

**ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1986-2011**

by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is a critical policy study of the development of Aboriginal post-secondary education in British Columbia between 1986 and 2011. It explores the question “How have changing political, economic and social circumstances in British Columbia influenced the development and implementation of Aboriginal post-secondary policy?” through an embedded case study. During this time, British Columbia was governed by three different political parties: the Social Credit (1986-1991), the New Democratic Party (1991-2001), and the Liberals (2001 – 2011).

The province was also undergoing significant changes in its relationships with Aboriginal people, in trying to bring certainty to issues of Aboriginal rights and title that were undermining resource development. At the beginning of this period BC did not recognize Aboriginal rights and title; by the end of this period a number of treaties and non-treaty agreements had been signed.

Stories shared through policy texts, other documentary sources, as well as interviews with nineteen policy actors reveal a number of significant themes in the Aboriginal post-secondary policy process. These include: sector intersection between the Ministries responsible for post-secondary education and Aboriginal affairs; privileging of First Nations; relationships between policy actors and policy structures, the importance of leadership and ownership; the selective implementation of recommendations and policy; and different understandings of accountability.

## **Preface**

An earlier version of Chapter 1, Section 1.2, Historical Context was incorporated into sections 2.1, 4.3, 4.3.1, and 5.5. of Fisher, D., Rubenson, K., Bernatchez, J., Clift, R., Jones, G., Lee, J., MacIvor, M., Meredith, J., Shanahan, T., Trottier, C.(2006). *Canadian federal policy and post-secondary education*. Vancouver: The Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training, University of British Columbia.

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## Definitions

**Aboriginal:** Since early colonial times, British and Canadian governments have imposed names on Indigenous peoples of what is now Canada. The 1982 Constitution recognizes Indians, Inuit and Metis people as Aboriginal. However, these three broad categories obfuscate the diversity of people within the categories (e.g. ties to specific nations, those who have and have not signed treaties, those living on or off-reserve, or in remote, rural and urban contexts, those who gained status through Bill C-31), and their varying access to rights, resources and services. It also ignores the existence of Indigenous people who are non-status Indians or who belong to unrecognized tribes. In this dissertation, the word Aboriginal is used to refer collectively to all people of Aboriginal descent. When appropriate or possible, more specific references are used (e.g. Indians, Metis, and Inuit, names of specific nations or bands, or designations such as urban or rural Aboriginal people). As has been common since the 1980s, the term “First Nations” is used to refer to individual status Indians and their political organizations (B. Miller, 2003).

**Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions:** For the purpose of this dissertation, Aboriginal post-secondary institutions are those not-for-profit institutions governed by Aboriginal people and that serve Aboriginal people (and sometimes non-Aboriginal people) through the delivery of a wide range programs and courses. In British Columbia, there are two types of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions: public and private. Public Aboriginal post-secondary institutions have been designated as public under the *College and Institute Act*. At this writing, only one public Aboriginal post-secondary institution exists, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. All other Aboriginal post-secondary institutions are private institutions (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008).

**Aboriginal rights and title:** Aboriginal rights include the historic “practices, customs, traditions and communal organization” (Woolford, 2005, p. 5) of Aboriginal groups, and include Aboriginal title, or a property right to the land itself. These rights are recognized, but not defined in Canada’s constitution. The colonization of British Columbia preceded on the basis that Aboriginal rights and title either did not exist, or had been extinguished. However, Supreme Court cases have found that unextinguished Aboriginal rights and title continue to exist in BC. In BC Aboriginal rights and title are largely undefined. Legal decisions and treaty negotiations are the primary tools for giving definition to rights and title (M. Stevenson, 2001; Woolford, 2005).

**Certainty:** In relation to treaty making, certainty is a “legal technique intended to define with a high degree of specificity all of the rights and obligations that flow from a treaty and ensure that there remains no undefined rights outside of a treaty” (M. Stevenson, 2001, p. 114). As such, certainty is the contemporary equivalent of the ‘extinguishment’ of Aboriginal rights through treaty. The finality of certainty is particularly appealing to the business sector, as uncertainty over lands and resources undermines investment and development. Such finality also appeals to governments, as it clarifies future rights and title issues, and facilitates development. For many First Nations, however, certainty through treaties will lead to uncertainty for future generations of First Nations who will have to live with the untested consequences of treaty (M. Stevenson, 2001; Woolford, 2005).

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAPSI	Association of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions
ABE	Adult Basic Education
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AIC	Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium
APF	Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework
APSES	Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan
ASP	Aboriginal Service Plan
ASPF	Aboriginal Special Projects Fund
AVED	Ministry of Advanced Education
BC	British Columbia
BCAFN	British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
BCCAT	British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer
BCFNC	BC First Nations Coordinators/Advisors. Sometimes called First Nations Post-Secondary Education Coordinators/Advisors
The Committee	Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners
The Council	BC First Nations Coordinators Council. Sometimes referred to as First Nations Post-Secondary Education Coordinators Council.
FNESC	First Nations Education Steering Committee
FNS	First Nations Summit
FNUC	First Nations University of Canada
GDI	Gabriel Dumont Institute
Green Report	Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners
IAHLA	Indigenous Adult and Higher Learner Association
IIG	Institute of Indigenous Government
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. In 2011 it was renamed Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
ISSP	Indian Studies Support Program
MAETT	Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
MCAWS	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS)
MEST	Ministry of Education, Skills and Training
MNBC	Metis Nation British Columbia, formerly known as the Metis Provincial Council of B.C.
MSTL	Ministry of Skills Training and Labour
MOU Partners	Memorandum of Understanding Partners, also referred to as the PSE Partners
NDP	New Democratic Party
NEC	Native Education Centre, now Native Education College
NIB	National Indian Brotherhood
NVIT	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
PSE	Post-Secondary education
PSE Partners	BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group,

	also referred to as the MOU Partners
PSIs	Post-Secondary institutions
PSSSP	Post-Secondary Student Support Program
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
SFU	Simon Fraser University
SIFC	Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
Socreds	Social Credit Party
TRU	Thompson Rivers University
UBC	University of British Columbia
UBC-O	University of British Columbia, Okanagan
UBC-V	University of British Columbia, Vancouver
UC	University College(s)
UCC	University College of the Cariboo, now Thompson Rivers University
UFV	University of the Fraser Valley
UBCIC	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
UNBC	University of Northern British Columbia
UNNS	United Native Nations Society. Also referred to as UNN
WWN	Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute



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Finally, I acknowledge Aboriginal educational leaders, practitioners and allies who helped to create space in post-secondary institutions for Aboriginal learners, Aboriginal knowledge, and Aboriginal ways of being.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Oh God! Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man's success -- his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society. Before I follow the great Chiefs who have gone before us, Oh Canada, I shall see these things come to pass. (George, 2001, p. 3)

In front of a crowd of some 35,000 people who gathered at Vancouver's Empire Stadium to celebrate Canada's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the late Chief Dan George of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation delivered his famous oratory, *A Lament for Confederation*. In that speech, Chief George laments the changes that have come with colonization, the loss of land, resources, authority, life ways, and he looks to education as a way to bridge the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. He envisions a time when

...our young braves and our chiefs sitting in the houses of law and government, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedom of *our* great land. So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation. So shall the *next* hundred years be the greatest and proudest in the proud history of our tribes and nations. (George, 2001, p. 3)

Chief Dan George did not live to see the changes he envisioned, and Canada has little reason for pride in how it has addressed internal disparities between Aboriginal and other Canadians. While the educational situation has changed significantly for Aboriginal people, far too many young people do not complete high school, and post-secondary education (PSE) participation and success continues to be a challenge. This challenge is being addressed, in part, through federal and provincial Aboriginal PSE policies.

The small but growing body of scholarly work on Aboriginal PSE policy tends to focus on the scant federal policies relating to funding for First Nations and Inuit post-secondary learners and programs. PSE public policy issues concerning Métis or other Aboriginal peoples are largely ignored, as are provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policies. Yet for the last quarter

of a century, policies have emerged at the provincial and territorial levels in acknowledgement of the stark reality of Aboriginal under participation and limited success in post-secondary systems.

### 1.1 Research Question

This thesis engages in a critical analysis of Aboriginal PSE policy in British Columbia from 1986 to 2011. In 1988, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology released its report *Access to Advanced Education and Job Training in British Columbia*, recommending that the province develop a strategy to address the education and training needs of “Native Indians” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992). From that point up until 2011, under the governance of three different political parties (the Social Credit, the New Democratic Party, and the Liberals) four documents relating to Aboriginal PSE were developed by or for the province: the *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners* (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990), the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a), the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary and Training Policy Framework Policy Draft for Discussion* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003, November 14),<sup>1</sup> and the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b).

Policies are not created within a vacuum; policies “are ideological texts that have been constructed within a particular historical and political context” (Codd, 1988, p. 244). This contextually dependent understanding frames the question about Aboriginal post-secondary

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<sup>1</sup> A final draft Aboriginal PSE policy was completed in 2004, but was “shelved.” The Ministry of Advanced Education repeatedly reiterates its intention to complete this document, but as of this writing (April 2012) it has not been released.

policy that this study pursues: How have changing political, economic and social circumstances in British Columbia influenced the development and implementation of Aboriginal post-secondary policy?

## **1.2 Historical Context**

Before the colonial education system was imposed, Aboriginal societies, like other societies, developed formal and informal approaches to meet the educational needs of their people. Educational approaches were designed to meet the unique needs of the people within their environmental and cultural contexts, as well as to develop the gifts of the individual while enhancing community well-being (E. Hampton, 1995). Aboriginal people acquired education through informal means, like observations and experiences, and through more formal processes such as apprenticeships, participation in secret societies, or potlatches. The educational process was lifelong, and accommodated the pursuit of specialized knowledge necessary for politics, art, medicine, and so forth (Stonechild, 2004). In addition to passing on knowledge intergenerationally through instruction, speeches, stories, songs, and other cultural practices, new knowledge was created empirically, through reflection, or by way of spiritual revelation. Such knowledge was personally and/or socially validated (Castellano, 2000).

During early periods of contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples, traditional educational processes continued to flourish. Aboriginal life ways, knowledge, and skills were valued by Europeans who depended on Aboriginal people for both their survival and economic success. In addition, political and military alliances with Aboriginal people facilitated access to and protection of land, resources and settlements. Aboriginal participation in European education, in this early period, was limited to the efforts of missionaries. While missionaries' efforts were clearly directed towards the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples through conversion

and civilization, the schooling they offered also provided access to European knowledge and skills valued by Aboriginal people in their continued interaction with Europeans. Through these early contact times, Aboriginal people continued to exercise their educational self-determination by participating on their own terms in both missionary and traditional education (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000).

During the late 1700s and the early 1800s the settler population increased rapidly. At the same time, the Aboriginal population was decreasing dramatically due to disease, warfare and starvation. European interests shifted from resource extraction to settlement and resource development, resulting in massive land usurpation and resource depletion. As traditional lifeways, skills and knowledge became less significant to the settlers, Aboriginal people lost their value as “Indians.” (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000).

In 1830, the British Imperial government directed the Department of Indian Affairs<sup>2</sup> to promote the civilization and Christianization of Aboriginal people (adults and children) through settlement, resource development, and schooling. With the passing of the 1857 *Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in the Province*, colonial powers envisioned the eventual end of Aboriginal communities through voluntary enfranchisement of debt-free, educated Aboriginal individuals of good character who would gain freehold tenure over a portion of tribal lands. While some Aboriginal people did participate in colonial education, they did not embrace the idea of assimilation, causing the Department to reevaluate its education policy. Because adults were seen to be incapable of progress, the Department shifted

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<sup>2</sup> Since as early as 1755, various departments under British colonial government and later Canada’s federal government have taken responsibility for Aboriginal people in Canada.

its focus to the education of children. This focus continued long after the creation of Canada (Milloy, 1999).

### **1.2.1 Nationhood and Assimilation**

In 1867, following the passing of the *British North America Act*, the Dominion of Canada was established. Under the *British North America Act* jurisdictional responsibility for different areas was divided between the federal and provincial governments. To ensure a strong central government, jurisdiction for issues of national significance, was retained by the federal government. This included “Indians and lands reserved for Indians.” The provinces retained responsibility for areas of more local interest including education. (Barman, 1991; Fisher et al, 2006; Paquette & Fallon, 2010; Stonechild, 2004, 2006). Despite the protests of Aboriginal people, control over all aspects of “Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians” became a federal responsibility. Concerned with minimizing its fiscal responsibilities for a growing Aboriginal population, the Department excluded Métis from the Indian Act during the settlement of the prairies, and only accepted responsibility for the Inuit under the Indian Act after a 1939 Supreme Court ruling (J. Miller, 2004a). The assimilative goals of British colonial policy continued in new more coercive forms under the Dominion of Canada, and schooling was a primary vehicle for achieving these ends.

Experience with day schools, where irregular attendance and enduring traditional lifeways undermined the assimilative potential, led government to believe that a new approach was necessary if its goals were to be met. Although Aboriginal students continued to attend federal day schools, and prior to WWI, also attended some provincial day schools, particularly when non-Aboriginal enrollments were low, following the 1879 *Davin Report*, federal policy favored residential schools. By separating children from their families and communities and

placing them in residential schools, it was believed that the assimilative potential of schooling would be realized more speedily (Barman, 1996; Haig-Brown, 1995b).

The concept of residential schools was not new. As early as the 1620s, French missionaries had explored residential education, but these schools were unsuccessful because of limited enrolment. Those children who did attend despaired of loneliness and often ran away. From the 1790s until 1802, and again from 1807 to the 1820s, Protestant missionaries in what is now New Brunswick operated the Indian College, a boarding school that combined basic education with local apprenticeship. Another residential school, Mount Elgin, opened in Munceytown in Upper Canada in 1850. It combined half-day basic academics and religious instruction with manual labour, but because of its oppressive nature, few people sent their children to it (J. Miller, 2004a).

Disregarding these failures, government proceeded to promote residential schools in two forms. Firstly, as a cost saving measure, the government maintained and expanded the role of various religious denominations' schooling, providing small subsidies to religious groups so that they could continue to run the schools. Secondly, while day schools and small boarding schools located near reserves continued to exist, large industrial schools were established distant from students' home communities. These institutions were geared towards preparing older students for low status occupations in society.

An increase in settlers in the 1900s intensified race-based employment practices. Aboriginal people were finding it increasingly difficult to secure employment and some settlers were expressing resentment over the competitive edge Aboriginal students gained through industrial schools. By 1910, government policy had turned towards schooling

Indian children for life on reserves, and the more cost-effective day and boarding schools. Differences between boarding schools and residential schools faded; in 1923, boarding and industrial schools were re-categorized as residential schools (Barman, 1996; J. Miller, 2004a).

By 1931, there were 80 residential schools in Canada distributed differently across provinces and territories, 20 of which were in BC (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a). The number and location of the schools reflected the government's views on assimilation. Because of the long-term contact between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadians, Aboriginal people in Eastern Canada were seen to be well on the way to assimilation and few residential schools were necessary. In addition, where settlement was not immanent, as in the north, assimilation was not a pressing concern so few schools were established. For example, in the early 1890s Indian Affairs turned down a request to support schooling in the Yukon because the government did not feel obligated to do so in the north (Coates, 1986).

Educational quality in residential schools was undermined by a number of factors. With the belief that an appropriate education for Aboriginal children would prepare for entry into the lowest level of the labour market, the school day was divided between academic and religious education and manual work that supported institutional maintenance. This half-day program continued until the mid-1950s. Moreover, because churches ran the schools, teachers were usually volunteer missionaries rather than qualified teaching professionals. Furthermore, parsimonious funding from the Department of Indian Affairs ensured that students' clothing and food were inadequate, and the facilities sub-standard, contributing to health issues. Perhaps most devastatingly, students were frequently victims of physical, spiritual, emotional and sexual abuse



(Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a; Milloy, 1999).

Federal day schools, which enrolled more students than residential schools, suffered from similar problems. In 1947, federal funding for days schools was \$47 annually per pupil, while the BC funding for provincial schools was approximately \$200 annually per pupil. Given this educational context, the outcomes are not surprising. Between 1890 and 1950, between 60% and 80% of students in federal day and residential schools did not go beyond grade three (Barman, 1996).

The quality of education for Métis people was even more dismal. Having been excluded in the Indian Act, Métis did not qualify for assistance from Indian Affairs. Nevertheless, many Métis attended federal residential schools, and others attended provincial schools. Sometimes, church sponsored groups, like the Grey Nuns at St. Paul de Métis, Alberta, established boarding schools for Métis children. Elsewhere, even churches refused to fund schooling for Métis children. In 1934, a Royal Commission was established to investigate Métis conditions in Alberta. They found that Métis people were living in substandard housing, often on road allowances, and had access to neither education nor health care services (Coates, 1986; Dickason, 1992).

While government turned its back on Aboriginal adult education, Aboriginal people clearly understood its importance. A Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia (known as the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission) was established in 1913, and toured the province to determine reserve allotments. Many of the Aboriginal people they met with spoke about the importance of education for their people. In the words of Chief James Stacker from Pemberton, BC:

Now as soon as the first white man arrived in the country we began to get wise that we

needed education - that education was as necessary to the Indian as to the white man that they become wise so that all the Indians here think that that is necessary and they all agree to it. (as cited in Haig-Brown, 1995b, p. 55)

Recognizing the relationship between education and employment, other BC Chiefs speaking before the 1916 McKenna-McBride commission requested access to trades and nursing education for their sons and daughters (Haig-Brown, 1995b). Furthermore, in 1923, Reverend Peter Kelly from Haida Gwaii pointed to the need for relevant vocational, technical and professional education, and envisioned an educational institution “where our men and women would be so fitted that they will be able to take their place in the larger public life of their country, and feel that they are equal to any life” (as cited in Haig-Brown, 1995b, p. 63). Education was also seen as necessary for inter-government relations. According to Reverend Kelly, Aboriginal people felt “that one who has educational training is able to bring any grievances before the Indian Department, or the Government, better than one who has not” (as cited in Haig-Brown, 1995b, p. 63).

By the early 1900s, only a handful of Aboriginal people in Canada had attended university. In 1902, the Department identified nine Indians with degrees: three from Quebec, five from Ontario, and one from the Northwest Territories (now Alberta), who had successfully completed degrees (Stonechild, 2004; 2006). There were no post-secondary graduates in British Columbia until 1916, when Peter Kelly graduated from Columbia College in New Westminster and was ordained as a minister in the Methodist Church (Morley, 1967). Thirty years later, Nisga’a Chief Frank Calder became the first status Indian graduate from the University of British Columbia.

Beginning in 1908, the Department of Indian Affairs began to fund further study for

federal schools graduates deemed worthy by both the Church and Department. In 1927, Department records indicated that 190 students were pursuing high school or post-secondary studies (Stonechild, 2004). That same year, the Allied Tribes of British Columbia met with federal officials, and were given assurances that funding would be available to Indians pursuing higher education (Haig-Brown, 1995b).

Not many, however were seen to be worthy of this funding. For one thing, eligibility guidelines required the student to have completed the eighth grade by fourteen years of age, a feat that few Indian students achieved in the half-day programs offered at the schools, particularly since many did not start school until they were eight or ten, and sometimes twelve years of age (Cuthand, 1978; 1991). Others were denied funding because Indian agents determined that their parents could pay for their education (Haig-Brown, 1995b). In addition, it is likely that section 86(1) of the 1876 *Indian Act*<sup>3</sup> discouraged many from pursuing further study. Under this section of the act,

Any Indian who may be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Medicine, or to any other degree by any University of Learning, or who may be admitted in any Province of the Dominion to practice law either as an Advocate or as a Barrister or Counselor or Solicitor or Attorney or to be a Notary Public, or who may enter Holy Orders or who may be licensed by any denomination of Christians as a Minister of the Gospel, shall ipso facto become and be enfranchised under this Act. (as cited in Stonechild, 2006, p. 21)

While there is no record of any Indian being enfranchised under this section of the Indian Act, it was likely a deterrent to many aspiring students. Additionally, professional organizations created barriers for Indian people. For example, a 1922 request that Andrew Paull, from the Squamish Nation be admitted as student-at-law to the British Columbia Law Society was denied because he

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<sup>3</sup> In 1880 revisions to the Indian Act did away with the involuntary enfranchisement of educated males, but the policy returned in 1920 and applied to any adult male that the Department saw fit to enfranchise. Involuntary enfranchisement was again eliminated in the 1922 Indian Act, but reappeared in 1933 revisions, with an exception for those Indians protected by treaty, and remained in place until 1951 (J. R. Miller, 2004a).

was not eligible to vote (Backhouse, 2003).<sup>4</sup>

The case-by-case funding for individuals to continue their education was discretionary, and declined during the inter-war years (Stonechild, 2004; 2006). In 1946 a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons was formed to look into the Indian Act. Squamish Chief Andrew Paull, a representative of the North American Indian Brotherhood, reminded the joint committee of the government's earlier promise to support Indian education:

After 1927 several Indians went to technical schools.... They went through their courses with flying colours. Then the Indian Affairs Department shut the door and would not let anybody else go ... to technical school, normal school, or to the university. (Haig-Brown, 1995b, p. 70)

Indian and Inuit people would have to wait until 1977 before a funding program was in place to support their educational aspirations. Federal post-secondary funding for the Métis remains a dream.

### **1.2.2 Assimilation under the Guise of Integration**

Post WWII, the Aboriginal population was growing rapidly and the federal government was reluctant to carry the increasing financial responsibility for delivering education and other services to the growing Indian population. The government also began to realize that residential schools were effective in neither educating nor assimilating Indian peoples. Furthermore, separate schooling for Indian children began to be seen as symbol of racism and denied citizenship (Haig-Brown, 1995b; Plant, 2009; W. Stevenson, 1991).

In the early 1940s, the federal government began exploring desegregated schooling. In 1946, a Joint Parliamentary Commission undertook a review of the Indian

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<sup>4</sup> Indians could not vote in BC provincial elections until 1949.

Act. A number of the Aboriginal representatives consulted by the commission promoted transferring responsibility for Indian education to the provinces and expanding educational opportunities to include vocational, adult and university education. The Commission's recommendation that Indian children be integrated into provincial schools resulted in revisions in the Indian Act in 1951 to enable this. While assimilation remained the educational goal of the department, it was to be pursued in a more cost effective manner; through integration with provincial curriculum and provincial schools (Haig-Brown, 1995b; Plant, 2009; W. Stevenson, 1991).

The department's vision of assimilation through integration influenced developments in both day and residential schools as the Department began bringing federal Indian schooling in line with provincial schooling. In 1949, federal Indian schools moved from half-day to full-day schooling. In 1950, residential schools started implementing provincial curriculum, and by the late 1950s, most day schools were also using provincial curriculum. Through this move to provincial curriculum the Department divested itself of curricular responsibility, and also limited the ability of school programming to respond to the unique communities in which they were operating.

