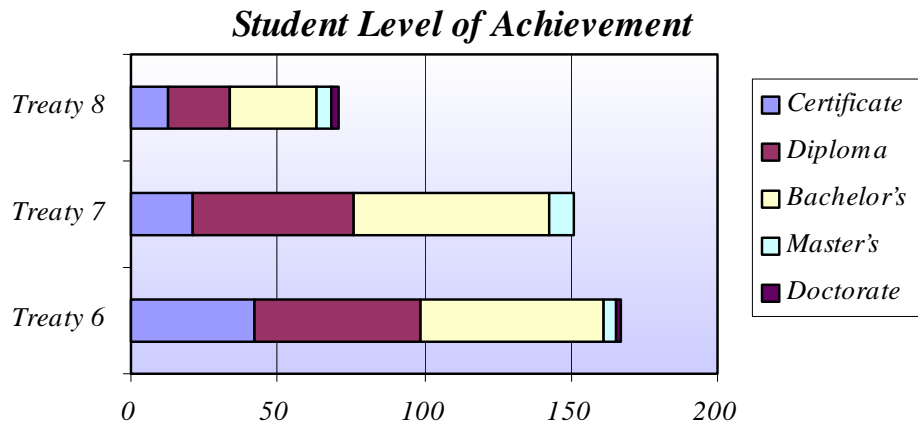
Recommend: Provide student scholarships and awards.

Recommend: Provide student employment programs, including opportunities during the summer months.

Student Graduation Rates

Students were asked what degree they would obtain when they graduate from their program. One-fifth stated they would receive a Certificate. Almost one-third (131) would get a Diploma. Over two-fifths (171) would obtain a Bachelor's Degree. Four percent (17) would receive their Master's Degree with an additional one percent acquiring their Ph.D. Two percent simply indicated they would be continuing their studies beyond their current level.

The graph below identifies how many students from each of the treaty areas identified themselves as enrolled at the various levels of post-secondary education. Specifically in Treaty 8,



13 students reported being in a certificate program, 21 in a diploma program, 29 seeking their Bachelor Degree, 5 in their Masters and 3 in their doctoral programs. In Treaty 7, 21 of the student respondents were earning their certificate, 55 their diploma, 67 their Bachelor Degree and 8 were in their

Masters. Treaty 6 had the highest number (42) of students identifying themselves as being in a certificate program. Fifty-seven of their students were obtaining their diploma, 62 their Bachelor Degree, 4 their Masters and 2 their Doctorate upon completion of their studies.

According to DIAND there were a total of 276 graduates (10% of the student population sponsored) in 1997-98. The majority (180) received a non-university degree (a definition was not provided) with an additional 84 (30%) receiving an undergraduate degree and the remaining 12 (4%) obtaining their graduate degree. DIAND also reports “an average of 255 post-secondary graduates over the last five years [ending in 1997-98], ranging from 202 in 1994/95 and 303 in 1996/96 [sic].” (p. 161)

Administrators and educators also believe that the number of graduates has increased dramatically over the last decade but statistics supporting this trend were not readily available. (DIAND statistics do not go back far enough to draw a conclusion.) Administrators and educators also felt that more people are graduating at advanced levels, with the trend shifting from graduating with a certificate or diploma to getting a bachelor’s or graduate degree. (There is some evidence in DIAND statistics to support this claim, but, again, statistics are only available from 1993-94 to 1997-98). In part, administrators attributed the increasing number of graduates over the last decade (or more) to the opportunity for students to acquire their education through First Nation PSE institutes.

Recommend: Have PSE administering agencies engage in ongoing tracking and annual reporting of the number of graduates.

Student Finances

In this section our primary goal is to identify how students, administrators and DIAND perceive student finances to affect the students’ education. First, we examine student sponsorship through PSSSP. We then identify the degree to which our students access other funding sources. Finally, we present the perceptions of our students, funding administrators, and the DIAND representative regarding how current funding arrangements affect our students’ abilities to commence and complete their studies as well as meet their basic living needs while furthering their education.

In each treaty area there are people who want to attend post-secondary who apply but cannot be sponsored when they first apply. Sixty-nine percent of the students responding to our

questionnaire received sponsorship right away. Of the 138 who were deferred, 47% (54) reporting having been on a waiting list for one semester; 53% were deferred two or more semesters. Both students and administrators perceive the capping of post-secondary funding to be the primary barrier to sponsoring all of the First Nation students who want to attend college or university in any given semester.

