

"Investing in the Future"

FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION IN CANADA






"Children are the First Nations
most precious resource.

They are the link to the past generations,
the enjoyment of the present generations
and the hope of the future."


AFN. (2002) ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS POSITION ON FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION, OTTAWA, ONTARIO





“A vibrant nation is one where education is steeped in First Nations social and cultural frames of reference, spiritual interconnectedness and the experience of First Nations peoples.”

*Chief Perry Bellegarde - National Symposium
on First Nations Educational Jurisdiction, May 2001*



GATHERING STRENGTH INITIATIVE

Educational Reform an INAC Initiative

The *Gathering Strength* investment in Educational Reform by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is an initiative that was launched in 1998 as part of the *Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* resources to improve the quality of education and academic achievement in First Nation schools. There has been an investment of \$76 million since 1998 by the federal government.

Through an Assembly of First Nations and INAC joint effort four funding priority areas were identified for the nationally allocated resources of this initiative. They include:

1. Strengthening management and governance capacity
2. Improving quality of classroom instruction
3. Increasing parental and community involvement in education
4. Aid for the school to work transition for First Nations youth.

Since 1998 program initiatives have been delivered by First Nations schools, education authorities, boards and regional education organizations. Funding amounts annually have been:

Total Expenditures to Date

Fiscal Year	Funding Amount	Number of Initiatives
1998-1999	\$ 10 million	200 initiatives
1999-2000	\$ 26 million	320 initiatives
2000-2001	\$ 40 million	390 initiatives
Total	\$ 76 million	910 initiatives* not combined

According to INAC there were two types of initiatives delivered by education organizations. The school-based-types provided programs and services that were part of daily operations including instructional services, administrative support, curriculum adaptation, technology acquisition and maintenance, Aboriginal language and cultural instruction and after school programs.

The second type of initiative provided programs and services to groups of schools. These included program adaptation, curriculum design, special education support (e.g. subject area specialists), research, school evaluation, library services and administration.

General Overview of Spending Priorities

Fiscal year	Investment	Initiatives
1999-2000	\$ 7.8 million	Improving the Effectiveness of Classroom Instruction
	\$ 14 million	Strengthening Education Management And Governance
	Decreased from \$3.6 million	Support For Community And Parental Involvement
2000-2001	\$16.7 million	Improving the Effectiveness of Classroom Instruction
	\$19.7 million	Strengthening Education Management And Governance
	Decreased from \$2.1 million	Support for Community And Parental Involvement

Fiscal Year 1999-2000 Investment Priorities

Fiscal Year	Investment	Priority Activity
1999-2000	\$4.4 million	Language and Culture
	\$1.4 million	Information Technology in First Nation Schools
	\$ 800,000	Parental and Community Involvement
	\$ 1.7 million	Professional development and training initiatives
	\$4.6 million	Retention and achievement strategies
	\$840,000	Career development and school-to-work transition
	\$9 million	Building Institutional and Governance Capacity

Fiscal Year 2000-2001 Investment Priorities

Fiscal Year	Investment	Priority Activity
2000-2001	\$19.7 million	Strengthening Management and Governance Capacity
	\$16.6 million	Improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Special Education, ◆ Language and Culture, ◆ Information Technology in Schools, ◆ Professional development and Training, ◆ Student Retention and Achievement
	\$2.1 million	Supporting Parental and community involvement in Education
	\$1.5 million	Aiding in School-to-Work Transition

Sampling of success stories:

In Alberta the Samson Cree Nation has introduced a four part special education initiative which helps their school system to develop and implement remedial programs targeted towards students of all age groups. The project also centralizes all special education needs programming and employs well trained teachers to address the needs of First Nation students more efficiently. Specific actions include implementing Individual Education Plans, Individual Option Plans for students and ongoing computer assisted learning programs to support special needs activities.

In the Tootinaowziebeeng Nation in Manitoba, Anishnawbe children learned about oral history and genealogy. The goal was for students to develop a sense of identity, acceptance and sharing through knowledge of their culture.

The Interlake Reserves Tribal Council (Manitoba) has continued their home/school coordinators training program to provide enhanced skills to community workers who in turn support parents, school staff and students in achieving their educational goals.

Tutoring, guidance, extracurricular activities, mentoring, Elders-in-Residence and homework support clubs are examples of initiatives developed in the Atlantic Region. Thirty-five percent of their Education Reform funding went towards student retention and achievement initiatives.

ELEMENTARY /SECONDARY EDUCATION

Education is the key to the social and economic strength of a community. Strong First Nation communities require people and economies to build sustainable futures and reduce the disparities that exist between First Nations and mainstream society. Unacceptable housing and health conditions, social dependency and poor educational achievement are barriers that limit the ability of First Nations to participate in all aspects of Canadian Society. Lack of education results in the marginalization of First Nations individually and collectively at the political, social and economic level and this reality must be addressed.

No nation can operate a 21st century economy without a 21st century electronic infrastructure, embracing computers, data communications and the other media(s)... First Nation communities are faced with the challenge of improving housing, health care, social services, local government infrastructure and educational services. The information highway will bring First Nations to the world, but more importantly – it will bring the world to First Nations. “*The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.*” Preparing First Nation youth for the future by providing them the knowledge and tools necessary to build a

foundation for higher education in an ever increasing “knowledge based” economy, *without sacrificing culture and tradition*, is critical to our survival as a people and as nations.

The *First Nations Elementary/Secondary Education Program* is funded by INAC for First Nations Councils and Education Authorities in order to support (1) instructional services on reserve, (2) the reimbursement of costs of on-reserve students attending provincial schools, and (3) the funding of student support services such as transportation, counseling, accommodation and financial assistance. Elementary secondary education expenditures have increased from \$703 million in 1992-93 to an estimated \$995 million in 2000-01. Since 1991-92 the enrollment of First Nation children in elementary and secondary schools has increased from 96,594 to more than 117,000 in 1998-99. There are presently 485 schools funded by INAC on reserve. The following table illustrates the total national enrollment of First Nation children in school by age group. It is notable that in the 14-18 age group the enrollment figures indicate a drop of nearly half that of the age 7-13 age group suggesting a nearly 50% drop in enrollment for each year between 1994-2000 respectively.

Total National Enrollment of First Nation Students by Age Group

School Year	Total	Age 4-6	Age 7-13	Age 14-18	19+
1993-94	103,644	23,943	47,767	24,682	7,252
1994-95	107,091	24,713	49,685	25,043	2,650
1995-96	110,642	23,007	51,601	27,145	8,889
1996-97	108,914	22,874	51,480	26,634	7,926
1997-98	109,542	22,703	51,324	27,087	8,428
1998-99	110,687	22,614	52,476	27,036	8,561
1999-00	112,471	22,291	53,784	27,932	8,464

The following table illustrates the total number of graduates by age group from secondary school for the period 1993-1999. Consistent with the previous table graduation rates suggest a **significant drop** in enrollment when compared to the number of students age 14-18 **enrolled** and the number age 16-18 **graduated**. For example, for the school year 1993-1994 the enrollment of students was 24, 682 and the graduation rate (for all ages), as indicated in the table below, for that same year was 1,868. Similarly, in 1998-99 the total enrollment of students for age 14-18 was 27,038 yet the total number of students (all ages) graduating that same year was 1,971. These numbers, according to INAC, include registered *Indians and Non-Registered* (as approved by the Minister) individuals living on-reserve and Inuit students in Kindergarten 4-Grade 13 where applicable inclusively.

Total Number of First Nation Graduates by Age Group from Secondary School National Statistics

School Year	Total	Age 16-18	Age 19-21	Age 22+
1993-94	1,868	610	901	357
1994-95	1,691	496	918	277
1995-96	2,068	588	1,134	346
1996-97	1,863	524	1,033	306
1997-98	1,994	591	1,102	301
1998-99	1,971	629	1,012	330

Data Source: INAC Information Management Branch 2001

Funding for elementary secondary education in First Nation schools is provided based on a funding formula. Existing funding arrangements focus on government accountability and not on local community needs. This must be changed to accountability at the **local community level**. It is difficult to maintain Treaty right to education when government policy does not allow for flexibility in funding options. The federal government considers *delegated authority* sufficient to meet the principle of First Nation's jurisdiction over education. Under *delegated authority*, the *government retains total control over the determination and allocation of resources* needed to establish, manage, and operate local First Nations schools. Furthermore, a First Nation's education authority must comply with federal directives

or be subject to reprisals. Within federal and *band-operated schools*, First Nations are required to comply with provincial educational policies and standards which do not include culturally or linguistically appropriate teaching and methodological approaches.

Section 114 of the *Indian Act* authorizes the Government of Canada to enter into agreements with provincial governments for the education of First Nations children. Arrangements are made with the provincial and territorial education authorities to integrate First Nations students into existing school systems. The federal government reimburses provincial and territorial school boards by paying tuition on a per capita basis for elementary and secondary education of First Nations students. Under the control of the federal government, the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has developed education policies and programs for First Nations students living on reserves. INAC operates federal schools; provides support for *band-operated* schools that are administered by First Nation councils; and enters into agreements with provincial and territorial school boards to place First Nations students in regular provincial/territorial schools. This *delegated authority model* of jurisdiction is unacceptable to First Nations and the dire results of federal interference in the programming and implementation of education services is illustrated by the statistics contained herein.

In summary, according to the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes Canada Report 1996 published by INAC Research and Analysis Directorate, it is clear educational progress over the past decade by First Nation students, particularly in terms of high school completion and post secondary participation continues to be less significant than others. *The pattern of delayed or incomplete success at the post secondary level suggests that there may be weaknesses in Aboriginal students' basic education and/or difficulties in the students social and economic environment which tends to limit their success in post-secondary programs.....The challenge of the upcoming years is to consolidate and strengthen the gains which have been made in post-secondary education, perhaps by focusing*

on the early preparation of Aboriginal students and on the social and economic context within which education takes place.

Accordingly, in INAC's Estimates 2002-03 Part II Report and Priorities, planned results for 2003-05 indicate a priority to work with First Nations to *develop performance indicators for quality-of-life and social and education programs to undertake the development of a joint strategy for statistical monitoring* of improved results. Also, to pursue educational reform to improve the quality of education through resources from the *Gathering Strength* initiative. These changes will be insignificant, however, if there is not a wholistic approach to education that is inclusive all elements of the social, mental, physical and spiritual elements of a First Nations students life and development.

INAC FUNDING FORMULA FOR ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

First Nation students ordinarily residing on a reserve or on Crown lands are eligible for INAC funding for the provision of education services at the elementary and secondary levels. Students residing off-reserve fall under provincial funding agreements. They are, however, eligible for INAC post-secondary funding.

FIRST NATION SCHOOLS

Instructional Services (2140)

The basic operating costs for First Nation schools are funded on a formula basis which is driven by the nominal roll. That is:

Grade Level	Rate Multiplied by Number of Student/Units
K4	\$1,813.00
K5	\$3,626.00
Elementary	\$4,951.00
Secondary	\$5,579.00

The base rate is then adjusted by a <size index value> and a <remoteness value> for communities located in remote or isolated areas.

These rates cover basic operating costs, such as:

- School supplies (pencils, notebooks, pens, etc.)
- Educational supplies (school books, library books, stationery, educational tools — maps, globe, etc. — physical education equipment
- Teachers' salaries
- Principal's salary
- One secretary's salary
- Services from specialists occasionally (speech therapist, curriculum development, etc.)
- Cultural development

As well as:

- Physical education clothing.
- Note: Students in K4 and K5 are not eligible.*

PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS

Tuition Fees (2145)

Rates are pre-established by the Ministry of Education in each respective province – for example in **Quebec** the rates are:

Grade Level	Rate Multiplied by Number of Student/Units
K4	\$4,991.00
K5	\$4,991.00
Elementary	\$4,788.00
Secondary	\$5,548.00

Funding levels are provided in the beginning of the year based on these rates though 50% is retained under undistributed funds. Funding is then adjusted at year end when invoices have been provided.

Ancillary Services (2146)

Funding for physical education clothing and school supplies is provided according to the following rates:

Physical education clothing	\$80/unit/year
School supplies:	
Elementary	\$ 80/unit/year
Secondary	\$110/unit/year

Note: Students in K4 and K5 are ineligible.

Advice and Assistance (2160)

This service provides, on a pro rata basis of the regional budget, for the Education Authority's liaison and consultation activities with other schools' administrations, parental and other committees within and outside the community, as well as, for support services to those committees.

ALL TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Room and Board (2156)

INAC does not pay room and board for students living on a reserve and attending a First Nation school. Students placed with foster families or facilities administered by Child and Family Service Agencies are also ineligible for room and board assistance.

Room and Board allocations, in most cases, are paid directly to the service provider (the family with which the child has been boarded).

