

Sharing Our Success

Promising Practices in Aboriginal Education

**PROCEEDINGS OF
A NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

Winnipeg, November 23-24th 2007

SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF Excellence in Education

Sharing Our Success:

Promising Practices in Aboriginal Education

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**WINNIPEG
NOVEMBER 23-24, 2007**

Prepared by Susan Phillips and Helen Raham
SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF **Excellence in Education**

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SAEE is an independent non-profit Canadian education research agency founded in 1996. SAEE has commissioned 38 studies on schooling practices in Canada, and is particularly interested in studies of innovative practices leading to successful learning outcomes with less advantaged students. As a registered Canadian charity, SAEE provides official tax receipts for grants and donations to its research.

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Executive Summary

Sharing our Success: Promising Practices in Aboriginal Education was a national research and policy conference convened by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) on November 23-24, 2007 at the York Hotel and the University of Winnipeg in Winnipeg. There were over 375 participants from regional and national Aboriginal¹ organizations, federal government departments, provincial/territorial departments of education, schools, universities and other organizations.

The conference was designed to engage stakeholders from across Canada in examining and sharing promising practices in aboriginal schooling. Over 70 presentations by more than 85 researchers, practitioners and policymakers at every level provided many opportunities for participants to explore constructive solutions to systemic challenges. Among the many issues addressed over the course of the two days were literacy and language; cultural programming; the assessment and reporting of results; governance and leadership; funding; the supply, training and retention of quality teachers; and community supports for learning. In addition to formal presentations, dialogues in the form of sharing circles and issue roundtables promoted further cross-pollination of effective strategies, policies, and resources.

This groundbreaking national conversation was a powerful catalyst for creating shared understandings to improve aboriginal student success. Formal and informal feedback was highly positive both for the calibre of the presentations and for bringing together all major stakeholders to examine the research and policy issues.

¹ In this document, the term “Aboriginal” is used in its most inclusive sense, to refer to all groups of Native People, Indigenous People, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, treaty and non-treaty Indians, persons living on reserves and those living off reserves.



Dr. Lloyd Axworthy addresses luncheon plenary

Introduction

In an era when education is the key to future economic and social well-being, improving outcomes for Canada's aboriginal students has become a priority for all stakeholders.

Progress toward this goal has been hampered by many barriers which have been articulated by numerous commissions and reports over the past decades. One obstacle is the tangled system of governance and funding in which multiple jurisdictions (federal, provincial/territorial, school boards, and band authorities) operate on separate tracks, with no mechanism to facilitate communication across systems or coordinate data collection and policy development. Progress for aboriginal learners has also been hobbled by the absence of a body of research to provide policymakers and practitioners a shared base of best practices. Identifying and sharing the features of effective programs and policies is essential if gains are to be generated on a larger scale.

The *Sharing Our Success* conference was designed to address these particular barriers by engaging stakeholders at every level in examining and exchanging promising practices in aboriginal education. Its purpose was to celebrate success and showcase the findings in the twenty schools in the foundational research which preceded the conference, while convening a broader national dialogue amongst educators, aboriginal leaders, and decision-makers on strategies to accelerate progress for all.

Grounded in research, the objectives of this conference were to make a lasting contribution to aboriginal education through:

- facilitating dialogue among practitioners, researchers and policymakers on successful strategies and the underlying conditions necessary to support them;
- promoting evidenced-based decisions in schools and in the development of policy;
- forging new networks to share inquiry into practice;
- promoting cross-pollination of best practices among systems
- identifying strategies for replication on a larger scale and gaps for further research; and
- harnessing commitment and resources for improving success for aboriginal learners.

Background

The conference was built on the foundation of earlier research commissioned by SAEЕ to examine school level factors associated with positive achievement for aboriginal students. Articulated in works by Bell (2004) and Fulford (2007), this research synthesizes lessons drawn from 20 schools in diverse settings across Canada. It is important to recognize this research as the framework for the *Sharing Our Success* conference program.

The initial research in 2003/04 under Dr. David Bell involved in-depth case studies of ten schools, a mix of band-operated and provincial/ territorial sites across western Canada. Despite the rich diversity in approaches and circumstances, a number of common characteristics and underlying success factors distinguished these schools. The 350 page report² that was produced identified strong leadership and governance structures, high expectations, focus on academic achievement and long-term success, secure and welcoming climate for children and families, respect for Aboriginal culture and traditions, quality of staff development, and a wide range of programs and supports for learning as critical factors in their success.

Six major systemic problems were also identified in the report: overlapping jurisdiction, uneven resource allocation, literacy and language, hiring and retaining qualified and experienced staff, transition from elementary to secondary school, and lack of a national policy to evaluate aboriginal education. Recommendations to address these included revisions of the Indian Act, establishment of a national centre for aboriginal language and culture, access to secondary education in home communities, enhanced teacher preparation, pre-school programs under jurisdiction of education, and better data on which to base programs to measure, track and report on progress of students.

Following the publication of the first *Sharing Our Success* case studies, SAEЕ organized a roundtable of fifty key policy makers on February 22, 2005 at Concordia University to develop a roadmap for action. The *Moving Forward* roundtable proceedings³ captured the essence of that intense dialogue which was facilitated by Ontario's Deputy Minister of Education at that time, Dr. Ben Levin. The roundtable discussions focused on identifying research-based solutions and actions in three areas: providing critical supports for successful learning; ensuring the supply, training and retention of quality teachers; and creating a culture of learning in Aboriginal communities. Recommendations developed in each of these priority areas were produced in the proceedings paper. Like the earlier case studies report, this document was used as a resource by both federal and provincial governments and native organizations in developing initiatives for improving aboriginal education programs.

² Bell, David et al. (2004). *Sharing Our Success: Ten Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*. SAEЕ: http://www.sae.ca/publications/A_021_HHH_MID.php

³ Henchey, Norman. (2005) *Moving Forward*. SAEЕ <http://www.sae.ca/movingforward>

In 2006 SAEE commissioned a further study of 10 exemplary schools from central, northern and eastern Canada conducted by Dr. George Fulford et al.⁴ There were remarkable similarities in the underlying success factors found in this new set of schools as well as intriguing variances from those examined by Bell. The 2007 case studies report contains 21 recommendations for federal and provincial governments, aboriginal leaders, and educators applying the lessons learned from these schools. The recommendations address improving governance and leadership, creating successful learners, strengthening language and culture, increasing teacher quality and supply, removing graduation barriers, and building capacity and accountability.

Figure 1 School Sites in the Sharing Our Success Studies



Together, the *Sharing Our Success* reports provide robust understandings of promising practices and policies for improving outcomes for aboriginal learners. The case studies provide readers with a sense of the schools' inner workings and struggles against circumstances that test their teaching and administrative abilities on a daily basis. Although funding and resources vary greatly, particularly between band-operated schools and those in provincial systems, the schools demonstrated an exceptional commitment to overcoming the multiple barriers that inhibit their students' learning.

⁴ Fulford, G. (2007). *Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*.

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Operating within its own unique geo-political setting, each was solution-oriented, developing and adapting educational practices to fit its particular challenges.

Despite the rich diversity in approaches and circumstances, a number of common characteristics distinguished these schools:

- Strong leadership and governance structures, often with long tenure
- High expectations for students
- Focus on academic achievement and long-term success
- Secure and welcoming climates for children and families
- Respect for aboriginal culture and traditions to make learning relevant
- Provision of a wide range of programs/supports for learning
- Exceptional language and cultural programs
- High percentage of aboriginal staff and quality staff development
- Assessment linked to instructional and planning decisions
- Vigorous community partnerships and beneficial external alliances

The Sharing *Our Success* research series was supported by research grants from the Provinces of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, the Government of Nunavut, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, The Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRnet), Northland School Division, and an anonymous Canadian foundation.

Each conference registrant was provided with a copy of *Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling* (Fulford, 2007). Readers can order this and other SAAE publications from <http://www.saae.ca>



Participants

Three hundred and seventy-five participants attended the *Sharing Our Success* conference, with many potential registrants turned away due to a lack of space. The approximate distribution across sectors was: federal government (5%), provincial governments (12%), aboriginal organizations (30%), school boards (20%), universities (12%), educators (20%) and foundations/non-profits/other (1%). Delegates from every province and territory participated in this conference.