Of our 431 student respondents, almost one-third (127) first received their funding in 1999. Some of the student respondents first received their sponsorship more than a decade ago. This may suggest that, for a few, post-secondary studies requires an extend period of time because of their need to upgrade or that they are pursuing advanced degrees which take a great deal of time to complete or because their studies were interrupted for whatever reason.

According to disclosures by 375 student respondents, sponsorship ranged from \$0.00 per month to over \$1400.00. Thirteen of our respondents received no living allowance. Nineteen students received less than \$600.00 per month. Thirty-four percent (128) had a living allowance of \$601.00 to \$800.00 monthly. Nine percent (35) earned \$801.00 to \$1000.00. Twice as many students (74) earned \$1001.00 to \$1200.00. Seventy earned \$1201.00 to \$1400.00. Finally, 51 earned over \$1400.00 per month as living allowance. Unfortunately, this information could not be compared with PSSSP policies which allocate funding according to number of dependents a student has and whether one's spouse (if one has a spouse) is employed or not. Nevertheless, we can assume a great deal of fluctuation in living allowance can be attributed these demographic differences. Variation in funding also stems, in part, to local funding bodies increasing the amount of money allocated in the DIAND PSSSP policies.

These numbers can be compared to estimates of costs incurred by students from the University of Calgary over a 12 month period (as provided by Duncan Woitaszek, Vice President External, Students' Union, University of Calgary). Mr. Woitaszek provided the following statistics⁹.

	Single Living Alone	Single Living with Roommate	Married without Children	Married with Children
Rent	\$4,085	\$3,255	\$6,510	\$7,260
Utilities	\$900	\$450	\$900	\$900
Food	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$10,800	\$21,600
Transportation	\$504	\$504	\$1,008	\$1,008
Books	\$830	\$830	\$1,660	\$1,660
Child Care	0	0	0	\$3,600
TOTAL	\$11,719.00	\$10,439	\$20,878	\$36,028

By these estimates and some additional calculations we can easily see our students do not receive enough to get by. By these standards of need, even our single students without dependents need over \$975 per month to survive.

The statement by the DIAND official to the right implies that students should seek other sources of income to "cover their needs." Administrators agreed insofar that the PSSSP forced students to

Students are expected to cover some of their own needs. This is not to say, however, that there could be specific needs that many First Nations and students cannot address. (DIAND)

⁹ Married couple information assumes both are attending university. All expenses are for a 12 month period; divide by 12 to get montly costs (except for books).

seek alternative sources of funding. However, that is where agreement ends.

Realistic that they are not going to be able to access more money from the funding administrator than what local PSSSP policies will allow, almost one-third (132) of our students do seek alternative funding sources.

The federal government has to provide funding for PSE students according to need and inclusive of inflation rates. All qualified PSE applicants should be funded according to Treaty Rights. (Administrator)

Twenty-eight percent of student respondents work while studying. Thirteen percent (54) take out a student loan. Five percent (23) receive a scholarship or bursary. In addition 9% (40) rely on food banks and other charitable organizations to some extent. Sixteen percent (69) receive financial help from their spouse or extended family. Two percent (7) indicated they receive social assistance. Twenty-nine percent (127) have the monthly child tax benefit as an additional source of income.

Students indicated they had insufficient moneys to cover many of their basic needs. Fifty-five percent said they did could not cover their basic living expenses. Almost half said they did not have enough money for

We need a reasonable amount to survive. School is stressful enough. Why create more roadblocks? (Student)

transportation (212) or accommodation (198). Thirty-six percent felt there was insufficient funding to meet the costs of childcare. About one quarter of our student respondents indicated that paying for books (117) and equipment (112) required for their studies was also a problem. Only 31 students identified insufficient funding with regard to tuition.

It is interesting to note that where the PSSSP funding administrator covers the cost directly, such as tuition and books, students tend to be satisfied. However, administrators feel very strongly that there is not sufficient money to cover tuition, books and equipment.

In some cases student opinion and the additional sum they requested to cover their expenses was associated with other student demographics. We examined accommodation and transportation needs with respect to where the student lived and attended class. We also checked to see if requests for additional childcare funding was related to the number of dependents the post-secondary student had.