The funding formula is as follows:*

- Boarding seven days a week - \$430/month
- Boarding five days a week - \$325/month

* **Note: this rate is under review. This service also provides a \$200/year clothing allocation per student boarded off reserve.**

Financial Assistance Allowances (2158)

Monthly allocation for secondary level students, is as follows:

- Students aged 18 - \$10/month
- Students aged 18 + \$20/month

Graduation clothing — up to \$200 is provided. In the case of First Nation schools, this applies only for communities that offer Secondary School Programming.

Guidance and Counseling (2159)

This service provides, on a pro rata basis of the regional budget, for the delivery of counseling and guidance services to students in elementary/secondary levels. It includes salaries and allowances for professional and paraprofessional counseling staff and for staff on educational leave; it also includes administration costs such as staffing, travel relocation, in service training, etc.

Source: INAC Feb. 2000

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

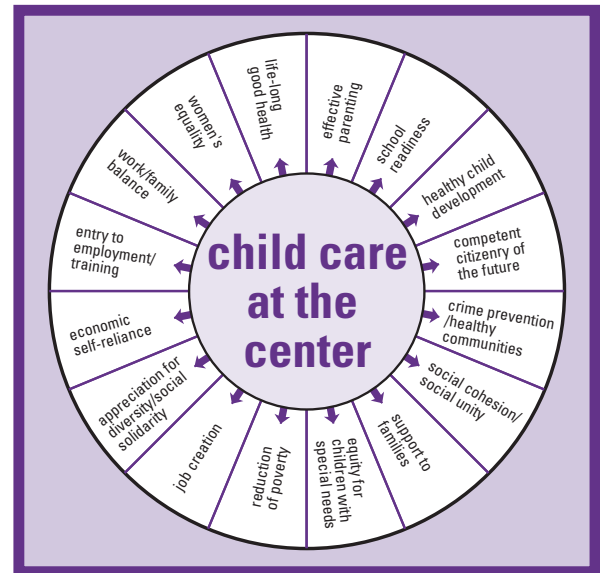
Early years researchers from many disciplines are now beginning to understand the crucial nature of child development as it pertains to the early years and its effects on learning behavior and health in the later stages of life. We now know that experiences and environments during early child development, including the active engagement of parents, *are critical to brain development for children in their early years*. New evidence indicates, what parents have always known, *that babies and young children need love and care*.

The new thinking of scientists related to the early development of a child's brain hinges on the new belief that there is a complex interplay between the genes *we are born with* and *the experiences we have*. Early experiences have a decisive impact on the development of the brain and the nature and long term extent of adult capacities. Early childhood interactions don't *just create the context*, they directly *affect the way the brain is "wired."* By the time children reach age three, their brain's are twice as active as those of adults and during adolescence their brain activity level actually decreases. There is also evidence that early learning improves the child's chances of enjoying good health, of finding work later in life, of social inclusion and of being less likely to commit crime (UNESCO).

Quality child care is critical to the development of children. Poor quality is shown to have negative effects on children – regardless of social class. High quality childcare is sensitive, responsive, personal, developmentally appropriate, culturally appropriate and

not custodial. High quality child care is also characterized by small group sizes, well trained staff, adequate health, safety and physical environment precautions, high adult to child ratios and stable consistent care giving.

The following model has been adapted from the *Childcare Resource and Research Centre* to illustrate how early childhood development programming should be implemented.



What Early Childhood Development Programs Ultimately Cost:

Indian Affairs and Northern Development estimated expenditures since 1994 were:

- \$15 million in 1994/95
- \$17 million in 1995-96
- \$18 million in 1996-97
- \$18 million in 1997-98

National Child Benefit

- 1998-99 \$30.3 million
- 1999-2000 \$48.26 million
- 2000-2001 \$55.19 million

In 1998-99 the breakdown of expenditures equaled approximately: for Child/Day care programs (\$810,589.00), Nutrition programs (\$4 million), Early child development programs (\$389,238.00), Employment and Training programs (\$4 million) and other related programs (\$5.7 million).

First Nations Child and Family Services

- The FNCFS program was established in 1991 under Directive 20-1. By 1998 there were 91 full service agencies in operation and 14 new agencies in the developmental stages.
- The budget in 1997/1998 was \$195 million (serving 359 First Nations across Canada)

Health Canada estimated expenditures for *Aboriginal Head Start* have been:

- *Off-reserve Aboriginal Head Start* was originally announced in 1995 and funding for a 4 year period totaled \$93.7 million: \$25.7 million for 1995-96, \$23 million for 1996-97 and \$22.5 million respectively for 1997-98 and 1998-99
- *Aboriginal Head Start On -Reserve* was set at \$100 million over 4 years beginning with \$15 million in 1998-1999, \$33 million in 1999/2000, \$27 million in 2000/2001 and \$25 million per year ongoing.

Human Resources Development Canada estimated expenditures for First Nations/Inuit Child Care have been:

- The *First Nations /Inuit Child Care Initiative* was announced in 1995. It intended to achieve levels of quality and quantity of child care in First Nations and Inuit communities that compared to the general population. The 3 year initiative was to develop and upgrade child care spaces with a target of 6,000 spaces intended to meet the accessibility level of the general population. The population of 0-4 year olds identified as North American Indian in 1996 was 106,370 meaning that only 6,000 of the population who required services received them.
- The financial commitment of \$6 million was for 1995-96 which was followed by \$26 million for 1996-97; \$40 million for 1997-98; ongoing funding of \$36 million annually will be available thereafter.

Despite these expenditures the programs are meeting less than 10% of the needs of First Nations children in Canada. The symptoms of poverty are devastating to First Nation communities especially when reforms to reverse poverty's trends have been unsuccessful. Empowerment in any society requires its people to be pro-active. First Nations communities are no different. To achieve long term sustainable communities policy makers would be wise to encourage and support education, training and entrepreneurial endeavors. Hand and hand with these initiatives are the support systems necessary to ensure success. This particularly relates to child care and early childhood development.

Although there have been child care and early childhood development initiatives in place since the 1990's there are still many barriers to overcome. The programs in terms of resourcing far from meet the need of First Nation communities in terms of risk factors. The following are some of the realities that still exist in First Nation communities today:

Day Care, Child Care and Head Start centres are expensive to operate and many communities do not have the facilities or funding to open or provide for these services. Establishing programs that integrate language, culture and traditions, as well as, modern community living takes time and money. In many First Nation communities these programs are still in the development phase due to lack of funding, trained personnel and facilities.

Funding for the design and development of First Nations specific child care, early childhood development and Head Start training programs and capacity building for community boards, directors and program managers is required. Inclusion of Elders and knowledgeable community members in the design, development and delivery of early childhood development, Head Start and child care programs is essential.

Enhancement and creation of new child care and early childhood development services over time is critical to ensure that location, hours, and types of community programs are flexible and meet the needs of parents and families. The current allocations of funding and child care spaces are totally inadequate. Allocation formulas must recognize and support the diversity of community program and resource needs. Funding allocations also must provide sufficient funding to keep parent fees at an affordable level for all parents. Fee schedules must be consistent with community practices and values.

First Nations and regions that receive other funding for child care spaces must not be penalized in such a manner that existing funding is reduced. Capital and operations and maintenance for day care facilities are grossly under funded. Reporting requirements need to be community oriented. Most importantly regular child care spaces are so severely under resourced that *special needs* children have almost no access to services.

We know that early childhood intervention creates and fosters healthier communities thus saving money in social spending long term. There is a critical need for the federal government to coordinate within its departments to ensure integration and pooling of resources for First Nation early childhood and child care programming. There is no long term commitment by the government to continue their children's initiatives long term. This has critical implications for the well being of First Nations children who are such a precious resource for the future in terms of development, empowerment and self sufficiency.

Needs of First Nations must be considered in terms of creating, sustaining and providing technical support for child care and early childhood development programs. This is translated into the following:

1. Stable and adequate funding that is fair and equitably distributed is required for the long term.
2. Licensing and monitoring of day care, child care and Head Start facilities must be within the jurisdiction of First Nations in order to respect self-government and self-sufficiency parameters of First Nations.

3. First Nation specific training must be developed and delivered to ensure there are sufficient child care providers who are able to meet the needs of First Nation children and their parents. Culturally specific curricula is also required.
4. Resources are required for the development of proper facilities that also includes operation and maintenance costs for sustainability purposes. There is a severe lack of capital facilities.
5. Funding must be flexible and meet the diverse needs of regions and First Nation communities that are diverse and changing.
6. Resources are also required to meet the requirements of *special needs* children above that of regular child care spaces.



JURISDICTION AND QUALITY EDUCATION

How is jurisdiction over Education defined and operationalized by First Nations?

(Source: Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century)

Jurisdiction is locally defined policies, procedures and curriculum for First Nations education programming at the local community level.

Jurisdiction is a locally developed system based on First Nation traditions and laws which incorporates our unique beliefs, vision and definition of education at the local level.

Jurisdiction requires, and is defined by, local autonomy.

Jurisdiction over education is totally under the purview of each individual First Nation.

Jurisdiction is defined through treaty and our inherent right to education.

Jurisdiction contains the basics of traditional methods and systems of teaching. These are social, spiritual, respect, language, culture, academic, economic and environment.

Jurisdiction is a right defined through treaty and the federal fiduciary obligation for the resourcing of First Nations education.

Jurisdiction means the exercise of quality of education, standards of education and programming requirements. This includes, and is not limited to, elementary, secondary, post-secondary, special education, literacy, adult education and vocational education.

Jurisdiction means clear guidelines for education authorities and Chief and Council in terms of authority and responsibility.

Jurisdiction means agreement on accreditation and certification at the First Nation level of education programming with recognition at the provincial and federal level.

Jurisdiction means governance over facility resources, curriculum, content and cultural aspects of First Nation education programs.

Jurisdiction means adequate resourcing and the recognition of the federal government of its fiduciary responsibility for First Nations education.

What Are The Principal Indicators of a Quality First Nations Education Program?

“Expanding access to education will only have a beneficial impact on individuals in a society only if the education is good quality.” (UNESCO 2002). It encompasses how learning is organized and managed, what the content of learning is, what level of learning is achieved, what it leads to in terms of outcomes, and what goes on in the learning environment. If parents do not believe that what their children learn is relevant to life, they will not send their children to school even if the opportunity exists. Where the modes of delivery of learning are inappropriate or demotivating, or where educators are untrained or poorly trained, it is unlikely learners will avail themselves of the educational opportunity (UNESCO).

- Quality of education is the recognition of the role of First Nation Elders in the education process.
- Quality of education is recognition of the role of children and the encouraging of pride and “magic” in their learning.
- Quality is based on the values, beliefs and philosophy as they are incorporated in the education program.
- Quality is every person paying attention to every part of the school system.
- Quality means obeying the laws of the natural world. A holistic approach to education is essential.
- Quality is qualified and caring teachers, administrators and staff.
- Quality is feeling okay about being a First Nations person.

- Quality is feeling a sense of growth through our culture and our language. It is based on identity and uniqueness as individuals.

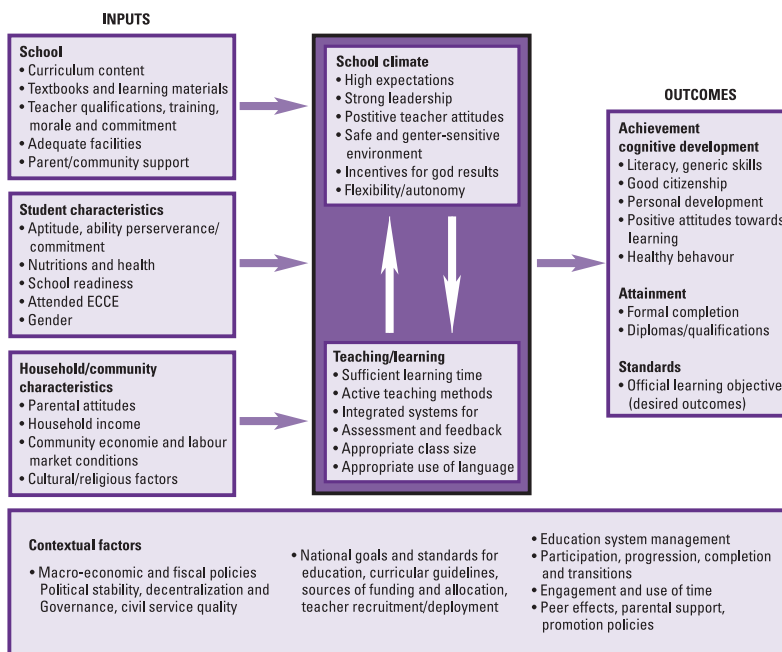
What is necessary to implement Quality education in First Nation communities?

(Source: Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century)

- First Nations students need to feel okay about themselves and their families.
- First Nations need to develop curriculum that is culturally appropriate to the community. Elders must also be a significant component of this initiative.
- First Nations need to ensure that there is a balance between the two worlds to prepare students for a future of work and lifelong learning.
- Community involvement in the implementation of education programming is essential to ensure quality. As stakeholders it is important the community membership participate in their children’s education.
- The education program must reflect the beliefs, traditions and values of the people it serves. Elders and community members are significant contributors to this effort.
- It is essential that First Nations hire and recruit quality teachers who know the curriculum, like their job and have good teaching values and attitudes.
- The education program needs to be flexible and designed to accommodate various teaching methodologies. Also, as current events happen they should be incorporated into lesson plans and school activities.

