



ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

FACT SHEET

Improving the education outcomes for Aboriginal peoples is a priority for the Government of Canada and has been a key focus of activity under the Canada -Aboriginal Peoples' Round Table process and the subsequent sessions on lifelong learning. These sessions have resulted in a shared commitment among all parties to work together to support the provision of a continuum of quality, culturally-relevant education for First Nations, Inuit and Métis people that helps them achieve their education goals. Education is also a central theme of the First Ministers' Meeting in Kelowna, British Columbia, November 24-25.

The Government of Canada committed to working with Aboriginal partners to strengthen quality, culturally-relevant education for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis of all ages. Steps towards this include a variety of federal programs for elementary, secondary and post-secondary students, as well as skills development and training, among others.

ON-RESERVE ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY EDUCATION

The high school completion rate for First Nations' students on-reserve has increased a full 10 per cent to 41.4 per cent between 1991 and 2001. Despite this significant improvement, the gap in educational attainment between First Nations youth and other Canadian youth remains; for example, the high school completion rate for the Canadian population increased 6.9 per cent over the same period to 68.7 per cent.

In 2004-05, the Government of Canada spent about \$1.1 billion on First Nations elementary/secondary education for approximately 120,000 students. These costs include:

- Instructional services to eligible students attending First Nations schools;
- The reimbursement of costs for on-reserve students attending provincial schools;
- Instructional services in federal schools (seven remaining schools);
- Student support services (i.e. transportation, counselling, accommodation);

This budget figure includes \$89 million for the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, \$101 million for Special Education and \$8.5 million for 111 Cultural Education Centres.

In addition, the 2005 Federal Budget announced new funding of \$120 million over the next five years for the Special Education Program, an investment aimed towards improving the quality of special education programming in First Nations schools.

Over the last 10 years, the number of band-operated schools managed directly by First Nations has increased from 372 to 496. Approximately 60 per cent of First Nations students living on-reserve attend First Nations band-operated schools. The remaining 40 per cent attend provincial, federal or private schools.

NON-RESERVE ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY EDUCATION

Approximately 80 per cent of school-age Aboriginal children attend schools in provincial and territorial systems. The Government of Canada provides financial support for elementary and secondary education through the Canada Social Transfer and Territorial Formula Financing, so that First Nations children can receive the support they need when attending schools off-reserve. This is coupled with initiatives to enhance the retention and academic success of Aboriginal learners in provincial and territorial schools.

The Government of Canada also provides support to non-reserve Aboriginal people through programs and initiatives such as Aboriginal Head Start and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

From 1987 to 2004-05, the number of registered First Nations and Inuit students enrolled in post-secondary education funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has increased from approximately 14,000 to about 24,000. Almost all post-secondary funding is administered by First Nations and Inuit organizations. About 4,500 of these students graduate annually.

The federal government also provides financial supports for Aboriginal post-secondary students through scholarship and bursary endowments to the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy (FNIYES), with a budget of \$24 million, includes four programs administered by INAC:

- Student Summer Employment Opportunities Program
- Science and Technology Program
- Youth Work Experience Program
- Career Promotion and Awareness Program.

FNIYES' objectives are to: support the development and enhancement of essential employability skills among First Nations and Inuit youth between 15-30; expose youth to a variety of career options; promote the link between education and labour market participation; and support work and study opportunities.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, LITERACY AND TRAINING

Between April 1999 and March 2005, the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS) has helped 280,694 Aboriginal people return to work. The AHRDS has a long term goal of increasing gains in literacy and essential skills for working age Aboriginal people and developing an Aboriginal workforce equipped with the skills needed to obtain meaningful and productive jobs.

FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLNET (FNS) PROGRAM

An Industry Canada SchoolNet initiative, First Nations SchoolNet connects all First Nations schools under federal jurisdiction to the Internet. By improving the connectivity and technical capacities of First Nations schools, the program aims to bridge the digital divide in First Nations schools located in remote and rural communities.

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