When we examined student opinion regarding transportation, we found the same pattern of response regardless of where the student lived. However, there was a noticeable difference when we examined how much extra money a student was requesting. Students living on reserve and taking

I ride my bike until the snow falls and then I have to walk or catch a ride and pay for gas. (Student)

PSE courses locally tend to request very little additional money, if any. Students living in the city tend to make the most requests for

funding, but, again, they tend to ask for less than \$100.00 additional funding per month. Requests over \$100.00 tend to come from students who travel or who live and attend PSE in the city.

It was difficult to make our monthly rent and to cover utilities so we moved to the reserve. Now gas is a problem and it is so difficult when both my husband and I work and go to school. One of us always has to wait at least 4 to 6 hours a day just to go home. (Student)

With respect to accommodation, students who live on reserve and attend the local PSE institute tend to make few requests. Those who travel back and

forth to the city for classes make more requests and for larger sums. This may be related to the fact that some students pay for accommodation in the city (at least a few days per week) as well as maintain housing on the reserve. Students who live in the same city as their PSE institute are the most likely to request over \$200.00 in additional funding. Students identified high rental costs as the main reason for their demands.

When we examined if the amount requested for childcare was related to how many dependents, results were predictable. People with no children accounted for most (76%) of the people without an opinion. Of those

The National Child Tax Benefit has been increased substantially the past two years and provides an additional source of funding support for students with dependent children and should help them address support for living. (DIAND official)

demanding more than \$150, 5 had 1 dependent; 12 had two dependents; 5 had 3; 3 had 4 or more children. Sadly, increases in the National Child Tax Benefit have not had the

desired effect of relieving financial strain as indicated by the DIAND representative above.

Students were asked to identify other costs they incur. They discussed periodic or one-time costs associated with moving, emergency travel, vehicle repair and the purchase of a computer. Costs associated with children included covering minor hockey fees, student fees for minor school-aged children living off-reserve, and the high costs of being parents of disabled dependents. Some of our post-secondary students also discussed course related costs such as having to pay for field trips required in their university or college course or pay for Internet service.

Points of Interest

1. Sixty-nine percent (299) of our students do not own their own computer. And yet, 193 use them on a daily basis to complete their academic work. An additional 163 use them on a weekly basis. Sixty use them once in awhile. Only 6 students never use them.
2. Sixty-eight percent (289) of our students have access to the Internet. Eighty-two use the Internet daily. An additional 184 log on a weekly basis. One hundred forty-eight use it once in awhile. Only 11 students indicated they never do.

Recommend: Make computers and other technology available to First Nation students, in, for example, the First Nation student lounge or the Native Centre on Campus.

Recommend: Fund Internet connectivity on reserves

Recommend: Have a First Nation dormitory.

Recommend: Provide affordable (or free) photocopying and faxing services to First Nations.

Recommend: Provide dollars for achievement and incentive grants.

SIFC charges a student services fee (over\$1000) in addition to tuition for "Indian" programs such as the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP). These services are offered without extra charge at other institutions. If institutions can legitimately charge these fees, how can Funding Administrators or students attending these courses cover the expense? (Administrator)

Administrators also indicated several areas of funding that students told them are inadequate. These areas include, but are not limited to student living allowance, costs of tutorial assistance, travel, child care and child school fees. The fact that there is no special needs allocation or coverage of non-insured health

benefits also worries some students.

Recommend: Consider the financial difficulty of students required to pay expenses not covered by their PSSSP.

Recommend: Provide services (e.g., tutoring) and equipment to students with disabilities to ensure they have access to post-secondary education. First Nation colleges also need capital costs to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities.

Twelve administrators indicated they had their own concerns about funding which students may or may not have presented to them. In some ways, they identified similar issues as the students, pointing to deficits in allocations for living allowances, an inability to provide child care subsidies

or pay school fees, cover the cost of student travel or set up emergency funds for students. However, they also had distinct concerns such as insufficient funding to cover the real costs of student tuition or equipment, books and supplies or to provide adequate counseling and tutorial services. As administrators, they had no moneys dedicated to cover administrative costs or to offer student incentives.

Recommend: Relate PSSSP funding to real needs and demands.

Recommend: Create a directory of possible sources of funding for “high cost students” (e.g., students with special needs, graduate students, students studying out of country) that would identify granting agencies from private and public sector.

While DIAND seems to believe that costs associated with student needs are reflected in existing policy, students and administrators know that students are struggling to make ends meet. Only 9% of students indicate they are able to set aside any resources to hold them over once their school term has ended or when they graduate from their degree.