- The school must be a safe place. The school environment is very important to the student.
- First Nations schools need to be holistic and meet all the needs of students, it should not be just academics.
- Facilities must be good quality with good lighting and aesthetics.
- Sports must be an integral part of the education program both indoors and outdoors.
- Spirituality must be valued and included in the education program as it plays an important role in developing identity.
- In order to ensure quality education programs we need to develop our own systems based on our traditions, culture and values. Monies are required to resource this effort. Provincial systems are not relevant to the beliefs and visions for the future of our children.
- The evaluation process needs to be based on community defined goals and objectives.

An Input-Process-Outcome Framework For Assessing Education Quality



Source : derived fro Heneveld and Graig (1995). OECD/ONES (2001), Scheerens (2002).

What are the Barriers to full jurisdiction of First Nations Education?

(Source: Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century)

- Provincial jurisdiction impedes the exercise of First Nations jurisdiction.
- There is a lack of adequate resources to implement full jurisdiction.
- There is lack of freedom to exercise jurisdiction because of federal policies and interference.
- There is lack of trust on the part of the federal government that First Nations have the ability to manage themselves.
- There needs to be a mechanism that defines the roles and responsibilities of the federal government in First Nations education once jurisdiction is assumed.
- Diversity needs to be recognized in terms of First Nations needs across the country. Local needs are extremely diverse from one part of the country to another.
- First Nations need to have full control over their budgets and financial resources in order to address local needs.
- Local community members need to be empowered to understand their education program services and rights.
- Capital funding and space accommodations standards are inadequate which forces First Nations to have to obtain services from provincial authorities.

- Federal and provincial recognition of First Nations self government is required,
- Systems need to be developed to project investment for program policies and services already in place.
- There needs to be information sharing between First Nations to facilitate exercise of jurisdiction.
- Adequate resourcing is required for the modernization and development of First Nation education programs in terms of accessibility, technology, training and equipment.

Capital construction dollars are continuously lost through master tuition agreements to construct schools, in whole or in part, in non-Aboriginal communities. Capital funds are never recovered from provincial education authorities when First Nation students no longer attend these schools because of “local control.” These funds need to be reclaimed from these non-First Nation entities.



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

What is First Nations Education?

First Nations education focuses on the *well being* of the student. It is a *holistic* approach that prepares First Nation students for *total living*. Modern First Nations education is consistent with traditional First Nations education. Both incorporate a deep respect for the natural world with the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and life skills development of the individual. First Nations language and cultural values are taught and enhanced through education. First Nations education develops qualities and values in students such as respect for Elders and cultural tradition, modesty, leadership, generosity, resourcefulness, integrity, wisdom, courage, compassion for others and living harmoniously with the environment. Relevant education for First Nations students today is based on the following basic philosophical elements:

- Preservation of languages and culture
- Values to develop a strong sense of pride and respect for the community, culture and family

- Preparation for Total Living including vocational, academic, professional and life skills
- Local jurisdiction over education, policies, management methods and approaches, curriculum standards and program quality, delivery of services and education resource requirements

Education as a Human Right

The right to education is established through Article 26 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948) which declared that “*elementary education shall be free and compulsory, and that higher levels will be equally available to all on the basis of merit.*”

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) the intrinsic human value of education – its ability to add meaning and value to everyone’s lives without discrimination – is at the core of its status as a human right. But education is also an indispensable means to

unlock and protect other human rights. It provides some of the scaffolding necessary for the achievement of *the rights to good health, liberty, security, economic well-being and participation in social and political activity*. Where the right to education is guaranteed, people's access to and enjoyment of other rights is enhanced and the imbalances in life chances are lessened (source: *Education for All is the World on Track? UNESCO-2002*).

According to UNESCO the right to education straddles the division between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. It embodies them all. For example, it is of central importance to implement the rights of *First Nation children*, as well as the rights of the *child*. Ethnicity and poverty are intertwined and under these circumstances, *merely providing opportunities* to attend school *will not suffice to eliminate discrimination or to universalize participation*. All human rights within education also need to be addressed if the right to education is to be achieved.

Children and young people cannot secure their right to education by themselves. They rely on their parents and their teachers. But few of their parents directly

provide the tax revenues from which education is financed, and their votes may have only a weak impact upon budgetary allocations. Many teachers are preoccupied with having to battle for their own rights. In Canada, therefore, the universal right to education for First Nations people is not guaranteed as described herein.

Historical Overview of First Nations Education

The earliest forms of education, long before the Europeans came to this country, were where teaching was done by family members and relatives. Women and Elders were especially acknowledged as *natural teachers* of First Nation people. Traditions dictated that women and Elders transmitted the culture, language and skills necessary for children to grow up and survive in a harsh environment. They transferred customs to their families and gave advice when decisions had to be made. Children spent their days with their mother, collecting medicines, firewood, fetching water, working hides and making clothes. Storytelling provided children with lessons and examples to guide them in their relations with the Creator, Mother Earth, their families and their governments. Mothers and Elders were the repositories of knowledge and wisdom. They were the institutions

which educated the young. The men of the community supported women in their natural role. This form of education effected the child positively because it addressed itself to the total community. The child had the opportunity to develop a good self-image as an individual and as a member of their First Nation.

From 1600 to 1750 schools were operated by missionaries. Teaching during this period concentrated primarily on religious matters. Decisions regarding the education of First Nation children were made in Europe, with interests of European settlers in North America taking precedence. Funding for education came from charitable societies in Europe. The stated objectives for First Nation children, who were schooled with the children of colonists, were “acculturation and assimilation.”

From 1750 to 1850, the British and the French influence continued to dominate education. Churches were still actively involved and dedicated to converting First Nations to Christianity. After this period, however, an opinion began to evolve which dictated that “Native people should be educated apart from North American inhabitants particularly to protect Natives from social exploitation.”

From 1850 to 1950 schooling for First Nations became segregated “in order to be protective.” Until the passing of the BNA Act in 1867, *Indian* education was exclusively the domain of European religious groups.

After 1867, federal responsibility for “*Indians and lands reserved for Indians*,” became a component of confederation. This coincided with the introduction of boarding schools. The church and government jointly operated these schools, the church managed the schools while government inspected and financed them.

Boarding schools had a very high mortality rate. It is estimated at the turn of the century, that 50 percent of children attending those schools did not live to benefit from the education they received. Enrollments in the schools were very high, so government operating funds could be obtained, as funding was dependent on per capita grants.

In 1948, the federal government began to alter policy concerning First Nation education. The government accepted full financial responsibility for First Nations education but that responsibility did not include the building and operation of schools on-reserve. Instead, arrangements were made with provincial governments to provide facilities and teachers

in existing provincially run schools. The federal government reimbursed school boards by paying tuition for First Nation students. The government made provision for 60 percent of First Nations students in integrated schools. The objective of this new policy was to abolish the separate political and social status of First Nations, to enfranchise First Nations and merge them into the rest of the population on an “equal footing.” During that time the *Indian Act* stipulated that a person would be enfranchised under the following conditions: a person would be removed from band membership as a result of living outside Canada for over five years without authority from the Superintendent General, and a person was enfranchised as a result of his/her profession.

The Act further stated.... “any such *Indian* of the male sex and not under 21 years of age who was able to speak, read, or write English or the French language, was sufficiently advanced in the elementary branches of education, was of good moral character and free from debt, was so declared to be enfranchised and would no longer be deemed an *Indian* within the meaning thereof.”

In June 1969, the federal government presented the *White Paper*, this paper proposed the elimination of all constitutional and legislative bases of discrimination against “*Indians*.”

As a result of discussions of a number of jurisdictional matters, the emergence of the Aboriginal leadership began to be felt in Canada. The appalling conditions faced by First Nations were articulated to the Canadian public and resulted in the policy statement... “*Indian Control of Indian Education*.” First Nation education became a major government focus, and subsequently, the policy statement was adopted in principle by the Department of Indian Affairs. This policy statement was based on two basic principles: parental responsibility and local control of education.

In 1988, a four year, six million dollar national review of First Nations education was completed and released by the Education Secretariat of the Assembly of First Nations. It was entitled “Tradition and Education: Towards A Vision of Our Future.” The review analyzed four aspects of First Nations education: jurisdiction, quality, management and resourcing.

The primary conclusions drawn from Tradition and Education were:

Education is an inherent right which must be respected by all levels of government. In particular, First Nations governments must assure that children, teachers of their children and community members understand fully, that the concepts of self government and self sufficiency are related.

Since the completion of the National Review: Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future in 1988, and the Ratification of the Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in 1989 by the Chiefs of Canada, the only movement by the federal government towards recognition and implementation of the recommendations of the study was the commissioning of the *MacPherson Report* which was released in September 1991.

The *MacPherson Report* clearly stated that the process set in motion by Tradition and Education should continue. On the First Nation side, MacPherson recommended a continued consultative process “especially one firmly focused on the identification and actual implementation of substantive education reforms in the near future.” On the government side,

MacPherson recommended the willingness to enter into serious discussions and negotiations with First Nations “about the process and substance of major reforms in the field of Indian education.”

In 1997 *Gathering Strength*, a response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, was released by the Federal Government. There were three themes dealing specifically with education:

- **Language, Heritage and Culture** - measures to preserve and protect First Nations languages, heritage and cultures.
- **Investing in Aboriginal Education/Training** - linking school, training and work opportunities, quality of education and programming to encourage youth to stay in school and increasing employment opportunities
- **Investing in First Nations youth** - developing youth initiatives on and off reserve

Four priority areas for nationally allocated resources were dedicated to:

- Strengthen management and governance capacity
- Improve the quality of classroom instruction

- Increase parental and community involvement in education
- Aid the school to work transition for First Nations youth

The expenditure of resources to date have been:

- 1998-99 \$10 million (200 initiatives)
- 1999-2000 \$26 million (320 initiatives)
- 2000-2001 \$40 million (390 initiatives)

What have been the Impacts of Education in First Nation communities today?

The following charts are indicators of the socio and economic conditions currently existing in First Nation communities today. These data are based on the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, INAC's Nominal roll and other Census related data.

As we can see in the table below graduation rates are no more than 28.9% to 32.1% annually with over 71% to 69% of our students *never completing grade 12 or 13*.

On-Reserve Population, Enrolled in Grade 12 or 13, Graduates, Canada 1994-95 to 1999-2000

School Year	Enrollment	Graduates	Graduation Rate
1994-95	5,743	1,662	28.9
1995-96	5,909	2,001	33.9
1996-97	5,618	1,785	31.8
1997-98	5,948	1,975	33.2
1998-99	5,036	1,939	32.1
1999-00	6,464	2,072	32.1

Source: Nominal Roll 1994-2000 INAC

The table below indicates the trends of enrollment by school type. In the past decade enrollments have increased in Band-Operated schools for elementary level students while enrollment trends at the provincial level remain high for secondary level school attendance.

**On-Reserve Population Enrolled in Kindergarten,
Elementary and Secondary Schools by School type,
Canada 1994-95 to 2000-01**

School Year	Federal	Provincial	Band Operated	Private
1990-91	8.8%	45.1%	44.0%	2.1%
1991-92	6.4%	44.6%	47.3%	1.7%
1992-93	5.0%	43.9%	49.2%	1.9%
1993-94	3.3%	42.6%	51.6%	2.5%
1994-95	2.1%	41.0%	54.5%	2.4%
1995-96	1.6%	39.4%	56.7%	2.3%
1996-97	1.6%	38.9%	57.5%	2.0%
1997-98	1.5%	37.8%	58.7%	2.0%
1998-99	1.5%	37.2%	59.4%	1.9%
1999-00	1.4%	36.7%	60.2%	1.7%
2000-01	1.4%	35.6%	61.3%	1.7%

Source: 1999-2000 Nominal Roll INAC

**Children 0-14 Years Identifying with an
Aboriginal Group in Canada 1996**

Age group	North American Indian	Metis	Inuit
0-4 yrs.	106,370	25,800	7,325
5-9 yrs.	101,415	24,220	7,025
10-14 yrs.	91,880	22,605	5,560

Source: APS and Census data 1996

Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) Data indicates that the highest population rates for Aboriginal people are for children aged 14 and under, compared to the population overall, for all categories: First Nation, Metis and Inuit. This indicates a huge need for education resourcing and policy planning for the future.