Teachers' salaries, pay scales, and benefits were brought in line with provincial or federal standards, and in 1968, provincial teaching certification was finally required of teachers at federal schools. Inadequate school inspection practices were somewhat addressed after 1953 when the province took over responsibility for the badly needed school inspections. Having no enforcement power, however, inspectors could only report their findings to the Department of Indian Affairs (Plant, 2009).

During this period, residential schools across Canada were very slowly being phased out.

Between 1944 and 1962, the number of residential schools declined from 80 to 65. In addition, some residential schools took on new roles as living quarters for students attending federal day or provincial schools, or for children receiving child welfare services (Plant, 2009). In 1984, BC's last residential school, St. Mary's Mission Indian Residential School, closed.

British Columbia was a forerunner in provincial integration of public schools. In 1949, BC's *Public School Act* was amended to enable the Minister of Education or local school boards to enter into agreements with the federal government so that Indian children could be enrolled in provincial schools. In 1950 both BC and Manitoba also signed joint agreements with the federal government that allowed Indian children to attend provincial schools. By the fall of 1950, local agreements were in place in Campbell River, Ashcroft, Terrace, Telegraph Creek, and Prince Rupert, which resulted in the federal government subsidizing the costs of 883 Indian children to attend local schools. By the mid-1960s over half of the Indian children in BC were attending provincial schools. Other provinces followed BC's lead, and by 1966/67, over half of the Indian children in Canada were attending provincially run institutions (Plant, 2009).

In embracing integration, the Department did not abandon its commitment to assimilation. Rather, according to a new vision proposed by Indian Affairs, desegregated education would "quicken and give meaning to the acculturative process through which they [Indian children] are passing" (Milloy, 1999, p. 196).

Integration into provincial schools, however, was not a panacea for the educational challenges faced by Aboriginal students. Aboriginal children found themselves a minority in public schools, following a Eurocentric provincial curriculum taught by non-Aboriginal teachers with no preparation in cross-cultural education. In this

culturally hostile environment, Aboriginal education was characterized by poor attendance, limited learning, high dropout rates and language loss, all of which ensured economic marginalization and a host of other social ills. In the 1960s Aboriginal people increasingly expressed their concerns about the ethnocentric curriculum, the need for special education, and the lack of consultation with Aboriginal people regarding the education of their children (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1986; J. Miller, 2004a; Plant, 2009; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000).

During this same period, the federal government began offering limited financial aid to individual Aboriginal PSE students. In 1957, the Department of Indian Affairs instituted a scholarship program ranging from \$250 to \$1750, and totaling \$25,000 annually as an incentive for “gifted” Indian students to pursue applied studies such as teaching, nursing, agriculture and technology. By 1963, only 22 scholarships totaling \$40,000 had been awarded; these scholarships were gradually phased out, and incorporated into vocational training. In 1968/69, the Department provided financial assistance to 250 students for vocational training (Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000; Stonechild, 2004; 2006).

Despite this lack of funding, Aboriginal people across Canada began participating in university education in greater numbers. In British Columbia in the 1963/64 academic year, there were only seven Indian students enrolled in Grade 13, 100 in vocational training, and ten in universities (Duff, 1997). That same year there were only 57 Indians enrolled in universities across Canada. Given that the high school dropout rate for Indians was 94%, this low post-secondary participation rate is understandable (Hawthorn, Lysyk, Cairns, & Canada. Indian Affairs Branch, 1966-7).

In 1965/66, only 2,143 of Canada's 218,000 Indian<sup>5</sup> people were attending post-secondary institutions (PSIs) (See Table 1). Of these, 131 were enrolled in university, 18 were in teacher's training, 14 were in nursing, 1, 244 were in vocational training, and 726 or 34% were enrolled in upgrading. The situation in British Columbia was similarly dismal, with only 465 of BC's 43,000 Indians in PSE. Of these, 32 were enrolled in university studies, four were enrolled in nursing, 294 were enrolled in vocational training, and 135 or 29% were taking upgrading.

Table 1

*Number of Indian Students in Post-Secondary Education and Training, Canada, Provinces & Territories, School Year 1965-66*

Course of Study	Region											Canada
	PI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MN	SK	AB	BC	YT	NT	
University	0	14	3	39	18	4	9	11	32	1	0	131
Teacher training	0	0	1	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Nurse training	0	1	1	3	10	0	3	2	4	0	0	24
Vocational training	1	25	15	181	389	135	114	49	294	40	1	1,244
Upgrading	2	0	12	2	352	144	52	10	135	17	0	726
Totals	3	40	32	235	776	283	178	72	465	58	1	2,143

Note. Adapted from table 25, pg. 205 "Indian Students in Post-Secondary and Vocational Training School Year 1965-66" in Canada Year Book 1967: Official Statistical Annual of the Resources, History, Institutions and Social and Economic Conditions of Canada, by Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Year Book Division. Copyright 1967 by the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

In 1979, the Department of Indian Affairs identified known Indian graduates and found that 1,096 Indian and Inuit students had graduated from universities between 1934 and 1977. Of these, 95 were from British Columbia (Martin & Canada. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1979).

The experience of Aboriginal students in PSIs was similar to the experiences of

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<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, comparable data on other Aboriginal groups does not exist.



children in the public school system. PSIs were poorly prepared for this influx of students, and Aboriginal students were confronted with an overwhelmingly Eurocentric environment and curriculum with little relevance to their lives (J. Miller, 2004b). As Stonechild (2004) notes, students' experiences were characterized by "culture shock, racism and alienation" (p. 76).

### **1.2.3 Towards Control and Recognition**

Canada's assimilationist agenda was most forcefully articulated in its 1969 White Paper which proposed terminating distinct status and legislation for Indian people, dismantling Indian Affairs, and transferring service from the federal to the provincial governments. Reaction by Aboriginal organizations was strong and swift, forcing government to renounce its policy. In 1972, the Native Indian Brotherhood articulated a new policy direction for Indian education, "Indian Control of Indian Education," based on the principles of parental responsibility and local control of education. This policy was adopted by the federal government in 1973 (J. Miller, 2004a; Stonechild, 2004; 2006). At the community level, Aboriginal people began assuming control of and responsibility for education.

In 1970, Blue Quills Native Education Centre in Alberta became the first Indian-controlled school in Canada. This was followed by Rae-Edzo in the Northwest Territories in 1971 and Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan in 1973. The school at Ile a la Crosse in Saskatchewan became the first Métis-controlled school (Dickason, 1992; Milloy, 1999; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000). Turning to British Columbia, in 1973 the Lil'wat people took over administrative control of the Mount Currie School (Williams & Wyatt, 1987) and by 1984, almost half of the 187 band-

operated schools in Canada were in BC (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1987). In 2009, there were 130 First Nations schools in British Columbia, serving some 6000 students (First Nations Schools Association, n.d.). Across Canada there were some 520 band-operated schools on reserves, serving approximately 60% of the First Nation student population. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (previously known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) also operates seven federal schools on reserves (Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010).

In addition to taking control of individual schools, Aboriginal people have exerted forms of educational self-determination in other educational contexts. For example, the Nisga'a in British Columbia and the Cree in northern Quebec are examples of First Nations that control provincial school boards (Barman et al., 1987). With the establishment of Nunavut in 1999, the Inuit in Eastern Arctic achieved education control due to their numerical majority (J. Miller, 2004a). On the other hand, educational self-determination for Métis and non-status Indians has been limited, and for the most part they are considered just another part of the public school population. However, in some areas where the boundaries of school districts correspond to Métis settlements, Métis people have control over school districts (Paquette, 1986). In some places, particularly in urban areas, concerns about the public education system's inability to respond to the needs of Aboriginal students have given rise to increased support services and curricular relevancy, alternative programs and schools (McCaskill, 1987; Paquette, 1986; Vernon, 1987).

The control envisioned by Aboriginal people over their educational systems has been seriously compromised by many factors. These include the lack of a legal basis for

transferring educational control to Indian bands, varying understandings of the meaning of Aboriginal control, a lack of clear policies and procedures for devolution of control, widespread underfunding and significant diseconomies of scale, jurisdictional conflicts between various levels of government, provincial control over educational standards, and lack of accountability (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1986; Paquette, 1986; Paquette & Fallon, 2010; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000). Nevertheless, significant gains have been made in Aboriginal education: Aboriginal communities have a greater input into the educational system; culturally appropriate curriculum is being developed and implemented; and participation rates at the kindergarten, elementary and secondary rates have increased (Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000). Furthermore, Aboriginal participation in PSE within provincial post-secondary and Aboriginal controlled PSIs is on the rise.

In the late 1960s mainstream universities began responding to the educational needs of Aboriginal students and countering Eurocentric perspectives on Aboriginal issues at Universities. For example, in 1969 Trent University established the first Native Studies Program in Canada. Aboriginal legal education took off in the summer of 1971 at the University of Saskatchewan with the development of preparatory summer courses for prospective Aboriginal legal students, and in 1973 the Native Law Program was established. During this same time, Native teacher education programs were being established. In British Columbia, early Aboriginal programming includes the UBC's Native Indian Teacher Education Program (1974), Simon Fraser University and Mount

Currie Teacher Training Program (1975-81), and UBC's Native Law Program,<sup>6</sup> which began in the mid-1970s. Today, across Canada and in British Columbia, public post-secondary systems offer a wide range of academic programs of special interest to Aboriginal people (Holmes, 2006).

Public PSIs have also been active in delivering student services for Aboriginal people. These initiatives began in the early 1970s in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and expanded rapidly in the 1990s. By 2001, almost half of Canada's 80 Universities provided some form of Aboriginal-specific student services (Pidgeon, 2001). Today most public colleges and universities provide a wide range of supports for Aboriginal students (Holmes, 2006).

The late 1970s and 1980s saw growth in Aboriginal PSE funding and, subsequently, participation. In 1977, Indian Affairs created the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program (PSEA) to "encourage Registered Canadian Indians and Inuit to acquire university and professional qualifications so that they become economically self-sufficient and may realize their individual potential for contributions to the Indian community and Canadian society" (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1988, section 14.36). The 1983 University and College Entrance Preparation Program provided further funding to assist in upgrading for university and college bound students. Unfortunately, Métis and non-status Indian students are excluded from these programs. With unlimited access to financial support for qualified students, Indian and Inuit post-secondary participation skyrocketed. In 1977, some 3,300 students were funded through the PSEA program; this number rose to 14,447 in 1987-88 (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1988; Stonechild, 2004; 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> Now known as First Nations Legal Studies.

Many First Nations argue that post-secondary education for Indian and Inuit students is an Aboriginal or treaty right, and is a federal responsibility. However, the federal government denies this. While the Indian Act includes some provisions for elementary and secondary schooling, no such provisions exist for post-secondary education. The federal government maintains that its support for Indian and Inuit post-secondary education and programs is a matter of social policy rather than fiduciary responsibility. Furthermore, funding for these federal post-secondary initiatives is precarious, necessitating annual, discretionary authorization by the Treasury Board (Paquette & Fallon, 2010; Stonechild, 2004, 2006).

In 1987, concerned with rising costs as more and more Indian and Inuit students accessed this funding, and justifying its move with concerns over completion rates, the federal government tightened eligibility requirements for post-secondary funding, implemented performance standards, and capped funding. This change was met by strong protests by Aboriginal organizations and student groups. Nevertheless, the revised program called Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSP) was announced in February of 1989. In response, Aboriginal students across Canada organized demonstrations, including a hunger strike. The federal government responded by loosening some restrictions regarding the amount and length of funding. However, an expenditure limit of \$130 million remained in place until 1991, when \$320 million was added over five years (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1988; Lanceley, 1991; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000; Stonechild, 2004; 2006). The funding was inadequate for the growing number of Indian and Inuit students who wanted to pursue studies. In 1991, Indian Affairs estimated that between 1000 and 1500 eligible students would not receive funding. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) estimated the number

to be as high as 4000 students (Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000).

Developments in Aboriginal control of education at the elementary and secondary level expanded to the post-secondary level as well. One well-known Aboriginal post-secondary institution is the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC). It was created in 1976 by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) and was academically affiliated with the University of Regina. It became the FNUC in 2003 and by 2005 had over 1,000 students and 3,000 graduates. That same year, the university gained national attention when control of FNUC was taken over by its governing body (Paquette & Fallon, 2010; Stonechild, 2004, 2006).

Of particular note is the development of the Gabrielle Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI) in Saskatchewan. It was established as a non-profit corporation in 1980. Initially the school focused on research, but it soon expanded to include curriculum development, a wide range of vocational educational programming, and the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), a four year bachelor of education program. It is the only Métis-controlled post-secondary institution in Canada. As a Métis institution, it is funded by the Saskatchewan government, with only some supplementary program funding from the federal government (Dorion & Yang, 2000; Paquette, 1986).

In British Columbia, Aboriginal-controlled PSIs developed early. The Native Education Centre (NEC) traces its history back to 1969 when it began offering programming to Aboriginal adults in urban Vancouver. For accreditation and funding purposes, it is affiliated with Vancouver Community College and Langara College. It continues, under the name Native Education College, to offer developmental, vocational

and academic programs. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) in Merritt, BC, was established in 1983 by the Coldwater, Nooaitch, Shackan, Upper Nicola and Lower Nicola First Nations, and in 1995, became an Aboriginal public institution. The En'owkin Centre, located near Penticton, BC, was established in 1981, and offers developmental, university transfer, and Okanagan language courses, and is renowned for its International School of Writing, offered in partnership with the University of Victoria. The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute, located in Gitwinksihlkw in the Nass Valley, was established in 1993 by the Nisga'a Tribal Council.<sup>7</sup> The school serves the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in the region and attracts students nationally and internationally (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a; Izen Consulting & Carden Consulting, 2011, March; Weir, 2008; Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute, n.d.).

In the early 1990s, a number of BC Aboriginal-controlled institutions organized under the name of Association of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions (AAPSI), and by 1995 there were 15 member institutions (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a). Following the demise of AAPSI, the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) formed in 2003. By 2007, the organization represented 31 Aboriginal PSIs in British Columbia (Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, 2007).

Many Aboriginal PSIs receive federal funding from the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) which was established in 1988. Approximately one-third of ISSP funding provides ongoing operational support to the FNUC. The rest of the money funds

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<sup>7</sup> Now known as the Nisga'a Lisims Government.

First Nations and mainstream institutions and educational organizations across Canada for the development and delivery of post-secondary programming for status Indian students (Stonechild, 2004, 2006).

In the late 1980s, provincial governments also began to develop policies to address the reality of Aboriginal under-participation in public PSIs. In 1987, Alberta's Ministry of Education released its *Policy Statement on Native Education* in Alberta:

Alberta Education supports education programs and services which provide enhanced opportunities for all Alberta students to develop an understanding and appreciation of Native histories, cultures and lifestyles. These programs and services also provide opportunities for Native people to help guide and shape the education their children receive. (as cited in Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 2)

This simple policy statement resulted in increased support for Aboriginal programming and services. In British Columbia, following the release of the 1990 *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners*, the province began implementing many of the recommendations, and in 1995 cabinet approved the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*. In 1992, Ontario established the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy*, providing resources to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal PSIs for Aboriginal support services and programming.

#### **1.2.4 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in the 21st Century**

Since 1967, the year Chief Dan George delivered his famous oration there have been many positive changes in Aboriginal education. Within public schools, there has been an increase in support and programming for Aboriginal students. Additionally, more and more First Nations communities are operating band schools. Aboriginal students are increasingly choosing to stay in school longer, and high school graduation rates have clearly improved. At the post-secondary level, a significant number of



Aboriginal organizations and institutions are taking responsibility for, or control of, delivering education to Aboriginal learners. Many public universities and colleges are responding to Aboriginal educational needs through increased access and Aboriginal-specific student services and programs. PSIs are also building relationships with Aboriginal organizations and communities, as well as partnerships with Aboriginal PSIs.

The federal government continues to provide limited funding to some Indian and Inuit students to access PSE, and to some Indian and Inuit institutes and organizations involved with PSE. However, the post-secondary funding mechanisms administered by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's (INAC) have been the subject of critique by Canada's Auditor General because "the Department does not know whether program funds are sufficient to support eligible students, and it has no assurance that only eligible students taking eligible course are receiving funding" (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2004, section 5.98). In addition, INAC has been criticized for not explaining why the number of funded students is declining and for not comparing First Nations PSE with the educational performance of other Canadians. In 2011 the Auditor General found that

As in 2004, INAC still allocates funds by First Nations community without regard to the number of eligible students; moreover, band governments have the flexibility to allocate the funds outside the program. Again, as in 2004, we found that the current funding mechanism and delivery model used to fund post-secondary education does not ensure that eligible students have equitable access to post-secondary education funding. (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, section 4.21)

Meanwhile, provincial governments continue to implement Aboriginal specific policy. In 2002, Alberta Learning released its *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (Alberta Learning, 2002). In Manitoba, Aboriginal PSE policy includes the *Aboriginal*

*Education Action Plan 2004 – 2007*, followed by the *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan 2008-2011* (“Bridging two worlds”, n.d.). In 2007, British Columbia embarked on the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*. Also in 2011, Ontario’s Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities released its *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (Ontario, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011). In the territories, higher education policy tends to be inclusive of Aboriginal issues. This is apparent in the Northwest Territories’ *Building on our Successes: Strategic Plan 2005 - 2015* and the *2006 Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy* (Government of Nunavut & Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, 2006; Northwest Territories, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, 2005).

Nevertheless, as illustrated in Table 2 below, there remain significant gaps between the education of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. In 2006 almost 44% of Canada’s Aboriginal population had no academic credentials, compared to 23% of non-Aboriginal Canadians. Congruently, high school graduation was the highest level of education for 21.8% of the Aboriginal population, compared to 25.7% of the non-Aboriginal population. Furthermore, while at 11.4%, the Aboriginal surpasses the 10.8% of the non-Aboriginal population with apprenticeships or trades certificates or diplomas, Aboriginal people lag behind the total population in terms of both college and university certificates and diplomas (14.5% and 2.8% compared to Canada’s non-Aboriginal population’s 17.4% and 4.5%). Unfortunately, only 5.8% of the Aboriginal identity population holds university degrees, compared to over 18% of non-Aboriginal Canadians. In other words, the non-Aboriginal rate is over 3 times higher than that of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Table 2

*Educational Attainment of Canadians, Age 15 and over, Aboriginal vs. non-Aboriginal People (2006)*

<u>Educational Attainment</u>	<u>Aboriginal Identity<sup>a</sup></u>		<u>Non-Aboriginal Identity</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
No certificate, diploma or degree	359,775	43.7%	5,738,550	23.1%
High school certificate or equivalent	179,590	21.8%	6,373,835	25.7%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	93,885	11.4%	2,691,535	10.8%
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	119,675	14.5%	4,315,455	17.4%
University certificate or diploma below the bachelor level	22,950	2.8%	1,113,200	4.5%
University certificate or degree	48,015	5.8%	4,607,750	18.5%
Total	823,890	100%	24,840,330	100%

Note. Adapted from: Statistics Canada. (2007a). *British Columbia (Code59) (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE). Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007. Copyright 2007 by the Minister of Industry; Statistics Canada. (2007b). *British Columbia (Code59) (table). Aboriginal Population Profile. 2006 Census* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-594-XWE). Ottawa. Released January 15, 2008. Copyright 2007 by the Minister of Industry.

<sup>a</sup> The Aboriginal identity population is composed of those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.

The situation in British Columbia is similar to that of Canada, but in some ways even more troubling, as shown in Table 3 below. At 39%, over twice as many Aboriginal people in British Columbia have no academic credentials, compared to the 19% of non-Non Aboriginal people. High school completion is the highest level of education for over 25% of Aboriginal people, compared to 28% for non-Aboriginal people. A greater number of Aboriginal (12.5%) than non-Aboriginal people (10.8%) have apprenticeships or trades certifications as their highest level of educational attainment. Moreover, a lower percentage of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal British Columbians (14.4% compared to 16.8%) have college or non-university certificates as their highest level of educational attainment, while 3.4% of Aboriginal people in

BC list university certificates or diplomas as their highest level of education compared to 5.5% of the non-Aboriginal population. Of particular concern is that almost four times the number of non-Aboriginal British Columbians (19.9%) have university certificates or degrees at the bachelor's level or above than Aboriginal British Columbians (5.3%).

Table 3

*Educational Attainment of British Columbians, Age 15 and over, Aboriginal vs. non-Aboriginal People (2006)*

<u>Educational Attainment</u>	<u>Aboriginal Identity<sup>a</sup></u>		<u>Non-Aboriginal Identity</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
No certificate, diploma or degree	54,915	39.0%	620,435	19.1%
High school certificate or equivalent	35,675	25.3%	910,970	28.0%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	17,615	12.5%	350,740	10.8%
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	20,275	14.4%	545,620	16.8%
University certificate or diploma below the bachelor level	4,825	3.4%	179,575	5.5%
University certificate or degree at or above bachelor's level	7,515	5.3%	646,745	19.9%
Total	140,825	100%	3,254,085	100%

Note. Adapted from: Statistics Canada. (2007a). *British Columbia (Code59) (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE). Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007. Copyright 2007 by the Minister of Industry; Statistics Canada. (2007b). *British Columbia (Code59) (table). Aboriginal Population Profile. 2006 Census* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-594-XWE). Ottawa. Released January 15, 2008. Copyright 2007 by the Minister of Industry.

<sup>a</sup> The Aboriginal identity population is composed of those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.

Of additional concern is the fact that some of the educational gains made over the last three decades may have reached a plateau, and are now declining. In 2000, the Auditor General of Canada estimated that it would take over 20 years to close the educational gap between First Nations living on reserves and other Canadians. Four years later, the estimated time for First Nations to reach academic parity with other Canadians rose to 28 years (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, p. 13). In

2011, after reviewing 2001 and 2006 census information on Aboriginal education, the Auditor General stated that even more time will be needed to close the educational gap (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2000; 2004; 2011)

Between 2001 and 2006, the portion of the Aboriginal identity population between 25 and 64 years of age with university degrees<sup>8</sup> increased from 6% to 8%. During this same time period, the portion of the non-Aboriginal population of the same age with university degrees increased from 20% to 23%. This means that the educational gap at the university level between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people actually increased (Statistics Canada, 2008).