Many participants were from First Nation education authorities, tribal councils, education centres, and band-operated schools from across Canada. Among the many Aboriginal organizations represented were the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Education Steering Committee (BC), First Nations Education Council (QC), National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, Northern Chiefs Council, Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (NS), Native Friendship Centres Association, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Métis Nation of Ontario.

In addition to the Canadian School Boards Association, the Association of Yukon School Councils, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the BC School Trustees Association, and Alberta School Boards Association there were delegates from over 25 school districts/ divisions, band education councils and other similar school authorities. Registrants who identified themselves with schools included participants from the 20 schools in the case studies as well as numerous educators from schools or education centres from across Canada.

Among the many universities and colleges represented were McGill University, Nipissing University, University of Saskatchewan, University of Alberta, St. Thomas University, University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, Queens University, Brandon University, University of Calgary, Memorial University, Western University, University of New Brunswick, University College of the North, Camosun College, Red River College, Red Crow College, SAIT, Nunavut Arctic College, and the University Presidents' Council of BC.

There were representatives of provincial/territorial governments from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Nunavut, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. While many of these presenters and participants were associated with ministries or departments of education, others were primarily associated with aboriginal health, early childhood, community services, employment and other programs. Federal representation included Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, Heritage Canada, and Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Other participating organizations included the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, the Canadian Council on Learning, Council of Ministers of Education Canada, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, and the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.

Program

The conference was held over two days, with three plenary sessions and 67 workshops involving over 85 presenters, a reception and banquet, and traditional ceremonies. The concurrent sessions were divided into five major strands, each providing a different focus and of interest to a slightly different audience. These included:

"I found the conference to be very informative, well organized, and offered a good balance between policy/research and school-based practices."

- **School presentations** – Administrators, teachers, and researchers from the 20 schools featured in the *Sharing Our Success* case studies (Bell, 2004 and Fulford, 2007) presented school-based practices which have proven to be beneficial for students. In these sessions, practical strategies, challenges and innovative leadership from band and provincially operated schools across the country were showcased.
- **Theme-based workshops** – These participatory workshops explored promising practices and key strategies for success within specific areas of interest: Aboriginal Language Programming, Leadership and Governance, Teacher Development, Community Partnerships, Technology, Assessment and Reporting, and Literacy. Facilitators presented evidence from the *Sharing our Success* findings and other research with respect to each theme and participants shared their own expertise and experiences.
- **Research** – Evidence from other research programs in progress was highlighted in sessions examining holistic learning models, improving graduation rates, and provincial findings on promising practices, while other workshops probed northern research needs and partnerships and connecting research with practice.
- **Policy** – These sessions were presented by Ministries/Departments of Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Canadian School Boards Association, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, and First Nations organizations. They addressed large-scale initiatives and roles and structures to support Aboriginal education both on and off reserve.
- **Roundtables** – These sessions, which began with opening statements by an expert panel, allowed participants to share perspectives and collectively explore solutions to three systemic issues: performance measures and accountability structures, capacity building, and the role of the school in First Nation language survival.

In addition, a 55-minute **APTN documentary** featuring the *Sharing Our Success* schools was available for viewing. **Poster Presentations** provided opportunities for participants to talk to researchers who had prepared visual summaries of innovative work in Aboriginal education. Various **exhibitors** from different organizations displayed relevant resources.

An overview of the program is provided on pages 30-31. With over 70 presentations, space does not permit a detailed summary of each. A brief synopsis is provided here of the plenary sessions and the various strands of concurrent workshops. Readers are urged to contact individual presenters listed in Appendix B for specific information and resources.

PLENARY SESSIONS

Opening Plenary

The Opening Plenary was held Friday morning in the Manitoba Ballroom of the York Hotel, preceded by a smudging ceremony. The invocation by **Elder Dave Courschene** welcomed all conference participants to Manitoba, center of America. He spoke of Great Creator's influence on our vision of the world, and how we should give thanks to Mother Nature and the spirit of our grandfathers in the four directions that give the balance of life. He concluded by explaining how education for aboriginal learners must incorporate these spiritual aspects.

Helen Raham, SAEЕ Research Director, greeted participants with these words:

“On behalf of SAEЕ, welcome to this national dialogue on *Promising Practices in Aboriginal Education*. We have gathered from every corner of this great land to learn from each other. We have come to hear inspiring stories, share our knowledge, and ponder lessons from the research. We have come with a common goal – to improve success for Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit students.

In 2004, SAEЕ commissioned a study to document practices in ten schools creating tangible academic progress for aboriginal learners. Due to the response to that report and the insatiable hunger for success models, SAEЕ commissioned a second set of case studies which was published this year. Each of you has received a copy of this report in your registration package.

The soaring eagle on the cover is a symbol of truth, power and freedom. Together with the dawning sun, it represents the hopes of Canada's rapidly growing population of aboriginal children for a brighter future. And, just as the eagle is equally at home in the skies or the rugged earth, so must young aboriginal learners be equipped to “walk successfully in both worlds”. The vision statement of one of the schools in the study captures the promise that must be kept:

Together we must ensure that all our students are attaining high levels of academic, cultural and individual success, empowered with the tools of knowledge, skill and experience to compete on any level, anywhere, as we move into the 21st century. (Peguis School)

The work we will accomplish at this national research exchange will help make this vision a reality. Together we can move forward by building on the research, sharing what works and scaling up success.”

Hon. Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship, and Youth, Manitoba also brought greetings, noting that “Advancing aboriginal education and enhancing aboriginal student success, including increasing representation of aboriginal students in postsecondary education are extremely important goals shared by my Department, government and our many educational and community partners. I’m sure that all of you at this conference today share these priorities.” The Minister described some of the initiatives under the framework of Manitoba’s Aboriginal Education Action Plan and affirmed the importance of research in influencing educational policies and practices, as “research can help us to envision and choose among many possibilities.”

“Case studies on promising practices in aboriginal education can offer in-depth insights into those special features and qualities that help to shape rich learning and social experiences, nurture imagination curiosity, support cultural education, inspire student learning and strengthen bridges to parents and communities.”

Hon. Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship, and Youth, Manitoba

He continued, “Storytelling is an integral part of aboriginal culture. Stories are gifts that teach and inform. In several fundamental ways, the case studies that we share during this conference are like stories. . . . Complemented by the conference’s blend of panels, interactive roundtable forums and sharing sessions, these case studies will provide us with both the knowledge and inspiration to continue to strengthen learning in classrooms, schools and communities for aboriginal students . . . [as] I think we can all agree that despite many successful efforts involving caring and committed individuals and organizations, we still have more work to do.”

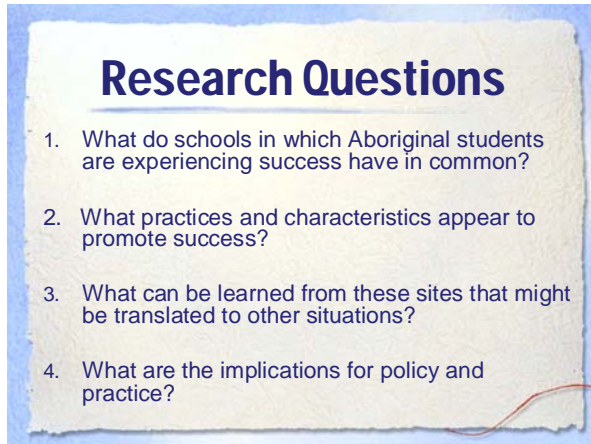
Before the keynote address, **educators from the 20 schools from the *Sharing Our Success* research** who had traveled from across Canada to share their practices were asked to stand and be recognized so that their efforts and accomplishments could be celebrated.

The keynote address was given by **George Fulford and Jackie Moore Daigle** who gave an overview of the *Sharing Our Success* study findings.

Based on two separate studies involving 20 schools, the research provides insights into ‘what works’ in creating academic progress for aboriginal students. The first study, *Ten Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling* was conducted between June 2003 and April 2004 by principal investigator, David Bell and co-authors, Sheila Rose, Kirk Anderson, Terry Fortin, Keith Spencer, Leon Simard, and Jackie Ottmann. *More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling* was completed in 2007 by George Fulford, with Jackie Moore Daigle, Blair Stevenson, Chuck Tolley, and Tracey Wade in schools spread across north, central and eastern Canada.