Total Population by 5 Year Age Groups (%) 1996
Aboriginal Peoples Survey

Age Group	Total Aboriginal	Total Registered Indian	On-Reserve	Off-reserve	Inuit	Metis	Other Aboriginal	Non-aboriginal
0-4	11.5	11.7	13.2	10.5	15.0	10.6	11.3	6.3
5-9	11.0	11.7	13.0	10.6	14.4	10.3	10.3	6.3
10-14	10.0	10.4	11.4	9.5	11.4	9.5	9.7	6.6
15-19	8.9	8.8	9.8	8.0	9.5	9.4	8.7	6.4
20-24	8.7	8.7	8.2	9.1	9.3	8.9	8.7	6.4
25-29	8.8	9.0	8.1	9.7	9.0	8.7	8.6	7.0
30-34	9.3	9.1	7.8	10.2	8.3	8.9	9.8	8.6
35-39	8.5	7.9	6.8	8.7	6.1	8.5	9.4	8.9
40-44	6.7	6.9	5.1	6.7	4.1	7.0	7.6	8.2
45-49	5.2	4.7	4.1	5.3	3.8	5.5	5.6	7.4
50-54	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.6	2.7	3.8	3.5	5.7
55-59	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.8	2.2	4.6
60-64	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.1	1.6	4.3
65-69	1.3	1.5	1.7	1.3	1.1	1.6	1.1	4.1
70-74	1.0	1.1	1.2	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.9	3.7
75-79	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.5	2.7
80-84	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	1.7
85+	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	1.1

Source: Aboriginal Women A Profile from the 1996 Census, INAC December 2001

The following table indicates that the unemployment rate continues to be double the rate of the non-Aboriginal population with registered *Indians* having the highest unemployment rate of any Aboriginal group.

Canada Labour Force Characteristics 1996

	Total Aboriginal	Total Registered Indians	On- reserve	Off- Reserve	Inuit	Metis	Other Aboriginal	Non- Aboriginal
Total Labour Force Activity	777,010	312,405	148,150	164,250	23,070	123,070	312,375	21,857,915
Total Labour Force	486	169,390	76,305	93,090	13,955	81,180	221,990	14,326,185
Employed	389,700	123,345	54,365	68,975	10,960	65,155	190,245	12,929,040
Unemployed	96,810	46,045	21,935	24,110	2,995	16,025	31,745	1,397,150
Unemployed Experienced	62,665	28,965	14,420	14,540	2,095	10,825	20,780	936,135
Unemployed Unexperienced	34,145	17,080	7,515	9,565	895	5,195	10,970	461,010
Not in Labour Force	284,500	143,015	71,855	71,160	9,305	41,890	90,285	7,531,725
Participation Rate%	63	54	52	57	60	66	71	66
Unemployment Rate	20	27	29	26	22	20	14	10
Employment/ Participation Ratio	51	40	37	42	47	53	61	59

Source: Statistics Canada, INAC Core Census Tabulations, 1996, T-11

- There were 771, 010 Aboriginal people aged 15 or more in Canada, representing 3.4% of the total Canadian labour force.
- Registered Indians comprise 35% of the Aboriginal labour force and account for 32% of employment and almost 48% of the unemployed.
- Registered Indians had the lowest labour force participation rate of any Aboriginal group, with a rate of 54%. The *Other Aboriginal* population had the highest rate of participation in the labour force; at 71%.
- Unemployment rates for all Aboriginal groups (except the Other Aboriginal population), continue to be at least double the rate of the non-Aboriginal population.
- Registered Indians had the highest unemployment rate of any Aboriginal group, at 27%.

- The Other Aboriginal population experienced the highest employment/population ratio of any Aboriginal group, with a rate of 61%.

Source: Aboriginal Labour Force Characteristics from the 1996 Census.
INAC March 2001

The results of these labour force statistics are drastically illustrated in the following pages as *characteristics of risk* for First Nations children and youth. These are broken down into 5 *risk factor categories*: (1) community environment, (2) family environment, (3) vulnerability of the child, (4) early behavior problems and (5) adolescent problems. Education is an important factor in *reducing these risk factors* as a basis for socio-economic development and addressing the implications of poverty.

Characteristics of Risk to First Nations Children and Youth

Risk Factor Category	Characteristics of Risk
Community Environment	Poverty, high unemployment, inadequate housing, cultural devaluation, culture and language barriers, low educational levels, low achievement expectations from society
Family Environment	Financial strain; large, overcrowded family; unemployed or underemployed parents; parents with little education; single female parent without family/other support; family violence or conflict; frequent family moves; low parent/child contact
Vulnerability of the child	Child of an alcohol, tobacco or drug abuser; birth defects and physical disabilities; birth defects and physical disabilities; physical or mental health problems
Early behavior problems	Learning disabilities, emotional problems, inability to cope with stress, low self-esteem, aggressiveness
Adolescent Problems	School failure and drop out; at risk of dropping out; violent acts; drug use and abuse; teenage pregnancy/teen parenthood; unemployed/under-employed; suicidal

Children are the First Nations most precious resource. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of the present generations and the hope of the future. First Nations intend to prepare their children to carry on their cultures and governments.

Because education shapes the minds and values of First Nations young people, it is vitally important that First Nations governments have jurisdiction over educational programs which have such a lasting impact.

The education of our children is a fundamental tool in developing and strengthening self-government in our communities. *Yet our children are at risk.*

The following tables illustrate the breadth and depth of the risk our children and youth are experiencing in our communities today.

Table 1 (a)
(Risk Factors for First Nation Children and Youth in Canada)

Risk Factor Category	Characteristic	Statistical Indicators of Risk
Community Environment	Poverty	Most Aboriginal people are at or below the poverty line. In major western cities, four times as many Aboriginal people as other citizens are below the poverty line.
	High unemployment	50% of First Nation children living on or off-reserve are living in poverty. Aboriginal people are less active in the labour force. They represent 47% of the those employed on-reserve and 57% off-reserve compared to the national labor force employment rate of 68%
	Inadequate Housing	First Nations houses on-reserve are ten times more likely to be crowded than houses the general population live in. Only 54% of houses have adequate water supplies and 47% have adequate sewage disposal. More than 20% of First Nations have problems with their water supply which threatens health and safety.
	Cultural devaluation	There are 633 First Nations in Canada, 52 Nations and cultural groups. There are 57 Aboriginal languages and 12 language families represented in Canada and only 3 languages are predicted to survive – Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway.
	Culture and language barriers	According to Census and APS data 21.9% of Aboriginal persons age 5-14, 27.5% aged 15-24, 36.7% aged 25-54 and 63.1% aged 55+ speak an Aboriginal language. As the Elders die the languages are dying with them.
	Low educational levels	The education of Aboriginal people lags behind other Canadians. 18% of Aboriginal people 15 years or older have less than grade 9 compared to 13.8% for Canadians, 8.1% Aboriginal people are high school graduates compared to 12.9% for Canadians. 4.7% Aboriginal people have University degrees compared to 11.6% Canadians.
	Low achievement expectations from society	69% of First Nation youth never complete high school compared to 31% of the general youth population for Canada. Rates of First Nation youth aged 20-24 attending university was 12% compared to 35% for the general population. Completion rates for First Nation youth are approximately 31% compared to 58% for the general population.
Family Environment	Alcohol, tobacco and other dependency of parents	According to the FNIRHS 78% of respondents said they used tobacco in non-traditional ways. 62% smoked cigarettes, 4% used snuff and 1% used chewing tobacco. The majority of the population of smokers are under the age of 40 and the smoking rates are up to 72% for the youngest adult age group (age 20-24). Smoking for Aboriginal children begins as early as 6 to 8 years (0-8%) but rapidly increases at age 11 to 12 (10% to 65%) with a peak initiation at about age 16 years.
	Parental abuse and neglect	25% of Aboriginal adults reported sexual abuse is a problem in their community and 15% reported rape as problems. 25 % of First Nation youth reside in one parent households and 18% live in non-family settings. Compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts First Nations youth are 1.6 more times likely to report living in a non-family setting. Mortality rates among Aboriginal youth indicate there are 250 deaths per 100,000 persons, a rate of approximately 3.6 times higher than deaths reported for all Canadian youth.

Table 1 (b)
(Risk Factors for First Nation Children and Youth in Canada)

Risk Factor Category	Characteristic	Statistical Indicators of Risk
	Financial strain	More than 45% of all First Nation youth were living in a low income household, a rate of roughly 1.9 times that of non-First Nation youth
	Large, overcrowded family	More than half (52%) of First Nation households live in homes that fall below one or more of the housing standards as compared to 32% for Non-First Nation households
	Unemployed or underemployed parents	Earned income per employed Aboriginal person in 1991 was \$14,561 compared to \$24,001 for the general Canadian population. First Nations people are economically disadvantaged in that they earn an average of half what Canadians earn and subsist on social assistance at a rate of five times higher than the rest of the Canadian population.
	Parents with little education	Half of the First Nations school age population do not complete high school.
	Single female parent without family/other support	32% of Aboriginal children live in households with a lone-parent and are at elevated risk for living in poverty
	Family violence or conflict	39% of Aboriginal adults reported that family violence is a problem in their community. Incarceration rates of Aboriginal people are 5-6 times higher than the national average. The highest rates of Aboriginal sentenced admissions were in the NWT (80%), the prairies (50%) and BC (20%)
	Frequent family moves	High rates of mobility characterize the First Nation youth population. Between 1995 and 1996, more than one third of First Nation youth reported a change in residence, a rate roughly 1.4 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal youth
	Low parent/child contact	5% of First Nations children were in the custody of Child and Family services in 1996/97.
Vulnerability of the Child	Child of an alcohol, tobacco or drug abuser	Incidences of FAS/FAE in First Nation communities are 30 times the national average.
	Birth defects and physical disabilities	Aboriginal people are more likely than other Canadians to have hearing, sight and speech difficulties. Mobility impairment occurs at the same rate for both populations. The rate of disability for Aboriginal people is 31%.
	Physical or mental health problems	The most prevalent health problems among First Nation children include ear infections, respiratory conditions, broken bones, emotional and behavioral problems. First Nation children are also at a greater risk of contracting diseases such as tuberculosis, Hepatitis A and B, meningitis and gastroenteritis than non-First Nation children.

Table 1 (c)
(Risk Factors for First Nation Children and Youth in Canada)

Risk Factor Category	Characteristic	Statistical Indicators of Risk
	Learning disabilities	Aboriginal youth are at elevated risk of suffering from a physical developmental or learning disability. According to the APS nearly a third of all First Nations people aged 15 and older had a disability which is more than double the national rate during the same period
Early Behavior Problems	Emotional problems	The suicide rates for First Nations females are 4 times higher than for Canadian females and 32.6 times higher for First Nation males than Canadian males
	Inability to cope with stress	Solvent abuse by youth is a particular concern: 22% of First Nations youth who report solvent abuse are chronic users and come from homes where there is financial hardship, neglect, family conflict or child abuse. Suicide rates for registered First Nation youth ages 15-24 are eight times higher than the national rate for females and five times higher for males.
	Low self-esteem	Incidences of FAS/FAE in First Nation communities are 30 times the national average
	Aggressiveness	Rates of incarceration (age group 15-19) are nine times higher among the First Nation population at approximately 45.7 per 10,000 compared to non-First Nation youth at 4.9 per 10,000.
Adolescent Problems	School failure and dropout	65% of First Nation youth never complete high school compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal children.
	At risk of dropping out	31% of First Nation youth do not attend school compared to the 69% who do
	Violent Acts	Rates of incarceration for violent crimes are nearly 9 times higher for First Nation youth at 103 per 10,000 compared rates of 11.8 per 10,000
	Drug use and abuse	62% of First Nations people aged 15 and over perceive alcohol abuse as a problem in their community while 48% state that drug abuse is an issue.
	Teenage pregnancy/teen parenthood	Aboriginal youth are at elevated risk of becoming pregnant at an early age and greater risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease.
	Unemployed/under-employed	Earnings from employment per person aged 15+ First Nation persons = \$9,140 compared to \$17,020 for the Canadian population
	Suicidal	Suicide rates for registered First Nation youth ages 15-24 are eight times higher than the national rate for females and five times higher for males.

Table 1 (d)
(Risk Factors for First Nation Children and Youth in Canada)

Risk Factor Category	Characteristic	Statistical Indicators of Risk
Negative Adolescent Behavior and Experience	Lack of bonding to family, school, community	65% of First Nation youth never complete high school compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal children. Rates of incarceration for violent crimes are nearly 9 times higher for First Nation youth at 103 per 10,000 compared rates of 11.8 per 10,000
	Hopelessness	Solvent abuse by youth is a particular concern: 22% of First Nations youth who report solvent abuse are chronic users and come from homes where there is financial hardship, neglect, family conflict or child abuse. Suicide rates of registered First Nation youth ages 15-24 are eight times higher than the national rate for females and five times higher for males.
	Feelings of failure	The most prevalent health problems among First Nation children include ear infections, respiratory conditions, broken bones, emotional and behavioral problems. Half of the First Nations school age population do not complete high school.
	Vulnerability to negative peer pressure	Solvent abuse by youth is a particular concern: 22% of First Nations youth who report solvent abuse are chronic users and come from homes where there is financial hardship, neglect, family conflict or child abuse

Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, INAC Indian Register, Health Canada – Medical Services Branch, First Nations

The following *First Nations Student Bill of Rights* recognizes that *every* First Nation student is entitled to: a cultural environment that respects and reinforces the history and traditions of all First Nations people; access to educational technologies, information systems and training in their effective use; access to a lifelong effective educational system to enable them to reach their full potential; a safe learning environment that challenges them to contribute to their communities; and the right to inherit a world free from hostilities that is environmentally sound. This First Nations Student Bill of Rights is consistent with that of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) cited earlier in this document.