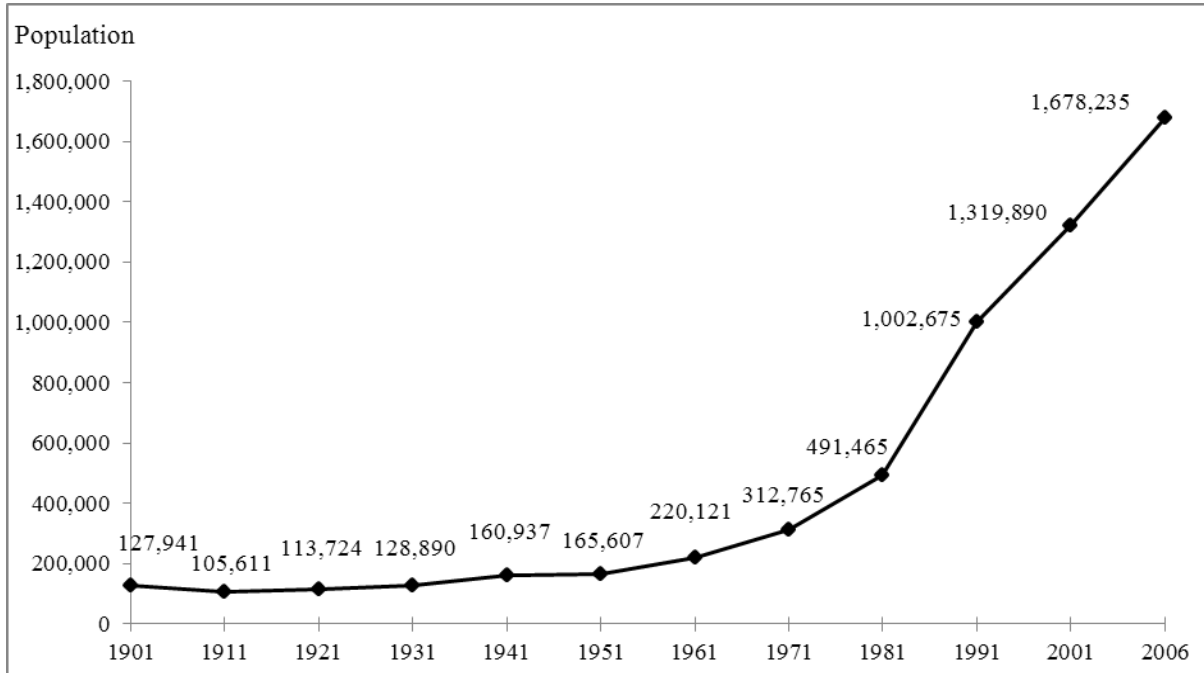
As indicated in Figure 1, Canada's Aboriginal population is growing rapidly. In addition, the Aboriginal population is significantly younger than the non-Aboriginal population.

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<sup>8</sup> Because of changes to Statistics Canada's questions, comparison of 2001 and 2006 data cannot be made for other levels of education.

Figure 1

Population reporting Aboriginal ancestry<sup>a</sup> (origin), Canada, 1901-2006



Note. Adapted from the first chart “Population reporting Aboriginal ancestry (origin) 1901-2001” in Statistics Canada. (2003, January 21). *Aboriginal peoples of Canada: A demographic profile* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 96F0030XIE2001007). Copyright 2003 by the Minister of Industry. 2006 data is from Statistics Canada. (2008b). *Aboriginal Peoples, 2006 Census*. Aboriginal ancestry (10), area of residence (6), age groups (12) and sex (3) for the population of Canada, provinces and territories, 2006 census - 20% sample data [data table] (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 97-558-XWE2006012). Ottawa. Released April 2, 2008. Copyright 2008 by the Minister of Industry.

<sup>a</sup>Aboriginal ancestry (origin) refers to those persons who reported at least one Aboriginal origin (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit) on the ethnic origin question in the Census. The question

In 2006, the median age of Aboriginal people in Canada was 27, compared to 40 in the non-Aboriginal population. In British Columbia, the median age for Aboriginal people is even younger: 25 years as compared to 37 years for other British Columbians (Stock, 2009). As this population ages, PSIs will be increasingly called upon to meet their academic needs and aspirations. It is still unclear if Canada’s provincial and Aboriginal PSIs are willing or able to respond to this challenge in a substantive way. What is clear is that the vision articulated by

Chief Dan George in 1967, “to grab the instruments of the white man’s success - his education, his skills,” has only been partially realized.

### 1.3 Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 explores the literature on Aboriginal PSE and finds that while there is a growing body of literature on Aboriginal education, the literature on Aboriginal PSE is more limited, emerging primarily in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and most frequently in works specifically about Aboriginal education. The few works that do address Aboriginal PSE policy specifically address federal policy initiatives that pertain to status Indian and Inuit students only. Furthermore, the existence of provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policy is only occasionally noted.

Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual and methodological framework used in this study. It draws on the literature of critical policy studies, articulates the research question, and includes an overview of the research process used. Chapter 4 focuses on developments in Aboriginal PSE policy under the Social Credit government in the late 1980s, particularly the 1990 *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners*. Chapter 5 examines Aboriginal post-secondary policy under the New Democratic Party, and in particular the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*. Chapter 6 looks at Aboriginal PSE policy initiated by the Liberals, in particular the draft revisions to the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework Policy* that were never finalized and the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are structured in a similar manner. They begin with a look at the context in which the policies developed, paying particular attention to changing relationships between the BC government and Aboriginal peoples, the economy, and PSE. This is followed

by a section on the policy process, including policy formation, policy text, and implementation. Each chapter closes with a discussion of findings.

Chapter 7 revisits the findings of previous chapters. Implications for research and policy are also presented in this final chapter. The chapter closes by considering the link between theory and action.



## Chapter 2: The Literature

In 1991, Cree scholar Winona Stevenson wrote that

the new existing studies on Indian students in post-secondary education are limited to DIAND annual and commissioned reports - see for example, A.B. Hawthorn, ed. A Survey on the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies. 2 vols. Ottawa: DIA, (1966-67) - and occasional mention in a few scholarly studies such as Frideres (1988). The Canadian Journal of Native Education also contains articles which discuss Indian post-secondary education. Clearly more studies on this subject, both local and general, are needed in order more fully to understand the historical and contemporary Indian education issues. (p. 232, Note 15)

Five years later, Danziger (1996) wrote that “scholars have neglected the changing historical patterns of Indian post-secondary education” (p.232). More recently, Marker (2004) pointed to the need for case studies on Aboriginal PSE. Numerous government and organizational reports continue to be produced about Aboriginal PSE, and the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* remains an important source of articles on Canadian Aboriginal post-secondary issues. For over 30 years, Frideres has continued to include brief discussions of PSE in eight editions of his books about Aboriginal issues in Canada (Frideres & Gadacz, 2007). However, until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Aboriginal issues remained marginal to the academic literature on PSE.

Since the 1990s, the literature on Aboriginal higher education has slowly grown, though much of it continues to be produced by various organizations outside of the academy. While it is certainly true that all educational research has policy implications (Ozga, 2000), and much of the literature cited includes recommendations to improve policy, there is very little work that directly focuses on Aboriginal post-secondary policy. Nevertheless, this literature is useful in understanding important issues related to Aboriginal PSE, as a precursor to understanding policy development and change. This overview includes literature on educational attainment, barriers to

Aboriginal participation, Aboriginal-controlled institutions, public PSIs, and student experiences, and then turns to the literature on Aboriginal post-secondary policy.

## **2.1 Educational Achievement**

Canada is noted as being among the top countries in the world in terms of participation in tertiary education (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009). However, that post-secondary participation is unevenly distributed among various populations within Canada, and the participation of Aboriginal peoples in PSE is seen to be particularly problematic.

A number of studies have examined information from census data in order to understand the educational achievement of Aboriginal people (see for example Armstrong, Kennedy, & Oberle, 1990; Hull & Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Research & Analysis Directorate, 2000; Hull, 2005; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Information Quality and Research Directorate, 1995; Mendelson, 2006). While these studies are not comparable because of changes in the populations studied, changes in census questions, and changes in the self-identification of various Aboriginal populations over time, they tell similar stories. Despite progress, significant differences in the educational attainment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people remain. Of particular concern are the high percentage of Aboriginal people without high school certification and the low percentage of Aboriginal people with university degrees.

## **2.2 Barriers**

The federal government's historic assimilationist policies, such as the enfranchisement of educated Indian people and residential schooling, have created an enduring legacy, and many Aboriginal people continue to understand western education as assimilative (Baker, 1995; R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004).

Few Aboriginal people have the necessary schooling to access PSE (Baker, 1995; R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004). As discussed in section 2.1.1, the percentage of Aboriginal people without high-school education continues to be astoundingly high. Even among those who graduate, many lack the academic courses and skills necessary for successful transition to post-secondary studies (R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004).

For those with the education necessary to access post-secondary, financial barriers can be huge. Aboriginal people suffer from high levels of unemployment, and many depend upon social assistance and seasonal employment to meet their material needs. Consequently, few Aboriginal people can afford PSE. Furthermore, relocating to cities where PSIs are located involves additional costs for moving, housing, and child-care. These costs are particularly high for students with families (Baker, 1995; R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004).

While Aboriginal students, like other students, can apply for various forms of financial assistance, a number of factors mitigate this possibility. A 2008 study R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Stonechild found that while First Nations youth were familiar with federal funding for Indian and Inuit students, there was little awareness of other forms of student financial assistance, especially among youth in remote areas, and little inclination to find out more about these funding opportunities. This problem occurs in part because many expect their applications for awards and loans will be refused, but also because many First Nations view education as an Aboriginal or treaty right, and understand PSE funding to be a federal responsibility. Many Aboriginal youth have strong aversions to debt, and added to this is the concern that repaying loans will be difficult. Few First Nations youth understand the cost of

PSE, and youth from more remote areas have little understanding of the costs associated with urban living.

Many Aboriginal people live in rural or remote areas. Schools in remote areas often face challenges in offering quality education experiences or the wide range of courses which may be necessary for post-secondary studies. To pursue post-secondary, students must either depend on distance or community-based learning or relocate to more urban areas where PSIs are located. Such relocation distances Aboriginal learners from their support networks, and involves increased costs related to childcare, housing, and moving (Baker, 1995; R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004).

Aboriginal learners are also challenged by individual barriers, such as low self-esteem, abuse, family dysfunction, isolation, alienation, and racism. These personal barriers can intensify in the often stressful post-secondary environment (Baker, 1995; R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004).

Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman (2005) explore the effects of parental background on post-secondary participation and find that family background, including parental education levels, family type, and location, has important direct and indirect effects on post-secondary participation, and that for Aboriginal students these effects play out during the high school years, rather than at the point of entry to post-secondary. The authors point out the need to address these issues early on to facilitate greater equity in PSE access.

Institutional culture poses another barrier to Aboriginal post-secondary participation. Colleges and universities are overwhelmingly Eurocentric in the values held, the services offered, the curriculum taught, the methodologies used, and in the faculty and staff hired. Aboriginal values, cultures, and knowledge is seldom acknowledged, respected, or integrated

into the post-secondary system, and Aboriginal people rarely have a voice in institutional settings (Baker, 1995; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2004).

### **2.3 Aboriginal-Controlled Institutions**

In response to growing frustration with the inability of the public PSIs to meet their PSE needs, Aboriginal people have been increasingly asserting their control by establishing their own PSIs. While a number of these institutions have existed since the early 70s, little has been written about them.

Barnhardt (1991) examines the structure of over 100 Indigenous institutions and structures throughout the world and identifies three models with varying degrees of Indigenous control: independent, affiliated, and integrated institutions. Independent institutions are controlled by and serve Indigenous communities. Included in this category are many small Aboriginal adult and community-based centers like BC's Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and En'owkin Centre. By 1995, there were between thirty and fifty of these institutions in Canada (Baker, 1995). However, as both Barnhardt (1991) and Baker (1995) point out, these institutions depend on affiliation agreements with public PSIs for accreditation. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996b) rightly re-categorizes these institutions as affiliated institutions. Barnhardt also includes Yukon College in the Yukon Territories and Arctic College (now Aurora College) in the Northwest Territories, as examples of Indigenous independent institutions because of the influence of the large Aboriginal populations in the regions they serve. However, they are clearly public PSIs, and would better fall under Barnhardt's category of integrated institutions. In Canada a number of independent institutions

do provide important community-based training opportunities, but they are not accredited (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b).

According to Barnhardt, affiliated institutions are Aboriginal-controlled and have negotiated relationships with mainstream institutions for accreditation purposes. These are the most common form of Aboriginal-controlled PSIs in Canada. Among the larger institutions are the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) (now First Nations University of Canada) and the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), also in Saskatchewan; Alberta's Blue Quills, Maskwachees Cultural College, and Old Sun; Manitoba's Yellowquills College; and BC's Secwepemc Cultural Education Society and NVIT. Smaller institutions, like Alberta's Yellowhead Tribal Council or BC's Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, partner with public PSIs to provide educational programming for Aboriginal learners at the tribal level or regional level. Small locally-controlled learning centres provide a range of developmental, skills training, and language programming that may or may not be accredited, as well as community-based programming for other institutions (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b).

These affiliation agreements are critical in the recognition of student learning by public PSIs and also often necessary in order for Aboriginal institutions to receive funding. However, Aboriginal institutions frequently pay a high price in terms of lost autonomy to achieve this recognition (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b). According to Evans, McDonald, and Nyce (1999), for articulation purposes Aboriginal PSIs must conform to mainstream institutional practices related to registration, prerequisites, faculty certification, curriculum ownership, class scheduling, academic standards and evaluation.

Unlike tribal colleges in the States, which have been able to secure funding through the 1978 *Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act* (Barnhardt, 1991), Aboriginal PSIs

in Canada exist primarily on non-statutory, discretionary federal funding provided on a competitive basis through the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) to both Aboriginal and public institutions that provide programs for Aboriginal students. While the ISSP provides relatively stable funding for SIFC, other First Nations-controlled institutions have to apply for this funding annually (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b; Paquette, 1986). GDI, as a Métis-affiliated institution, is ineligible for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) funding, and receives most of its funding from the Saskatchewan government (Paquette, 1986).

In integrated structures, programs or units that serve Indigenous students are contained within and administered by mainstream institutions. UBC's First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) is the Canadian example cited by Barnhardt (1991). These types of structures are really units within mainstream PSIs, which are discussed in section 2. 4.

Hampton<sup>9</sup> (2000) builds on Barnhardt's models of Indigenous-controlled institutions by developing models of First Nations university education. He points out that the "historic assimilationist model" of Aboriginal education continues today in university contexts, a practice often damaging to Aboriginal students and characterized by high failure rates. Hampton's "special program or unit" model exists within a western university, and while it often results in greater student success, this model is characterized by limited accountability to the community, unstable funding, perceptions of programs as "second class," dependence upon extraordinary commitment of those involved, and low enrollment and completion rates. The "federated" model involves partnerships between Aboriginal and public institutions that facilitate Indigenous control, can lead to greater educational parity, and can result in increased recognition in the post-

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<sup>9</sup> Hampton is a former President of SIFC which is now the First Nations University of Canada.

secondary system. However, sustaining partnerships takes time and negotiations, and equality among partners is difficult to maintain. The “autonomous” model, which refers to independent community-based Aboriginal PSIs, supports student success and community capacity building. These institutions usually have a small population base, are underfunded, and rely on purchasing courses from non-Aboriginal institutions. Ultimately, Hampton argues for the development of another model, an Indigenous university lead by Aboriginal people and supported by federal and provincial governments that would build on collaborative partnerships among a network of institutions, nationally and internationally, who share educational resources.

Some authors have explored specific Aboriginal institutions. Bashford and Heinzerling (1987) look at the developments at Blue Quills Native Education Centre, a First Nations-controlled school that began offering a bachelor’s degree in education in 1975 and expanded to offer a wide range of developmental, skills training, and professional programs at the certificate, diploma and bachelors level.

Similarly, Dorion and Yang (2000) provide important insight into the development of Saskatchewan’s GDI, which is affiliated with both the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology and the University of Saskatchewan. GDI is the only Métis-controlled post-secondary institution in Canada; it offers a wide range of community-based developmental, professional, and skills training programs throughout Saskatchewan. Results of a study of twenty-five GDI students and faculty indicated that these programs have increased students’ employability and wage levels. They have also contributed to students’ self-esteem and sense of identity as Métis people. The programs are seen to provide solid training, equivalent to programs in mainstream institutions, but could benefit from stronger Métis curriculum content and more Métis staff. Challenges identified by students include the lack of Métis specific post-



secondary funding, and employment related discrimination. To improve Métis PSE, respondents pointed to the need for stronger emphasis on Métis educational self-government and community participation, and the establishment of a Métis Education Act. Respondents also stressed the need for maintaining high academic standards, increasing Métis content and work experience opportunities, and strengthening links to the labour market.

The Native Education Centre (NEC) in Vancouver, the oldest Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institution in BC, is the site of Haig-Brown's (1995a; 1995b) ethnography. Her work explores the contradictions and tensions inherent in operations of the NEC, an institution that strives to enhance Aboriginal cultures and values while providing opportunities for enhancing education and training and struggling with issues related to accreditation and funding, growth and bureaucratization, cultural diversity, and internalized oppression. Haig-Brown's work also provides a brief history of Aboriginal PSE in BC. Unfortunately, this history ends before provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policies emerge.

## **2.4 Public Post-Secondary Institutions**

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) turn their attention to the inadequacies of public PSIs in meeting the learning needs and aspirations of First Nations students. They maintain that PSIs' attempts to increase Aboriginal outcomes are largely aimed at student interventions like tutoring and counselling, and that those PSIs need to pay attention to institutional factors that can enhance the educational experiences of First Nations. Critical to institutional change are the "Four Rs": respecting students' cultures, ensuring the relevancy of programs and services for Aboriginal learners, acknowledging the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning by recognizing First Nations students' knowledge and experiences, and facilitating responsibility through the participation of First Nations in the transformation of higher education structures.

Baker (1995) situates Aboriginal education as “one of the most significant challenges facing Canadian colleges in the 1990s” (p. 208). He identifies barriers that confront Aboriginal adult learners, and draws on examples from across Canada to demonstrate a broad range of changes being implemented by government and PSIs, both public and Aboriginal, to enhance the educational experiences of Aboriginal learners.

Gardner (2000) explores the development of Aboriginal initiatives at the University of British Columbia, with a particular focus on the FNHL which was established in 1987 to increase Aboriginal participation and program relevancy throughout the university. Using the Four Rs (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) as a framework, Gardner discusses students’ and staff’s reflections. Issues of respect continue to challenge Aboriginal students, demonstrating a need for students to learn strategies to respond to and cope with racism, and a need for anti-racist education for faculty and staff. Over the years, curricular relevance has been greatly improved, however the increasing diversity of Aboriginal students and expectations for a more wholistic educational experience are challenging FNHL and the university to do more. Attempts to create a reciprocal learning and teaching environment in which Aboriginal students’ knowledge and experience are recognized have begun and can be furthered through collaborative processes that necessitate respectful dialogue. Finally, responsibility through participation continues to be a challenge. There are still too few Aboriginal students, staff, and faculty members, and Elders are only marginally involved in teaching. Moreover, while Aboriginal advisory committees have long been established, Aboriginal people are not represented on the board of governors. As stated in an evaluation of FNHL, “the task of transforming the university has been well begun, but it is not yet done. Inviting First Nations people into the house is the first step. Accepting them as partners in knowledge creation is the next step” (Gardner, 2000, p. 27).

Marker (2004) revisits Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) classic work and finds that while many PSIs have become much more responsive to First Nations' perspectives, the promise of the Four Rs has yet to be fully realized, particularly in relation to university practices associated with research, methodology, theory, and community.

Native studies programs have also been investigated by a number of authors. An early example is the work of Price (1981), who reflects upon the slow development of Native Studies in Canada, a phenomenon he attributes to disciplinary-based academic ethnocentrism. Price credits Aboriginal teacher-education programs, interdisciplinary Native studies programs, and radical politics with extending Native Studies beyond anthropology. Witham (1982) describes an experimental approach to a Native Studies class, based on Paulo Freire's problem-solving approach, which resulted in students taking greater responsibility over their educational experience but failing to develop their critical understanding. Couture (2000) shares his personal reflections about the principles that underlie Native Studies, and the tensions that exist in university-based Native studies programs. Such tensions are likely minimized in programs like the Secwepemc First Nations Studies Program, a partnership between the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council, the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society and Simon Fraser University. Ignace, Ignace, Layton, Sharma, and Yerbury (1996) describe the development, implementation, expansion, and outcomes of this unique community-based program.

McCaskill (1983) describes a successful community-based economic development and small business management course, jointly sponsored and managed by Native Alliance Five (representing twenty-four Métis and non-status Indian communities in southern Ontario) and Trent University, that promotes partnerships between Aboriginal organizations and educational institutions in order to meet the training needs of Aboriginal people.

O'Brien and Pace (1990) describe the planning and implementation of the Micmac Bachelor of Social Work Program at Dalhousie University. While finding the program to be beneficial for both the Micmac community and the School of Social Work, the authors also identify a number of challenges inherent in sharing control and funding: finding appropriate instructors and curriculum materials, balancing university requirements with community relevance, and student participation.

Hesch (1999) explores the tensions inherent in the development of a culturally relevant teacher education program at the Winnipeg Education Centre based on criteria developed by Ladson-Billings: academic success, cultural competency, and critical consciousness. In their literature review on Aboriginal teacher education, Archibald, Pidgeon, Janvier, Commodore, and McCormick (2002) examine challenges to the recruitment, training, and retention of Aboriginal teachers, and suggest strategies to address these challenges.

Levin and Alcorn (1999) discuss Manitoba's access programs, which were established in the early 1970s and provide access to a wide range of technical, applied, and university studies. These programs are characterized by active recruitment, careful selection, and personal, financial, and academic support. Through these programs, access and completion rates for Aboriginal students have increased without compromising academic quality and community capacity-building has grown.

M. Hampton and Roy (2002) stress the important role that faculty play in supporting First Nations educational success. They claim that: positive professor/student relationships, relevant curriculum, culturally appropriate teaching methods and styles, and understanding First Nations students' lives all contribute to positive educational experiences for First Nations students. In their words, "those who strive for bicultural competence may be more effective at facilitating

First Nations student success" (p. 24).

James (2001) points out that there is little data available on the effectiveness and quality of programs for Aboriginal post-secondary students in Canada. To address this, he undertakes an exploratory study of Aboriginal programs at 27 colleges and universities in British Columbia and Ontario. James identifies three factors associated with successful programs for Aboriginal learners: Aboriginal faculty, Aboriginal advisory committees, and the incorporation of Aboriginal content in mainstream degree programs. James cites lack of data concerning Aboriginal students and their PSE experiences as a major impediment to research on the effectiveness of Aboriginal programs and services.