Commissioned by SAE, this research was designed to answer the questions shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Research Questions



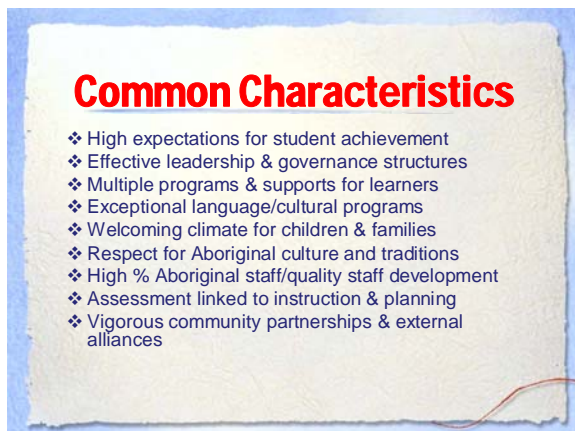
The schools were selected through multi-level consultations with aboriginal, federal, provincial/territorial, and local authorities. Data collection involved 7-11 days per site to review documents and conduct observations, as well as interviews and focus groups with key informants involving over 800 respondents in total. The framework shown in Figure 3 was used to examine and document school practices, and identify innovations and strengths and the underlying conditions contributing to their success.

Figure 3 Research Framework



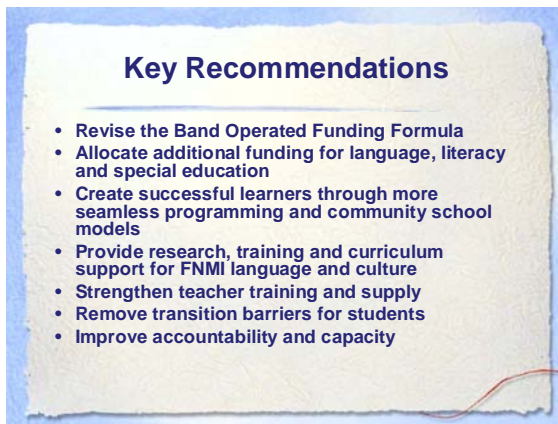
The detailed draft case studies thus prepared were vetted and approved by local authorities and reported back to the school community. The research teams then conducted cross-case analyses to map success factors and identify broader issues which must be addressed by policymakers at a systems level. Although uniquely translated within each school's context, a number of common success factors were found across the 20 sites as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 School Characteristics



Within each success factor, the salient practices used by the schools were then summarized by Daigle and Fulford in a series of slides. These approaches were further amplified in the workshops presented by the schools over the course of the conference.

Figure 5 Recommendations



Systemic issues that emerged from these cases deserve careful attention, including Aboriginal education funding, special education, teacher development, language and literacy, cultural programming, and performance measurement. These issues, among others, were discussed in a variety of formats throughout the *Sharing Our Success* conference. The keynote address concluded by referring to the 21 policy recommendations contained in the final report. These identify necessary steps at the system level to strengthen infrastructure and build school capacity. Some of these recommendations are highlighted in Figure 5.

Second Plenary

The second plenary session occurred Friday noon, with two distinguished guests addressing delegates prior to the luncheon speech by Roberta Jamieson.

Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, President of the University of Winnipeg, welcomed conference participants to the University of Winnipeg for Saturday's sessions. Underlining the importance of research in advancing opportunities for aboriginal learners, he referred to the *Sharing Our Success* project as a landmark study. Encouraged by new developments such as the recent meeting between 25 universities and Grand Chief Fontaine and other Aboriginal leaders, Dr. Axworthy believes universities must play a role in supporting youth through programs as such homework clubs, afterschool programs, and opportunity tuition funds, noting that if the talents of indigenous youth can be fully utilized our human resource potential will be unsurpassed. In his closing remarks, Dr. Axworthy referred to Jonathan Lear's book entitled, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. He was inspired by the wisdom and leadership of Chief Plenty Coups of the Crow Nation, whose traditional way of life was threatened by the arrival of the Europeans and the disappearance of the buffalo. The chief counselled his people to find their way forward in an unknown landscape by maintaining and applying traditional culture and values in new ways. Dr. Axworthy concluded by saying, "We would like to walk with you."

Chief Donovan Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations, welcomed delegates to Winnipeg on behalf of the Chiefs in Treaty One Territory, and brought the regrets of National Grand Chief Phil Fontaine. Chief Fontaine spoke with pride of his mother, who was a passionate educator, and of the rising numbers of aboriginal graduates from high school and post-secondary institutions. He is very proud of the educational vision and strong leadership in aboriginal communities and of his own community, one of the first in Canada to take local responsibility for education. Reminding us that 25% of school-age children in Manitoba are Indian or Métis, the Chief urged educators to instill dreams in all aboriginal children that they can achieve their academic goals and to never lose focus that each child is gifted in special ways.

Roberta Jamieson, CEO, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, gave an uplifting luncheon address, commending delegates for their commitment to educational success. Drawing inspiration from a long list of distinguished aboriginal leaders who have been recognized for their outstanding achievements to Canadian society, she urged participants to work together to ensure that every First Nation, Inuit and Métis who wants education or training is able to achieve that goal. She outlined some of the programs for young people sponsored by the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, including scholarships, role model programs, celebration of achievement, and bursaries. The Foundation welcomes and encourages partnerships across Canada to help expand these life-changing opportunities for disadvantaged youth.

Closing Plenary

On Saturday the conference moved to the University of Winnipeg where the only plenary session was the closing ceremony. **Conference Chair, Helen Raham of SAEE**, thanked everyone involved with the conference and restated her hope that participants had had the opportunities to collaborate, share knowledge, build upon best practices, and forge new networks to enhance the success of students from Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities. **Resident Elder, Linda McEvoy** performed a traditional drum song to conclude the conference.



Roberta Jamieson addresses luncheon plenary

SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

As the centerpiece of the conference, presentations by the schools in the *Sharing Our Success* research formed 65% of the program. These workshops featured principals and teachers (and/or a senior administrator in some instances) from the 20 case study schools, who showcased practices found to promote student success. These one-hour sessions were usually chaired by the researcher who had prepared the case study.

The schools are identified in the table below:

Table 1 Schools in the Sharing Our Success Research

2004 Schools	Location	Authority
Alert Bay Elementary	Alert Bay, BC	S.D. #85, Vancouver Island North
Atikameg School	Whitefish FN Reserve, AB	Whitefish Lake First Nation and Northland S.D.
Chalo Elementary	Fort Nelson FN Reserve, BC	Fort Nelson First Nation
Elijah Smith Elementary	Whitehorse, YT	Yukon Dept. of Education
Gift Lake School	Gift Lake Metis Settlement, AB	Northland S.D.
Merritt Secondary School	Merritt, BC	S.D. #58, Nicola-Similkameen
Peguis Central School	Peguis Reserve, MB	Peguis Band
Princess Alexandra Comm. School	Saskatoon, SK	Saskatoon School District
Reindeer Lake School	Southend, SK	Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation
Southeast Collegiate	Winnipeg, MB	Southeast Tribal Council
2007 Schools		
Tsi Snaihne School	Tsi Snaiihne, QC	Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education
Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School	Behchoko, NT	Tilcho Community Services Agency
Écoles Wiinibekuu & Annie Whiskeychan	Waskaganish, QC	Cree School Board
Eskasoni Elem/Middle School	Eskasoni, NS	Eskasoni School Board
Kitigan Zibi School	Maniwaki, QC	Kitigan Zibi Education Council
Mount Carmel Elementary School	Kenora, ON	Kenora District Catholic School Board
N'Swakamok Alternative School	Sudbury, ON	Rainbow District School Board
Nuiyak School	Sanikiluaq, NU	Nunavut Education School Services
Se't A'newey Kina'matino'kuom	Conne River, NL	Miawpukek First Nation of Conne River
Wapanohk Community School	Thompson, MB	Mystery Lake School Division

The school workshops were richly illustrated with innovative strategies, specific instructional approaches, hands-on resources and the data collected to monitor outcomes and inform planning. Most schools presented twice to packed audiences over the two days, and eagerly sought out workshops by other schools grappling with similar challenges. This exchange of effective approaches among practitioners was seen by many to be the highlight of the conference, and many participants expressed the desire to be able to attend more school presentations than could be accommodated in the concurrent scheduling.