First Nations Student Rights

- Children are the most precious resource of First Nations; they are the link to the past generations, and hope for the future.
- First Nations intend to prepare their children to carry on their cultures and governments because education shapes the minds and values of our young people.

- It is vitally important that First Nations governments have jurisdiction over the education programs which have such a lasting impact.
- Equality access to lifelong learning and education is a fundamental right of all First Nations peoples.

Therefore Every First Nations student is entitled to:

1. A cultural environment that respects and reinforces the history and traditions of all Aboriginal people.
2. Access to educational technologies, information systems and training in their effective use.
3. Access to a lifelong effective educational system to enable students to reach their full potential and then pass that on to others.
4. A safe learning environment that challenges students to contribute to their communities.
5. The right to inherit a world free from hostilities, that is environmentally sound.

Source: Resolution No. 18/93 XIV Annual Chiefs Assembly AFN



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“We must love, nurture and encourage our youth in all their endeavours, which are many and ever-changing, throughout their young lives. We must have great patience during each phase they go through and be confident in their abilities.”

National Chief Matthew Coon Come - First Nations Peoples Agenda, 2000





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FIRST NATIONS EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS

Our Children are at Risk... Can we Really Afford to do Nothing?

According to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) 31 percent of Aboriginal people have some form of disability. This is twice the national average of the general Canadian population. For young adults the rate is almost three times as high.

Disabilities affecting mobility and agility are most common, but hearing and visual disabilities affecting a large portion of the Aboriginal population are also prevalent.

The population of First Nation people nationally is 626,606 and out of that there are 190,748 with a disability. *Source: Indian Register Population by Region INAC December 31, 1997*

In 1997 15% of children under six, 11% of children aged 6-11, and 9% of children aged 12 years and older had asthma.

Bronchitis affects almost one in ten children under 6. Respiratory illness is the single greatest cause of hospitalization for young First Nation's children.

HIV/AIDS is a serious health issue among Aboriginal peoples, with Aboriginal people being one of the fastest growing segments of the HIV-positive population (CICH).

According to Health Canada, injury is a major cause of death among First Nations young people aged 15-24 at a rate of 86% with 14% being *other* causes.

Death rates for First Nation infants from injuries are four times the rate of non-First Nation infants and death rates from other causes such as birth defect, low birth weight, respiratory illness are significantly higher for Aboriginal infants and children when compared to the non-Aboriginal population (CICH).

Canada's Census figures indicate that the income of 9 out of every 10 Aboriginal persons living on a reserve with a disability is below the poverty line.

Only 2 out of every 10 Aboriginal persons with a disability living on a reserve have some kind of employment and 5 of every 10 Aboriginal persons with a disability living on a reserve have less than grade 8 formal schooling.

One in every 2 or 3 children in First Nation communities currently stands to develop permanent hearing loss.

Life expectancy at birth is seven to eight years less for registered *Indians* than for Canadians generally.

For infants, the death rate is about twice as high as the national average.

Aboriginal children are the fastest growing segment of the Aboriginal population. In 1996, 35% of Aboriginal people were younger than 15 years of age compared to about 21% for Canada.

The fertility rate among the Aboriginal population is about 69% higher than the rate for the general Canadian population and population growth is twice the national rate (1996 Census)

Injuries remain the leading cause of death for children and youth after their first birthday and a major cause of hospitalization and disability.

Aboriginal children are six times more likely to die by injury, poisoning or violence (ACPH, 1999)

Children with disabilities or identified special needs are unlikely to survive or receive the services they need.

Diabetes ranks as the most prevalent chronic disease condition found in First Nation populations.

The tuberculosis rate among the registered First Nation population is nine times the national average.

Suicide rates among First Nation youth, age 1-19, is six times the national rate.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is thirty times that of the general population.

Infant mortality rate (IMR) is an important measure of population health. In the case of Aboriginal populations, the ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal Infant deaths is twice as high for First Nation people and three times as high for the Inuit as for other Canadians.

Abnormal birth weight – low birth weight – is a known risk factor for ill health in childhood and later life.

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy is another leading cause of ill health in infancy.

Fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect (FAS and FAE) are results of alcohol abuse. Prenatal alcohol exposure may cause subtle deficits in judgement and reasoning in people with apparently normal intelligence.

The estimated cost of meeting the needs of someone who is severely affected by FAS over a lifetime is \$1 to \$1.5 million. (RCAP).

The ninth annual report on child poverty in Canada says 1.3 million Canadian children live below the poverty line – 400,000 more than a decade ago.

Families living below the poverty line spend more than 55% of their income on food, shelter and clothing, according to Campaign 2000's definition.

The cost of bringing every Canadian child out of poverty would be \$12 billion. The investment according to activists would pay benefits in the long term by reducing social problems such as crime.

In Ontario there was a 91% increase in child poverty over a nine-year period. This is compared to a national average increase of 27% during the same period.

According to the Campaign 2000 "Child Poverty in Canada", inadequate income and child development are key determinants to a healthy population.

Adequate income and a healthy start in life have a long-term impact on the well being of children.

Low-income children are more than twice as likely to have low levels of vision, hearing, speech, mobility, dexterity, cognition and emotion. They are also less likely to have an annual visit to the dentist and more likely to be exposed to environmental contaminants.

One hundred and fifty Aboriginal youth were interviewed by *Save the Children Canada* and they concluded that 90% of child and teen prostitutes in Canada are Aboriginal. The report states that widespread racism; crushing poverty and declining culture are the primary reasons why Native youth end up on the streets.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

The following steps are proposed in order that we may address the issues described herein.

In terms of Jurisdiction:

The federal government must realize that there is a need to develop, with First Nations government, instruments, laws and policy making procedures at the national and local level to support and give confidence that the implementation and First Nation jurisdiction over education will be a reality.

Financial resource levels which meet First Nation needs, and the ability to exercise decision making authority without interference from the federal government, is required.

Any provincial role in First Nation decision making must be removed. The federal government must not off-load its fiduciary obligation for First Nations education to provincial governments. Jurisdictional barriers must be removed, particularly provincial laws and regulations which hinder the enhancement and promotion of First Nation values, beliefs, traditions and cultures.

In terms of Resourcing:

First Nation education financing must be derived from community based needs identification processes. A new fiscal framework for the financing of First Nations education must be negotiated with the federal government immediately. A comprehensive review and evaluation of First Nations education financing must be conducted.

In terms of Management

Parity and equality of opportunity for all First Nations learners regardless of geography and isolation is required. Community ownership of First Nation education systems must be facilitated through training designed to facilitate empowerment. The development of resource centers are required for the active sharing of materials.

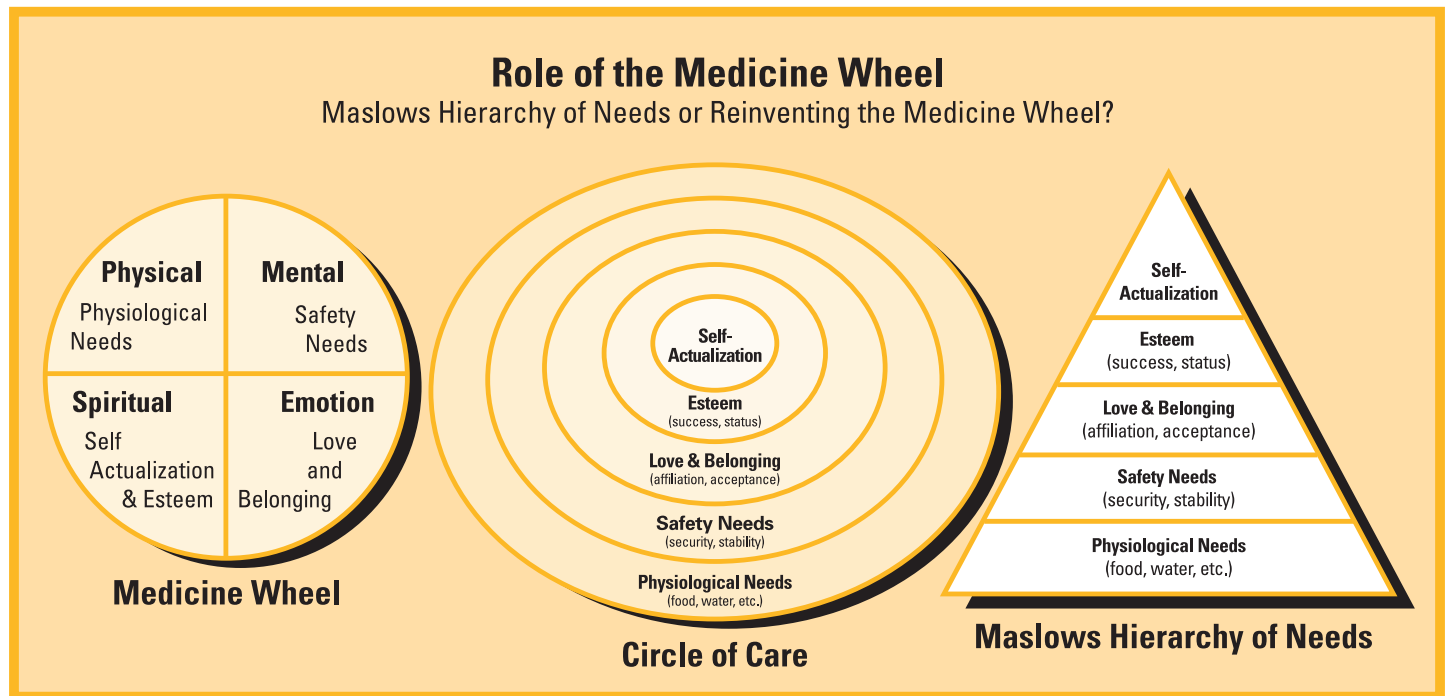
In terms of Quality

First Nations must participate fully in the education of their children. Holistic education incorporates culture, traditional values, spirituality, the physical, emotional and social well being of the learner. New fiscal policies designed to reflect and respond to the language, needs, beliefs, traditions and values of the people they serve are critical. The enactment and support of policies which encourage and require the participation of Elders and community members as contributors are paramount in the sustainability of First Nation culture and language. Source: A Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education (1989) and Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century (1996), RCAP, (1996)

Who are the Stakeholders?

The following diagram outlines *Maslow's hierarchy of needs* and its relationship to the *Medicine Wheel*. We know that for a human being to live they must have their basic physiological needs of food, water, housing and clothing met. They also must have their safety needs met in terms of security and stability. Love and belonging ensures acceptance and affiliation with the family, the community and ultimately society. With these a child and an individual can develop their self-esteem, self-actualization and inevitably their full potential. For First Nations, especially the majority of our child population and their families, the vary basics of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are their biggest hurdle.

If their living, housing, food and clothing needs are not met then it will be impossible to achieve the higher levels of self-actualization that we all aspire to as human beings. This is the particularly the reality for First Nations children and youth. It is our responsibility to ensure education programming meets the holistic requirements of our future generations. This means programs that **must be** high quality, culturally appropriate, comprehensive, equitable, accessible and affordable. Any investment in our children will certainly be an ultimate investment in our future. **This is the right of our children and our people.**



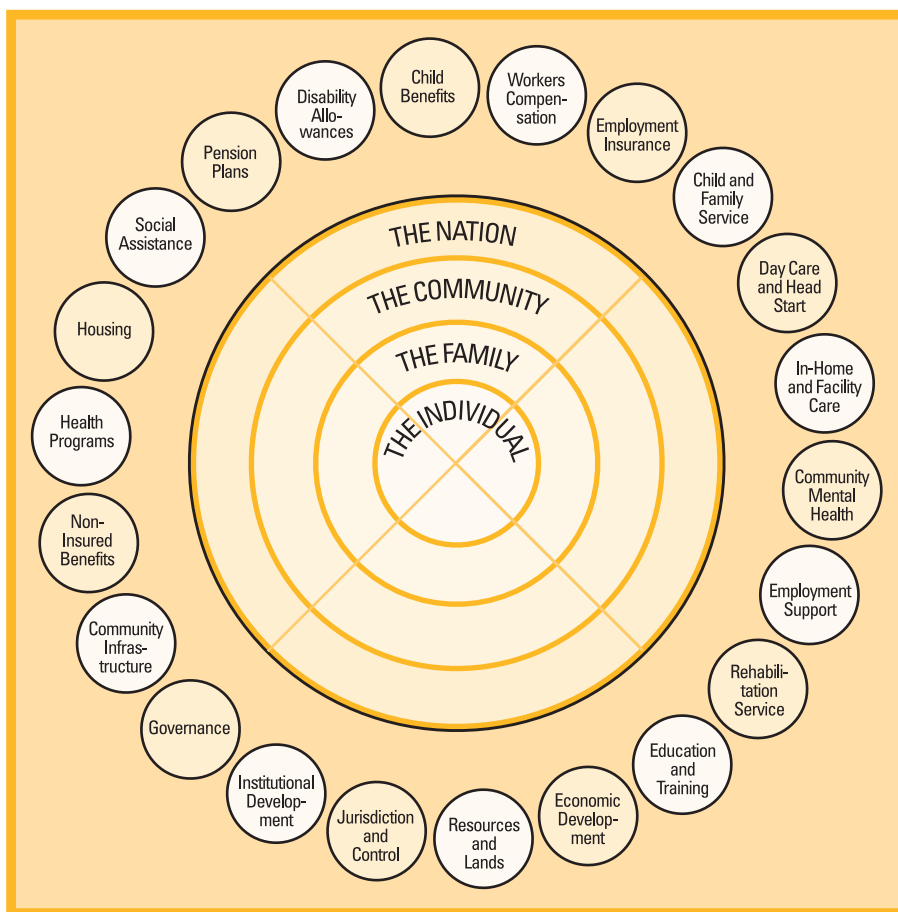
There is also the issue of the stakeholders. For holistic programming to happen the following stakeholders are essential to developing a coordinated approach to change. Policy and program development must be dependent upon the belief that all stakeholders have a unique contribution to any given effort.