In 1996, RCAP recommended that public PSIs facilitate improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal students by creating more hospitable educational environments, recruiting Aboriginal students, developing Aboriginal admissions policies, developing Aboriginal academic and personal counselling services, increasing Aboriginal content and perspectives in courses, including Aboriginal studies courses and programs, creating gathering spaces for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal student unions, and hiring Aboriginal faculty. They also recommended implementing cross-cultural awareness programs for faculty and staff, establishing Aboriginal advisory councils, and appointing Aboriginal representatives to institutional governing bodies (Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b).

It is clear that many institutions have risen to this challenge. Miller (2004b) reflects on a quarter century of change at the University of Saskatchewan that resulted in the increased development of Aboriginal courses, programs, and support services. He optimistically contemplates the future of Aboriginal university relationships, believing that universities can and will continue to respond positively to the educational and research needs of Aboriginal people.

Miller also promotes the collaborative, consensual, non-coercive policy-making and service-oriented leadership style modeled by the League of Six Nations as an appropriate governance model for Canadian universities, particularly in an era of financial constraint combined with rising social expectations.

Holmes (2006) reports on the results of a survey conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, in which 55 of their 90 university-level member institutions (61%) participated. Holmes found that 81% of the institutions actively recruited Aboriginal students, and 46% of the institutions offered either on or off-campus bridging programs. Community-based, or a combination of community-based and on-campus, outreach programs at the certificate, bachelor, or graduate level were offered at 63% of the institutions. Many of the schools offered degrees in Aboriginal studies at the bachelor's level (35%) and the master's level (13%), while fewer offered degrees at the doctoral level (3.7%). At 57% of the institutions, programs such as teaching, social work, law, medicine, nursing, management, development studies, women's studies, and linguistics included an Aboriginal specialization or focus. Most institutions provided a wide range of Aboriginal-specific student services including academic and personal support, employment support, career counselling, housing, healthcare, childcare, social and cultural events, and Elder visits. An impressive 70% of institutions had Aboriginal student centres, ranging from small lounges to stand-alone buildings. More than half of the universities and colleges surveyed offered Aboriginal scholarships or bursaries. Over half the institutions offered cross-cultural training for faculty and staff. Aboriginal advisory committees had been established at 63% of the institutions, and 31% of the institutions had Aboriginal representation on their board of governors.

## 2.5 Student Experiences

A number of works have examined the experiences of Aboriginal post-secondary students. For example, Te Hennepe (1993) shares conversations with Aboriginal students who have experienced tensions related to respect and authority that arose in anthropology classes at the University of British Columbia.

Archibald et al. (1995) share the successes and challenges experienced by Aboriginal students in two PSE contexts: the University of British Columbia, an “integrated” mainstream university (Barnhardt, 1991) and the NEC, an Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institution in Vancouver, BC.

Respondents from UBC associated success with support from First Nations individuals, organizations, and institutions, UBC First Nations academic units, and First Nations student services. A strong cultural foundation also contributed to success. Conversely, non-Aboriginal student services had little impact on students’ success. UBC students identified a number of challenges as well. These included initial adjustments to the university context, particularly when relocation was necessary; inadequate and sometime irregular funding; and racism which impacted self-esteem, created emotional barriers, and undermined First Nations identity. A wide range of personal issues, institutional short-comings (including the impersonal nature of institutional culture, inflexible policies, inadequate support services, insufficient library resources related to First Nations issues, and racism), and negative perceptions of UBC were also barriers to success. Most students went on to find employment in the areas in which they were trained, but some found discontinuity between their university training and the reality of work. Respondents also reported that attending UBC strengthened their identity as Aboriginal people and supported their personal growth (Archibald et al., 1995).

Students who attended the NEC had few problems with initial adjustment to the institution. Their education was supported by friends and family, NEC staff, and other students. Other factors contributing to success included the atmosphere at NEC, relevant programming and regulations, the skills and positive personal attributes of teachers, and cultural activities. These success factors contributed to personal growth and a stronger sense of First Nations identity. Barriers to education included inadequate funding, family responsibilities, financial issues, personal problems, childcare, and transportation. While students' responses were overwhelmingly positive, a few students pointed to discomfort about racism directed towards non-Aboriginal instructors. A few students identified issues that were specific to them including transferability of a course and confidentiality issues with a specific staff member. Most of the students were able to gain employment in the areas related to their studies, and many were continuing their education. Education at NEC also contributed to a deepening or renewal of cultural identity and personal growth (Archibald et al., 1995).

Danziger (1996) explores the educational experiences of post-secondary students from Walpole Island First Nations. Most credited their families and school associates for encouraging them to pursue PSE and studied in institutions close to home. While their academic careers were often interrupted, most (70%) completed at least one academic program, and spoke well of their academic experiences, which were enhanced by the development of Aboriginal student services. Criticisms were directed towards Indian Affairs for failing to monitor student success prior to 1989 and for capping funding in the 1990s.

Hesch (1996) examines the contradictory experiences of Métis and Cree students in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program. He finds that their ability to develop and act upon their fragmented but critical understanding of education's reproductive forces was



undermined by state institutional requirements that contribute to educational inequality but must be satisfied for teacher certification. Using a life history approach, Orr and Friesen (1999) share the experiences of four graduates of the Northern Teacher Education Program whose work advances Aboriginal self-determination in their respective schools and communities.

## **2.6 Policy**

According to Corson (2000) there is a gap in Canadian research on educational policy. While this need is being addressed by researchers in other countries, in “Canada, the beginnings of research on policy design, implementation, and evaluation still lie in the future” (p. 179). This is particularly true of policy research on Aboriginal PSE (Paquette, 1986).

National reviews of federal post-secondary policy largely ignore its impact on Aboriginal people. However, this is changing, as demonstrated in a recent publication by Fisher et al. (2006). They discuss the complex and evolving role that Canadian federal policy has played in influencing post-secondary policy. While education in Canada is generally seen to be provincial jurisdiction, Canada has been able to influence PSE through research funding, transfer payments to the provinces, funding for vocational and technical training, and through national student loans. The authors also discuss the historic role of federal policy on Aboriginal education. Under the Indian Act, the federal government is responsible for K-12 schooling for Indian children, and has exercised that responsibility through an overtly assimilationist agenda delivered first by religious organizations, and later by way of “integration” into provincial schools. The poor quality of education historically experienced by Indian children resulted in most students leaving school long before high school completion, making PSE largely out of their reach. In the wake of integration, high school graduation rates increased, along with post-secondary participation.

In response, the federal government has provided financial support for Indian and Inuit post-secondary students, and for some programs that serve Indian and Inuit students.

A number of studies discuss federal Aboriginal education policies. While most address policies that affect education at the K-12 level, some also discuss post-secondary policies. Paquette (1986) provides a comprehensive national overview of various educational options available in the 1980s to Indian, Inuit, Métis, non-status, and urban Aboriginal peoples attending various levels of schooling in Canada's provinces and territories, along with an analysis of associated governance models, funding mechanisms, and policies. Given the limited federal involvement in Aboriginal PSE, it is not surprising that the author focusses primarily on the K-12 level. He does discuss INAC's post-secondary support for First Nations and Inuit students, and INAC funding of a number of Aboriginal institutions. He points out that GDI, a Métis-affiliated institution, is not eligible for this funding, and exists primarily on provincial funding. The author further points out that "the entire adult post-secondary education budget of the Department [of Indian Affairs] lacks any statutory sanction and is therefore discretionary in nature" (p. 19). Paquette's work predates the capping of funding through the 1989 *Post-Secondary Student Support Program*, the 1988 establishment of the *Indian Studies Support Program*, and the development of provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policy.

In "Prairie Indians and Higher Education: An Historical Overview, 1876 to 1977" W. Stevenson (1991) reveals that as early as the 1870s, prairie Indians understood the importance of education to the future of their peoples, and negotiated educational rights into treaties. The federal government responded to their treaty responsibilities initially by leaving education in the hands of missionaries and subsequently through "a long history of near-sighted government parsimony towards Indian education" (p. 230). After the 1950s, when Indians were integrated

into provincial schools, graduation rates increased, as did post-secondary attendance and Indian advocacy for post-secondary financial support. Eventually, the federal government established policy tools to support Indian higher education. The Vocational Training Program was established in the 1960s and, following the National Indian Brotherhood's 1972 policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*, the federal government established the 1977 Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program, resulting in significant increases in First Nations PSE. While Stevenson's work focuses on the Prairies rather than British Columbia, and while her analysis ends in 1977, long before provinces instituted Aboriginal post-secondary policies, her work provides important insight into the limited role the federal government has played in the PSE of Indian people.

Lanceley (1991) explores the development of Canada's funding for Indian post-secondary students, and discusses Aboriginal students involvement in policy process and activism in response to the federal government's capping of the *Post-Secondary Student Support Program*. Lanceley does not discuss provincial policy, which was just emerging when his work was published.

Graham, Dittburner, and Abele (1996) and Abele, Dittburner, and Graham (2000) trace developments in federal and provincial Aboriginal education policy between 1965 and 1992. The authors find that education discourse changed over time, influenced both by changes in discourse on Aboriginal governance and multiculturalism; that provincial jurisdiction over education resulted in regional differences in Aboriginal policy discourse; that policy documents promoted peaceful relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples; that there was a strong focus on process, particularly on meaningful consultation throughout the period studied. Furthermore, the authors found that different interpretations of key concepts by Aboriginal

people and government created confusion and frustration and undermined progress. These two works are important in understanding the development of Aboriginal education policy over time, however the survey nature of the work prevented a detailed analysis of BC Aboriginal post-secondary policy discourse. In addition, their work ends in 1992, when BC provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policy was just emerging.

Critical of the theoretical weaknesses in much of the scholarship about Aboriginal people, Satzewich and Wotherspoon (2000) draw on political economy to analyze a broad range of Aboriginal/state relations, including education. Their work demonstrates that though participation and completion rates have increased, First Nations people are still underrepresented in PSE. Furthermore, the range of education and training programs promoted by government have created a hierarchy with a small, relatively well-educated group of First Nations prepared for managerial or professional roles and a large pool of poorly educated people who are destined to be low skilled wage earners. Like others, the authors largely ignore the development of provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policies.

In *The New Buffalo* (2006), Stonechild provides a comprehensive study of the historical development of federal First Nations PSE policy from confederation to 2006. Underlying this history is the question of jurisdictional responsibility for First Nations PSE, an issue that arises as a result of the constitutional division of powers that gave the federal government jurisdiction over Indians and Indian land, and the provinces jurisdiction over education. While many First Nations see PSE as a treaty and Aboriginal right, and a federal responsibility, the federal government frames its support of First Nations PSE as social policy. Pursuing resolution of this question through the courts is risky, as the decision could be negative or narrow. As social policy, support for First Nations PSE is always parsimonious and frequently under threat.

Stonechild's work is a significant contribution to Aboriginal PSE, but its focus is on federal policy as it applies to First Nations and as it unfolds in Saskatchewan. Stonechild gives only brief attention to provincial policy and the educational issues of Métis, Inuit, and urban Aboriginal peoples.

Paquette and Fallon (2010) have made a significant contribution to the discourse on First Nations education policy through their book *First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock*. While they focus primarily on K-12 education, some attention is given to PSE, particularly in relation to the development of federal funding for First Nations students and programs. Paquette and Fallon discuss the conflicting perspectives of First Nations and the federal government on federal responsibility for First Nations PSE and echo Stonechild's caution that a court decision could result in a negative decision or narrow interpretation of First Nations' educational rights. After reviewing RCAP's post-secondary recommendations, the authors conclude with a number of recommendations to revise the federal government's post-secondary funding in order to ensure that it is adequate, equitable, and feasible. Of particular note is the recommendation that as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational outcomes approach parity, Aboriginal students begin to bear a greater portion of their educational costs. They also recommend provincial support for Aboriginal post-secondary programs and services, partnerships between Aboriginal and public PSIs, and endowed scholarships/bursaries for Métis and non-status students.

That federal post-secondary policy is the focus of Paquette and Fallon's work is not surprising. What is surprising is that the authors marginalize provincial Aboriginal post-secondary initiatives to the extent that they do. They cite Saskatchewan's support for the FNUC and GDI as the only examples of direct targeted provincial support for Aboriginal post-

secondary programs. While they acknowledge that provinces do contribute somewhat, they claim that

*to date, provinces have generally left it to post-secondary institutions to decide what supports and what course and program adaptations are needed – and to find the resources for such accommodations within the established sources for their operating expenditures, notably block and special funding, tuition and fees, or through supplementary revenues generated by entrepreneurial activities. (2010, p. 134, emphasis in original)*

While it is true that provincial governments tend to be parsimonious in their support of Aboriginal post-secondary initiatives, such a statement ignores the significant role that BC has played in supporting public Aboriginal institutions as well as in promoting and resourcing change in BC's mainstream public PSIs.

In her master's thesis, Jenkins (2008) finds that different post-secondary policy environments in Canada and the States have led to differences in support for and accreditation of Indigenous PSIs. While there is a growing private post-secondary sector, Canada has a strong history of provincially and territorially controlled public post-secondary systems with credential-granting authority regulated by government organizations, making it difficult for Aboriginal institutions to gain credit-granting status. The U.S., on the other hand, has a lengthy history of a diverse mix of both public and private PSIs, and of credit-granting authority vested in non-governmental regional bodies. Many Native American PSIs have been successful in using these regional bodies to gain credential-granting power as public, tribal, or private not-for-profit institutions.

In Canada there is no federal legislation that recognizes Aboriginal institutions, and the federal government usually provides discretionary, short-term competitive program funding to Aboriginal institutions. The First Nations University of Canada is an exception in that they receive annual base funding from the federal government. Outside of recognizing and funding a

few institutions like NVIT, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the now defunct Institute of Indigenous Government (IIG) as part of their public post-secondary system, provincial legislation is silent on Aboriginal-controlled institutions, though some provincial funding does flow through to Aboriginal institutions through affiliation agreements or discretionary funding. In the states, tribal colleges have had access to base-funding from the federal government since 1978 through the *Tribally-Controlled College or University Assistance Act*. Tribal colleges also have access to a larger range of government and non-government grants than their Canadian counterparts (Jenkins, 2008).

Naokwegijig-Corbiere (2007) explores the post-secondary policy context in Ontario in search of a policy tool that will ensure that post-secondary Native programming serves Aboriginal communities. In doing so, she recognizes the 1991 *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy* as a significant commitment by the Ontario government to support public PSIs' ability to serve Aboriginal learners and communities, although it does little to facilitate Aboriginal control. Aboriginal control over university programming is undermined by institutional autonomy and academic freedom, as well as by the criteria set by the *Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board*. To remedy this, Naokwegijig-Corbiere promotes First Nations accreditation of university-level Aboriginal programs. Such an accreditation process, the author believes, would lead to a deeper form of curricular Indigenization, while building stronger relations and deeper understandings between First Nations and PSIs. It is, however, unlikely that universities would give up the institutional autonomy or academic freedom necessary for this to happen.

A 2005 study by Ontario's Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium (AIC) looks at the development of Aboriginal-controlled PSIs, and identifies the lack of policy support from both

the federal and provincial governments as an impediment to such development in Ontario. They point out that federal funding is inadequate for meeting the needs of Aboriginal institutions. The AIC also discusses Ontario's 1991 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Strategy*, intended to improve Aboriginal PSE outcomes, institutional awareness of and sensitivity to Aboriginal cultures and issues, and to increase Aboriginal participation in institutional decision making. Through this policy, public PSIs enjoy a significant stable source of regularized funding, and can apply for additional funding for new program development, delivery, and student services. Public post-secondary schools who partner with Aboriginal institutions also benefit from utilizing Aboriginal students to increase student numbers for calculating their operating grants and charging Aboriginal institutions for administrative fees, teaching salaries, and other costs. Aboriginal institutions, on the other hand, have access to very limited funding awarded annually on a competitive basis and restricted to program development and delivery. Because of inadequate funding, and their inability to grant academic credentials, Aboriginal institutions are forced to enter into partnerships with public PSIs. The AIC recommends that the federal government enact legislation that recognizes Aboriginal institutions as certificate, diploma, and degree-granting institutions, that these institutions be supported by both federal and provincial governments, and that the provinces develop policies and processes to ensure the transferability of courses between public and Aboriginal institutions (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005, August).

The AIC holds up BC's 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* and Saskatchewan's 2000 *Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act* as examples of provincial policies that support Aboriginal institutions through funding and certificate-granting authority (Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, 2005, August). A closer look at



BC's *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, however, reveals that outside of creating two Aboriginal public institutions and encouraging partnerships between public and Aboriginal institutions, the policy offers nothing to Aboriginal controlled institutions. As in Ontario, BC's Aboriginal institutions continue to be challenged by funding and accreditation issues.

In BC, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) (2008, May) advocates a different approach to supporting Aboriginal PSIs. In 1995, BC created policy that designated two Aboriginal institutions, the IIG<sup>10</sup> and NVIT, as public post-secondary institutes with credential-granting authority. Other Aboriginal PSIs contribute significantly to the education of Aboriginal people, but remain outside of the provincial policy environment and suffer from inadequate funding and a lack of recognition in the post-secondary system. FNESC recommends that provincial policy recognize and fund Aboriginal PSE as an integral part of a more integrated post-secondary system. FNESC points out that their policy recommendations are consistent with and supportive of existing provincial policies, including the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, the 2005 *New Relationship*, the 2006 *Métis Relationship Accord*, and the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, and briefly describes these policies. However, an analysis of these policies is outside the scope of FNESC's paper.

Most recently, Cowin (2011) provides a thorough overview of developments in Aboriginal PSE in both public and Aboriginal-controlled institutions in British Columbia. Cowin also describes BC provincial policy developments from the 1990 *Green Report* to the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*. However, this report is intended as an

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<sup>10</sup> IIG closed in 2007.

introduction to Aboriginal PSE for a lay audience, and is intentionally descriptive rather than analytical.

While the works discussed above focus specifically on Aboriginal PSE, some scholars writing more generally about BC post-secondary policy are recognizing Aboriginal people as part of the post-secondary population and therefore include the impact of policy on Aboriginal peoples as part of their analysis. For example, in their examination of the *Campus 2020* report, Metcalfe et al. (2007) critique the report's recommendations on Aboriginal PSE that focus on "evidence and accountability to rationalize expenditures" (p. 2) and miss many opportunities to address the educational disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people. The authors also raise concerns that the creation of regional teaching universities will further consolidate geographic disparities inherent in BC's post-secondary system, privileging those in the lower mainland with easier access to research universities.

This concern is further explored by Metcalfe (2009), who finds that *Campus 2020*'s recreation of three university-colleges, a college, and an institute as universities does little to address the spatial hierarchy of BC's post-secondary system given that these new universities are concentrated in the southwest corner of the province. Metcalfe expresses concern that this will continue the geographic disadvantage experience by many Aboriginal peoples who live in northern BC. According to Metcalfe, "72.6% of the Aboriginal population live in the Northern regions, an area that is not well served by postsecondary education" (p. 209). While it is true that the restructuring of BC's post-secondary system continues to disadvantage those who live in the northern, rural or remote areas, Metcalfe's concern is over stated given that 60% of BC's Aboriginal population lives in urban centres, and over 50% live in the southwestern corner of the province (Norton & BC Stats, 2008; Stock, 2009).

## 2.7 Summary

The literature surveyed reveals that there is a small but growing body of work on Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada that addresses the educational achievement of Aboriginal people, barriers to Aboriginal post-secondary participation, the development of Aboriginal controlled institutions, Aboriginal programs and services in public PSIs, and the experiences of Aboriginal post-secondary. While these works provide important contextual background for understanding Aboriginal post-secondary issues and have implications for policy, they do not specifically examine Aboriginal post-secondary policy.

In the much smaller body of literature that specifically addresses Aboriginal post-secondary education policy, it is apparent that the limited federal role in funding post-secondary education costs for Indians and Inuit students, and providing some limited funding to support programs and services for Indian and Inuit students has captured the interest of most writers. Only recently has attention been paid to provincial policies that address Aboriginal post-secondary education.

A few scholars have explored the impact of BC provincial post-secondary policy on Aboriginal learners. Graham, Dittburner and Abele (1996) and Abele, Dittburner and Graham (2000) do address the development of Aboriginal post-secondary education in British Columbia, but they discuss policy developments between 1967 and 1991, when Aboriginal post-secondary policy in BC was just emerging. Both FNEC (2008) and Cowin (2011) discuss Aboriginal post-secondary education policy in BC. However, an analysis of these policies is beyond the scope of their work. FNEC draws upon provincial post-secondary policy in order to build support for Aboriginal controlled institutions, while Cowin's piece is purposefully descriptive.

This dissertation addresses the limited scholarship on Aboriginal post-secondary

education policy in British Columbia by undertaking a close examination of the context, development and implementation of Aboriginal specific post-secondary policy in British Columbia between 1986 and 2011.

## **Chapter 3: Conceptual Methodological Framework**

To set the conceptual and methodological framework for the dissertation, this chapter begins with a discussion of policy and critical policy analysis. This is followed by a description of the research strategy, including approaches to research design, data collection, and analysis.

### **3.1 Policy and Critical Policy Analysis**

As Ozga (2000) notes, definitions of policy offered by different scholars reflect the writers' perspectives. Rice, for example, sees social policy as "endeavours to affect the nature of the quality of life of Canadians. It creates conditions that are intended to increase the welfare of Canadians, insure just treatment of individuals, provide resources to those who, due to an inability to earn income, are unable to meet their own needs, and reduce or, if possible, eliminate social inequalities through redistribution"(cited in Prince, 1996, p. 240). As Prince points out, such a description ignores that public policy is also used to exert control, to punish, and to maintain inequities.

Dye's definition of policy as "whatever governments choose to do, or not to do" (cited in Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997, p. 22) is less biased, and points out the importance of both action and non-action. However, Dye's focus on government's role in policy making, obfuscates the complexity of the policy process that involves various levels of government, interest groups, and individuals with competing interests and values. Critical to a study of policy is the context in which it develops (Graham et al., 1996; Taylor, 1997; Taylor et al., 1997). Easton's definition of policy as the "authoritative allocation of values" (cited in Taylor et al., 1997, p. 27; Gale, 2003, p. 51) captures the political and value-laden nature of policy.

Policy documents are recognized as one facet of the complex and dynamic policy process. However,

policy is more than simply the policy text; it also involves processes prior to the articulation of the text and the processes which continue after the text has been produced, both in modifications to it as a statement of values and desired action, and in actual practice. Furthermore, contestation is involved right from the moment of the appearance of an issue on the policy agenda, through the initiation of action to the inevitable trade-offs involved in formulation and implementation. (S. Taylor et al., 1997, pp. 28-29)

Policy then, is about the text, the process and its consequences, all of which are influenced by context and contestation.