A number of overarching themes documented in the research were evident in these presentations by the schools. Some focused on particular curricular strengths and adaptations to meet student needs in literacy and language, mathematics, science, or vocational training, etc. Other schools shared

exemplary local language and cultural programs, describing the implementation and effects of language immersion programs or traditional land-based education offered by the school. A holistic and seamless approach to education was another dominant theme. Some presentations focused on creating culturally affirming alternative learning environments for drop-out youth. Others described successful interventions in health, behavior, early childhood and parenting, post-secondary support, etc. The full-service programming of the community school model was explored in some detail.

Strong community engagement, local control of decisions, and the forging of innovative partnerships to increase student success were commonly highlighted as instrumental to the success of these schools. Organizational and leadership strategies also featured prominently in these schools' repertoires. Governance structures and the sometimes unique division of leadership roles and responsibilities at the school were described, along with hiring and professional development practices, the collection, use and reporting of data, improvement planning processes, and effective strategies for engaging community support.

"It was inspiring to see all the successes there are in aboriginal schooling. I now have a lot more strategies and 'best practices' that I am planning to use in my own practice."

For details, readers are referred to the case studies (Bell, 2004 and Fulford, 2007) which document each school's promising practices and implementation strategies.

POLICY SESSIONS

Aboriginal education policy is in different stages of development and implementation depending upon the jurisdiction and the specific issue being addressed. Policy sessions were included in the program to assist conference participants become aware of initiatives in other jurisdictions, consider solutions and challenges held in common, and provide feedback to policy makers. In confronting systemic issues for on and off-reserve schools, these eight policy sessions were informative and sometimes provocative.

Four sessions featured provincial /territorial action plans or strategies for aboriginal education; two policy sessions were national in scope. The remainder dealt with policy at the school district/division level or within aboriginal organizations to support education. Where regional perspectives were valuable, panels provided a diversity of viewpoints on the policies being discussed.

"We have never had the opportunity to have these cross-sectorial conversations before."

Provincial and territorial presentations, while specific to their respective jurisdictional needs, had many commonalities. The four main objectives of Manitoba's Action Plan were articulated by Helen Settee-Robinson as increasing high school graduation rates, access to postsecondary education, successful

participation in the labor market, and the research base on aboriginal education and employment. Initiatives undertaken by the Manitoba government to support these goals include: curricular change, added parent and community involvement, aboriginal advisory councils, community schools partnerships, community-based aboriginal teacher education programs, aboriginal adult learning centers, apprenticeship and in training programs, data collection and new research.

Dominic Giroux presented a resource document outlining Ontario's new First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework designed to close the achievement gap in literacy, graduation rates and advancement to postsecondary by 2016. The mandate of Ontario's Aboriginal Education Office has been expanded to include postsecondary education and training, and the Province has increased targeted support for aboriginal learners which includes Native Language and Studies programming. A resource designed to guide school boards in developing policies for self-identification of aboriginal students to support board capacity to monitor their progress was also provided.

Saskatchewan Learning recognizes First Nations and Métis education as foundational to the provincial education system. Maureen Johns Simpson described a comprehensive coordinated approach which includes governance, policy, curriculum, capacity building, and accountability. Partnerships are actively supported at the provincial, regional and local levels as the goal of working in partnership with First Nations and Métis peoples and their governments is to provide the best possible supports to all children and youth in Saskatchewan schools. A MOU among Saskatchewan Learning, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations is to develop shared decision making/co-management arrangements between the provincial and the First Nations education systems. Similar to other provinces, the goals of First Nations and Métis Education are: improved outcomes for First Nations and Métis students; a high quality learning program for all students; a shared and harmonious future; and, a seamless education system. She detailed some promising practices, research, and programs as well as describing the Continuous Improvement Framework.

Policy initiatives and unique challenges in four northern jurisdictions were examined in a session on *Education Policy for Learners in the North*. Each panelist highlighted the necessity to base education on aboriginal worldviews, beliefs, principles and values specific to that people. Catherine McGregor outlined Nunavut's process for developing policy that involves elders and the community and allows for specific needs of local communities while addressing the overarching goals of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), which is the foundation for restructuring education delivery. Some components of Nunavut's education policy include: IQ curricular competencies for all K–12 students; Sivunikasamut Illinniarniq (a new system of multiple options for high school); inclusive education, bilingual education and dynamic assessment. Pauline Gordon from the Northwest Territories believes that the land-based skills learnt from her parents allowed her to be successful. Land-based skills should form the foundation of aboriginal education which requires programs to foster land-based teaching and teaching personnel. Tina Jules from Yukon Department of Education described the diversity of languages, governance agreements, elders in the schools programs, and cultural inclusion programs. Abraham Jolly from the Cree School Board in Québec addressed the need for implementing a foundation for engaging the next generation in the education process. All panel members agreed

on the need for aboriginal teachers, and that most successful teacher training programs are in a governance structure that includes First Nations.

Raymond Théberge, Director General of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), led a session on *Pan-Canadian Initiatives in Aboriginal Education*. The CMEC supports aboriginal education as one of three CMEC priorities through teacher training; classroom, curriculum and resources; school-community partnerships; and research, consultation, and policy development. With its unique framework which encompasses all provincial and territorial ministers and deputy ministers of education, CMEC can pool and share federal and provincial/territorial resources and information. In order to work towards evidence-based decision-making, the CMEC is developing tools to assess and address specific needs in aboriginal education by collecting achievement data, developing indicators, and facilitating collaboration. As with many of the policy sessions, a vigorous question-and-answer period ensued.

The Role of School Boards in Improving Aboriginal Achievement was explored in a panel session chaired by the Executive Director of the Canadian School Boards Association. Trustees Valerie Adrian (BC) and Steve Noskey (AB), along with Director of Education, Janet Wilkenson (ON), described board policies and strategies on aboriginal education being implemented in different areas of the country. Some of the challenges for school boards that emerged from this session included: attracting, training and retaining aboriginal teachers; the legislation governing aboriginal education, funding inequalities; and the identification, assessment and monitoring progress of this cohort. Also noted were the utility of technology in delivering language programs; the importance of relationships; and the increasing success of their students seen in the data collected.

In *Structures to Support Band-operated Schools*, a three-member panel addressed policies required to build capacity in the 520 band-operated schools serving students from 633 different First Nations across Canada. Don Avison, Eleanor Bernard, and Peter Garrow described some of the curriculum development, resources, research, advocacy, and professional development services provided to FN schools by such organizations as the BC First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey in Nova Scotia, and the Assembly of First Nations.

There was common agreement that aboriginal students must receive equitable funding with their peers in provincial/territorial schools, and that the funding formula must be revised to provide sustainable support for the cultural and language aspects of their education, research, data collection, technology, special needs services, pre-school and post-secondary programs, and under-funded other infrastructural components. As in many other sessions there was much discussion about accountability, assessment and appropriate performance indicators.

Although Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) was unable to unveil its Education Renewal Plan as anticipated, Assistant Associate Deputy Minister, Christine Cram, highlighted some of the successes and challenges with respect to the oversight of educational services for some 121,000 aboriginal students enrolled in primary and secondary education. In her remarks, entitled *Education is the Future*, she noted that this landmark conference benefited from the convergence of recent

research and the broad diversity of participants, which SAEE has artfully structured to allow groups to network across boundaries. She stated that this broad collaboration should make us optimistic about the future of aboriginal education as should a number of other developments such as B.C.'s legislation, Manitoba's speech from the throne, economic factors, land claims, and demographics. Christine was joined by First Nations SchoolNet representatives who spoke of the benefits technology provides to individual learners and to aboriginal communities.

Collectively, these sessions offer evidence of numerous policy developments which hold potential to positively affect aboriginal learning in Canada, and of the value of such constructive exchanges among the various jurisdictions responsible for aboriginal education. The use of research to guide policy to meet the needs of aboriginal learners was a common theme. It was evident that research was being translated into policy initiatives which may then be evaluated for their effectiveness with careful monitoring of results. It is conceivable that policy and practice at large may be influenced by lessons learned from the implementation of initiatives such as Manitoba's Aboriginal Education Action Plan, the *Canada-First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement* in British Columbia, Ontario's Aboriginal Education Strategy, the proposed Nunavut Education Act in tandem with the new Language Act; or national policy priorities expressed by the Assembly of First Nations, INAC and CMEC.