Each stakeholder has resources that need developing and each would benefit from a network that is based on the sharing of ideas and solutions to similar problems as illustrated below.

Education is an investment in our future.

Without healthy, socially developed children we will have no future. We will have no guarantees for tomorrow without them. To survive as a people, a culture and a nation, we must attend to the health and well-being of all our children.

(Source: For those Who are Able: A Perspective on First Nations Child Disability - Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald)





CAN WE REALLY AFFORD TO DO NOTHING?

AFN Education Position on First Nations Education

Introduction

Children are the First Nations most precious resource. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of the present generations and the hope of the future. First Nations intend to prepare their children to carry on their cultures and environments. The education of our children is a fundamental tool in developing and strengthening self-government in our communities. Yet our children are at risk. They are at risk from poverty, inadequate housing, cultural devaluation, overcrowded living conditions, abuse, disability, suicide, violence and failure.

First Nations communities are forced to subsist in third world living conditions and in a country that has been rated by the United Nations Human Development index as one of the top three countries in the world to live. Yet on this same index First Nations rank 78th.

Inherent Right to Education

First Nations have an inherent right to self-government. They have existed as sovereign, self-governing nations since long before the establishment of the Government of Canada. First Nations have never relinquished the right to self-government and a key component of self-government is education and capacity development. Education is an inherent Aboriginal treaty right and First Nations have never relinquished this right. In the 1972 *Indian Control of Indian*

Education position statement, First Nations articulated a clear position with regard to the desirable educational environment for our children. They stated that “*Indian parents must have full responsibility and control of education.*” The federal government subsequently adopted this document as their policy, opening the door for the establishment of First Nation operated schools. Many First Nations communities embraced the concept that offered opportunities to create quality of education for their children. The expansion of First Nations control over education provided previously banned parental input and community decision making over the key elements of education programming that would ultimately result in the growth of culturally grounded and competent First Nations peoples.

Responsibility and Jurisdiction

The responsibility and jurisdiction for the First Nations education remains hindered by the federal government by adopted policies that purport to advance First Nations aspirations for control and decision making authority which have been expressed continuously since the 1970's. Our rights must be explicitly recognized by all levels of government and must be entrenched in the Constitution of Canada. Legislation may recognize inherent Aboriginal rights of First Nations but cannot create, delegate or terminate such rights. The public must be informed about the history of the First Nations relationship with government. The public needs to understand

the First Nations demand for change from the paternalistic policies and practices of the current federal system to one of supporting First Nations self-sufficiency. The federal government must provide adequate resources for First Nations to formulate long-term education plans in a comprehensive and measured way from pre-school, to post-secondary and adult education.

The Right to Education from an International Perspective

The right to education is established through Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which declared that “*elementary education shall be free and compulsory, and that higher levels will be equally available to all on the basis of merit.*” According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) the intrinsic human value of education is its ability to add meaning and value to everyone’s lives without discrimination and is at the core of its status as a human right. But education is indispensable as a means to unlock and protect other human rights. It provides the base necessary for the achievement of the rights to **good health, liberty, security, economic well being and participation in social and political activity**. Where the right to education is guaranteed, people’s access to and enjoyment of their rights, is enhanced and the imbalances of life chances and poverty are lessened.

The right to education straddles the division between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. It embodies them all. Merely providing the opportunities to attend school will not suffice to eliminate discrimination or to universalize participation.

Residential Schools: Impact on Education Results

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which was established on March 31, 1998 to fund projects which address the legacy, including intergenerational impacts, of sexual and physical abuse suffered by Aboriginal people in Canada’s Indian residential school system, has published within their operational update, *The Healing Has Begun* (May 2002) ample evidence that the church and government worked together to keep known abuses from public view. Published reports of the conditions in the residential school system cried out the squalid conditions that included inadequate nutrition, inadequate health standards and inadequate staff training. The system was declared, by a government inspector of schools at the time, a *national crime*, yet nothing ever changed.

The residential school system was a “*conscious, deliberate and often brutal attempt to force Aboriginal people to assimilate*” now “*for the first time in over 100 years, many families are experiencing a generation of children who live with their parents until their teens.*” There are approximately 93,000 former students alive today. Residential schools were in operation well into the last quarter of the 20th Century. Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife did not close until the 1990’s. The abuses did not happen only a long time ago. The residential school introduced features to Aboriginal communities which have been passed on from generation to generation. The consequences of the policy of forced assimilation are very much alive in Aboriginal communities today (2002).

Testimonies of former students whose long list of abuses which included kidnapping, sexual abuse, beatings, punishment for speaking Aboriginal languages, being stripped naked and ridiculed in front of other students and forced labour; concluded the experiences of the residential schools have been “*really detrimental to the development of the human being.*”

The system of forced assimilation has had consequences which are with many First Nation people today. Many of those who went through residential school were denied an opportunity to develop parenting skills. They struggled with the destruction of their identities as First Nation people, and with the destruction of their cultures and languages. Generations of First Nation people today still recall the memories of trauma, neglect, shame and poverty (2002). The most *at risk* target groups for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation are: children, youth, women, men, Elders and the intergenerationally impacted.

The residential school experience resulted in cultural devaluation, disease, loss of faith, loss of hope and despondence. Healing through education is our only hope for a future of promise and change. Culture, spirituality, medicine, family, communication, learning and sports are just a few of the elements of education and healing. The Government of Canada is responsible for ensuring that the resources for this healing journey are sustained long term to turn around this shameful historical legacy.

Early Childhood Development

Learning begins at birth. Throughout the world there is a growing understanding that the period from birth to the start of primary education is a critical formative stage for the growth and development of a child. The learning outcomes – norms and values, knowledge, skills – of primary education are stronger when learning occurs in the years preceding regular school. There is also evidence that early learning improves the child's chances of enjoying good health, finding work later in life, of inclusion and of being less likely to commit crime (UNESCO).

Children cannot secure their right to education themselves. They rely on their parents and their teachers. But few of their parents are equipped to meet their needs. First Nations children are at risk. The community environment, family environment, early behaviour problems and adolescent problems require immediate interventions to address the implications of poverty. Education essential to reducing these risk factors as a basis of socio-economic development. Because education shapes the minds and values of First Nations children, it is vitally important that First Nations governments have jurisdiction over educational programs which have such a lasting impact.

Fifty percent of First Nation children living on or off-reserve are living in poverty. Only 54% of houses have adequate water supplies and 47% have adequate sewage disposal. Thirty-two percent of First Nation children live in households with a lone-parent and are at *elevated risk of poverty*. The most prevalent health problems among First Nation children include ear infections, respiratory conditions, broken bones, hearing, sight and speech difficulties, and emotional and behavioural problems. First Nation children are also at risk of contracting diseases such as tuberculosis, Hepatitis A and B, meningitis and gastroenteritis than non-First Nation children. Our communities are in crisis and our children are at risk. The Government of Canada is responsible constitutionally and through treaty to ensure the human rights of our children are not denied.

What is Required to Address the Problem

The federal government must realize that there is a need to develop, with First Nations governments, instruments, laws and policy making procedures at the national and local level to

support and give confidence that the implementation of First Nations jurisdiction over education will be a reality.

Financial resource levels which meet First Nation needs and the ability to exercise decision-making authority without interference from the federal government are required. Any provincial role in First Nations decision-making must be removed. The federal government must not off load its fiduciary obligation for First Nations education to provincial governments. Jurisdictional barriers must be removed, particularly provincial laws and regulations which hinder the enhancement and promotion of First Nation values, beliefs, traditions and cultures.

First Nation education financing must be derived from community based needs identification processes. A new fiscal framework for the financing of First Nations education must be negotiated with the federal government immediately. A comprehensive review and evaluation of First Nations financing must be conducted.

Parity and equality of opportunity for all First Nation learners regardless of geography and isolation is required. Community ownership of First Nation education systems must be facilitated through training designed to facilitate empowerment. The development of resource centres are required for the active sharing of materials.

First Nations must participate fully in the education of their children. Holistic education incorporates culture, traditional values, spirituality, and the physical, emotional and social well being of the learner. New fiscal policies designed to reflect and respond to the language, needs, beliefs, and traditions of the people they serve are critical. The enactment and support of policies which encourage and require the participation of Elders and community members as

contributors are paramount in the sustainability of First Nation culture and language.

There are many stakeholders that have roles and resources that are required to address the needs of our children. They are not limited to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). They include Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) for early childhood development programming, training, youth, and daycare; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for housing, Health Canada for FAS/FAE prevention and intervention, First Nations Head Start, Healthy Babies, Brighter Futures, Aboriginal disability, home and continuing care, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, and injury prevention; Solicitor General for policing, prevention, corrections, probation, and parole; DIAND for child and family services, national child benefit, early childhood development, social assistance, income security reform and disability.

Currently only 32% of First Nation children are graduating from Grade 12-13 in on-reserve schools. This statistic has been consistent since 1994 and into 2000. That is, 70% of our population have less than a high school education. Provincial outcomes are no better. Education is a human right. It is an investment in our future. Without healthy, socially developed children we will have no future. Without them, we will have no guarantees for tomorrow.

To survive as a people, a culture and a nation, we must attend to the health and well-being of all our children so that they may be successful learners, and competent and contributing members of our First Nation communities. To do nothing will ensure the genocide of our people.



ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

About the Assembly of First Nations

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the national representative organization of the First Nations in Canada. There are over 630 First Nations communities in Canada. The AFN Secretariat is designed to present the views of the various First Nations through their leaders in areas such as Aboriginal and Treaty Rights, Economic Development, Education, Languages, Literacy, Health, Housing, Social Development, Justice, Taxation, Land Claims, Environment and a whole array of issues that are of common concern.

Few Canadians realize that the First Nations peoples are identified in the Constitution as one of the founding nations of Canada, along with the English and French. Unfortunately, most Canadians are not aware of the many issues which brought about the need for First Nations peoples to assert their rightful position in Canadian society.

Many years of being excluded from Canada's formal political process had left First Nations peoples with an incredible void to fill in order to attain a level of political, social and legal knowledge that is on par with other groups in Canadian society. The AFN exists to fulfill this void, to attain the goal of correcting past injustices and to enhance

the rightful position of the First Nations peoples in Canada's future.

From 1969 to the present, the AFN has become a very powerful and increasingly articulate lobby group for Aboriginal rights in Canada. Over the years, the AFN became an ever present watch-dog agency as well as a means for First Nations to press for changes in federal and provincial Aboriginal policies.

The AFN is the secretariat, or administrative body, of First Nations Chiefs. Thus, the AFN is directly responsible to the First Nations Chiefs in Assembly, who in themselves are directly responsible to their First Nations communities. Hence, the AFN is a truly representative organization of the Status and Treaty First Nations peoples in Canada, and is also a consensus driven body.

The Chiefs meet annually to set national policy and direction through resolution. The National Chief is elected every three years by the Chiefs in Assembly. The present National Chief is Matthew Coon Come. The Chiefs meet between the annual assemblies every 3 to 4 months in a forum called the Confederacy of Nations to set on-going direction.

The AFN with direction from its membership strives to present and preserve the authenticity of North American history with the goal of enhancing justice for Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Fighting for long standing First Nations rights is not merely a fight for natural resources and self-determination, it is also a fight for human rights, human dignity and cultural survival.