Over time, researchers have approached the study of policy from different perspectives. Drawing upon work by Roger Dale, Ozga (2000) identified three different approaches, or policy “projects,” based on the intention of the policy research. The “social administration project” refers to early work, emerging in the post-war era with the development of both the welfare state and the field of sociology, which sought to provide empirical data to guide government decision makers with information with which to reform policy in the interests of the client, not government.

Since the 1960s, the “policy analysis project” has overtaken the field of policy studies. Here researchers are concerned with making policy more effective and efficient. It is focused more on solving policy problems than understanding policy. Within the policy analysis project, there is a continuum of research ranging from “the academic analysis of policy,” which is less engaged in practice, to the “analysis for policy,” which can be advocacy-oriented. The policy analysis project has been criticized for both its concern for clients and its lack of theoretical grounding. A third approach, the “social science project,” is primarily aimed at understanding policy, is more theoretically oriented, and is less driven by a concern for clients. It is the approach preferred by Ozga (2000).

This thesis, however, aligns itself within critical policy analysis as articulated by Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997). By combining critical theory with policy analysis, critical

policy analysis, like the “social science project,” concerns itself with understanding how things work. It no longer needs to draw on the same frame of reference used by the policy maker, and draws on critical theory for insight into a problem. By remaining within the policy analysis framework, however, that understanding can be used politically and strategically. Critical policy analysis:

cannot afford to ignore the technical issues of planning, but it must also be political and strategic. It can help expose the ways in which agendas are set and framed in favour of dominant interests, and it can identify and overcome obstacles to a democratic planning process. It can reveal the ways in which information provided for consultation might be distorted or false or misleading.... It can contribute to an understanding of a policy already in place or help create pressures towards a new policy agenda. In this way, critical policy analysis can be both reactive and proactive. (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 20)

Furthermore, critical policy analysis is “a value laden activity which explicitly or implicitly makes judgements as to whether and in what ways policies help to make things better” (cited in Taylor et al., 1997, p. 37). It draws upon critical theory, a concept that is difficult to define because there are multiple critical traditions in diverse fields that continue to evolve in the light of new theoretical insights, problems, and contexts. Furthermore, critical scholars resist reducing critical theory to a universal homogenizing strategy (Brookfield, 2005; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Critical theory is linked to the intellectual legacy of some of the neo-Marxist German male scholars (e.g. Max Horkheimer, Eric Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and later Jurgen Habermas) associated with the Institute of Social Research (the Frankfurt School), which was originally established in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1923. With the rise of Nazism, the Institute relocated to Geneva (1933), then New York (1934) and Los Angeles (1941) before returning to Frankfurt in 1953. While never developing a unified universal theory, these scholars developed

an approach to theoretical work in order to understand, critique, and transform capitalism and its conditions of oppression and domination in the interest of developing a more just, free, humane, and democratic social world (Bohman, 2005; Brookfield, 2005; Giroux, 2003). Over the years, numerous scholars in a wide range of disciplines have built on this work.

These ideas have been the subject of much debate. For example, critical theory has been taken to task for its explicitly political nature; for its focus on class at the expense of gender, sexuality, and racialization; for privileging reason over other forms of knowledge and experience; for its use of patriarchal pronouns and inaccessible theoretical language; for patronizing or uncritical understandings of emancipation, and for its narrow view of power (Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Leonardo, 2004).

Indigenous critiques have added to this debate, noting that critical research has failed to understand American Indians as both citizens of the state and members of sovereign domestic nations; promoted democracy without recognizing its homogenizing force; promoted anthropocentric visions of emancipation that entrench land and resources as commodities for individual or collective consumption; highlighted the role of class, gender, and race rather than colonization in analysis of oppression; and ignored the “identity paradox” confronting American Indians – that is the tension that exists between creating more inclusive notions of Indian-ness and protecting Indian identity from encroachment, commoditization, and fraud (Brayboy, 2006; Grande, 2004).

However, as bell hooks acknowledges in relation to her critique of Freire’s work, “critical interrogation is not the same as dismissal” (cited in Leonardo, 2004). Grande (2004) notes that “though they may arrive by different roads and aspire to different destinations, critical theorists and indigenous scholars are committed to defining schools and societies that are free from



oppression and subordination and stand for justice and emancipation”(p. 6). Drawn to its emancipatory potential, some Indigenous scholars have energized critical theory with Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies in order to resonate with Indigenous contexts and aspirations. For example, Maori scholar Graham Hingangaroa Smith, explains that Kaupapa Maori (Maori-centred) research

is a ‘local’ theoretical positioning which is the modality through which the emancipatory goal of critical theory, in a specific historical, political and social context, is practiced. The ‘localizing’ of the aims of critical theory is partly an enactment of what critical theory actually ‘offered’ to oppressed, marginalized and silenced groups. The project of critical theory held out the possibility that, through emancipation, groups such as Maori would take greater control over their own lives and humanity. This necessarily implied that groups would take hold of the project of emancipation and attempt to make it a reality in their own terms (cited in L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 186).

Kaupapa Maori research, Red Pedagogy, Tribal Critical Race Theory, Hawaiian pedagogy, intellectual sovereignty, and critical Indigenous philosophy are just a few examples of critical perspectives informed by synergistic relationships between Indigenous and critical scholarship in diverse Indigenous contexts (Brayboy, 2005; 2006; Denzin, 2005; Grande, 2000; G. H. Smith, 2000; L. T. Smith, 1999; Turner, 2006; Warrior, 1995).

Turner (2006) calls for a “division of intellectual labour” (p. 119) among Indigenous scholars. Some will have the role of philosophers within Aboriginal communities or within the academy; others “need to critically engage European ideas, methodologies, and theories to show how they have marginalized, distorted, and ignored indigenous voices” (pp. 100-101). In rising to this second role, I propose to draw on aspects of critical theory as I undertake a critical policy analysis of the complex political, economic, and social context in which BC’s Aboriginal post-secondary education (PSE) policies evolved. This approach will address Schissel and Wotherspoon’s (2003) criticism about Aboriginal educational policy research being “more

descriptive than analytical” (p. 195). This approach also seems appropriate for a Métis researcher who has spent almost two decades working within BC’s PSE system to further the educational interests of Aboriginal students and their communities.

### **3.2 Research Strategy**

Because this research addresses a “how” question about a complex, contemporary social phenomena (Aboriginal PSE policy), bounded by time (1986 – 2011) and geography (British Columbia) in which contextual conditions (political, social, and economic) are critical, a case study approach is used to guide the research design, data collection, and data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003).

#### **3.2.1 Research Design**

This case study of Aboriginal PSE policy in BC will be explored through an embedded case design, where the units of analysis are bound by time associated with different political parties governing BC. As stated above, the time period begins in 1986 and ends in 2011. Within this time frame, three different political parties governed British Columbia: the Social Credit (1986 - 1991), the New Democratic Party (1991 - 2001), and the Liberal Party under Premier Campbell (2001 - 2011). Because politics is one of the contexts to be explored in this study, and because different policy documents were developed during these different political eras, these different time periods provide logical embedded units of analysis for this study, as indicated in Table 4 below.

Table 4  
*Embedded Units of Analysis*

Year	Governing Party and Political Context	Document(s)
1986 - 1991	Social Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (1990)</li> </ul>
1991 – 2001	New Democratic Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework (1995)</li> </ul>
2001 – 2011	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework Draft for Discussion (2003)</li> <li>• Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007)</li> </ul>

Embedded units of analysis help to organize the study, allow for deeper exploration of units within the case, and hopefully provide greater insight on the influence of contextual issues - particularly the political context - on the development of Aboriginal PSE policy over time. A return to the case as a whole after exploring the subunits will allow for cross-unit conclusions and analysis and will also ensure that the analysis remains focused on the broader case (Yin, 2003).

### 3.2.2 Data Collection

One of the strengths of case study research is the use of multiple data sources (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). This study will draw upon a wide range of documents and interviews. Moreover, analysis of texts is an important approach to policy studies. Graham, Dittburner, and Abele (1996) compare document-based policy analysis to geological research:

The dated documents provide the sedimentary layers in which can be found the fossil record of concepts and terminology, as they have evolved over time. As with the fossil record, it is important to avoid generalizing from single instances and to remember that diversity and surprise, fault lines and conglomerate rock are as frequent as the neat layers of sandstone and shale in which perfect records are found. (p. 37)

To explore the fossilized record of BC's Aboriginal post-secondary policy, the following sources were drawn upon:

- Scholarly literature, including literature on critical theory, social policy, education and Aboriginal issues;
- Statistical data, used to contextualize the demography of Aboriginal people, particularly in relation to PSE;
- Government policy and administrative sources including policy documents (as identified above), annual reports and other reports, meeting minutes, agendas, and so forth; and
- Archival sources such as organizational reports, meeting minutes, and so forth.

These documents are important sources for that geological research information because they are accessible, and allow for analysis about

- The *source of the policy*: whose interests it serves, its relationship to global, national and local imperatives;
- The *scope of the policy*: what it is assumed it is able to do, how it frames the issue, the policy relationships embedded in it; and
- The *pattern of the policy*: what it builds on or alters in terms of relationships, what organizational and institutional changes or developments it requires. (Ozga, 2000, p. 95)

A focus on policy documents is not an attempt to privilege text over the oral tradition. Oracy plays an important role in the Aboriginal public policy debates (and in court decisions) and shapes policy as text. However, because of its ephemeral nature, oral testimony is not easily accessible to policy researchers (Graham et al., 1996). In order to draw upon oral sources, this study includes research interviews with key participants in the policy process.

Drawing from these multiple sources of data, policy texts, other documents, and interviews, allows for triangulation or, as Yin (2003) says, “converging lines of inquiry” (p. 98) in which conclusions can be checked against different sources. This approach also addresses concerns about educational policy research being more “commentary and critique rather than empirical research” (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 40).

Morse's (1994) definition of a "good informant" as one who "has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study" (cited in Palys, 1997, p. 137) was helpful in selecting possible research participants, as was the assistance of the research supervisor. Twenty individuals who were actively engaged with different aspects of the Aboriginal post-secondary policy process were identified and invited by letter to participate in interviews. Nineteen people accepted the invitation.

Eight of the participants are former or current members of BC's ministries responsible for post-secondary education, three of whom were senior officials (Ministers or Deputy Ministers); three of the participants were or are senior staff from Aboriginal PSE institutions; two participants were or are from Aboriginal political organizations (one First Nations and one Métis); two participants were or are Aboriginal coordinators at public PSIs; one participant was a senior official from the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; one participant was or is a representative from an Aboriginal PSE organization; another participant is or was from a non-Aboriginal post-secondary organization; and one participant is or was an academic working in Aboriginal education. Of these 19 participants, 11 are Aboriginal and eight are non-Aboriginal. Eleven participants are or were male,<sup>11</sup> and eight are female.

It is important to note that the roles of these individuals are complex, overlapping and changing. For example, a participant could have worked as an Aboriginal coordinator, and then worked for government before taking on a role with an Aboriginal post-secondary institution. For the purposes of this work, participants have been associated with their primary roles in relation to the Aboriginal post-secondary policy process.

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<sup>11</sup> One participant has since passed away.

Research participants determined where and when the interviews took place. All interviews were scheduled between October 15, 2006, and January 26, 2007, and held in a wide variety of settings including: participant's work places (seven), by phone (six), in restaurants (two), at my workplace (two), and in participant's homes (two). Participants were generous with their time. While the length of interviews varied, the average length was 59 minutes. The shortest interview was 33 minutes, and one participant was interviewed twice for a total of 115 minutes.

According to Yin (2003), interviews help to corroborate other evidence, provide new insight, and add to the energy of the work through incorporating multiple voices of those involved in policy-making. Such interviews are important to policy analysis as real stories about what happened in the policy-making process, as discourse about policy, and as indicative of interest representation. "There is a need for gathering of such data from educational workers who have lived through periods of transition, and whose experiences would provide a source for better understanding of the experience of change in education" (Ozga, 2000, p. 128).

Mishler (1986) is critical of research approaches that portray interviews as verbal behavior requiring highly standardized questions and techniques to facilitate comparability across interviews. These approaches treat each answer in isolation and ignore the situational, social, and cultural contexts of the interview, which are necessary for interpreting meaning. Rather, Mishler sees interviews as discourse, or speech acts, between the interviewer and research participant through which the meaning of both questions and responses are contextually grounded and co-constructed. This understanding of interviews is now broadly shared (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

To facilitate this jointly constructed discourse, a semi-structured interview process that

included open-ended questions was used (see Appendix A). While open-ended questions are time-intensive in terms of both the interviews and transcriptions, they allow the interviewee to voice a wide range of responses in her/his own words, can provide interesting and rich information, and give the interview participant greater control over the flow and content of the interview (Carspecken, 1996; Mishler, 1986; Palys, 1997).

The interview protocol was sent to research participants prior to the interview. Some research participants embraced the structure of the protocol whole heartedly and quickly, question by question, shared their policy stories. Some shared their policy stories without reference to the questions at all. Still others waited for me to ask the questions in the protocol before responding.

Understanding the meaning of questions and answers requires accurate transcriptions. This was facilitated by recorded interviews and repeated careful listening during the transcription process. To facilitate accuracy, validity, and the democratization of the researcher process, research participants were invited to review and edit their transcriptions (Carspecken, 1996; Mishler, 1986). Only seven of the research participants took advantage of this opportunity.

Because of my professional experience and the relatively small circle of people involved in Aboriginal post-secondary policy, many of the research participants are colleagues and friends. I was mindful of these relationships and felt a deep obligation to ensure that I was respectful of research participants and the knowledge, experience and insights they shared through their stories.

### **3.2.3 Analysis**

In some ways, analysis of the data began long before my doctoral program. I began working in Aboriginal PSE in 1989, and while I did not personally participate in the

consultations process, I remember being involved in discussions about UBC First Nations House of Learning's (FNHL) submission to the *Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners*. Additionally, I participated in consultation on the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (1995), the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework Policy Draft for Discussion* (2003), the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* (2007), and *Campus 2020* (2007). I was an active participant in Aboriginal forums hosted by the provincial government between 2004 and 2008. Over the years, I frequently attended the British Columbia First Nations Coordinators meetings, and in discussions with the Aboriginal coordinators, my colleagues at UBC, and others frequently discussed the relative merits of the policies with which we worked. I have been thinking about these policies for a long time. Having long experienced and reflected upon these policy changes, my engagement with this research reflects a deep commitment to understanding change and possibility in Aboriginal post-secondary policy.

Analysis continued as I transcribed and reflected upon the interviews. NVivo 8, a qualitative data analysis program proved invaluable for storing, organizing, and initial coding of the interview data. NVivo also served as a database that kept interviews separate from the written report in order to increase reliability (Yin, 2003). Maintaining an accurate chain of evidence that references data sources and links conclusions to the evidence also increases reliability and constructs validity.

Given the historic nature of the research, chronology is of great significance, and NVivo proved useful in creating codes that separated data into different phases of the policy process (context, formulation, and implementation) within the three different time periods and political eras (See Table 4 above). Initially, I used NVivo for coding emerging themes from the



interviews, but was overwhelmed by the number of categories that emerged. Instead, I began to work more directly with the document and interview texts.

Documentary evidence was organized chronologically (Yin, 2003). Then, policy stories and documentary evidence were interwoven to produce a detailed description of the policy context, policy formulation, and policy implementation for each of the three time periods and political eras.

Policy stories clearly enriched my work. The voices of research participants enlivened and enriched the dissertation, and provided support for or highlighted the significance of evidence articulated in various documents. Policy stories also provided evidence not found in documentary sources, particularly in relation to the context in which these policies developed and the contestation among those with competing interests.

Through repeatedly working with the data, the following themes emerged across all three periods: sector intersection between the Ministries responsible for post-secondary education and Aboriginal affairs; privileging of First Nations; relationships between policy actors and policy structures, the importance of leadership and ownership; the selective implementation of recommendations and policy; and different understandings of accountability. These themes are further explored and theorized in the final chapter.

## **Chapter 4: The Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners**

In 1989, at the height of national demonstrations protesting federal cutbacks in post-secondary funding for status Indian and Inuit students, the British Columbia provincial government announced the establishment of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners. It was tasked with the responsibility of providing policy advice on Aboriginal post-secondary education (PSE). The following year, the *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners* (also known as the *Green Report*) was submitted to the BC provincial government. This report provided the first comprehensive look at the PSE and training needs of Aboriginal people in British Columbia, and set the ground work for two decades of provincial policy and institutional change.

This chapter takes a close look at the *Green Report*, beginning with a discussion of the context in which the report developed. This is followed by a discussion of the policy process formulation, and implementation. The chapter closes with a discussion of themes that emerged as a result of the research.

### **4.1 The Context**

#### **4.1.1 The Province's Relationship with Aboriginal People**

Throughout the latter half of the 1970s and all of the 1980s, British Columbia was governed by the Social Credit Party (Socreds), a centre-right populist party with strong commitments to free enterprise (Blake, 1996). Under the leadership of Bill Bennett, Premier from 1975 to 1986, the Social Credit government continued BC's longstanding tradition of

denying the existence of Aboriginal rights that began in early colonial times (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990; 1996).

Prior to contact, the Aboriginal population in what is now British Columbia was large and culturally diverse. With a population of over 100,000 Aboriginal people, it was the most densely populated region in Canada. Aboriginal peoples were organized politically into culturally and linguistically distinct, self-governing and self-sufficient sovereign nations (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1992).

In early colonial times, the British Empire recognized that Aboriginal people had an interest in the land, and that the extension of British sovereignty alone did not extinguish that interest. *The Royal Proclamation of 1763*, which led to the establishment of treaties in other parts of Canada, stipulated that Indian lands could only be purchased by the Crown at a public gathering of the Indians involved. Despite the establishment of reserves, only 14 small treaties, known as the Douglas Treaties, were signed between 1850 and 1854 on the colony of Vancouver Island. No further treaties were negotiated after the mainland was established as the Colony of British Columbia in 1858, nor after the colonies united in 1866.

The establishment of the Colony of British Columbia signaled a new era of government-Aboriginal relations. Indians were barred from preempting lands, and reserves were reduced to 10 acres per family. The Douglas Treaties on Vancouver Island were reframed as mere “friendship agreements” and Indian people were reframed as nomadic savages, too primitive to have land rights. Thus the doctrine of *terra nullius*<sup>12</sup> was implemented: Aboriginal rights never existed, so there was no need to extinguish rights through treaties (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990;

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<sup>12</sup> The idea here is that because there was no significant human occupation, there were no Aboriginal rights to the land, so the Crown title to the land was unencumbered by Aboriginal title. According to Tennant, Australia and British Columbia are the only significant cases in which Aboriginal title was denied in this way.

1996).

This was BC's position when it joined Canada in 1871, and continued to be its position. The Terms of Union that gave BC jurisdiction over provincial land, made no mention of Aboriginal rights or treaties. Furthermore, it ensured that British Columbia's practice of allocating small tracts of reserve land continued. Under the 1867 *Constitution Act*, Indians and reserve lands became the responsibility of the federal government. BC did not participate in negotiations during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Beaver, Slave and Sekani peoples in the north-eastern corner of the province signed adhesions to Treaty Eight (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990; 1996).

Beginning in the 1970s, a series of judicial decisions helped to create a climate for change. In the *Calder v. British Columbia* (1973) case, the Nisga'a argued that they had Aboriginal title to their lands in the Nass Valley before the assertion of British title, and that title had never been extinguished. While the 1973 Supreme Court decision dismissed the case on a technicality, six Supreme Court justices found that the Nisga'a held title prior to colonization. Only three justices, however, held that title continued to exist after British sovereignty was asserted. Following the *Calder* case, the federal government entered into treaty making with the Nisga'a; the BC government only participated as observers in this process (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990; 1996).

The 1984 *Guerin v. The Queen* decision established Aboriginal title as a legal right based on historic occupation. Shortly thereafter, the BC Court of Appeals granted an appeal sought by the Nuuchahnulth<sup>13</sup> to halt logging on Meares Island. Subsequently, other Aboriginal groups

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<sup>13</sup> For a map of First Nations traditional territories and names in British Columbia go to <http://www.BCed.gov.BC.ca/abed/map.htm>

were also successful in getting injunctions to halt resource development. In addition, blockades were erected with increasing frequency during the 1980s and early 1990s. These blockades effectively disrupted resource-based industries and transportation networks, and resulted in new alliances between Aboriginal and environmental groups. The Nuu-chah-nulth, Haida, and Nlaka'pamux peoples were successful in permanently halting resource extraction when Meares Island, Lyle Island and the Stein Valley became parks (Shearer, 1993). By the end of the 20th century, British Columbians began to understand that Aboriginal rights and title had economic significance (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990; 1996).

#### **4.1.2 The Economy**

Despite its increasing growth and complexity, in the 1980s BC's economy was largely based on resource extraction. Such resource dependence made BC vulnerable to fluctuations in the international market, creating cycles of "boom and bust." An economic downturn in the early 1980s was short lived, and between 1984 and 1990, British Columbia's economy had the strongest growth in Canada. However, over a century of poor management of the fisheries and forestry resulted in serious depletion of salmon stocks and unsustainable forestry practices, creating more economic tension. The growing importance of tourism, which capitalized upon a "Beautiful British Columbia," as well as growing emphasis on environmental issues, also exacerbated the pressure on BC's resource sector (Barman, 1991; Shearer, 1993; White, Michalowski, & Cross, 2006).

The increasing legal recognition of Aboriginal rights and title, in combination with the road blockades, contributed to greater uncertainty in the business environment. In 1989, BC's First Nations met with large resource companies twice to discuss land claims. Many of the industry representatives were convinced of the need to negotiate land claims in order to ensure

access to resources, and began pressuring government to enter into negotiations. At the same time public understanding and support of land claims grew, and church and labour groups joined resource companies in pressing government to enter into negotiations (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990; 1996).

In 1986, William Vander Zalm became leader of the Social Credit party and Premier of British Columbia. Under the leadership of Vander Zalm, and with the departure of a number of politicians with strong anti-Aboriginal perspectives, space opened for a different approach to Aboriginal issues. In 1987, a Native Affairs Secretariat was established, subsequently becoming the Ministry of Native Affairs in 1988. The Premier's Council on Native Affairs, a nine-member group with representation from BC, First Nations, and the private sector, was established in 1989. After engaging in land claims discussions with First Nations groups throughout the province, the Premier's Council recommended that BC enter into treaty negotiations. In December 1990, the British Columbia Claims Task Force was established with the responsibility to define the scope and organization of treaty negotiations (McKee, 2009; Tennant, 1990; 1996).