Most jurisdictions are cognizant that aboriginal learning initiatives must include early childhood education as well as entry into the labor force and/or post-secondary education. Other common policy issues that emerged from the provincial, national and local presentations included: appropriate performance indicators and their use, governance, self-identification, and funding. While there were many differences of opinion expressed on specific issues, generally there is a common understanding of the policy issues that must be resolved to strengthen aboriginal education in Canada.

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

In addition to the keynote address and school-based presentations on the *Sharing Our Success* research, other research sessions were also offered at this conference. Some highlighted significant field studies underway or recently completed, while others explored processes, gaps and collaborations for research into aboriginal schooling.

An example of the latter was an invitational session on *Research Partnerships for Strengthening Education in Canada's North*. This brainstorming session, sponsored by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and chaired by Helen Raham, brought together approximately 40 key players to explore potential directions for policy-focused research to inform education initiatives in northern communities. James Stauch, of the Gordon Foundation, briefly described the *Canada North* program to support policy-oriented initiatives in the northern regions and then solicited ideas for education projects of strategic importance in strengthening Northern people's opportunities for success. While many priority areas were identified by the group, two of the most exciting ideas that emerged were the urgency of strengthening first languages in the north and the establishment of a world-class arctic university. Participants felt strongly about the necessity for moving northern issues onto the national agenda and continued forums for dialogue about northern education.

What are the gaps in our knowledge?
What levers could bring about the greatest change?
Which partners need to be part of the solution?
Who could lead this work?
Who could support it?
What's the timeline?

Questions posed at *Research Partnerships for Strengthening Education in Canada's North*

In their workshop entitled, *Connecting Research with Practice*, two well-known aboriginal scholars from Manitoba joined forces to offer their perspectives on conducting research in indigenous settings. Professors Laara Fitznor and Brian Rice highlighted the importance of honouring aboriginal place, researchers, and ways of knowing in the inquiry process. In the discussion period, participants shared their research experiences to illustrate this precept.

The Making Education Work Project (MEW) is a research and demonstration project funded by the Province of Manitoba and the Canada Millennium

Scholarship Foundation. This five-year study which commenced in September 2006 is examining the effectiveness of an intervention being piloted in six Manitoba secondary schools designed to increase graduation rates and entry into post-secondary education for aboriginal high school students. Components of the program offered include academic, individual and cultural support, exposure to post-secondary options, school, community and parent liaison mentoring. Pilot Project Manager, Jocelyn Charron, and the Provincial Coordinator, Betty-Ann McIvor reported on the status of the implementation and plans for evaluation. The research will track cohorts of treatment and control groups with respect to high school graduation rates, participation in PSE programs, and other outcome measures.


Recent field-based research from Alberta was presented by Bob Steele, of Alberta Education's FNMI Services Branch. Bob discussed the findings from two reports, *Promising Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education* and *First Nations, Métis and Inuit School-Community Learning Environment Project*. The first report contained in-depth case studies of two schools, and the second drew observations from 16 participating schools. This research provided insights on practices associated with success for aboriginal students in five domains: parent and community engagement; cultural and language programming; teachers, instruction and curriculum/resources; professional development; and, individual student support.

The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) presented a summary of its year-long research and consultations on holistic and culturally relevant measures of learning for aboriginal learners in a session entitled, *Redefining How Success Is Measured In First Nation, Inuit and Métis Learning*. Jarrett Laughlin offered an overview of the consultation process and the key characteristics of holistic lifelong learning in these contexts that emerged. Professor Narcisse Blood described the data gaps and challenges that limit non-aboriginal understanding of FNMI learning. A brief description of the three lifelong learning models and how they might be used to develop a national, holistic framework for measuring lifelong learning was provided by Ted Amendt. This work is a welcome addition to the research field, as there is no broadly accepted framework for measuring the full spectrum of aboriginal learning.

DIALOGUE SESSIONS

These interactive theme-based discussions benefited from the combined expertise and experience of the conference presenters and participants. The program included eight sharing circles on Friday and three larger roundtables on Saturday on key domains of practice emerging from the research: Aboriginal Language, Cultural Programs, Leadership and Governance, Teacher Development, Community Partnerships, Literacy, Technology, and Assessment and Reporting. For each topic, a synergistic mix of school-based expertise drawn from the *Sharing Our Success* research complemented that of recognized experts and practitioners, and discussion facilitators encouraged active exchanges of information and effective strategies.

The sharing circles followed a common format. They were small group sessions with usually no more than thirty people. After a welcome by the facilitator and brief statements by resource panel members, participants were encouraged to share their own expertise. Each group was also directed to the specific *Sharing Our Success* research findings relevant to their theme.



“I enjoyed the opportunity to meet such dedicated educators. Listening to their successes was very beneficial. I believe that these strategies and models of learning are transferrable to most aboriginal education centres and schools.”

Many examples of the effective integration of local FNMI culture into the curriculum were gathered in the session on cultural programming. Another group considered the evidence around immersion and core models of FN language instruction, and issues related to the supply of instructional resources and qualified instructors. The teacher development session focused on strategies for the recruitment, pre-service training, mentoring and professional development of aboriginal teachers, noting acute needs and promising solutions in some northern regions. As skilled and stable leadership and governance is vital to school success, one group discussed effective governance models and leadership quality at band, district and school level. Leadership training, supply and succession were felt to be areas much in need of further research. Another group heard from entrepreneurial principals who had forged innovative partnerships to establish exciting new learning opportunities for students – television studios, home construction programs, native artifact museums, etc. The community school model figured prominently in discussions of harnessing community partnerships. Literacy strategies and the use of technology to enhance learning were the focus of other group exchanges. Three schools who achieved dramatic academic gains through the use of assessment to guide instructional decisions prompted a useful dialogue on assessment and reporting.

Saturday’s roundtables were forums for vigorous debate on three systemic challenges that had surfaced frequently through the conference. With upwards of 90 participants in each roundtable, there was no shortage of responses to the opening remarks offered by an expert panel chosen for their diverse perspectives on the issue.

Panelists Peter Garrow (Assembly of First Nation), Sheila Carr-Stewart (University of Saskatchewan) and Eleanor Bernard (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey) opened the roundtable debate on strategies for *Building Capacity in First Nations Schools*, highlighting the importance of educational governance, infrastructure, leadership, funding, and a strong cultural foundation. The ensuing audience discussion focused heavily on underfunding in FN schools and teacher training and development issues.

The second issues roundtable focused on *Performance Measures and Accountability Structures*. Panel members included: Gerry Hurton (Assembly of First Nations), Don Avison (University Presidents Council, BC); Genevieve Fox (Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre) and Helen Robinson-Settee (CMEC Indicators Program Lead, Manitoba). This session elicited diverse and strongly held views on measuring aboriginal learning K–12 and the uses of that information. While panel members generally agreed that multiple forms of assessment are needed and that currently there is an inability to collect anything other than graduation rates across jurisdictions, the roundtable did not reach consensus on what pan-Canadian indicators should be implemented.

The third roundtable topic was the *Role of the School in First National Language Survival*. Each panelist identified key issues and the pertinent research base to assist participants collectively explore solutions to this question. Researcher Mary-Jane Norris (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) set the stage by providing the national statistics on FN language decline and the breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of language. Andrea Bear Nicholas (St. Thomas University) presented evidence on the impact of immersion programs in reversing this decline, and Peter Geller (University College of the North) underlined issues related to the development and training of FNMI teachers and language instructors.

While consensus on solutions to these three critical issues was not achieved in these one-hour roundtables, there was general agreement that it is necessary to continue these discussions at the national, provincial, and local levels.



Afterword

The issues discussed during the *Sharing Our Success* conference were varied and complex. The participants represented a variety of backgrounds, interests and affiliations from every region of Canada. What was remarkable was the quality of the experience, the honesty of the dialogue, and the shared vision and concern.

SUMMARY

As we reflect on the conference proceedings as a whole, several takeaway messages stand out. While by no means a conclusive list, these observations may offer guidance and inspiration for all partners in moving forward.

Encouraging Progress is Being Made – There is evidence of concrete action and progress on numerous fronts. Some notable examples include: comprehensive provincial action plans and resources dedicated to closing the achievement gap; the enactment of landmark First Nation agreements and legislation; improved data collection; recognition of the place of research to guide decisions; the sharing of information on best practices; and technology advances that increase educational opportunities. We should celebrate this progress.

