

## **Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium February 2003**

---

### **Background**

Ontario's nine Aboriginal post-secondary education and training institutes are highly successful. The institutes: deliver 150 different programs to 4000 students; fill the need for culturally relevant curriculum; trained/educated 18,000 students over seven years; provided 367 jobs in Aboriginal communities in 2000/01; research capacity is increasing; and enrolment continues to escalate. Aboriginal institutes encourage student achievement by: delivering programs in Aboriginal communities; learning experiences/programs that are reflective of Aboriginal culture; delivering programs in learner centered environments focused on student support, including links to community services; and through flexible, innovative approaches for adult and young learners (PLA, hands on experiences, inclusion of elders/traditional people).

While some Aboriginal institutes have delivered programs for seventeen (17) years, all institutes continue to grow, continue to address the unique education and training needs of Aboriginal communities, and continue to seek recognition that leads to resources. Aboriginal communities continue to demand increased programs and services to address changes in labour market needs and due to increasing education attainment levels for entry to employment.

The institutes require formal recognition and adequate funding from government for operations, research, development and capital, in order to continue to be successful in addressing the education and training needs of Aboriginal peoples.

### **Government and The Issues**

- MTCU provides grant funding to support programs and services for Aboriginal peoples through the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (est. 1990). Colleges, universities and Aboriginal institutes rely on Aboriginal grants to address the needs in Aboriginal education. Of the \$6 million fund, \$5.2 million supports programs and services in colleges and universities. The same funding envelopes do not exist for Aboriginal institutes. Aboriginal institutes require more than \$800,000 and require access to the same funding envelopes as mainstream. A review of the Strategy should result in the need for additional funding and a change in the allocation of the fund.
- MTCU increased support to colleges and universities for the double cohort. Aboriginal institutes experienced a 92% increase in enrolment over five-years and expect another large influx in enrolment due to the double cohort. Rising tuition and rising grade point averages for entry into mainstream institutes will make attending Aboriginal institutes very attractive. Aboriginal institutes require funding to address increasing enrolments.
- HRDC provides training/employment support to Aboriginal peoples through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy. It is well known that the amount of AHRDS funding does not address the training needs of Aboriginal

peoples. HRDC should consider a specific allocation to support local and regional program development and delivery by Aboriginal institutes.

- HRDC has an opportunity to be creative with the implementation of Canada's Innovation Strategy. HRDC could create a focus on Aboriginal people and develop a mechanism to federally recognize and fund Aboriginal institutes as training, education and research institutes.
- INAC provides access to limited funding for some institutes through the Indian Studies Support Program. INAC needs to recognize and provide funding for Ontario's Aboriginal post-secondary institutes as it has with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

## **Models in Other Jurisdictions**

1. Saskatchewan - The federal government recognizes and provides funding to the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) through the Indian Studies Support Program. Indian Affairs uses a portion of the national allocation of post-secondary funding to provide ongoing support to SIFC. The provincial government in Saskatchewan matches the federal funding allocation.
2. British Columbia - The province of British Columbia provincially recognizes and provides funding to two Aboriginal institutes through their Aboriginal Policy Framework on Post-Secondary Education. The institutes that receive recognition and ongoing funding are the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the Institute of Indigenous Government.
3. United States of America - Presidential Order passed by President Clinton, recognizes and supports Tribal Colleges and Institutes in the U.S.A. The Presidential Order directs all federal government departments to develop and implement plans to increase support to Tribal Colleges and Universities. The Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act provides federal recognition of Tribal Colleges and per student funding for the operation of 25 Tribal Colleges.
4. New Zealand - The Education Amendment Act 1990, Section 162 (4) provides legislative recognition of a wananga (Maori university) and provides funding to Maori institutes in the same manner and level as mainstream institutes.

## **The Future**

Aboriginal institutes fill a particular niche in the market by providing education and training that is accessible and attainable for Aboriginal peoples thereby, increasing the success of Aboriginal peoples in post-secondary. Legislative and policy recognition by the provincial and federal governments and adequate funding will increase the capacity of Aboriginal institutes to address the current and future needs of Aboriginal peoples, thereby strengthening Aboriginal economies, and Ontario's economy.