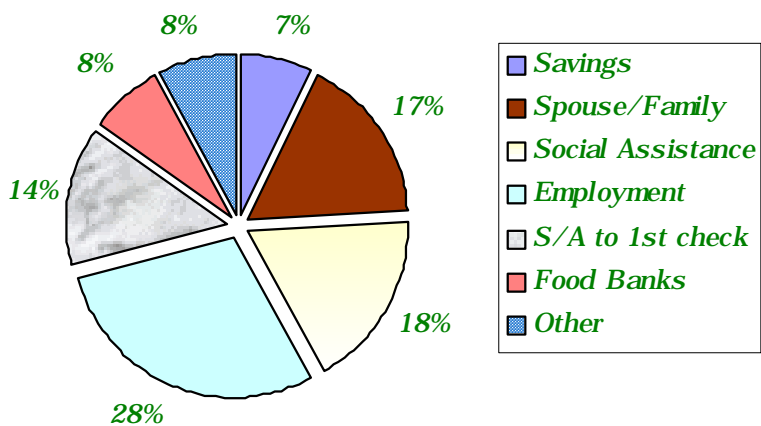
Usually I have to rely on social assistance for the first month until I can find employment. (Student)

Finding work is hard on the reserve, even with some college education. If there were more assistance in finding summer employment, I probably wouldn't have any problem, even if I did have to relocate. (Student)

Over one-third (154) of our students indicate they are able to cover their bills through employment those months they do not receive student financing. However, even if a student gets hired immediately afterward, there is always the inevitable lag time from the time you start work until your first paycheck. Seventeen percent (75) must resort to social assistance until their first payday. High unemployment rates on the reserve force twenty-two percent (95) of our students to go on social assistance for those months they do not receive student financing.

Twenty-nine percent (114) of our students indicated they experience severe financial hardships during these months.

Student Incomes in Summer Months



An additional 48% (191) find covering costs is somewhat problematic during this time. Only 52 (13%) are not affected by it. Thirty-nine said this situation does not apply to them, meaning perhaps that they go to school and receive funding throughout the year or that they do not ever receive a living allowance. Twenty-one percent (92) get by with the assistance from their spouse and/or extended family. Ten percent (41) must depend on food banks and other charitable organizations.

The DIAND official believes the PSSSP program “helps many First Nations students to gain access to post-secondary education and an opportunity to earn qualifications useful for pursuing careers and to contribute to economic self-reliance.” (p. 2 of DIAND questionnaire results) Unfortunately, for many of our students, success at PSE is interrupted by times of economic hardship and dependency

Going back on social assistance is a downfall. You have to go through so much red tape, but, without it, you don't have anything to fall back on. (Student)

on others to meet their basic needs. These leaps backward cannot possibly contribute positively to the student's self-esteem, let alone foster their ability to become self-reliant.

Recommend: Develop an employment referral program for students at the post-secondary institutes which is linked to existing programs in surrounding reserves and town sites.

Recommend: Establish links between PSE and social assistance to prevent students from encountering unnecessary financial hardship.

Current Links between PSE, HRDC and Social Assistance

Both administrators and the DIAND official were asked what links exist between PSE, HRDC and social assistance. Half (6) of the administrators who responded indicated they had linked with HRDC and/or social assistance. However, they did not explain what these connections consisted of.

Recommend: Establish projects "to link social assistance with HRDC's training programs and UCEP.

Recommend: Staff involved in administering PSE and HRDC programs should be aware of the eligibility criteria of the other program to ensure that students are considered under the appropriate program. (DIAND official)

In particular, HRDC's mandate, which is dictated by their labor market agreement with the province, is of great concern. It is required to follow mainstream labor market needs rather than striving to meet the real needs identified by First Nation populations in Alberta.

At the workshop administrators emphasized the fact that "Sometimes our students get lost amongst the criteria for eligibility set by different government departments. We need to join together at a community level to accommodate our student needs and cover their expenses. However,

Students frequently set training and education goals by what they are eligible for or by what training is available locally rather than by desire. (Administrator)

such coordination is very difficult because a) of the artificial boxes (including eligibility criteria) set up by federal government policies and b) local HRDC,

social assistance and education funding budgets are always in jeopardy of being cut. Policies conflict, different government departments duplicate service; all of this defeats our purpose of helping students."