Agreement on Fundamental Goals – There is widespread support for many fundamental principles of aboriginal education: the central importance of first language and culture; the value of seamless and broad programs to support aboriginal learners; the importance of developing a cadre of skilled aboriginal teachers; the need for a holistic approach to schooling and for engaging parents and community in that process; and the imperative to build local leadership and capacity. These commonalities are a strong foundation on which to build and move forward.

Diverging Views are Still Apparent – In other important areas, we have not yet reached consensus or require more information about best practice and policies to close the gap. Some areas that fall into this category include: measuring, tracking and reporting student learning; balancing authority and accountability; and delivering first language instruction. We should seek opportunities to reach understandings through further research and dialogue across the sectors.

Persistent Challenges Remain – Certain systemic issues continue to impede progress towards excellence in aboriginal education. Among these are: funding inequities; the supply and development of skilled aboriginal teachers; infrastructure, governance and capacity issues; lack of communication among the various sectors involved; and the absence of data by which to measure progress on a national scale. All of us must share a sense of urgency in removing these barriers.

The conference was viewed by many as important and successful, both for its content and the rare opportunity it afforded the various sectors and regions to engage in dialogue with each other about promising practice. There was strong affirmation that there should be more conferences of this nature, perhaps on an annual basis. Many felt that two days were not enough time to fully mine a program of this breadth. There was universal consensus that the lines of communication and bridges built through this pan-Canadian research and policy exchange must be maintained and expanded. A summary of the participant evaluations appears on the following page.

The success of this conference was due to many factors, including the generosity of its sponsors, the guidance of the program committee, the commitment of the SAEF staff, the speakers who shared their wisdom, and the participants who so fully engaged in the experience. Going forward, may we all continue to seek opportunities to collaborate, share knowledge, and build on best practice to enhance the success of Canada's aboriginal youth.



PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Registrants were asked to provide formal written evaluation related to different aspects of the conference. Evaluation forms were received from 94 of 375 participants, yielding a response rate of 25%. Respondents self-identified as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 Respondents by Role

Participants	Percentage
School-based Educator	18
School Division/District Leader	17
Academic Faculty/Research Consultant	13
Non-profit Organization	8
Aboriginal Organization	12
Conference Presenter	6
Provincial/Federal Government	13
Student	2
Other	11

Table 3 illustrates participant satisfaction rates with various elements at the conference. When questioned about conference presentations, 95.6% of respondents stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the keynote sessions and the same percentage responded similarly when asked to rate all conference sessions. When rating conference materials 96.7% of respondents stated they were satisfied or very satisfied. Of those responding to the survey, 93.4% were satisfied with the opportunities for networking and communication.

Table 3 Satisfaction Rates

Percent of Respondents	Keynote Addresses	Content of Sessions	Conference Materials	Networking Opportunities
Dissatisfied	2.2	0	0	1.1
Not Very Satisfied	5.4	4.3	3.3	5.4
Satisfied	42.4	40.2	40.7	30.4
Very Satisfied	50	55.4	56	63

Another major indicator of the success of the conference was that 88% of respondents stated they would attend a conference of this type in the future. When asked to respond to the question “What did you enjoy most about the *Sharing Our Success* Conference?” there were many varied and positive comments, some of which are featured as pull-quotes throughout this document.

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The University of Winnipeg
Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis & Non-Status Indians
The Provinces of Manitoba, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan
Yukon and the Northwest Territories
Canadian Council on Learning, Aboriginal Learning and Knowledge Centre
Aboriginal Peoples Television Network
Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation
The Winnipeg Foundation
First Nations SchoolNet
Canadian North Airlines

We express our deep gratitude to the many presenters, panel members and facilitators who generously gave their time and expertise to make this research exchange a success.

We are also indebted to the members of the Steering Committee who provided us with thoughtful advice in the planning and execution of this conference:

Calvin Hanselmann, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Diana Jones, Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth
Dawn Sutherland, Associate Professor of Education, University of Winnipeg
Jackie Moore-Daigle, Director, Aboriginal Teacher Education, Queen's University
George Fulford, Associate Professor, University of Winnipeg
Sheila Rose, Yukon College Native Teacher Education Program

We also wish to thank the following:

University of Winnipeg student volunteers (10)
Jordan Bighorn and his student film crew from Southeast Collegiate
William Whyte School Drummers and Dancers

Photos courtesy of Jordan Bighorn, Southeast Collegiate

Conference at a Glance: Friday, November 23, York Hotel

7:30 Registration and Continental Breakfast - Foyer and Manitoba Ballroom - Smudging Ceremony, Flin Flon Room with Elder Dave Courschene								
8:30 Opening Greetings: Helen Raham, Elder Dave Courschene, and Hon. Peter Bjornson - Manitoba Ballroom								
8:50 Keynote Address: George Fulford/Jackie Moore Daigle, Sharing Our Success: Overview of Research - Manitoba Ballroom								
	Churchill	Portage	The Pas	Brandon	Canadian North	Thompson	Canadian South/Central	Solarium
9:45	S The Fourth R Elijah Smith School (YK)	S Elements for Success Princess Alexandra Comm. School (SK)	S Strong Like Two People Chief Jimmy Bruneau School (NT)	S Moving Our Students Forward Mount Carmel Elem. School (ON)	T Cultural Programs B. Stevenson J. Jamieson R. Wolff	T Aboriginal Language Programming G. Fulford A. Bear Nicholas	R Promising Practices from Alberta B. Steele	P Manitoba's Action Plan for Aboriginal Education H. Robinson-Settee
10:45	Nutrition Break - Foyer							
11:15	S Hearts and Minds Working as One Alert Bay Elementary (BC)	S Planning and Policy for Locally Controlled FN Schools Peguis Central School (MB)	S Building a Strong Foundation Eskasoni School (NS)	S le thi ha hon:nien- We Make the Road for Them Akwasasne Mohawk Schools (ON/QC)	T Leadership and Governance C. Tolley & T. Fortin	T Teacher Development M. Duxtater & J. Moore Daigle	P Saskatchewan's Priorities for Aboriginal Learners M. Johns Simpson	P Ontario's Aboriginal Education Strategy D. Giroux
12:15	Buffet Lunch - Manitoba Ballroom and Solarium							
1:15	Greetings: Chief Donovan Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, University of Winnipeg, Luncheon Address: Roberta Jamieson, NAAF - Manitoba Ballroom							
2:15	S It's all about Vocabulary Development Chalo School (BC)	S Strategies for Success Reindeer Lake School (SK)	S Holistic Community-based Learning N'Swakamok Alternative School (ON)	S Progress Through Community Advancement Wapanohk Community School (MB)	S 27 Years of Successful Initiatives Kitigan Zibi School (QC)	T Community Partnerships T. Wade & Panel	T Technology C. Tolley B. Walmark P. MacDonald T. Whiteduck	P Role of School Boards in Improving Aboriginal Outcomes D. Anderson & CSBA Panel
3:15	Nutrition Break - Foyer							
3:30	S Enlightened Destiny: Unfolding Indigenous Education Southeast Collegiate (MB)	S Effective Strategies for Increasing FN Student Success Merritt Secondary School (BC)	S Promoting Success through Innovative Partnerships Nuiyak School (NU)	S Meeting Local Needs Set A'newey School (NL)	S Cree School Board's Unique Pedagogical & Admin. Services Ecoles Wiinibekuu & Whiskeychan (QC)	T Assessment and Reporting K. Spencer B. Montour	T Literacy J. Ottmann S. Gower, T. Cederwall	P Pan-Canadian Initiatives in Aboriginal Education- CMEC R. Théberge
6:00	Reception – Just Off Broadway Restaurant (No Host Bar)							
7:00	Banquet – Manitoba Ballroom - Entertainment: William Whyte School (Winnipeg) drummers and dancers							

S-School Presentation, R-Research, P-Policy, T-Theme Based Workshop, D-Roundtable Discussion, F-Documentary Viewing