In discussing this new political context, one participant stated

Well you had a very right wing, small "c" conservative provincial government that for the most part among the MLAs in the cabinet were very conservative on First Nations issues, but the Premier himself... had a very open mind about First Nations issues, and he was prepared to do a bunch of things differently than the previous administration had been. But Vander Zalm was quite open minded, and there were a couple of key cabinet ministers, Stephen Rogers, [and] later Jack Weisgerber, folks like that who agreed that it was time for the province to buck up and take some responsibility for some of this stuff. So the political climate had changed dramatically in [19]87 from the previous decade. ... Politically, suddenly there was a signal from the Premier. He created this Native Affairs Secretariat.... He put a minister in charge, Stephen Rogers, who was open minded. And they were given some clout in terms of instructions, verbally or written or both, to other Ministries to start working with Native Affairs to try and develop an agenda for government and implement it on this topic. There was quite a changed environment in that sense, in that there was a willing Premier, some new Deputies, and new Ministers and MLAs, a core of them anyway. And although there was still a pretty conservative caucus and cabinet, the Premier was willing to take a chance on some of these issues in a

way that probably hadn't been seen before. (RR 16, para. 35)

In a more moderate political climate, bureaucrats were also more open to change:

Some of the bureaucratic people had changed or they were in the process of moving them along. Like ... one of the key constitutional deputies was very fundamentally opposed to any service provision or any change in provincial approach to First Nations people. He came from obviously a very small "c" conservative background. ... I don't think that most of the Deputies needed a lot of encouragement once the... [these types of] folks were gone. People like Phil Halk, who I think then was in finance, and other folks like that were quite open minded about looking at some changed policy approaches and funding them. (RR 16, para. 35, 39)

Despite this change, many people in government felt reluctance, and even fear, to get involved with land claims. Addressing Aboriginal social issues was more palatable:

When we started dealing with Cabinet and the Deputies' committees on Aboriginal issues, of course the overarching one was land claims, but politically there was still at that point, particularly from 1987 to about 1991, 1990 anyway, there was still a lot of concern on the provincial government's political folks' part about getting into land claims, so they wanted to focus on the idea that they could make a change on the educational status, economic status, and social status of First Nations people. Because they could kind of get their minds around that. The claims thing was fairly abstract and politically, they felt, dangerous for them. Whereas getting people jobs, a better education, better health care and better water, those sorts of things, kind of appealed to them. So I think it was a natural tendency of the bureaucracy then to focus on where can we make some changes and get involved that isn't strictly speaking on-reserve and has some potential for change. And I think that's one of the background reasons that people started paying attention to post-secondary issues. (RR 16, para. 31)

Because the provincial government had a longstanding tradition of refusing to deal with Aboriginal issues, there was no shortage of issues to confront:

There was no radar screen at all that had any Aboriginal issues on it. Period. So you had this incredible pent-up demand in health and education, post-secondary education, on the employment side, on most of the social service sides, child welfare and adoption, and all those issues, where there was a list of outstanding issues, in some case grievances, in others just a desire for change and reform. But there had never been anywhere to go to with them, because there was no forum internally within government and no advocates to deal with the issues. So typically when people from First Nations communities went to the provincial government, what they were told, no matter what the issue was, was that's

the federal government's problem. Go talk to the federal government. (RR 16, para. 29)

And while there were a number of Aboriginal issues that needed addressing, there was little capacity in government to address them. The Ministry of Native Affairs had an important role to play in developing capacity within other Ministries (Malloy, 2001). As one participant remembered,

That's why they hired people for the Native Affairs Secretariat. There was virtually no Aboriginal content within the other departments. Education had a tiny bit more than some of the other line departments, but most of them, at the very most, had somebody who dealt with these kinds of issues off the corner of their desk. There weren't a lot of staff people from the First Nations community in post-secondary education or the Ministry of Education.... Part of the initial exercise was to get them [Ministry staff] to recognize the issues, build capacity to deal with them, and start dealing with the policy issues themselves rather than us trying to be the experts in forestry and education and health and all that from within Aboriginal Affairs. (RR 16, para. 13)

This lack of capacity was not limited to the government in power. While a number of Opposition members were familiar with Aboriginal issues, many others lacked capacity in this area. One New Democratic Party (NDP) MLA spoke about his ignorance about Aboriginal issues. While he was "interested in an abstract way in Native justice issues" his contact with Aboriginal people was limited to his mother's maid and participating in the "Moccasin Miles fundraising walk in 1969 and '70" (RR 07, para. 27). He credited NDP leader Michael Harcourt for increasing his understanding of Aboriginal issues:

Harcourt as opposition leader was really, so far as I know, he was the first major politician in Canada to promote treaty resolution. And while we were in opposition, I can really remember this as a sort of an epiphany. (RR07, para. 27)

#### **4.1.3 Post-Secondary Education**

In 1986, "Aboriginal post-secondary education wasn't even on the radar screen because it was a federal government responsibility" (RR 19, para. 31). However, that was soon to change.



A number of Aboriginal educational issues were being raised with the Ministry of Native Affairs in their discussions with First Nations:

One was the Master Tuition Agreement, more oriented to K to 12. The second one was the lack of resources for curriculum and language instruction and traditional knowledge at all levels, from K through university. A third one was a lack of First Nations teachers. And a fourth was governance, the fact that in the elementary, high school, public schools and post-secondary, both, that there was no real involvement of First Nations in the non-reserve school governance arrangements. These were raised in meetings with First Nations leaders, some of whom were predominately involved in education, some of whom were political leaders who would raise the issue as a side along with other discussions. ...The Ministry [of Native Affairs] was pushed to raise these issues with our colleagues in other departments. (RR 16, para. 9)

Aboriginal educational issues were being raised in other venues as well. In 1987 the province initiated a Royal Commission on Education to study the K-12 system. “Few educational matters engaged the Commission’s attention as much as ... consideration of what is required to provide a sound education for First Nations children” (British Columbia Royal Commission on Education, 1988, p. 57). The Commission made four recommendations specific to Aboriginal education: that bands and tribal councils be given the authority and resources for educational self-determination or shared responsibility; that public schools and Aboriginal people develop formal processes to improve Aboriginal education; that schools and Aboriginal communities work together to address a wide range of educational issues; and that bands, tribal councils, schools, and government work together to address a number of issues outside of the K-12 system. While the Royal Commission concentrated on issues in the K-12 system, a focus on Aboriginal PSE was not far away.

Federal cutbacks to Aboriginal private post-secondary institutes were threatening the continued existence of the Native Education Centre (NEC) and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). Gordon Antoine, Chief of the Coldwater Indian Band, and founder of

NVIT, sought out support from the Ministry. A senior government official remembered the deep impact this meeting had on him:

What affected me profoundly was one day, and I'm guessing at the year, but I would say it would be 1987 or 1988. I think it was 1987. I got a request for a meeting from a person named Chief Gordon Antoine. He wanted to meet with me because the feds were cutting off the funding to the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and to another facility, the Native Education Centre....

He just came in and he laid out the problem very succinctly. And I had never heard of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology or the Native Education Centre. But he made his case pretty plain and he said we are going to have to close if we don't get some money from the province...

I really was captured by Gordon. I was captured by his love of education. Now I didn't give him an answer that day because I wanted my staff to do some work and I wanted to visit both places, which I did....

I then went to the Premier, it was Premier Vander Zalm. I said I just think we should fund this. I said we either fund it now or we'll fund a different problem ten, twenty years down the road, and Vander Zalm accepted that. He bought into it. So Gordon of course was thrilled, but more importantly, a few months later, by this time we were establishing a real relationship. (RR 10, para. 6-11)

This was the beginning of a relationship that would last until 2004 when Chief Antoine passed away. The combined circumstances of federal cutbacks and this meeting with Gordon Antoine laid the foundation for further developments, including the Green Report.

You got to thank the feds for cutting the funding. If they hadn't cut the funding off, I probably wouldn't have met him [Chief Gordon Antoine]. This [the Green Report] may not have happened. We would have just kept on drifting. (RR 10, para. 137)

A few months later, Chief Antoine again approached the Ministry. This time he sought help in communicating with a college in his area:

He came to me and he said ... "I'm really frustrated.... I'm trying to do some joint programming with [a college in the interior of British Columbia]. I can't even get a phone call back...." I said, "I think I can fix that.... how would you like to be on the

board of [that college]?”<sup>14</sup> And he looked at me and he said, “You’re kidding.” I said, “No. Would you like to do that? I appreciate your love of education, what you’re bringing to the table, what you’re trying to do for First Nations.” That’s why I said it. One of the recommendations [in the Green Report] is to have a First Nations person on every board. By the time the recommendation came in, we already had that [First Nations representation on institutional governing boards]. (RR 10, para. 13)

As a result of Chief Antoine’s relationship with this key government official, the Ministry began implementing small changes that affected specific Aboriginal and public PSIs. After the Green Report, these changes would be implemented system-wide.

The economic woes in the early 1980s, combined with the capping of federal transfer payments to the provinces, resulted in cut-backs to the post-secondary system. There was an increasing public concern over all government spending, and public support for PSE had waned. This resulted in cut-backs in programs and services, an increased focus on accountability and efficiency, and a focus on workforce training that would meet the economic needs of the province. When the economy began to recover in the latter half of that decade, the province started to think about expanding access to PSE (Gaber, 2003; Schütze & Day, 2001).

To that end, the Ministry established eight regional committees as well as an “umbrella” Provincial Access Committee charged with the responsibility to make recommendations that would enhance accessibility to PSE and job-training. Their report, *Access to Advanced Education and Job Training in British Columbia*, was tabled in September of 1988. The report was well received, and early in 1989, government released the *Access for All* initiative that guided the expansion of and access to British Columbia’s post-secondary system for over a decade. One of the Provincial Access Committee’s priorities was addressing the access needs of

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<sup>14</sup> Following the *Colleges and Institute Amendment Act* of 1983, government appointed all members of College Boards.

underrepresented groups,<sup>15</sup> including Native Indian peoples (Gaber, 2003; Schütze & Day, 2001).

Recognizing the complexity of issues related to Aboriginal PSE, the Provincial Access Committee refrained from making specific policy recommendations to address Aboriginal underrepresentation in PSE and training. Rather they “strongly” urged that

the provincial government take immediate steps, in consultation with Native Indian groups, universities and colleges, to develop and implement a detailed strategy to address the diverse advanced education and job training needs of Native Indians. (British Columbia Provincial Access Committee & British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1988, p. 20)

Government quickly responded to this recommendation. Government’s willingness to address the Access Committee’s recommendations was motivated in part by a concern about inclusiveness, and also by a growing understanding that a better educated Aboriginal population would benefit the BC economy through Aboriginal labour force participation. As a senior government official explained, at first support for Aboriginal PSE initiatives

was mainly about offering opportunities to Aboriginals for education in the post-secondary system to make sure that they were included. It wasn’t until after a while that I made the connection between that and the economic part of it. (RR19, para. 43)

Concern about BC’s declining working-age population was creating space for populations underrepresented in the work force. By 1986, British Columbia’s Aboriginal population had increased to 132,500 people (Remillard, S., Canada. Dept. of the Secretary of State, Native Citizens Directorate, Social Trends Analysis Directorate, & Statistics Canada, Demography Division, 1992) and Aboriginal people were beginning to be seen as important in filling labour

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<sup>15</sup> Other underrepresented groups addressed in the report were people with disabilities, people from remote communities, and prisoners.

force needs. This was made clear in the Ministry's 1989/90 Annual Report:

Because of changes in the population's age structure, fewer young people will enter the BC labour force during the next several years. Opportunities will increase for groups that are now underrepresented in the workplace: native people, persons with disabilities, older workers and new immigrants. This increase will strengthen the demand for programs to help these people enter the labour force. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1990, p. 9)

#### **4.2 The Policy Process**

On Monday, March 20, 1989, Advanced Education and Job Training Minister Stan Hagen and Native Affairs Minister Jack Weisgerber jointly announced the establishment of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (the Committee) co-chaired by Chief Gordon Antoine and Dr. Peter Jones, then President of Fraser Valley College.

Another sixteen members were appointed to the Committee. This "stellar group of individuals" (RR 06, para.135) included key First Nations political and educational leaders from throughout BC, an Elder and student, as well as representation from the Ministry of Native Affairs and the Open Learning Agency. Twelve of the Committee members were from BC First Nations and six were non-Aboriginal. Aboriginal and public PSIs had five representatives each on the Committee. Status Indian groups (band and tribal councils) were well represented with five committee members. However, despite the fact that 41.4% of the 60,000 status Indians lived off-reserve and that there were approximately 72,500 non-status Indians, Métis, and Inuit people living in BC (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1992), only one person, Rosalee Tizya of the United Native Nations (UNN), represented their interests. A representative from the Ministry of Native Affairs also sat on the Committee. A number of bureaucrats from the Ministries of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and Education and Indian and

Northern Affairs served as advisors and resource people to the Committee. (For a list of committee members and their affiliations, see Appendix B.)

The announcement of the Committee was met with some skepticism. National concern about inadequate funding for Aboriginal PSE came to head in the 1989-90 academic year. Across the country there were student protests and a hunger strike following the capping of funding for PSE by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (Graham et al., 1996; Lanceley, 1991). Bev Scow, a Kwakwa'ka'wakw student studying political sciences at UBC, and head of the Intercampus Native Student Network, had been involved with organizing protests over the federal capping of post-secondary funds. She questioned the timing of the announcement, and was concerned that “the provincial government is undermining the jurisdiction between native people and the federal government” (cited in Glavin, 1989). Committee co-chair Chief Antoine acknowledged these concerns, but stated that he would “do just about anything to increase enrolment, to ensure that native people, the native population, is more fairly represented [in PSE]” (cited in Glavin, 1989).

Prior to the establishment of the Committee, an informal “coalition of First Nations post-secondary institutes” (RR06, para. 33) including representatives from En’owkin Centre, NVIT, NEC and the Native Indian Teacher Education Program of the University of British Columbia, was emerging, and meeting together to discuss post-secondary issues. A number of these people were appointed to the Committee, “so that by the time we actually formed this Committee, you know a number of us [of the Aboriginal post-secondary educators on the Committee] knew each other in our work situations” (RR 06, para. 33).

Unlike government officials who had little policy capacity in Aboriginal PSE, these representatives of Aboriginal institutions and programs, came to the table rich in knowledge and

experience. One group member stated that

when we came together [as a committee] we ...said, we all have a lot of experience in the area, and we, in a sense, know what the issues are, and we had actually been talking about how we might improve things. (RR06, para. 37)

The group quickly set about their work. Sub-committees were established to address programming, support services, and governance. A consultation paper, drawing on the work of the sub-committees, a submission by committee member Edward John, and submissions to the Sullivan and Access Commissions, as well as a number of relevant studies and reports, was drafted. The final consultation paper, "Obstacles to Access," identifies geographic, financial, cultural/social, program, and governance challenges to Aboriginal education (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1989).

#### **4.2.1 Consultation**

This paper, along with an invitation to participate in regional consultation meetings was sent out broadly to Aboriginal organizations, student groups, and PSIs. Committee members, with the assistance of bands, tribal councils, and friendship centres, organized meetings in their own regions, while consultations in other areas of the province were organized with the assistance of local Aboriginal groups. In all, 14 regional consultations were held, 85 written submissions were received, and 130 oral presentations were heard during November and December of 1989 (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990).

The policy development process itself heightened awareness of post-secondary issues among Aboriginal educators. One participant stated that "while it was in the process of being developed, it also created a lot of awareness in the community of Aboriginal educators that were consulted. I think it helped to create a developing awareness of the situation" (RR 1, para. 45).

This increased awareness was not limited to Aboriginal educators; those within government and PSIs also benefited from an increased awareness. In the words of a senior government official,

I know that the result of the work as it was taking place was to engage a lot of public servants and a lot of folks within the post-secondary institutions in looking again or re-looking or, in many cases, looking for the first time at what the issues were, and what some of the potential solutions were. So even if it had only acted to increase their awareness and get them thinking and get them off their duffs, I think that would have been enough. (RR16, para. 65)

The Committee also maintained close relationships with the Premier's Council on Native Affairs, which was then travelling around the BC meeting with various bands and tribal groups. The Premier's Council on Native Affairs liaised with the Committee through its joint members, Eric Denhoff and Chief Robert Louie, as well as by sharing minutes and consultation schedules. In addition, on July 14, 1989, Ed John and Jo-ann Archibald spoke to the Premier's Council on Native Affairs about the objectives of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1989, August 17).

In writing the report, Committee members were able to build their recommendations on common themes that were widely applicable, some of which had been articulated in other reports over the years. In the words of one participant,

The recommendations were quite extensive and ... [drew] on common issues or common threads.... I mean support services were required no matter which type of post-secondary institute. If you look at any provincial or national report, there are some common recommendations that have been cited over the years, which indicate that they have never been fully addressed.... Take a look at having Native languages getting recognized. We can't say it's a new thing. It's been talked about forever. And the same for having relevancy for the programs, the culture, [and] this area of providing bridging programs. Obviously if Aboriginal people aren't graduating from high school with the kind of academic courses required to get into post-secondary, there is some skill-building that's needed there. Those are, as I say, they're common issues and also common recommendations that can be implemented in any setting, whether it be the Aboriginal post-secondary institute or a mainstream institute. (RR06, para. 47)



Despite much agreement, there were some points of tension. One participant jokingly remembered that “we fought and we argued about everything” (RR17, para. 60). Another said, “We certainly had great discussions because you can see the diverse group. We didn’t all agree, but somehow this sort of all came together” (RR 06, para. 51).

The Committee also ensured that the report was widely distributed. Because there were no funds available to print the report, Chief Gordon Antoine took on responsibility for printing copies of what would become known as the *Green Report*:

When it came time to do the report, there was no money to print the report. So what Gordon Antoine did was he used his own office and he ran off copies. He had all these old, left over covers that were all green. So he used that, and that’s how it became the Green Report. Gordon Antoine talked about it and he and I laughed forever and a day about that. That’s how it became the *Green Report*. It was just the colour, right. He had no money, nothing, so this is what he did. That’s how the report came together. (RR 17, para. 61)

In March of 1990, a year before its scheduled completion, the *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners* was presented to the Honourable Bruce Strachan, Minister of the newly named Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, who vowed to implement “this first class work ... in conjunction with the Premier's task force on native affairs and the Cabinet Committee on Native Affairs as quickly as possible” (British Columbia Legislative Assembly, 1990, May 7).

#### **4.2.2 The Text**

In articulating its goal statement, the Committee drew from the 1988 *Access for All*’s goal of increasing BC’s dismal post-secondary participation rates to the national average by 1995, and applied it to the Aboriginal context. The Committee’s ambitious goal statement reads,

That British Columbia, together with First Nations, recognize and act on the urgent need to increase the participation and completion rates of First Nations post-secondary learners to at least the national average by 1995, and that this process incorporate the unique cultural traditions of First Nations. (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990, p. 5)

Throughout the report the terms “First Nations” and “Native” are used inclusively to refer to Aboriginal, status, non-status, and treaty Indians, as well as Métis and Inuit people.

A brief historical overview of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations positions BC First Nations as self-governing Nations, who, upon colonization were subject to federal and provincial legislation and the assimilative forces of missionary, federal, and provincial schooling. While reference is made to the way that federally imposed definitions of “Indian” resulted in the creation of non-status Indians, no mention is made of the creation of other groups of Aboriginal people, such as Métis or Inuit peoples, or of Aboriginal people from other regions of Canada who have migrated to British Columbia. Furthermore, in describing the political organization of Aboriginal people in British Columbia, the focus is solely on BC bands, tribal councils, and linguistic groups. It is these groups that join the federal and provincial governments to make up the three political systems that the PSE system is “challenged to coalesce [the] efforts of” (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990, p. 9).

The Committee contextualizes the *Green Report* through a statement made by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) <sup>16</sup> asserting that changes to educational policies, administrative practices and programs that affect First Nations students “be consistent with First Nations self-government and be approved by First Nations” (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990, p. 10).

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<sup>16</sup> The National Indian Brotherhood, a national organization representing status Indian and treaty groups, was established in 1968. In 1982 it became the Assembly of First Nations.

Key to the *Green Report* are four principles that not only guide the writing of the report, but also are offered as the foundation for implementing recommendations. The principles are 1) that First Nations have a right to self-determination in education and must be part of the decision-making process; 2) that because education is an inherent Aboriginal right, it is a federal responsibility that can only be devolved to the province with First Nations approval; 3) that higher education reflect a holistic approach and enhance First Nations languages and values;<sup>17</sup> and 4) that Provincial responsibility to ensure First Nations access to holistic education requires cooperative planning between First Nations and post-secondary authorities.

The twenty-one recommendations that follow are framed as “Challenges to the Post-Secondary System” and include recommendations on governance, jurisdiction, cultural, program, financial, and geographic challenges.

#### **4.2.2.1 Governance Challenges**

In this section of the *Green Report*, the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the governance of PSE is said to be antithetical to democracy and the cause of “oppression, failed assimilation and frequently, racism” (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990, p. 12). The report acknowledges that both status and non-status Indians attend provincial PSIs, but makes no mention of other Aboriginal groups. In addition, in this section, the report affirms the role of the federal government in funding status Indians’ PSE and urges the province to respect this federal role.

In keeping with the principle of education as an inherent right of self-determination, the “Governance” recommendations address ways to strengthen self-determination. To this end, the

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<sup>17</sup> Here the report cites the Assembly of First Nations’ definition of education.

report recommends consultation with and support of First Nations in implementing recommendations; First Nations appointments representing both status and non-status interests (no reference is made to other Aboriginal groups), to institutional governing bodies; the establishment of First Nations Advisory Councils to advise governing bodies; and the creation and staffing of a senior Ministry position responsible Aboriginal education with a “Native” person.

The *Green Report* further states that once these recommendations are implemented, the newly formed First Nations Congress (FNC) Education Secretariat<sup>18</sup> should replace the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners as government’s advisors. The FNC Education Secretariat was to be chaired by Nathan Matthew and include five representatives from bands and tribal councils and one representative from UNN (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992, November).

To ensure ongoing implementation, the report recommends a legislatively established provincial council with representation from PSIs, faculty, students, First Nations institutions, and the Ministry. The report also calls for financial support for First Nations institutions through direct formula funding.<sup>19</sup> A final recommendation in the governance section is aimed specifically at the soon to be established University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), and urges the establishment of an Aboriginal Studies division as well as First Nations representation

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<sup>18</sup> The FNC was a province-wide First Nations organization established in 1988. The FNC Education Secretariat was established by way of a resolution passed by the FNC in June, 1989.