Let's take a case in point: professional development by social workers at Kainai, a Treaty 7 Nation. A few years ago, there was a provincial requirement that the social workers have degrees. As some of our social workers simply had certificates or diplomas of social work, they sought HRDC funding to upgrade their education. Due to rigid definitions and eligibility requirements that create arbitrary distinctions between "education" and "training", HRDC was unable to fund them. This, in turn, put the funding administrator of post-secondary education and Red Crow Community College in a bind. Red Crow already had a long waiting list of people who wished to enroll in their social worker program. Now they were the ones forced to make hard decisions regarding who to sponsor and who must remain on their wait list.

Recommend: Expand funding policy to include one and two year PSE programs.

Linking Education and Employment

In addition to noticing increases in the graduation rates and in enrollment to more advanced degree programs, administrators and educators alike have noticed that the career goals of First Nation students has expanded and changed. Administrators drew attention to the fact that over time more students have begun enrolling in science and technology fields. Nevertheless, administrators

indicated the majority of students remained within the social services area. These trends could, of course, greatly impact the local community's ability to accommodate new graduates in their workforce, if a large number of the students desire to return to their reserve for employment.

Researchers were therefore interested in finding out how many of our graduates are employed in their field of study as well as identify where our current student population wants to seek employment upon completion of their studies. However, neither administrators nor the representative from DIAND could provide information regarding the number of graduates who were employed in their field of study.

Students were asked to identify where they would prefer to seek employment upon graduation. Of the 421 who responded to this question, 23% specified their home community. Twenty-eight percent indicated they would seek employment in a region or city near their home community. An additional 26% would search within the province of Alberta. Twelve students (3%) would work outside Canada, with another 15 willing to work "anywhere". Many responded to more than one category, indicating a willingness to relocate for employment, where necessary. In these cases, they usually checked off "in their home community" as one of their choices. So did those in the new category "anywhere". Responses also indicate, to some degree, many students' perception that there is little employment opportunity on reserve.

I get an education to help my community but there are no jobs when I graduate. (Student)

Recommend: Survey graduates to identify whether they are employed in their field of study and where their jobs are situated.

Recommend: Post-secondary Institutions should network with local employment and referral agencies, notifying their staff of pending graduates and informing graduates of upcoming job postings.

Educators were asked what role they felt industry should play in post-secondary education. Three indicated PSE institutes should develop partnerships with industry. Seven educators felt industry should provide co-op placement opportunities. Three felt industry should take responsibility for training costs or subsidize training costs. Two suggested financial support could be in the form of providing student scholarships, bursaries and awards. Five spoke of industry providing jobs for graduates, with two respondents stating they should actively recruit skilled Aboriginal people while one said industry should identify job opportunities. Two stated industry should inform educational institutes of job requirements. One suggested they provide career counseling.

When asked directly if there is a need to find industry sponsorships for co-op education or work experience components for programs directed at First Nation learners, fifteen responded positively. One stated this is already happening all of the time, while 5 said it only occurs sometimes. Seven educators said this seldom occurs. Thirteen educators felt apprenticeship and industry training should be promoted institutionally. Two educators did not agree. However, 15 felt such training should be promoted at the community level.

Recommend: Foster industry partnerships, including First Nation co-op placements and internship positions. It is especially important to network with First Nation service providers.

While First Nations wish to assist our students in finding and maintaining employment whenever possible, we must also be careful not to "assimilate the employability of graduates as criterion for success... Unbridled capitalism means gradual suffocation of such non-essential programs; if graduates cannot prove the economic utility of degrees in literature, history, art, and so forth, the modern business controlled university will be unwilling to support them." (p. 15, Chrisjohn et al. 1995). Instead of letting labour market demands dictate what studies our people

Apprenticeship and Industry Training is not a part of PSE institutional mandate. (Educator)

should undertake, we must encourage our students to gain expertise in their areas of choice, and integrate our students into our First Nations workforce in ways they can best use their skills to our communal benefit. (Treaty 7 community member, FNAHEC, 2000). Treaty7 community member in a parallel FNAHEC research study undertaken for Alberta Learning stated this most eloquently:

In the past, if we asked a child to go and find out what is happening, where our adversaries were, where the buffalo were, where we camp, they would go look out and if they didn't return then there was something wrong. They didn't come back with the information we needed to survive." [But today, we are telling our graduates who have knowledge and skills we need as a community,] "Go live on the outside. We don't need your services." [This is not right. Instead we must return to our traditional ways and welcome our people back. We must reinforce the need for them to return.] "You are going far to go to school. Your education will not only benefit yourself, but your community, your relatives, and neighbours will benefit. You will teach what you know from the outside." (Kainai)

To many of our First Nations people, education is a communal, not an individualistic or corporate exercise (Treaty 7 community member, Treaty 7, 2000).