Conference at a Glance: Saturday, November 23, University of Winnipeg

7:30 Smudging Ceremony – Elder Linda McEvoy, Aboriginal Student Centre, Lockhardt Hall							
8:00 Registration and Continental Breakfast- Manitoba Hall - POSTER DISPLAY - Main Hallway (all day)							
	Room 3M62	Room 3M61	Room 3M71	Room 3M69	Room 4M41	Theatre A	Theatre B
8:30	S Planning and Policy for Locally Controlled FN Schools Peguis Central School (MB)	S The Fourth R Elijah Smith School (YK)	S Meeting Local Needs Se't A'newey School (NL)	S Promoting Success through Innovative Partnerships Nuiyak School (NU)	R Re-defining Success in Aboriginal Learning: Holistic Models J. Laughlin, T. Amendt & N. Blood	P Structures to Support Band-Operated Schools R. Phillips, P. Garrow, E. Bernard, & D. Avison	F Sharing Our Success Schools Documentary Viewing Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)
9:45	S Hearts and Minds Working as One Alert Bay Elementary (BC)	S Strategies for Success Reindeer Lake School (SK)	S 27 Years of Successful Initiatives Kitigan Zibi School (QC)	S Building a Strong Foundation Eskasoni School (NS)	S Progress Through Community Advancement Wapanohk Community School (MB)	R Making Education Work: Improving Graduation Rates and Access to PSE J. Charron & B.A. McIvor	F Sharing Our Success Schools Documentary Viewing Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)
10:45	Nutrition Break						
11:15	S Strong Like Two People Chief Jimmy Bruneau School (NT)	S Effective Strategies for Increasing FN Student Success Merritt Secondary School (BC)	R Connecting with Research with Practice L. Fitznor & B. Rice	S Moving Our Students Forward Mount Carmel Elem. School (ON)	S It's all about Vocabulary Development Chalo School (BC)	P Education Policy for Learners in the North K. Lowe, P. Gordon C. McGregor, T. Jules A. Jolly	F Sharing Our Success Schools Documentary Viewing Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)
12:15	Buffet Lunch - Cafeteria						
1:30	S Elements for Success Princess Alexandra Comm. School (SK)	S Potential for Partnerships Atikameg & Gift Lake Schools (AB)	S Hollistic Community-based Learning N'Swakamok Alternative Sec. School (ON)	R Research Partnerships in the North Invitational Session H. Raham & J. Stauch	S le thi ha hon:nien- We Make the Road for Them Akwesasne Mohawk Schools (ON/QC)	R Innovative Industry in The Classroom: Modules for Aboriginal Students P. Tremblay, NAAF	P Education is the Future: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada C. Cram, INAC D. Avison (Chair)
2:30	Nutrition Break						
2:45	D Performance Measures & Accountability Structures H. Raham, G. Hurton, D. Avison, Genevieve Fox H. Robinson-Settee		D Building Capacity in First Nations Schools P. Gordon, P. Garrow, S. Carr-Stewart & E. Bernard		D Role of the School in FN Language Survival M. Doxtater, M. J. Norris, A. Bear Nicholas & P. Geller		D
4:00	Closing Ceremony - Theatre A- Chair: H. Raham, SAAE		THEATRE B		THEATRE A		

S-School Presentation, R-Research, P-Policy, T-Theme Based Workshop, D-Roundtable Discussion, F-Documentary Viewing

APPENDIX B - List of Presenters

Valerie Adrian, Chair, School District #74 (Gold Trail) Board of Education, BC
Ted Amendt, Acting Director of First Nations and Métis Education, Saskatchewan Learning
David Anderson, Executive Director, Alberta School Boards Association
Kirk Anderson, Professor of Education, University of New Brunswick
Judy Angeloff, Program Leader, Native Studies, N'Swakamok Alternative School, Sudbury, ON
Asmede Asgarli, Keewatin Tribal Council, Winnipeg, BC
Kelly-Lee Assinewe, Native Education Counselor, N'Swakamok Alternative School, Sudbury, ON
Lloyd Axworthy, President and Vice Chancellor, University of Winnipeg
Don Avison, President, University Presidents' Council of British Columbia
Eleanor Bernard, Executive Director, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, NS
Jordan Bighorn, Counselor, Southeast Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB
Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship & Youth, MB
Narcisse Blood, Kainai Studies Program, Department of Education, Lethbridge University
Barbara Cahoon, Southeast Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB
Cory Carmichael, Vice principal, Chalo School, Fort Nelson First Nation, BC
Sheila Carr-Stewart, Professor, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
Trudy Cederwall, Student Success Principal, Kenora Catholic District School Board, ON
Jocelyn Charron, Pilot Project Manager, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation
Christina Commonda, Assistant Director of Education, Kitigan Zibi, QC
Jill Cook, Principal, Alert Bay Elementary, BC
Ron Cook, Cree Language Coordinator, Mystery Lake School Division, Thompson, MB
David Courschene, Elder, Sagkeeng First Nation Turtle Lodge, MB
Sharon Cordell, Community Connector, Wapanohk Community School, MB
Christine Cram, Associate Assist. Deputy Minister, Regional Operations, Indian and Northern Affairs
Jackie Moore Daigle, Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, Queen's University
Phillip Djwa, First Nations Education Steering Committee, Schoolnet Technology Consultant, BC
Michael Doxtater, Assoc. Professor of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
Loretta Dykun, Culturally Proficient Education Consultant, Mystery Lake SD, Thompson, MB
Lara Fitznor, Professor, Dept of Educational Administration, University of Manitoba
Donovan Fontaine, Chief, Assembly of First Nations, Winnipeg, MB
Terry Fortin, Adjunct Professor, University of Alberta
Genevieve Fox, Coordinator, Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, Calgary
George Fulford, Assoc. Professor of Anthropology, University of Winnipeg
Peter Garrow, Director of Education, Jurisdiction and Governance, Assembly of First Nations
Peter Geller, Dean of Arts, University College of the North
Dominic Giroux, Assistant Deputy Minister, French Language Education and Education Operations Division, Ontario Ministry of Education
Pauline Gordon, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education Culture and Employment, NWT
Sue Gower, Principal, Chalo School, Fort Nelson First Nation, BC
Donelda Haller, First Nations Support Worker, Merritt Secondary, SD.58 Nicola Similkameen, BC
Wendy Hyer, Assistant Superintendent, SD. 58 Nicola Similkameen, BC
Gerry Hurton, Special Education and Performance Measurement, Assembly of First Nations
John Jamieson, Co-principal, Nuiyak School, NU
Roberta Jamieson, CEO, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
Rod Jeddore, Director of Education, Conne River, NL

Lucinda Jenkins, Pedagogical Supervisor, Northland School Division No. 61, AB
Tina Jules, Director of First Nations Programs and Partnerships, Yukon Department of Education
Jarrett Laughlin, Senior Research Analyst, Canadian Council on Learning
Keith Lowe, Senior Policy and Program Advisor, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth
Peter MacDonald, Principal, Eel Ground First Nation School, NB
Rick McCorrister, Principal, Peguis Central School, MB
Linda McEvoy, Elder in Residence, University of Winnipeg
Cathy McGregor, Director of Curriculum and School Services, Nunavut Department of Education
Betty-Ann McIvor, Coordinator, Making Education Work Project, Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth
Philomena Moore, Principal, Eskasoni Elementary and Middle School, NS
Barry Montour, Director of Education, Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Board of Education, ON
Rita Mueller, Dir. Early Childhood and School Services, NWT Dept of Education, Culture & Employment
Azin Nasser, Teacher, Southeast Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB
Andrea Bear Nicholas, Chair in Native Studies, St. Thomas University, Fredericton
Mary Jane Norris, Sr. Research Manager, Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Steve Noskey, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Northland School Division No. 61, AB
Patricia Parulekar, Executive Director, Canadian School Boards Association
Ron Phillips, Assistant Professor, Education, Nipissing University
Jacqueline Ottmann, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary
Helen Raham, Research Director, Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE)
Bonnie Rempel, Vice-principal, Wapanohk Community School, Mystery Lake SD, Thompson, MB
Helen Robinson-Settee, Director, Aboriginal Ed. Directorate, Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth
Maureen Johns Simpson, Acting Executive Director, First Nations and Métis Education Branch, Saskatchewan Learning
Shane Skjerven, Principal, Princess Alexandra Community School, Saskatoon, SK
Keith Spencer, Superintendent, Nisga'a School District, BC
Bob Steele, Senior Manager, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Services Branch, Alberta Education
Arlene Stevens, Vice-principal, Eskasoni Elementary & Middle School, NS
Linda Stevenson, Teacher, Peguis Central School, MB
Blair Stevenson, Silta Associates, QC
Anita Tenasco, Director of Education, Kitigan Zibi, QC
Raymond Théberge, Director General, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)
Chuck Tolley, Education Consultant, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Paulette Tremblay, Director of Education, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
Tracey Wade, Chignecto Consulting Group, Sackville, NB
Bryan Wagner, Principal, Wapanohk Community School, Mystery Lake SD, Thompson, MB
Jan Wallace, Vice Principal, Elijah Smith Elementary School, Whitehorse, YK
Brian Walmark, Director of Research, Keewaytinook Okimakanak, ON
Edwina Wetzels, Education Director (retired), Conne River, NL.
Tim Whiteduck, First Nations Education Council, Regional Coordinator First Nations SchoolNet, QC
Janet Wilkinson, Director of Education, Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, ON
John Wright, Principal, Elijah Smith Elementary School, Whitehorse, YK

APPENDIX C - Media Releases



National Conference Showcases Aboriginal Education

November 21, 2007, Winnipeg – Senior policymakers, educators, and aboriginal leaders are gathering in Winnipeg this weekend to exchange strategies for improving success rates for aboriginal students. Over 350 representatives of governments, school boards, native organizations, and educators from across Canada are attending the two-day conference November 23 and 24th at the York Hotel and the University of Winnipeg.