<sup>19</sup> A funding formula for the colleges and institutes was introduced in 1984 by way of an annually negotiated agreement or ‘program profile’ between the Ministry and the institution based that takes into account the delivery of programs, courses, and student number and type. As a result of the funding formula, an operating grant is given to the institution from the Ministry. Institutions report back to the Ministry on their success in meeting the program profile.(Gaber, 2003; Schütze & Day, 2001)

on the Board of Governors and Senate.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4.2.2.2 Jurisdiction**

Under Jurisdictional Challenges the *Green Report* discusses the problems that emerge as a result of overlapping federal and provincial responsibility for First Nations PSE, and stresses the need for intergovernmental coordination and cooperation. Again, the role of the federal government in funding status Indian PSE is affirmed. The report acknowledges that “advocacy groups” like UNN and the BC Association of Friendship Centres urge the province to fund non-status Indians at a similar level (no mention is made of other Aboriginal groups). However, no official recommendation is made to this end. Rather, the report advocates for the establishment of a committee with federal, provincial, and First Nations representation to deal with cross-jurisdictional issues, and that there be First Nations representation on relevant Ministry committees.

#### **4.2.2.3 Culture**

To address cultural challenges that face Aboriginal students within the public post-secondary system, the *Green Report* recommends cross-cultural awareness courses for administrators, faculty, staff, students, and the general public. The report further recommends funding First Nations coordinators to provide support services to First Nations students. After a discussion of BC First Nations languages (no mention is made of other Aboriginal languages) the report recommends accrediting First Nation’s languages and funding First Nations language teacher training. The final recommendations in this section advocate revising post-secondary

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<sup>20</sup> The establishment of a university was announced in January 1990, and Bill 40, the UNBC Act was passed in June 1990.

policies to increase Aboriginal participation and hiring Aboriginal administrators, faculty, and staff.

#### **4.2.2.4 Program Challenges**

Under “Program Challenges,” the issue of curriculum relevancy is raised. The report recommends gearing adult basic education (ABE) programs to local labour market needs; the establishing transition programs; supporting community-based literacy programs; and creating a resource centre to evaluate, develop, and share curriculum materials. The report also recommends that the Ministry and PSIs be accountable to First Nations for both funding expenditures and for Aboriginal student participation and completion rates.

#### **4.2.2.5 Financial**

In discussing financial challenges the report notes that federal assistance to status Indian students is inadequate to meet the demands for ABE, vocational, and college preparatory programs, and insufficient to address of the cost of living for urban students. Provincial funding for non-status students for ABE is also seen to be inadequate. To meet these financial needs the report recommends the Ministry establish forgivable student loans for ABE, and designated First Nations scholarships and bursaries for students attending both First Nations and public PSIs.

#### **4.2.2.6 Geographical Challenges**

In order to address geographical challenges, the final recommendation calls for distance education programs, for both rural and urban students, which combine technology with the support of instructors and tutors.

#### **4.2.2.7 Prioritized Recommendations and Implementation Plan**

To aid in implementation, the report highlights recommendations that were prioritized through the consultation process, including funding First Nations institutions; addressing cross-jurisdictional issues; establishing First Nations coordinators positions at public PSIs; funding First Nations language teacher training, transition, and community-based literacy programs; accrediting First Nations languages and teacher language training; and establishing accountability systems for both funding and First Nations participation and completion rates. A brief five-year implementation plan, along with cost-estimates, is also included.

#### **4.2.3 Implementation**

Prior to the release of the *Green Report*, changes were already occurring in BC's post-secondary system. A number of PSIs already had Aboriginal advisory committees and Aboriginal representation on governing bodies. In addition, a number of PSIs offered Aboriginal student services and programming. Through the implementation of the Green Report, these initiatives would be strengthened and broadened throughout the post-secondary system.

In September 1990, the Committee met to plan the implementation of the recommendations. Letters were drafted to college and institute presidents inviting them to submit proposals for funding for Aboriginal coordinators; to Aboriginal and public institutions, inviting them to submit proposals to fund transition, literacy, ABE, cross-cultural awareness, and language programs; to universities to fund Native teacher language training; to colleges, institutes, and Aboriginal-controlled institutions to develop a clearing house for the development and dissemination of curriculum materials; to the Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development, asking for their help in the development and coordination of Native post-secondary curriculum materials; to the First Nations Congress Educational Secretariat,

requesting that they provide policy advice on PSE; to CEOs at colleges and institutes, encouraging them to consult with First Nations locally and regionally, and asking that they review admissions and program policies to support Aboriginal learners; and to the Council on Admissions and Transfers, requesting that the accreditation of First Nations languages and Aboriginal program and admission policies be discussed at the next Council meeting. A two-year secondment opportunity as Special Advisor on Native Programs with the Ministry's Universities, Colleges and Institutes Division was also drafted (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990, September 12).

The *Green Report* had a "certain cachet because it was developed by Aboriginal people" (RR03, para. 9). Following its release, the Aboriginal community took ownership of the report and used it to advocate for change. One participant remembered "political leaders, First Nations political leaders, ... Aboriginal educators and leaders in the Aboriginal education community, really holding on to the *Green Report* and using that to advance their cause (RR 04, para. 49).

A sense of ownership was also developing among some working in government and institutions: "I think there was some real enthusiasm that developed both within pockets of the bureaucracy and pockets of the PSIs that later resulted in some of ...the programs and things that we see now" (RR 16, para. 67).

One of the people who championed the *Green Report* recommendations was Christie Brown, a manager within the Ministry who had served as an advisor to the Committee. Her leadership, organizational abilities, and tact are specifically acknowledged in the *Green Report* (Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, 1990). After the report was released, Brown:

sort of became the manager of Aboriginal post-secondary programs right after the *Green Report* came out and she just took some of those recommendations and said we're doing



this. And she found the money. And one of the key elements was putting Aboriginal coordinator positions for the establishment of those positions. So they just did it with all of the institutes and colleges and universities that were willing to. (RR 04, para. 81)

In its *1990-91 Annual Report* the Ministry reported on expanding Native post-secondary participation, as well as the development of new Native programming, including criminal justice and tourism programs at NEC and social work at the College of New Caledonia. Approximately 150 apprentices were indentured to band councils throughout BC. The Ministry reported spending \$3 million dollars to support Aboriginal PSE. Furthermore,

based on recommendations from the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, the Ministry began to implement a new provincial strategy to increase Native participation in advanced education. This strategy included:

- Providing funds to hire Native education coordinators at 13 public post-secondary institutions;
- Providing funds to develop a new curriculum and evaluate existing curricula for Native education programs;
- Establishing a Northern Distance Learning Pilot Project through the Open Learning Agency;
- Hiring a Special Advisor on Native education to help the Ministry provide programs and services for Native students; and
- Making appointments of Native people to governing boards at a number of post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1991 p. 9)

In the fall of 1991 an election was called and the NDP, under the leadership of Michael Harcourt, replaced the Social Credit government. Despite this governance change, the *Green Report* continued to guide Aboriginal post-secondary policy and program developments.

In November 1992, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs completed *The Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners Status Report on Follow-up Action*, and reported that “substantial action had been taken on most of its recommendations” (p. 14).

The implementation of these recommendations resulted in significant change. Government began consulting with Aboriginal groups and appointed First Nations representatives to twenty-one PSIs' governing boards. They also hired a Special Advisor on Aboriginal Programs, funded several First Nations institutions, and held meetings to address cross jurisdictional issues. The University of Northern BC agreed to develop an Aboriginal studies program and brought Aboriginal representatives onto its interim governing council. The Ministry also provided funding for several Aboriginal-controlled institutions; for hiring Aboriginal coordinators at public PSIs; and for First Nations language, ABE, transition, literacy, and curriculum initiatives. In addition, the Open Learning Agency began providing distance education to Aboriginal students throughout the province (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992, November).

Not all recommendations, however, were implemented or fully implemented. The ephemeral nature of the FNC Education Congress meant that it could not take on the policy leadership role envisioned in the *Green Report*. Furthermore, while the Ministry considered creating a provincial council to oversee the implementation of recommendations, it was never established, nor was forgivable student loans for ABE students implemented. Neither the Ministry nor PSIs reported to First Nations on Aboriginal post-secondary funding or student participation and completion rates (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992, November).

Not all PSIs embraced recommendations with open arms. Even with targeted funding, there was resistance to hiring Aboriginal coordinators. According to participants, institutional autonomy and institutional racism played a role. One participant stated that

every institution thinks of itself as a self-governing entity, and even more so with the universities, that they are their own. There's a reason for the ivory tower concept. Maybe even more importantly, they think that hey, we're smart people. We don't want or need you telling us what to do. We're going to figure this out. Don't worry, we'll get there. Or the other side of it was the world's just fine, thank you. Aboriginal people that make it are going to make it on their own. So that was the institutional resistance. (RR03, para. 42)

While many PSIs willingly implemented some recommendations, there were “pockets of resistance,” particularly in the north, the Okanagan, and places where relationships between the PSIs and the Aboriginal community had not yet been established.

One participant remembered being puzzled that a post-secondary institution in the interior of BC hadn't asked for funding to hire an Aboriginal coordinator:

They sort of felt they didn't need one, and even if they did get one, they weren't sure where they would put this person. So I asked the Ministry for a grant of ten-thousand dollars to do a research project to show the college why they needed a coordinator. Or to find out that maybe they didn't. So we hired a contractor to conduct interviews in First Nations communities, neighboring communities in the catchment area and in the college itself and demonstrated to them that they did indeed need a coordinator. (RR04, para. 123)

This same participant also remembered the “incredible resistance” of a college in north-eastern BC where, despite the high Aboriginal population in its catchment area, the institution turned down funding for a coordinator. And while this same college received funding to implement Aboriginal programming, “basically nothing was being done” (RR04, para. 127). It took a phone call from the Deputy Minister to the college president before a coordinator was hired (RR04, para. 127).

Another participant felt that the implementation of recommendations was limited because a number of PSIs, and many people working within PSIs, failed to take ownership of the recommendations:

We rely on ...somebody else to take up these recommendations.....even the way I talk, the provincial government ought to do this, and the federal government should do this. But it is back to each individual person and the institution in which that person works to also take up the recommendations, to say how could I use this in [the program that I work with]? And I think that's one thing we don't do. And that's why maybe when we think of these sorts of big reports and how they can inform policy, [we think that] somebody else ought to be doing it. We don't think that this relates to our own back yard in this way. I think that's one thing... I don't think we thought about ...at the time. (RR06, para. 107)

Establishing relationships between Aboriginal groups and PSIs was seen to be important in implementing recommendations. As one participant explained, “where there had been a relationship established, the relationship prevailed and something did get implemented” (RR04, para. 131). Eventually, “with political pressure,” institutions resistant to this change came around, and “by 1995 we had coordinators in all of the colleges and institutes” (RR 04, para. 81).

It would take some time, however, before all PSIs established advisory committees, and in 1992, only institutions with large Aboriginal student populations were delivering cross-cultural awareness training. Concerned about compromising academic standards many institutions resisted revising admission policies, and there is no indication that most PSIs were hiring Aboriginal people other than the Aboriginal coordinators. Like the government, the PSIs were not accountable to Aboriginal people for Aboriginal program funding or Aboriginal student participation or completion rates.

A number of participants expressed disappointment in the limited implementation of the recommendations. One participant stated that

the *Green Report* contained some very good information and was saying that these are some things that you really need to think about doing. But how it was interpreted and manifested after that was completely counter to the intent of the Green Report, I believe.

My perspective. (RR 10 para. 67)

The lack of a group to oversee implementation of the recommendations, and a lack of accountability, was seen to be particularly problematic:

I think we were disappointed that ... there were some things done, but really they didn't follow through with continuing [to implement] the plan. I think if they would have continued this, having the initial post-secondary committee [oversee implementation], I think we really could have done a lot more, because the group would have made the Ministry accountable. (RR06, para. 99)

This participant felt that without a group to oversee implementation,

none of these recommendations have ever gotten fully implemented, therefore we're not any further ahead than we were. The gap is still wide and the problems are still there, and people are still creating some success based on the small resources that they have. (RR06, para. 131)

In 1992, after the NDP replaced the Socreds, the Ministry turned its attention to a new strategy for Aboriginal PSE. It announced its intentions to develop an Aboriginal PSE policy that would “a) reflect government and First Nations’ priorities and negotiations which have emerged since 1990; and b) address key unresolved issues regarding PSE for Aboriginal people” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992, November, p. 2). The recommendations in the *Green Report* would continue to influence this new policy development, as would consultation with Aboriginal organizations and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.3 Discussion and Findings

In reflecting on the stories told about this policy process through the documents and

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<sup>21</sup> Previously the Ministry of Native Affairs.

interviews, a number of interesting themes emerge. These themes include the influence of the Ministry of Native Affairs, the privileging of First Nations, the importance of relationships and leadership and ownership, the selective implementation of recommendations, and accountability.

#### **4.3.1 The Influence of the Ministry of Native Affairs**

As a response to previously mentioned court decisions and direct actions in support of Aboriginal rights and title that threatened BC's resource economy, the BC government established a new Ministry in 1988, the Ministry of Native Affairs, and in 1990 finally agreed to enter into treaty negotiations. Because education was being raised by First Nations in their discussions with this new Ministry, Native Affairs "was pushed to raise these issues with [their] colleagues in other departments" (RR 14, para. 9). Despite the establishment of Native Affairs, there was much reluctance and little capacity for engaging seriously with Aboriginal rights and title. PSE provided a more palatable initial venue for government to engage with and develop capacity in Aboriginal issues.

The involvement of Native Affairs in the development of the *Green Report* is illustrated by the joint announcement of the establishment of the Committee by the Ministers of Native Affairs and Advanced Education; the presence of Ministry of Native Affairs and key Aboriginal political leaders on the Committee; and by the close relationship between the Committee and the Premier's Council on Native Affairs, who shared two members, as well as minutes and consultation schedules, and who also met together. The important role played by Native Affairs in Aboriginal post-secondary policy development is also illustrated by Minister Strachan's announcement that the *Green Report* would be implemented in conjunction with both the Premier's Task Force on Native Affairs and the Cabinet Committee on Native Affairs. Native Affairs' role in Aboriginal post-secondary policy continued after the NDP came into power, as

illustrated by plans to develop an Aboriginal PSE policy in consultation with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs that would “reflect government and First Nations’ priorities and negotiations which have emerged since 1990” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992, November, p. 2).

#### **4.3.2 Privileging First Nations**

Given the lack of Métis, Inuit, or non-status and urban Indian representation on the Committee, it is not surprising that the text of the *Green Report* privileges BC’s on-reserve First Nations. That privilege is clearly illustrated by the use of the term “First Nations” in reference to all Aboriginal people, and by the history section which briefly acknowledges the existence of non-status Indians, but fails to acknowledge the existence of Métis, Inuit, other Aboriginal people who migrated to BC from other jurisdictions, or the growing number of Aboriginal people in urban settings. While bands and tribal councils are framed as a “third level of government,” the UNN, the only political organization representing non-status and off-reserve Indian people on the Committee, is considered merely an “advocacy group.” In addition, the context of the report is framed by, and education is defined through, references to documents produced by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), a national body representing status Indians.

Given the supposedly inclusive use of the term “First Nations,” many of the recommendations could be seen as widely applicable. However, some of the recommendations also privilege First Nations specifically. One example is the recommendation that the nascent First Nations Congress Educational Secretariat succeed the Provincial Advisory Committee in providing policy advice to the Ministry. It was to be chaired by Chief Nathan Matthew and include five representatives from bands and tribal councils and only one representative from UNN. No Métis representation is considered.

In discussions about jurisdiction, federal responsibility for funding status Indians is reaffirmed while aspirations of other Aboriginal groups for similar funding is not acknowledged. Provincial responsibility is seen to be for funding PSIs and student assistance, but the request for provincial funding for non-status Indians, while acknowledged, is not recommended. In addition, the language recommendation refers to BC First Nations languages only. Moreover, while the proposed Aboriginal directors on public PSIs' governing boards were to represent status and non-status Indians, no mention is made of other Aboriginal groups. Finally, the post-secondary issues of urban Aboriginal students are only mentioned in relation to the high costs of living in urban areas, and only appear in the final recommendation about access to distance education.

At a time when Aboriginal rights and title were first emerging as key provincial policy issues, the privileging of the interests of BC on-reserve status Indians is an understandable and important strategic choice that reinforces the special legal status held by the First Nations people on the Committee. However, it also serves to create a policy document which reflects a hierarchy of Aboriginal peoples, with BC on-reserve status Indians on top, followed by off-reserve status Indians, non-status Indians, and urban Aboriginal people. The existence of Métis and Inuit peoples, as well as Aboriginal peoples from other jurisdictions, is not even acknowledged.

### **4.3.3 Relationships**

This case also reveals the importance of relationships in facilitating developments in this policy process. As a result of the late Chief Antoine's passionate advocacy for Aboriginal education, he was able to build strong relationships with a key senior Ministry official and secure funding for two Aboriginal institutes and Aboriginal appointments to public PSIs' governing



boards even before the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners was established. At the same time the committee was announced, Chief Antoine's position as co-chair was also announced. This was likely due, in part, to this relationship.

Relationships among Aboriginal post-secondary educators, which preceded the establishment of the Committee, facilitated their capacity to address post-secondary issues for Aboriginal learners, and allowed them to work quickly and efficiently to address common issues.

Relationships were also seen to be key to the implementation of recommendations by PSIs. To reiterate one respondent's explanations of events, "Where there had been a relationship established, the relationship prevailed and something did get implemented" (RR04, para. 131). Conversely, where no relationship existed, or where relationships were poor, recommendations were difficult to implement.

#### **4.3.4 Leadership and Ownership**

The leadership of individuals, like Chief Gordon Antoine, and members of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, was instrumental to the development of the *Green Report*. The consultation process increased awareness among Aboriginal people about post-secondary leadership, and after its release, Aboriginal political and educational leaders were said to take ownership of the report and use it to advocate for change. Within both the Ministry and some PSIs, a number of individuals were said to have developed an enthusiasm for the report that resulted in change. Within the Ministry, Christie Brown was important in driving that change. However, a lack of ownership by PSIs and individuals working within them was seen to limit implementation of recommendations.

#### **4.3.5 Selective Implementation of Recommendations**

Prior to the development of the *Green Report*, the province used its power to appoint

Chief Gordon Antoine to the governing body of a local college to facilitate communication between NVIT and the college. After the release of the Green Report, the province appointed Aboriginal representatives to PSE governing bodies throughout the system to ensure First Nations representation in the governance of PSIs. The Ministry channeled funds to support implementation of select recommendations, and the Ministry also applied pressure to specific PSIs to encourage them to implement recommendations. However, the Ministry did not implement all of the recommendation. For example, the Ministry did not: create a Provincial Council that would oversee implementation of the *Green Report*, establish forgivable student loans for ABE students, or report to First Nations on Aboriginal post-secondary funding or student participation and completion rates.

While many PSIs quickly began implementing the *Green Report*'s recommendation, others resisted implementing a number of recommendations, including the establishment of advisory committees, admission policies, cross-cultural training, and employment equity. Even with the availability of targeted funding, political pressure had to be applied by the Ministry to a number of institutions before they would hire Aboriginal coordinators.

#### **4.3.6 Accountability**

The Committee envisioned the creation of a legislatively enacted provincial council that would report to the Ministry and oversee the implementation of the recommendations. The province never complied, and because of this, there was no group to hold government accountable for implementing the *Green Report*. The Committee also recommended that the Ministry and PSIs account to First Nations for funds and student participation rates. Again, neither the Ministry nor post-secondary institutes were held accountable to First Nations. This lack of accountability was seen to be a factor in the partial implementation of recommendations,

as well as the limited improvement in Aboriginal post-secondary participation.

#### 4.4 **Summary**

Despite concerns over the privileging of specific Aboriginal groups, and only partial implementation of recommendations, the *Green Report* is a significant development in BC's Aboriginal PSE policy. Firstly, it was the first comprehensive look at Aboriginal PSE in British Columbia. Secondly, it increased awareness of Aboriginal post-secondary issues among Aboriginal political and educational leaders, as well as those working within government and public PSIs, and created substantial change within both public and Aboriginal private institutions. Furthermore, the *Green Report* also served as the foundation for developments in Aboriginal PSE in British Columbia for the next two decades.

## **Chapter 5: The Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy**

### **Framework**

In 1991, the New Democratic Party (NDP) replaced the Social Credit as BC's governing party. Under the NDP, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training (MAET) continued to selectively implement recommendations from the 1990 *Green Report*. In 1992, MAET announced its intention to develop policy to address Aboriginal post-secondary education (PSE). Three years later, the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (APF) received cabinet approval and implementation of the policy began in May of 1997.

This chapter focuses on the APF, beginning with a discussion of the context in which the policy developed. This is followed by a discussion of the policy process, including policy formulation, the text, and implementation. The chapter closes with a discussion of the themes that emerged as a result of the research.

### **5.1 The Context**

#### **5.1.1 The Province's Relationship with Aboriginal People**

Following their election, the NDP quickly began building on the treaty foundation laid by the Social Credit government. In September of 1992, the First Nations Summit (FNS), the province, and the federal government formally endorsed the recommendations put forward by the BC Claims Task Force by signing the *British Columbia Treaty Commission Agreement*. The BC Treaty Commission was established in 1993. This independent body is composed of representatives from First Nations, the province, and the federal government, and was designed to facilitate the treaty process by monitoring developments, assisting in dispute resolution, and allocating treaty funding to First Nations to participate in the treaty process.

Many First Nations bands and tribal councils were eager to participate in this new treaty

process. By June of 1994, forty-one First Nations had entered the treaty process by submitting “Statements of Intent,” the first stage of the treaty process. While the province was initially optimistic that treaties would be ratified by the end of the decade, treaties proceeded slowly. By 2001, forty-nine First Nations participated in various stages of the process; however no treaties were signed under the BC Treaty process, and treaty negotiations became part of the ongoing life of British Columbia (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 1994; British Columbia Treaty Commission, 2001a).

The only treaty signed during this period was the *Nisga’a Final Agreement*, which was negotiated outside of the BC Treaty Process under an earlier process initiated by the federal government. The *Nisga’a Agreement in Principle* was signed in 1996. Despite much controversy, including Liberal opposition leader Gordon Campbell’s failed legal challenge to the constitutionality of the Nisga’a treaty, the *Final Agreement* was signed by the Nisga’a and provincial and federal government in 1998, and was ratified by all three levels of government in 1999, before coming into effect in May 2000 (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 2001b; McKee, 2009).

For various reasons, many First Nations did not participate in the BC treaty process. Some groups rejected treaty negotiations because the process is aimed at delimiting rights to land and resources that had never been ceded to either federal or provincial governments. Others feel that negotiations should proceed nation to nation between First Nations and the federal government, and not involve the provincial government. Many First Nations are deterred by the high cost of participating in treaty-making. Some feel that it may be more advantageous to settle treaties at a later date, while others believe that it may be more strategic to seek compensation for the infringement of rights and title than negotiate treaties (Gurtson, 2002; McKee, 2009).