The Mandate of the Education Secretariat

1. **Advocacy.** Advocate the promotion of community based and governed education systems through treaty and Aboriginal rights. Safeguard education treaty rights and advance First Nations jurisdiction over education.
2. **Policy.** Promote and facilitate the development of national strategies, policy frameworks, guidelines and standards for education. Support local First Nations educational goals, needs and initiatives. Facilitate the development and implementation of a national strategy for jurisdiction over education.
3. **Knowledge and Research.** Conduct national research and distribute the results. Provide forums to facilitate dialogue and gather information on First Nations education. Explore opportunities to access research funds. Make presentations regarding First Nations education.

4. **Communication and Information Sharing.** Develop and maintain a process of communicating First Nations educational needs with governments. Provide political advice and support for First Nations engaged in such a process. Communicate orally and in writing with First Nations communities, other organizations and the public. Share information and encourage educators and communities to use what best meets their needs. Provide forums for First Nations peoples to discuss educational matters and build consensus.

The Objectives of the Education Sector

The Education Sector continues to be centered on advancing the educational priorities of First Nations and making progress in the area of First Nations Education. The role of the Education Sector is to perform the following objectives in relation to the above mandate.

- To consult, inform and coordinate with First nations in all regions on educational issues and assist First Nations by lobbying governments on their behalf.
- To advance First Nations education through projects and initiatives inclusive of special education, post secondary education, jurisdiction, funding/ accountability, language and culture.

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“First Nations are passionate about the education of their peoples.
They will persist in pursuing what is rightfully theirs.
They will continue to assert their indigenous right to educational jurisdiction
to ensure that First Nations move towards the implementation of their vision of education.”

*Dr. Paulette Tremblay - National Symposium on First
Nations Educational Jurisdiction, May 2001*



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Language, Culture and Education

In spite of a history that could have destroyed our cultural survival as Peoples, we have continued to express our culture through the deepest appreciation, respect, commitment and celebration of our unique relationship with this earth, one another, and all of creation. The survival of our languages is essential to our cultural identity. First Nations languages are our cultural legacy, a gift from the Ancestors who persevered to bring us this far. We thank them, for it is their hard work that ensured that the languages are still here today.

Within the last 30 years our language use has been declining at a pace more rapid than ever before. Within one or two generations some languages *will not be spoken at all*, in fact, *it is predicted only 3 of the 53 languages indigenous to Canada will survive at all*. There have been many efforts made to reverse this trend in communities and organizations throughout Canada, but they lack in long term financial commitment from Federal and Provincial governments. First Nations languages *need the same official status as enjoyed by both French and English languages in Canada*. Language education rights of First Nations are not as specifically entrenched as are the official languages. Therefore, although language rights are included as an Aboriginal right in Section 35(1) of *the Constitution Act 1982* the federal and provincial governments have not interpreted this as a legal obligation to provide language education. We must ensure there is protection and adequate resourcing to address the dire loss of languages that is occurring as our primary speakers and Elders pass on and take our languages with them. The following chart indicates the number of speakers of an Aboriginal language by age group:

Speakers of an Aboriginal Language by Age Group 1991 (Percent)

Age	Total Aboriginal	First Nation Registered	First Nation Non-Registered	Metis	Inuit
5-14 years	21.9	28.6	5.2	5.1	67/0
15-24 years	27.4	33.7	8.6	8.2	71.2
25-54 years	36.7	47.6	9.7	18.1	74.5
55+	63.1	74.7	24.5	43.5	90.6
% of speakers age 5+	32.7	41.8	9.0	14.4	72.5

Source: Statistics Canada Census and APS

The health of a language has to do with:

1. The number of its speakers
2. How these speakers are concentrated in the population
3. How many child speakers there are

“Healthy” languages are not only used by a majority of the population, they are used for most or all situations requiring communication.

Languages are extremely flexible and adaptable. A language can simply take an idea from another culture, use its own resources for forming words and create its own equivalent.

According to the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1993)* “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.”

“Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All indigenous peoples also have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.”

According to author R. E. Littlebear, our languages have been oral since time immemorial. Some of them have been written only in the last three centuries. We must remember this oral tradition when we teach our languages.

For instance some of us said, “Let’s get our languages into written form” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s make dictionaries for our languages” and we did and still the languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s get linguists trained in our own languages” and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s train our own people who speak our languages to become linguists” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s apply for federal language education grants” and we did and we got a grant and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s let the schools teach the languages” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s develop culturally-relevant materials” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s use language masters to teach our languages” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s tape record our Elders speaking and doing cultural activities” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s video tape our Elders speaking and doing cultural activities” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s put our language speakers on CR ROM” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Finally, someone will say, “Let’s flash freeze the remaining speakers of our languages so when technology catches up these speakers can be thawed out and revived and we will have ready made Aboriginal languages speakers.” We will do that and these thawed out speakers will awake to a world in the distant future where they are the only speakers of their languages because all of the other speakers of their languages will be gone and no one will understand them.

The responsibility for saving our languages is ours. If we do nothing, we can expect our languages to be dead by the end of the next century. A great void will be left in the universe that will never be filled when all our languages die. Families must retrieve their rightful position as the first teachers of our languages. They must talk our languages every day, everywhere, with everyone, anywhere. But if they are to relinquish this responsibility to schools then they must be supportive. They must make use of all the items we have listed to preserve our languages in order to maintain a high level of effort at language preservation.

Language Survival Status and Corresponding Retention Strategies

Status	Strategy
Flourishing	Prevention
Enduring	Expansion
Declining	Fortification
Obsolescent	Restoration
Extinct	Revival

An Overview of Language Status and Health Indicators

Languages Status	“Health” Indicators
Flourishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has speakers of all ages, some of them monolingual. - Population increases also lead to increases in the number of speakers - It is used in all communicative situations. - The language adapts to the changing culture of the community. - Speakers become increasingly more literate (the language is written in the form of dictionaries, grammars, and the curriculum to teach the language).
Enduring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has speakers of all ages, most or all are bilingual. - The population of speakers tends to remain constant over time. - English tends to be used exclusively in some situations. - The language adapts to the changing culture of the community. - There is little or no Native language literacy in the community (it is not committed to writing – it is transmitted primarily orally).
Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are proportionately more older speakers than younger. - Younger speakers are not altogether fluent in the language. - The number of speakers decreases over time, even though the population itself may be increasing. - The population is essentially illiterate in the language.
Obsolescent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An obsolescent language has an age gradient of speakers that terminates in the adult population. - The language is not taught to children in the home. - The number of speakers declines very rapidly. - The entire population is bi-lingual and English is preferred in essentially all situations. - The language is inflexible, it no longer adapts to new situations. - There is no literacy.
Extinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The last of the speakers have died, there are no living speakers of the language left in the population. - The language is not written, documented or recorded by linguists, anthropologists, or folklore specialists. - There is no major source of information about the language, grammar or any models of usage to understand how to conduct a conversation in the language.

Source: A Guide to Issues in Indian Language Retention J.J. Bauman

The *Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education* states that “Aboriginal languages deserve **official status within Canada, constitutional recognition, and accompanying legislative protection**. The federal government is obligated to provide adequate resources to First Nations to ensure the development of language structures; curriculum materials; First Nations language teachers; resource centres; and immersion programs. Aboriginal language instruction is necessary from preschool to post-secondary and adult education. First Nations support and protect the status of Aboriginal languages in many First Nations communities. First Nations have developed Aboriginal language policies. These policies must be acknowledged and implemented in all schools serving First Nations students.”

Language is like a living thing. Language takes “life” from the use people make of it.



RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

A Word About Residential Schools – the Impact on Education Results

According to the *Operational Update from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation The Healing Has Begun* (May 2002) the Foundation was established on March 31, 1998 to fund projects which address the legacy, including intergenerational impacts, of sexual and physical abuse suffered by Aboriginal people in Canada's Indian residential school system. As early as the 1920's there was ample evidence that the church and government worked together to keep known abuses from public view. Published reports of the conditions in the residential school system cried out the squalid conditions that included inadequate nutrition, inadequate health standards, and inadequate staff training. The system was declared by P.H. Bryce, a government inspector of schools at the time, a *national crime*, yet nothing ever changed.

The Indian residential school system was a “*conscious, deliberate and often brutal attempt to force Aboriginal people to assimilate*” now “*for the first time in over 100 years, many families are experiencing a generation of children who live with their parents until their teens.*” There are approximately 93,000 former students alive today. Residential schools were in operation well into the last quarter of the 20th Century. Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife, NT did not close until the 1990's. The abuses did not happen only a long time ago. The residential school introduced features to Aboriginal communities *which have been passed on from generation to generation. The consequences of the policy of forced assimilation are very much alive in Aboriginal communities today* (2002).

Testimonies of hundreds of former students, whose list of abuses suffered included: kidnapping, sexual abuse, beatings, needles being pushed through tongues as punishment for speaking Aboriginal languages, being stripped naked and ridiculed in front of other students, being forced to stand upright for hours until collapsing, hair being ripped from heads, bondage and confinement, application of electric shocks and forced labour; concluded that the experiences of the residential school were “*really detrimental to the development of the human being.*” (2002)

This system of forced assimilation has had consequences which are with many First Nation people today. Many of those who went through residential schools *were denied an opportunity to develop parenting skills. They struggled with the destruction of their identities as First Nation people, and with the destruction of their cultures and languages.* Generations of First Nation people today still recall the memories of trauma, neglect, shame and poverty (2002).

The types of projects funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation have been *healing services, community services and life skills, prevention and awareness, traditional activities and training and education.* Addictions, victimization and abuse have been the most severe participant challenges affecting the majority of projects. Other common challenges include denial or grief, poverty and lack of parenting skills. Trainees are often women and those inter-generationally impacted by the legacy of the residential school physical and sexual abuse.

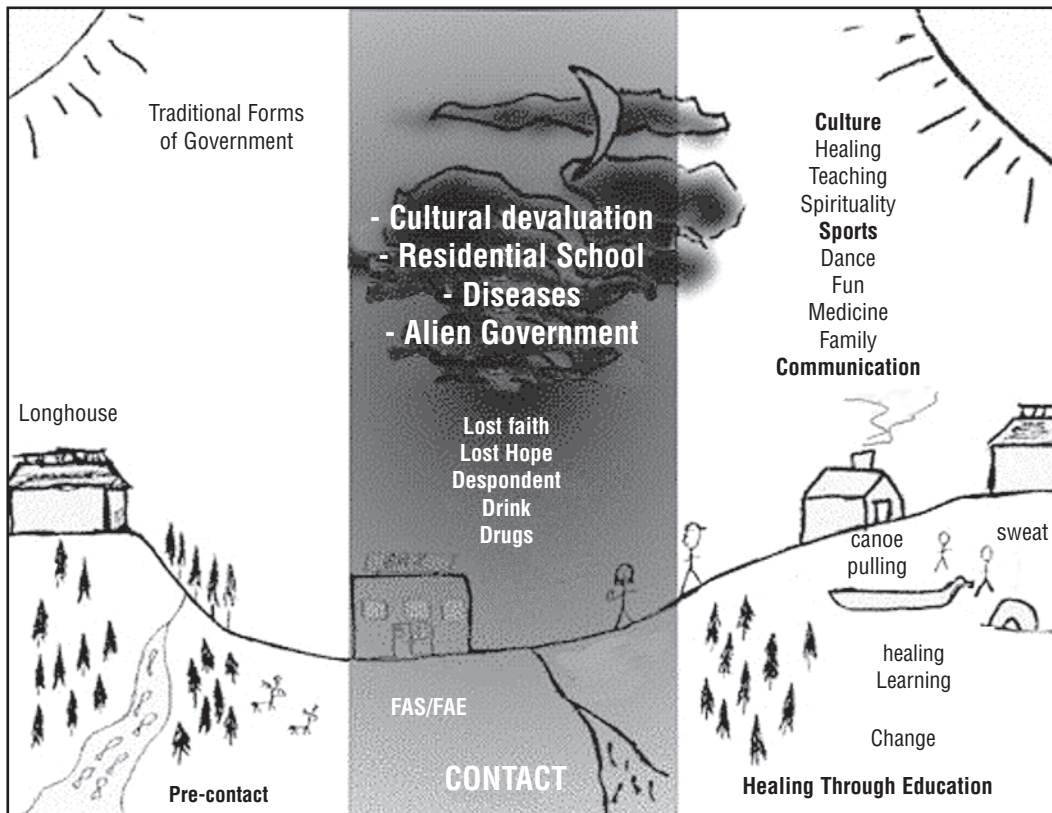
The most at risk target groups for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation are:

- Children
- Youth
- Women
- Men
- Elders
- The intergenerationally impacted

The following is an illustration of the healing that First Nation communities are facing which affects the ability of the education systems of today to be effective.

An Illustration of Healing That Many First Nation Communities Face

<http://aboriginalcollections.ic.gc.ca/snuneymuxw/lifetd4.htm>





POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

In 1998, the Chiefs in Assembly mandated the Assembly of First Nations to pursue a national review of First Nations post secondary education. The intent of the study was to make recommendations to improve the Post Secondary Education (PSE) policies and programs funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine the development, impact and effectiveness of the Post Secondary Education Program (PSEP), the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) and the University and College Entrance Program (UCEP). A total of 47 recommendations were made to improve the PSE policies and programs funded by DIAND. Improvements were recommended in the following areas: resources, student support services, program effectiveness, addressing quality of programming, accessibility, equity, portability and transferability and administration and program operations.