The conference is organized by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) which documented successful practices in 20 band and provincial schools across Canada in its *Sharing Our Success* research series. These schools will be showcased at the conference alongside senior government officials and other experts who will describe new policies and initiatives to improve outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit learners.

“It will only be possible to close the achievement gap on a national scale by pooling our knowledge about what works for aboriginal learners,” said Helen Raham, SAEE Research Director. “This event brings all stakeholders together in a national sharing circle to examine promising models, build on the research, and exchange solutions to long-standing barriers to success.”

Among the dignitaries addressing the conference are University of Winnipeg President, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy; Hon. Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship & Youth, Manitoba; Christine Cram, Assistant Associate Deputy Minister, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; Manitoba Regional Chief Katherine Whitecloud, Assembly of First Nations; Roberta Jamieson, CEO of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation; Peter Garrow, Education Director, Assembly of First Nations; and Dr. Raymond Théberge on behalf of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. The plenary address will be given by Dr. George Fulford (principal author) and Dr. Jackie Moore Daigle (co-investigator) in the 2007 set of school case studies.

The *Sharing Our Success* conference is co-hosted by the University of Winnipeg and funded by Indian and Northern Affairs, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians, the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, BC and Ontario, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and numerous other sponsors.

Further Information:

Conference details: www.sae.ca/successconference/index.html

Helen Raham, SAEE Research Director,

Media Backgrounder November 2007

A boriginal learners are the fastest growing cohort in the Canadian school system, and approximately 50% of them drop out of school before completing Grade 12. In an era when education is the key to future economic and social well-being, a failure rate of this proportion represents a national disgrace.

Much of the disparity in the quality of schooling experienced by aboriginal children can be attributed to the tangle of overlapping jurisdictions and governance models which inhibit the development of an effective, equitable and accountable system of education.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) currently spends close to \$1.3 billion annually on educational services for some 121,000 aboriginal students enrolled in primary and secondary education.¹ In a lengthy devolution process, INAC's role has dramatically shifted from direct delivery of these services to the oversight of funding for education programs controlled by First Nation authorities. Although INAC is accountable for the quality of education in federally funded schools and its equivalency with provincial systems, the Auditor General has found its accountability for education spending to be inadequate and an absence of mechanisms for managing and monitoring system quality.

Band governments, who are responsible for administering local education programs, often lack the capacity or will to ensure their schools meet provincial standards. With typically fewer than 500 members, many reserves have difficulty hiring qualified teachers. For all but the largest band-operated schools, inadequate educational funding remains a critical issue. Federal dollars available through the outdated Band Operated Funding Formula (BOFF) remain substantially below (estimated by some at 75%) the amount received by provincially operated schools. While INAC's New Paths funding introduced in 2003 and 2004 provided an additional \$65M targeted for key initiatives, disparities among band-operated schools have widened based on their capacity to access these funds.

Despite a well-defined link between the use of assessment data and improved performance, the absence of a mandatory large-scale assessment program for band-operated schools prevents monitoring their progress against common benchmarks. Many band authorities are reluctant to require their schools to participate in provincial assessments for a variety of reasons, including fear of surrendering hard-won control over education, cultural bias in the tests, unfair comparison of band-operated and provincial schools, and the desire for more holistic measures of achievement. Provincial governments, with one notable exception², also lack mechanisms to track and report results for aboriginal learners on provincial assessments. As a result, aboriginal parents, First Nation leaders, policy makers, and Canadians at large lack useful evidence about the relative effectiveness of the various delivery models.

Unlike many countries where closing the minority achievement gap has been a priority, there has been little serious research in Canada to identify effective policies and practices for raising aboriginal achievement. And, although numerous reports commissioned by federal and provincial governments and aboriginal organizations over the past 40 years have produced remarkably similar findings about the problems and recommendations, they have had modest or no impact on the system.

¹ Based on figures provided by INAC in March 2007.

² B.C. has reported aboriginal graduation rates and performance on an annual provincial assessments for Gr. 4, 7 and 10 since 2001.

Gathering Momentum

After years of rhetoric, however, the problem is beginning to receive the attention it deserves. In September 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education announced that the provinces and territories had agreed to make improving aboriginal education a collective priority. Since that time, most provinces and territories have articulated multi-year plans and targeted resources to address the needs of aboriginal learners. The CMEC has begun work with the provinces to establish a self-identification system for aboriginal students to better monitor their progress. A set of common achievement indicators is under development which will lead to a national report card on aboriginal learning. This will provide the data required to inform policymakers of the impact of their efforts and identify where new resources and strategies are required.

The Canadian Council on Learning has allocated significant resources to an Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre established in April 2006. The Centre has focused its initial efforts on consultations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders to develop holistic measures of student achievement which reflect their culture and values. The results of this work are to be released this month.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will table a new five-year Education Plan December 2007 to receive approval for a renewed mandate for responsibility for federally funded education programs. A revised funding formula, capacity building measures in the field, and some steps toward the establishment of structures for monitoring outcomes are widely anticipated components of this plan.

Having won control over education delivery, First Nation leaders and their organizations have continued to press for funding equity, local infrastructure and capacity building measures, and curricula which appropriately reflects their languages and cultures. An historic Canada - First Nations Jurisdiction Agreement achieved in British Columbia this year sets out law-making powers that cover on-reserve schools, provincial education standards that must be met, and the establishment of Community Education Authorities to manage the education system for participating First Nations. This offers a compelling model for other jurisdictions in supporting capacity building and accountability in FN schools.

Research to Close the Gap

While improving educational outcomes has become a national priority, progress has been hampered by the absence of research on best practice to guide policymakers and practitioners. Recent SAEE studies of schools creating measurable progress for aboriginal learners have provided some promising practices and templates. This case study research synthesizes lessons drawn from 20 schools from diverse settings across Canada. Demand has been high for these reports:

Sharing Our Success: Ten Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling (Bell, 2004)

Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling (Fulford, 2007)

On November 23-24, SAEE will host the *Sharing Our Success* conference in Winnipeg to showcase promising practices in these 20 schools and engage over 350 educators, aboriginal leaders, and decision makers in a national dialogue about what works in closing the aboriginal learning gap. Featuring over 70 presentations, this event promises to be a powerful catalyst for increasing aboriginal student success. The conference is funded by Indian and Northern Affairs, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, BC, Ontario, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon, as well as numerous sponsors.

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Sharing Our Success:

Promising Practices in Aboriginal Education

PROCEEDINGS OF A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

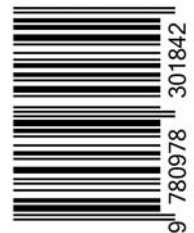
Winnipeg, November 23-24, 2007

Sharing Our Success was an opportunity for over 375 people from across Canada to assemble in Winnipeg on November 23 and 24th, 2007 to participate in a national dialogue on promising practices in aboriginal education. The over 70 presentations in the program were designed to highlight the research and to provide opportunities to share constructive solutions for the systemic issues that continue to challenge aboriginal learners and educators: issues of literacy, language and cultural programming; the assessment and reporting of results; governance and leadership; funding; the supply, training and retention of quality teachers; and community supports for learning. This Proceedings Report is an overview of this conference whose purpose was to capture present and future policy directions, opportunities for partnerships, roles of stakeholders; and, identify systematic issues and strategies to generate large-scale progress in aboriginal schooling.



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