Jurisdiction & Authority

This brings us clearly to a discussion of control, accountability and jurisdiction. The comment to the right clearly identifies our current state of affairs with respect to the education of our people.

In this section, we examine how our current lack of control affects First Nation funding arrangements in comparison to other non-First Nation students and non-First Nation controlled post-secondary institutions. We also speak of the current flow of information and money, which is currently unidirectional: from First Nations (or the federal government who feels it is "acting on our behalf") to the non-First Nation post-secondary institution and/or provincial and federal government.

No Nation, no People, no Community is in control when their funding levels are set by outsiders, when their financial decisions are made by someone else, when funding caps are imposed upon them unilaterally by an external political system, when the depth and breadth of the form of their educational programs are determined by outside forces, and when the very nature of their intellectual activity is required to conform to someone else's notions of suitability. (p. 3, Ayounghan, Fiddler & Smallface-Marule, 1997)

Control in the hand of DIAND

In 1989, the federal government announced criteria changes for post-secondary educational assistance. As a result of these changes, funding was no longer available for the following: counseling services, special services and contingencies (e.g., daycare and rent), special tutorial assistance, special clothing and equipment, daily travel allowance and emergency travel. We asked students and administrators if they felt a large number of students encountered financial difficulty and were unable to complete their post secondary education as a result of these policy changes. Four administrators had no opinion, one agreed and the remaining eight responding to the question strongly agreed with this statement.

The Post-secondary Student Support Program offers much more authority and flexibility than the previous policy. Specific needs were amalgamated and administering organizations were given the authority to develop their own allowance schedules. (DIAND official)

Over seventy percent of the students also agreed, 45% of them strongly.

According to the administrators, the federal government's decision to cap the program negatively impacted their ability to guarantee our First Nations treaty right to education. Five of the administrators stated that the funding cap forced PSE funding administrators to defer students and create waiting lists. Administrators were forced to provide the same living allowance to sponsored students for an extended period, ignoring cost of living increases. This, in turn, enforced the poverty of students and caused students to seek other sources of funding, including student loans. Alternatively, some administrators increased living allowances to better meet student needs but had to cut the number of students they were able to sponsor or incur debt. Either way, administrators found themselves in a catch-22 situation. Deferring some students from our communities and failing to provide sufficient funding to meet the needs of the students they did sponsor caused strained relations.

The federal government's decision to cap the maximum number of sponsorship months also caused discord. For those administrators who ignored this policy, it reduced the numbers of students they could sponsor without going into debt. Those administrators who adhered to this new policy were forced to confine students to one program of study and deny sponsorship to students who exceeded the maximum number of months allowed by DIAND. (Some students appealed this decision.) This in turn, created hardship for many students, especially for people with special needs and for single parents.

At the administrator workshop in February, discussion revolved around their concern that the funding cap was causing strained relations in more ways than one. It is not simply that people became angry with their administrators for delaying their ability to attend post-secondary or for failing to procure sufficient funding for them. The government's move to limit First Nation treaty right to education has created, in the words of one administrator, a "domino effect" which pits First Nations against each other rather than unifying them.

Our First Nation students are being denied their treaty rights to education to some degree.

All students should be given the opportunity to attend post-secondary institutions. More funding dollars are needed as the demand for post secondary education increases... If a student is a member of a First Nation, then they should be entitled to the right to be funded in order to obtain an education, if they so choose. (Student)

Our First Nation governments and First Nation funding bodies are also being undermined as long as the federal government imposes PSE and PSSSP policies and caps PSSSP funding. As long as we have no control over legislation that impacts the education our students have a right to receive. To that

end, First Nations challenge the federal government to meet their fiduciary obligations with regards to our treaty right to education. In addition, both federal and provincial governments must pass legislation enabling First Nation controlled institutions to develop their own accreditation boards which is then honored by other post-secondary institutions.

Recommend: Establish a political body to lobby the federal government.

Recommend: Pass legislation enabling First Nations to assume real control over their own educational program delivery. (Administrator)

Distribution and Control of Resources

In our research, we asked funding administrators to state their opinion regarding whether resources dedicated to post-secondary education were distributed equitably in the Alberta Region relative to several distinct standards.

In relation to the potential First Nation student population, four administrators disagreed and 6 strongly disagreed that there was equity. This inequity will exist as long as there are some First Nations denied their Treaty Rights to education (through being declined or delayed in their sponsorship).