Recommendations were based on the recurring themes that were evident throughout the national report. First Nations want the federal obligation to fund post-secondary education for First Nation students clearly mandated and out of the discretionary control of INAC. Post secondary education is necessary to provide First Nation with well qualified personnel for effective self-government. Post-secondary programs must be funded at levels that reflect inflationary costs and enrollment increases. Current post-secondary policies on program and financial assistance formulas are inadequate. They must be revised through consultation

with First Nations. First Nations are seeking to develop new, more appropriate educational guidelines and policies affecting post-secondary education based on contemporary needs.

Currently university graduation rates are four times lower for the First Nations population than the Canadian population. More specifically, 3% of the First Nations population, aged 15-years and older, has completed university (Bachelor's degree or higher) compared to 13.3% of the Canadian population (1996 Census Data, Statistics Canada). Although the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development allocated \$288 million for Post Secondary Education during 2000-2001, it has been estimated that approximately 8,475 First Nations applicants were not able to access funding for Post Secondary Education.

The First Nations student population is growing. In 1997-1998, 27,515 First Nations students were enrolled in colleges and universities across the country and it has been estimated that 40,516 First Nations students will require Post Secondary Education assistance in 2002. An examination of the estimated average provincial cost per student per academic year compared to the national amount allocated per First Nation student shows that the federal government only provides enough funding to cover 48% of the costs per student per academic year.

The Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) was established by INAC to provide financial support to First Nations organizations and post secondary educational institutions, as well as, to non-Aboriginal education institutions to offer training and courses for First Nations people. The ISSP also contributes funding to the research, development and delivery of special programs for treaty and status First Nations students. A majority of this funding goes to mainstream Post Secondary Education institutions.

Due to lack of funding many First Nation communities are unable to provide their membership with the support and opportunity to pursue their educational goals and career aspirations. Adequate funding for post-secondary education is crucial if we are to build stronger communities. The federal government has an obligation to implement the recommendations of the PSE National Report to ensure that all First Nation students have adequate funding. Monies are allocated by percentage increases that are available to INAC from the Treasury Board Secretariat rather than regional requirements based on student needs. Funding increases for Post Secondary Education have been limited to a 2% annual growth. Thus monies allocated have not kept pace with the inflationary demand of the economy and increasing demand of First Nations for Post-Secondary education.

Post Secondary Enrollment by Qualification according to INAC statistics are as follows. Data for 2006-06 are provided according to the AFN National Report of First Nations Post Secondary Education based on INAC projections.

Post Secondary Enrollment by Qualification November 1st Census

Source: Overview of INAC Education Program Data 2001

School Year	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2005-06
Total	17,699	20,556	22,492	22,586	23,205	22,045	22,409	39,883
Non-University	8,676	9,881	10,900	10,952	11,412	10,706	11,003	19,582
Undergraduate	8,233	9,875	10,479	10,383	10,317	9,673	9,080	18,147
Graduate	455	667	768	850	768	736	766	1,157
Not Seeking Qualification	141	133	345	401	708	930	1560	758
Estimate funded March 31, Total	23,068	24,482	27,183	26,987	27,172	27,157	26,520	

Note: Numbers do not include *Status Indian and Inuit Students* funded by the NWT government.

Post Secondary Enrollment Rate/comparison

Full Time PSE Enrollment Rates for Registered Indian Population Receiving INAC Funding, Compared to all Canadians, Canada 1995-96 to 1999-2000

School Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Registered Indians					
Enrolled Full time 17-34	13,608	12,715	13,230	12,506	12,470
Population aged 17-34	194,211	196,290	198,114	199,098	201,229
Enrollment Rate	7.0	6.5	6.7	6.3	6.2
All Canadian Population					
Enrolled Full time 17-34	900,785	884,123	912,200	921,068	N/A
Population aged 17-34	8,031,535	7,903,114	7,903,114	7,823,526	N/A
Enrollment Rate	11.2	11.5	11.5	11.8	N/A

Note: Includes university and community college full-time enrollment for the Fall snapshot data. The age group 17-34 was selected because most students enrolled in post-secondary institutions fall within this age group. *However, First Nation students tend to be older than other Canadians when they enroll in post-secondary institutions.*

Sources:

- 1995-99 Post Secondary Database, Information Management Branch INAC
- 1995-99 Indian Register, INAC
- 1995-98 Statistics Canada, Internal Band of Education Statistics
- 1995-98 Statistics Canada ANSIM II Matrix 6367



SPECIAL EDUCATION

The fertility rate among the Aboriginal population is about 69% higher than the rate for the general Canadian population making population growth twice the national rate. First Nation children are the fastest growing segment of the First Nation population with 35% younger than 15 years of age compared to about 21% for Canada. Even more significantly the resulting demand for programs and services for this age group are overwhelmingly high.

Injuries are the leading cause of death for children and youth after their first birthday and a major cause of hospitalization and disability. Aboriginal children are **six times** more likely to die by injury, poisoning or violence. Children with disabilities or identified special needs are even less likely to survive or receive the services they need.

One in every 2 or 3 children in First Nation communities currently stands to develop permanent hearing loss. Because of the predisposition of First Nation children to middle ear disease the likelihood of normal speech and language development is minimized. This is a direct result of poor living conditions in many First Nation communities. Permanent neuromotor disabilities

in remote and under-serviced regions are yet another result of lack of adequate medical services and early diagnosis or intervention.

In order to effectively discuss special education from a First Nations perspective we must first take a look back at how special needs and disability have been characterized historically. To do so we will look at three time periods, the 1960's, 1980's and 1990's.

During the 1960's and earlier, First Nation children and adults with disabilities lived in residential institutions where they were cared for as patients. There were two consequences of this model of care. One was that children and adults with disabilities were treated as a group. Facilities and services were not designed to meet individual needs; therefore, individuals had no right to make choices about their own lives.

The second consequence was the isolation of children and adults with disabilities from the community. The result was stereotyping and labeling of persons with disabilities. Something that still occurs today.

During the 1980's advancements of rehabilitative medicine and government social service programs occurred as a result of the World Wars. Soldiers who returned home wounded and traumatized provided the initial incentive for these developments. This resulted in improved rehabilitation and social service programs nationwide.

Additionally, **special schools** were established for children and adults with disabilities resulting in a move away from residential institutions so that both **homes and schools were more community based**. Although this was an improvement, individuals with disabilities were still segregated within group homes, sheltered workshops and special school situations.

Finally, in the 1990's the philosophies of the 1960's and 1980's evolved into one of integration and de-medicalization of services. The right of First Nations persons with disabilities to live full-integrated lives within their communities and to participate in all aspects of community life prevailed. (Source: FNEC Policy Study on Special Education).

Scope of the Problem

According to RCAP, alcohol consumption during pregnancy is another leading cause of ill health in infancy and youth. Fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect

(FAS and FAE) are results of alcohol abuse that many First Nation communities are struggling with. Low birth weight increases the chance of death in infancy and of lifelong health and social problems (RCAP). Low birth weight babies are likely to have underdeveloped respiratory and other systems, and weak immune systems. **Long term they are in serious risk of chronic ill health or disability.**

In the case of FAS, researchers now recognize that prenatal alcohol exposure may cause subtle deficits in judgment and reasoning in people with apparently normal intelligence.

The estimated cost of meeting the needs of someone who is severely affected by FAS over a lifetime is \$1 to \$1.5 million. All of this is just a precursor to the larger special needs and disability issue for First Nations.

According to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) 31 percent of Aboriginal people have some form of disability. This is twice the national average of the general Canadian population. **For young adults the rate is almost three times as high.** Disabilities affecting mobility and agility are most common, but hearing and visual disabilities affecting a large portion of the population are also prevalent. The following table illustrates the percentage by Aboriginal group:

Persons with Physical Disabilities Total & Aboriginal Populations 1991

	Total Population	Total Aboriginal	First Nation On-Reserve	First Nation Off-Reserve	Metis	Inuit
Mobility disability	45	45	47	45	44	36
Hearing Disability	23	35	39	33	34	44
Seeing Disability	9	24	32	21	22	24
Agility	44	35	34	36	38	26
Speaking Disability	10	13	14	13	13	10
Other Disability	37	36	37	37	35	36

Note: Population is those 15 years of age and older Source: Statistics Canada/RCAP Vol. 3 Chp. 3

The following table illustrates the population of First Nation people with disabilities by region - which includes First Nation children and youth who will ultimately require special education services and programs at the community level.

Population of First Nation People with Disabilities by Region

<u>Region</u>	<u>Population *</u>	<u>People with Disabilities**</u>
Yukon	7,199	2,260
Northwest Territories	13,998	4,395
British Columbia	102,075	32,052
Alberta	76,419	23,999
Saskatchewan	94,953	23,815
Manitoba	95,113	29,865
Ontario	138,518	43,495
Quebec	58,640	18,415
NB-PEI	18,857	5,912
NS-NFLD/Labrador	20,834	6,542
TOTAL	626,606	190,748

Note: *Population Source: Indian Register Population by Region INAC December 31, 1997

**Disability Rate of 31.4% for Aboriginal People data source: Statistics Canada

Through research we know *that incidences of FAS/FAE in First Nation communities are 30 times the national average.* The lack of special education programs in First Nation and federal schools often means that First Nation students are required to leave their home to attend provincial schools to obtain the needed services. Special education must be resourced by the federal government as an integral part of the non-discretionary First Nations education program. **Improved methods of diagnosing special education students and increasing special education service delivery must be developed.** It is essential that federal, provincial, territorial and First Nations education systems be accountable to parents of First Nations students who are in special education programs.

Extensive amount of work has been completed documenting the need for requisite funding for First Nations learners with special needs and providing input to the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in order to prove the extent of that need to the federal government. Since the December 2001 federal budget announcement of \$60 million for the next two years for First Nations Special Education, AFN Education has maintained First Nations participation during the drafting stages of the implementation plan to access these funds.

The new dollars for Special Education are viewed as a temporary measure to be utilized to implement an

accountability framework, increase local capacity and meet the needs of First Nations community schools in the development and implementation of quality special education programs and services.

Imposed deadlines by Treasury Board (TB) and INAC are major challenges for First Nations which limits true consultation, inclusion and input into INAC's Special Education Implementation Plan. The inadequacy of funds to implement a national program also provides limitations in the development of a national allocation methodology that was fair and equitable for all First Nations regions. There also continues to be the need for a national Special Education policy that is permanently and adequately resourced.

The following UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Article 23 illustrates the rights of our children to the services they require. It clearly states: *Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions, which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate for the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or other caring for the child. To ensure that*

the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

Actions Required to Address Barriers For First Nation Children and Adults with Disabilities

Approach	Action Required
Employment and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonstration projects are required to improve First Nation youth and adult access to the labor market ➤ Equitable access to education and training is also required ➤ Accommodation is required to support FN individuals in the area of employment and training ➤ Evaluation criteria for program delivery should recognize the principles of the Medicine Wheel
Institutionalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Funding is required to enhance independent and community living options to decrease the rate of institutionalization ➤ Training is required to home care workers, attendants, teaching assistants, who would then be qualified to work with children with special needs
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Funding is required to enable communities to become more aware of the principles of barrier free design ➤ Funding is required to enable First Nation communities to implement barrier free design
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resources are required to assist First Nation communities in enhancing transportation options ➤ Small aircraft need to be equipped to enhance wheelchair access that can be accommodated in a dignified manner
Income Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DIAND must raise its income security rates so that they are comparable to or better than provincial rates ➤ A reimbursement system is required for the additional costs of disability ➤ Steps are required to remedy disincentives
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Traditional health practices and spirituality must be accommodated to ensure equity of access
Disability related supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Research is required to assist First Nations communities in developing culturally appropriate rehabilitation services based on FN culture and values
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The rates of disability among FN children and adults are higher as compared to non-First Nation due to poverty and socio-economic conditions. Education and awareness programs are required to address FAS, diabetes and AIDS/HIV

Source: Our Perspective of Aboriginal People with Disabilities

The biggest problem overall is there are no comprehensive strategies that address the specific needs of CHILDREN who have disabilities. Although government strategies are well intended and target very important issues for First Nations individuals with disability, children with disabilities are at the very edge of a big bureaucratic abyss. Government does not worry about children until they are old enough to enter the work force (note Statistics Canada, INAC, HRDC or other government agency databases whose figures start at age 15 and go up). How can we quantify the needs of our children when they aren't even counted, especially in terms of disability?

Article 42 of the CONVENTION on the RIGHTS of the CHILD

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right to access to such health care services
2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:
 - a) To diminish infant and child mortality
 - b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care
 - c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including the framework of primary health care, through, *inter alia*, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution.
 - d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal care for mothers
 - e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and have support in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast-feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents.
 - f) To develop preventative health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.
3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.
4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.