Most administrators also feel our students are disadvantaged if compared to non-First Nation students attending PSE institutes. Six disagreed, five strongly, with a statement inferring equity between First Nations and non-First Nation students.

Nine believe no equity exists with regard to provincial and public resourcing¹⁰. One administrator believes provincial FTE grants and tuition received for students is fair.

Eight disagree (7 of them strongly). These negative attributions relate to the fact that our students receive inadequate funding through PSSSP and appear to have limited access to provincial student financing (e.g., through loans). In part, they also reflect the fact that First Nations PSE institutes are not eligible to receive the same provincial financing as non-First Nations colleges and universities, including funding for provincial grants such as ACCESS Grants. Nor do they have the same access to private granting agencies and corporate sponsorship. First Nations institutes do not receive FTE grants, like the other PSE institutes. This leaves them dependent, to a large extent, on federal financing, which has proven inadequate to cover their costs of course and program delivery or to enable the First Nations institutes to offer the broad range of programming their students request.

Recommend: Provide First Nation PSE institutes with provincial funding obtained through the Provincial/Federal Transfer Act.

Recommend: Make funds available for Nations through the ACCESS fund process.

Recommend: Examine the effect of lobbying the provincial government or accepting provincial moneys on issues related to Treaty rights, jurisdiction and authority.

Recommend: All post-secondary institutions that receive any funds for First Nation students should be held accountable to our Nations. We must have access to a) how moneys allocated for First Nation programs and services are being spent; and b) information regarding the quality of services they provide to our students.

Recommend: Post-secondary colleges and universities should promote First Nation participation at all levels of staffing and decision-making. For example, the cultural demographics of the staff and decision-makers should mirror that of the student body they service.

Exceptions to the Rule:

Red Crow Community College and Muskwachees both received provincial government recognition as private colleges yet these institutions cannot get funding from the province. In actuality, Red Crow did receive some funding this year. The problem they encountered, however, was that they had to put a security deposit equaling half their tuition for 65 seats in order to get provincial dollars.

Action:

Some administrators feel we should lobby the province to fund FN institutions. The problem with this is that it puts First Nation negotiations in the provincial arena rather than forcing the federal government to maintain its own fiduciary obligations at a Nation to Nation level. Instead we should argue that First Nation institutes need access to funding similar or surpassing that available to provincial public education institutions, but which are not controlled by the provincial or public purse. (Administrator).

¹⁰ Eleven educator respondents indicate their funding comes from one or some combination of six sources: tuition (9), bands for cost recovery programs (6), Metis and/or First Nation organizations (2), INAC (2), Alberta Learning (2), and private enterprise (1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions made by students, funding administrators, educators and the DIAND official have been woven throughout the document. Many of them could (and some do) appear under various headings and can be examined from a number of standpoints: thematically as well as from a “who should do what” framework. From a thematic standpoint, we have been able to pull out five major trends from the comments made.

1. Provide funding to meet real costs incurred by students, funding administrators and post-secondary institutes.
2. Recognize and honor the distinct cultural needs of First Nation students.
3. First Nations students require deliberate actions be taken in order to improve rates of enrollment, to ensure they receive a high quality of education, to enable them to complete their studies and to find meaningful employment afterward.
4. Our students have personal needs (such as dependents, kinship obligations) that affect their ability to do well at school; culturally relevant support services must be available to assist them in their studies.
5. First Nation people demand transparency and accountability. Students require the PSE institute they attend, and the federal government to meet their obligations with regard to their treaty right to education. funding administrators and First Nation PSE institutes also hold the federal government to their fiduciary responsibilities. Both students and administrators demand open communication and direction from the grassroots (First Nation community members, students, funding administrators and PSE institutes) at all levels of decision-making.

In many cases, students, administrators, educators or the DIAND representative identified who was to be responsible for achieving the recommendations they identified. Where no one in particular is targeted, it becomes incumbent upon each reader to examine how they personally or collectively could take action so that the recommendation can become a reality.

With respect to the above themes, educators clearly have the responsibility to act on numbers 2 through 5. Even

with regard to theme 1, which may not seem to directly relate to post-secondary institutions, there are ways educators can assist our students. For example, it remains important for all educators to remember the financial strain experienced by many of our students when planning field trips or having other hidden costs in the courses that are not covered by their PSSSP.

Federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments need to provide more support services to First Nation students and to encourage them in their studies. Help needs to be there after students complete their studies with respect to graduation support and employment opportunities at home, for instance. PSE institutions need to expand their awareness of First Nation issues from a superficial understanding to becoming sincere. (Administrator recommendation)

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Students, funding administrators and DIAND officials acknowledge that having the Post-secondary Student Support Program permits First Nations people, who otherwise would not be able to afford it, to get their post-secondary education. Administrators and DIAND officials also recognize the benefits of the Indian Student Support Program. According to the DIAND representative, ISSP “helps post-secondary institutions, particularly First Nation colleges, to

develop programs and courses relevant to the needs of First Nations post-secondary students” (p. 2 of DIAND questionnaire response).

Given these acknowledged benefits, First Nation funding administrators and students agree that both the PSSSP and the ISSP programs do not guarantee First Nation treaty rights to education. In fact, there is great room for improvement. Throughout this document, we have seen the theme of inadequate funding for our students, our funding bodies, and our First Nations PSE institutes introduced time and again.

In this report, we have also heard students identify the need for an education which is congruent with their languages, cultures, traditions and belief systems, an educational system which honors First Nation contributions and acknowledges First Nation history and present circumstances with respect. This vision can come to pass through deliberate measures to improve the quality of education provided to First Nations at non-First Nations PSE colleges and universities. More importantly to some, First Nations can assume real control over their own PSE institutes by setting up their own accreditation board, developing their own courses and programs and using reputable instructors to teach First Nation controlled curricula.

Administrators recommend that collective action be taken on the basis of this research. Results confirm what Administrators have known but were not able to “prove” through statistics prior to the research. Administrators feel strongly that it is not enough to do a band aid approach to PSSSP and ISSP; they want wholesale change.

Now we have our own research and do not have to rely on government statistics. (Administrator)

Specifically, Administrators suggest action be taken at a number of levels. First, educators from each post-secondary college and university should review student recommendations and make changes in programming at the local level. We must also advocate for our PSE graduates to become employed in careers that reflect their advanced knowledge and skills. For First-Nation controlled institutions, this information may also prove useful to local Chief and Council when negotiating their Federal Transfer Agreements (FTA).

At the regional level, we must join together to support First Nation to make the education our students receive congruent with First Nation culture, history, and present circumstances. This includes, but is not restricted to, including First Nation material in the curriculum, hiring First Nation instructors, counselors and administrative staff, and seeking direction from our Nation’s education leaders. It also means facilitating course transfer agreements between First Nations and non-First Nations institutes and recognizing courses accredited through a First Nations controlled accreditation board.

This research should also be presented to Chiefs and Councils during the Chief’s Summit so that our First Nation educators can receive direction and authorization to make wholesale changes to the program. In addition, First Nation educators should examine if they can link the information from this research with sub-agreement negotiations on which First Nation Chiefs and Councils were working a few years back.

At a national level we must take collective action to improve the quality of life our First Nation students have while striving to meet their educational goals by enhancing their educational environment, providing them with sufficient finances, having support services available to them. This information can also be used to argue for more First Nations controlled PSE institutes, negotiate a First Nation controlled accreditation board, and examine the possibility of setting up a First Nation controlled disseminating body to track important post-secondary student information.

Our First Nation students, our funding administrators, and post-secondary educators from around the province have told us about their successes and their struggles. Now we must honor their insights and experiences.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ayoungman, Vivian, Fiddler, Don & Marie Smallface-Marule, (February 11, 1997) **Post-secondary education and First Nations: The perspective from First Nations Educational Institutions**. Presented to the Senate of Canada Subcommittee on Post-Secondary Education, Vancouver, B.C.
- Chrisjohn, Roland & Vivian Ayoungman (July 31, 1995). **Post-secondary review: Treaty 7 Tribal Council**. Unpublished document.
- DIAND, (August, 1999). Overview of DIAND Program Data, **IMB/CIMD**.
- Treaty 7. (May, 2000). **Shared voices and visions: Treaty 7 First Nations Dialogue on Education**. Unpublished paper presented to Alberta Learning.
- Woitaszek, Duncan. (May 18, 2000). Fax sent by M. Woitaszek, Vice President External, Students' Union, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

APPENDIX A
STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATORS OF POST SECONDARY FUNDING INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX C

DIAND INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX D

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX E

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FIRST NATIONS: THE PERSPECTIVE FROM
FIRST NATIONS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

APPENDIX F

POST-SECONDARY REVIEW: TREATY 7 TRIBAL COUNCIL