One of the province's goals was to use the treaty process to placate First Nations and reduce direct action. Despite the treaty process, protests continued. After an initial period of calm following the initiation of the treaty process, a number of First Nations used blockades to draw attention to their specific issues. For example, in 1995 alone the Douglas Lake blockade was set up after members of the Upper Nicola First Nation were charged with illegal fishing; the Adams Lake blockade, involving Adams Lake, Little Shuswap, and Neskonlith First Nations, protested the development of a recreational vehicle park; at Gustafsen Lake there was a stand-off between the RCMP and "Defenders of the Shuswap Nation," who laid claim to land they had been using ceremonially; at King Island the Heiltsuk First Nation protested the building of a logging road; the Penticton First Nation protested the expansion of the Apex Ski resort; the Nanoose First Nation demonstrated to prevent the building of a subdivision on a burial ground; and the Gitksan set up a series of anti-logging blockades in their territory (McKee, 2009; Ricard & Wilkes, 2007).

Other First Nations have chosen to pursue title through the courts. During the 1990s, the most significant case was *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*. This land title case, launched by the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, was initially rejected at the BC Supreme Court in 1991 by Chief Justice McEachern who dismissed oral testimony as unreliable and found that Aboriginal title had been extinguished by the colonial government. In 1993, the British Columbia Court of Appeal ruled that there had been no blanket extinguishment of Aboriginal rights and recommended that negotiation be used to define the nature and scope of the rights. Finally, in 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'ens' case could not be decided without a retrial. However, the court found that Aboriginal title had never been extinguished in British Columbia; that title includes a right to the land itself, not just the right to

participate in traditional activities; that unextinguished Aboriginal title is a burden on the Crown; that Aboriginal title is held collectively and can only be sold to the federal government; and that Aboriginal title is constitutionally protected. In addition, the court stated that oral history has the same footing as other types of historical evidence (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 1999; Gurtson, 2002; McKee, 2009).

While *Delgamuukw* failed to resolve the Gitksan and Wet'su'weten title issue, it raised expectations among First Nations at the treaty table. In response to *Delgamuukw*, provincial and federal governments increased support for First Nations economic development and capacity building and the provincial government increased its consultations on land use and development, although they did not alter their basic position on negotiations (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 1999; Gurtson, 2002; McKee, 2009).

The BC treaty process, the Nisga'a Treaty, direct action, and the *Delgamuukw* decision all had an impact on British Columbia's troubled economy.

### **5.1.2 Economic Climate**

The economic strength that BC enjoyed during the latter half of the 1980s came to an end, and when the NDP came into power, they inherited a debt of 1.7 billion dollars (Lee, 2006). Most of the 1990s was characterized by an economic slowdown, with a growth rate of only 2.9% in real GDP between 1990 and 2001. Residential construction fell 25% in the 1990's. Indeed, for much of the 1990s, unemployment rates were as high as 8% and business investment was limited. Although there was some gas development in the northeast corner of the province, forestry and mining were weak (White et al., 2006).

The causes for BC's economic slowdown are complex and multi-faceted. Among them are the collapse of Asian economies, the end of immigration from Hong Kong, falling

commodity prices, increased taxes, progressive labour legislation, capital expenditures, mining restrictions, more stringent forestry legislation, historical mismanagement of forestry, expansion of park land, environmental activism, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and the loss of corporate head offices through consolidation and relocation (Bond, 2002).

Unresolved Aboriginal land issues also contributed to BC's economic decline.

According to Bond (2002),

Another major factor discouraging investment, most particularly in the interior of BC, [where few First Nations were participating in the treaty process] is the matter of unsettled Aboriginal land claims.... Until treaties are concluded, uncertainty reigns.... What is certain, however, is that until the issue is effectively settled, major mineral and tourist development will effectively remain on hold. (p. 208)

The cost of "uncertainty" resulting from land claims was high. In 1990 Price Waterhouse estimated the cost of uncertainty to be one billion dollars in lost investment and 1,500 in lost jobs in mining and forestry alone (British Columbia Treaty Commission & Grant Thornton Management Consultants, 2004). In the wake of *Delgamuukw* there was much concern that the broader definition of Aboriginal rights, combined with the obligation to consult with First Nations and compensate for infringement of Aboriginal rights, would inhibit resource development, increase litigation, and undermine treaty negotiations. Both federal Reform Party leader Preston Manning and BC Liberal leader Gordon Campbell warned that *Delgamuukw* would be an impediment to investment, economic recovery, and employment (McKee, 2009).

While the cost of uncertainty was high, so was the cost of treaty-making. In 1996 KPMG estimated the costs of treaty-making to be between 1.37 to 2.11 billion dollars; in 1999 Grant Thornton estimated them to be between 2.08 to 2.48 billion dollars (British Columbia Treaty Commission & Grant Thornton Management Consultants, 2004). Although treaties would be expensive to negotiate and implement, they would bring significant benefits once certainty over



land ownership was established. In 1996, KPMG estimated financial benefits of treaty to First Nations to range from 6.02 to 6.63 billion dollars; in 1999 Grant Thornton estimated these to be between 6.28 and 6.76 billion dollars. Net financial benefits to British Columbians were estimated to be 3.91 to 5.26 billion dollars or 3.80 to 4.68 billion dollars by KPMG and Grant Thornton respectively (British Columbia Treaty Commission & Grant Thornton Management Consultants, 2004).

### **5.1.3 Post-Secondary Education**

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was both a growing dependence on international markets and an increase in competition with these same markets. BC's economy was also challenged by issues of technological change, economic slowdown, faltering resource industries, high unemployment, and increasing poverty. In this context, PSE took on new importance. The NDP saw economic, labour, and social concerns as intimately connected with education, and thus made significant investments in PSE throughout the 1990s, with an emphasis on skills training and vocationalism (D. Fisher et al., 2012; D. Fisher, Rubenson, Jones, & Shanahan, 2009).

In 1993, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology was recreated as the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour (MSTL). This was the first of several ministry reorganizations implemented by the NDP. Between 1991 and 2001, the ministry responsible for PSE was restructured and renamed four times, and fell under the leadership of nine different Ministers (see Appendix C).

The creation of MSTL signaled a new approach to PSE, deemphasizing academic education while merging higher education with workforce development and industrial relations. This restructuring facilitated the collaboration of government, industry, labour, and the PSE

system in order to support province-wide economic development by addressing deficits in skills and training through the \$200 million initiative, *Skills Now!* (British Columbia Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, 1994; Fisher et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2009).

In implementing *Skills Now!* the NDP continued to expand the post-secondary system as initiated by the Social Credit government under *Access for All*. They significantly increased student spaces at PSIs by recreating Kwantlen College as a university-college<sup>22</sup> and Langara as a college;<sup>23</sup> opening three new universities including the University of Northern BC, Royal Roads University, and the short lived Technical University of BC; and giving degree-granting status to the university-colleges as well as to the British Columbia Institute of Technology and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. Apprenticeship programs were expanded, information technology was promoted and supported, new advanced technology programs were developed, and community skills centres were opened throughout the province. Aboriginal higher education was addressed specifically through the designation of two Aboriginal institutions, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and Institute of Indigenous Government (IIG), as public institutions, and through the development of the APF (Cowin, 2007; Fisher et al., 2012).

In 1996, the Ministry was renamed Education, Skills and Training (MEST), linking together K-12 education, PSE, and skills development. The major policy initiative at this time was *Charting a New Course: A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996c). This policy brought a more coordinated managerial and accountability focus to the college and institute system, “to ensure that all British Columbians are prepared to participate in

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<sup>22</sup> Under the Socreds, Okanagan, Cariboo, and Malaspina colleges became university and colleges in 1989, and Fraser Valley College became a university-college in 1990.

<sup>23</sup> Formerly a campus of Vancouver Community College.

today's changing society; find productive employment in a competitive labour market; have opportunities for continuous learning; and receive value for the investment made in public PSE and training" (p. 1). Key to the policy were the goals relevance and quality, access, affordability, and accountability.

Relevance and quality were associated with improved career preparation; flexible, learner-focused, outcomes-based programming; student support; and cross-cultural training. The goal of access focused on inter-institutional transfer and articulation, new learning technologies, and reducing barriers for equity groups and non-traditional learners. To increase affordability, funding would be restructured to include operating grants as well as partnership-dependent funding for marketing, technology, and capital maintenance and expansion.

The text of *Charting a New Course* said little about Aboriginal people other than recognizing them as part of the diverse student body necessitating diverse approaches to education. Nevertheless, this document would have an important influence on the development and implementation of the new APF.

Access to PSE was further enhanced through a freeze on tuition fees, which remained in force until after NDP were replaced by the Liberals; the development of a number of programs directed specifically at unemployed and income-assistance recipients; and the elimination of tuition fees for adult basic education (ABE) in the college system. In 1998, the Ministry was again reorganized when responsibility for K-12 education returned to the Ministry of Education, leaving the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) responsible for PSE and training. Increased management of the system continued under *Charting a New Course* (Schütze & Day, 2001).

Like all students, Aboriginal students benefited from the NDPs efforts to ensure that BC's post-secondary system remained relevant, accessible, affordable, and accountable. However, Aboriginal students benefited more directly from Aboriginal-specific initiatives, including the designation of two public Aboriginal institutes and the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*.

## 5.2 The Policy Process

Following the release of the *Green Report* in 1990, there was a growing awareness of Aboriginal education. Individual Aboriginal educators like Verna J. Kirkness and Jo-ann Archibald “raised the profile and awareness of Aboriginal post-secondary education actually in the whole country, not just the province” (RR04, para. 101). The informal coalition of educators that had been meeting to discuss Aboriginal PSE in the late 1980s organized into a group called the Association of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions (APPSI). Initially founded by En’owkin Centre, the Native Education Centre (NEC), and NVIT, by 1995 APPSI had a membership of 15 Aboriginal institutions that were registered under both the *Society Act* and the *Private Post-Secondary Education Act* and served some 1500 students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a). There was also “growing support at the national and provincial level for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education [that] created the climate where [the provincial] government was willing to start taking a look at it” (RR15, para. 43).

By 1995, there were 21 Aboriginal coordinators in the college and institute system funded directly by the province (British Columbia Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, 1995). In addition, a number of universities had also hired Aboriginal coordinators. Over time these Aboriginal coordinators “became a force of their own” (RR 04, para. 95). They organized

under the name of the British Columbia First Nations Coordinators (BCFNC) and established an executive committee that evolved into the BCFNC Council (the Council) to represent the interests of the BCFNC and Aboriginal students, and to provide policy advice to the Ministry (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002).

In 1996, the Aboriginal population of BC was 139,655 and represented 3.8% of BC's total population. By 2001, that number had grown to 170,020 and represented 4.3% of BC's total population (BC Stats, 2005). According to a former Ministry staff member, in addition to highlighting the growing Aboriginal population, reports by Statistics Canada "really brought home to people across the country the stark situation of Aboriginal education in the country" (RR04, para. 47). Additionally, there was an increased awareness and unease about the social conditions with which Aboriginal people live. A former Ministry staff member remembered that "you've got this emerging social issue about what are you going to do with this Aboriginal population that's booming. Booming! ...They're going to be on your streets. They are going to be everywhere" (RR03, para. 66).

In particular, a growing, uneducated Aboriginal youth population was seen as a potential social problem. A former Ministry staff member used stories about the rise of Aboriginal youth gangs in Manitoba to bring home the idea that educational change was necessary:

So I would tell these horror stories just to get people thinking about it, because that population is booming and the social system's not ready. You're going to have people on the streets. It's just going to be worse and worse. (RR03, para. 74)

Within the Ministry, career-related education and training, and participation in the provincial economy, were seen as the remedy for Aboriginal poverty and other social issues. In the words of a former senior government official,

You don't have to be very smart to recognize that if it's too late to go back to real

Aboriginal lifestyles where the skills are taught from generation to generation. It's probably too late for anybody to live that way, certainly for people who aren't born yet. Aboriginal people are going to have to integrate into our society. They don't have to accept all aspects of the culture, but to get out of poverty they have to be educated and competitive. (RR05, para. 51)

Another senior government official of the time framed education and skills training in terms of contributing to community building:

I think there's cohesiveness that comes in communities, whether it's the male or female breadwinner to bring an income into the home, to understand the value of that. I think that is part of building strong communities. And there are outstanding employment opportunities in the skilled and technical fields and I thought there should have been a greater push, and obviously that was reflected in the *Skills Now*, a greater push on trying to see, including in Aboriginal communities, giving people those opportunities to get those kinds of skills so they can participate in the economy. (RR09, para. 48)

The need to build capacity for treaty implementation was an additional motivation for government to seriously address Aboriginal PSE (RR03, para. 23). A former Ministry employee remembered that "you had pressures from the Treaty Commission. Nothing was happening and millions of dollars going into it. We [the Ministry] had a role to play in terms of training, and building capacity" (RR03, para. 42).

Multiple factors determined the direction in which Aboriginal PSE policy evolved. The heightened profile of Aboriginal education generally, the push for increased Aboriginal-controlled education, and the growing awareness of Aboriginal educational underachievement were all important determinants. Additionally, a rapidly growing young Aboriginal population, many of whom were experiencing severe social conditions, and the critical need for capacity development in a post-treaty environment, played a role in setting the context in which Aboriginal post-secondary policy was developed.

In 1992, MAETT signaled its intention to develop an Aboriginal post-secondary policy. It was, however, a number of years before such a policy came into being. In September 1993,

MAETT was recreated as MSTL, and responsibility for Aboriginal programming was placed within Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs. It was during this time that the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy was developed.

The Ministry's ability to deal with the complexities of Aboriginal education was facilitated by increased capacity within the bureaucracy. For example, Garry Wouters, who was appointed Deputy Minister in 1993, brought with him a breath of experience with Aboriginal issues, having previously served as Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Associate Deputy Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) Canada, as well as Regional General Director of INAC in Alberta and Ontario ("Turning point staff," 2003; Hunter, 1997). Robin Ciceri, who had been a Ministry advisor to the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education and Training for Native Learners, became Director of Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs for MSTL, and then Director of Universities and Aboriginal Programming for MEST. Don Avison, Deputy Minister of Education, Skills and Training in 1997/98, had previously been Deputy Justice Minister in the Northwest Territories and Director General of the Aboriginal Justice Initiative in Ottawa (Hunter, 1997).

The Ministry's Aboriginal education capacity also expanded when they began hiring Aboriginal staff. For example, Ida Mills from the Ditidaht First Nation was appointed Special Advisor to the Aboriginal Program unit in 1992 and 1993 (Mills, 1992, November 16; Ciceri, 1995, October 10). Mills was followed by Darrel McLeod, a Cree from northern Alberta who had previously been Director of the K'noowenchoot Centre for Aboriginal Adult Education Resources. In October 1995, McLeod took on the additional role of Acting Manager of Aboriginal Programs. His staff included Sylvia Scow of the Dene Nation who was seconded from the University of Victoria to fill the position of Coordinator of Aboriginal Programs;

Connie Johnson, Research Officer; and Mary Gunn, Secretary (Ciceri, 1995, October 10).

Despite this increased capacity among Ministry staff, some felt that government had a limited understanding of the need for Aboriginal-controlled education. One participant recalled that

there was always a hesitancy to really understand why we would want Aboriginal education when public education was available. There was that sort of dialogue. It was always ongoing. We had to justify and validate our reasons for doing what we were doing. (RR15, para. 43)

In contemplating the policy, the Ministry was challenged by a number of “thorny” issues. They struggled with the question “what does Aboriginal control mean in a public institution?” (RR03, para. 110). They tried to understand the appropriate mix of Aboriginal private and public institutions, and the associated benefits:

Did it make sense to have more independent Aboriginal institutions not tied to a public credential but [that] might do some really neat cool things? Or does it make more sense to support more public Aboriginal institutions and maybe not get the quality that we wanted or the Aboriginal-ness, independent Aboriginal-ness, out of that Aboriginal control. That was always a thorny point. (RR03, para. 110)

Another concern was the proliferation of Aboriginal-controlled institutions. According to a former Ministry staff member, “you had the Native Ed Centre, you had AAPSI, you had NVIT at the time, and even En’owkin. For a while, it was almost like mushrooms popping up on all of the reserves” (RR03, para. 110).

The issue of funding was complex. Not only was there concern about “how much the public purse could stand” (RR15, para. 43), but the use of public money to fund private Aboriginal institutions was questioned (RR03, para. 110). On the other side, there were those who wanted Aboriginal-specific funding to benefit only Aboriginal-controlled institutions.



These people

felt that the public system shouldn't get a dime of this new money. That it should all go to the Aboriginal side, and that the policy framework should be focussed completely towards the development and establishment of the Aboriginal post-secondary institutes and not the public [institutions]." (RR04, para. 77)

Despite these concerns, senior Ministry bureaucrats were

extremely willing and receptive to go with the political will of the day as well. And this is a very important piece. You had Garry Wouters as the Deputy Minister of post-secondary education, the Ministry of Advanced Education at the time. The Director that he worked with was Robin Ciceri.... Both Garry and Robin were very driven to implement the government's vision and just put their full weight behind it. (RR04, para. 69)

While there was much support within the Ministry for addressing the needs of Aboriginal learners, there was also resistance. A former Ministry staff member recalled

bureaucrats who were just doing their jobs in being diligent and worried about precedent, and worried about managing expectations and balance, and all that kind of stuff. And they would come up with a hundred and one reasons why we shouldn't do X, Y and Z. (RR04, para. 17)

In the face of such resistance, support from champions within the Ministry was critical. Deputy Minister Garry Wouters played an important role in pushing the APF forward:

Garry [Wouters] would just sort of say, you know, in some ways, pull rank as a Deputy and say, no we're doing it....We're going to set up George Manuel Institute.<sup>24</sup> We're going to set up NVIT. We're going to finish the policy framework. (RR04, para. 17)

Ministry support for Aboriginal education was reflected in the budget, which jumped from \$4.5 million in 1993/4 to \$6.5 million in 1994/95. According to a respondent, this was

discretionary funding, project-based funding that we were to put out to the institutes, both public and private institutes, to give a lift to their momentum. And that was phenomenal. It was a great time to be working in government. (RR04, para. 69)

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<sup>24</sup> The proposed George Manuel Institute became the Institute of Indigenous Government.

Early attempts at drafting a policy, first by Ministry staff, then by two different consulting firms, proved unsuccessful. According to the BCFNC,<sup>25</sup>

The aforementioned versions were prepared by non-[A]boriginal persons with less than full First Nations' participation, including that of First Nations' Education Coordinators. In retrospect, it appears that the development of policy was also frustrated by a lack of consensus and support within the Ministry regarding critical issues in First Nations' education. (First Nations' Post-Secondary Education Coordinators Council, 1996, January 26)

### 5.2.1 Consultation

A former Ministry staff recalled receiving drafts of the APF before he began working for the Ministry:

I got drafts of policy framework documents that were drafted in isolation by these consultants who supposedly talked to people. The last draft that was done by a contractor, my name was on the list of people who had supposedly been consulted, and they had never spoken to me. So that was really unfortunate. I could see why the framework wasn't even considered. (RR04, para. 67)

Following three failed attempts at developing the policy, the Ministry took a different approach and

set up a consultation strategy with political leaders around the province and educational leaders... We held I think about five sessions where we did an initial cut at the policy framework based on information we had, based on the *Green Report*, based on stuff that I knew, anecdotal information, based on informal conversations with Aboriginal educational leaders and political leaders, and we came up with a first draft which we then used as a basis for consultation. (RR04, para.75)

At the time, many Aboriginal people experienced government consultation as tokenism.

As a former member of AAPSI executive remarked,

Back then it was the nature of governments not to do a lot of consultation where they actually dialogued back and forth and listened very carefully. Very often the nature of consultation was that the government would make an announcement they wanted to do

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<sup>25</sup> Previously known as the First Nations PSE Coordinators.

something. They would call a meeting and inform Aboriginal people that it was happening, and they would call it consultation. (RR15, para. 47)

Given this experience, consultation for the APF was a pleasant departure. Throughout the 1990s, the Ministry placed great emphasis on consulting with stakeholder groups, that is “groups of individuals who play key roles within PSIs and in the broader post-secondary system” (Gaber, 2003, p. 184). In relation to the APF, the two primary stakeholder groups the Ministry consulted were the BCFNC and APPSI (RR14, para. 57).

### **5.2.1.1 Consultation with the BCFNC**

As frontline workers in the public post-secondary system, the BCFNC were able to provide comprehensive policy advice because of the diversity of institutions that they represented, and students they supported. A past coordinator remarked that “you had big institutions to small ones. You had northern versus southern. You had coastal versus interior” (RR11, para. 89). In addition, the BCFNC enjoyed strong leadership from Council members like Shirley Joseph<sup>26</sup> from Langara College, Brenda Ireland<sup>27</sup> from British Columbia Institute of Technology, Theresa Neel<sup>28</sup> from University College of the Fraser Valley, and Lyle Mueller<sup>29</sup> from Okanagan University College (1995, March 14).

The Council worked closely with Darrel McLeod, the Special Advisor/ Acting Manager of Aboriginal Programs, on Aboriginal policy issues related to the public post-secondary system. Council Chair Shirley Joseph was particularly active in her policy advocacy and she

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<sup>26</sup> The late Shirley Joseph, Wet’suwet’en Nation, was the first Aboriginal coordinator at Vancouver Community College, and later Langara College. She passed away in 1997.

<sup>27</sup> Brenda Ireland is an Anishnaabe-Métis and was instrumental in the establishment of the First Nations Programs and Services Department at the British Columbia Institute of Technology in 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Theresa Neel, from the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation, was a member of the Provincial Advisory Committee on PSE for Native Learners.

<sup>29</sup> Lyle Muller is Métis. He later became Director of Aboriginal Programs and Services, UBC-Okanagan.

had the Deputy's [Garry Wouters'] ear and she had Robin Ciceri's ear. And they didn't mess with Shirley. When Shirley wanted something, she just went after it. But she operated from a solid basis and she cared so much about the policy. She'd call if there was a delay in circulating the latest draft of the policy, she'd call up Robin [Ciceri] or Garry [Wouters] and say where is this thing? I'm waiting for it. You said it would be on my desk for four o'clock today, and it's not here. So where is it?" (RR04, para, 99)

Through consultation, the BCFNC and the Council made significant changes to the policy. One participant remembered that the initial policy document was

written from a government point of view. The white father standing there saying this is what you're going to do. All of us [BCFNC] were not accepting of that.... We have to let them know that if this is going to be our working document then we need to have our words in there. So it was a slashing of everything. So, yes we did revise it. It wasn't our initial document it was [a] government document.... So it was changed, still not to our total liking but it was better than what was handed down. (RR11, para. 89)

For the BCFNC, points of contention in APF included a narrow vision of education that addressed economic and social issues while ignoring spiritual ones (First Nations Post-Secondary Education Coordinators/Advisors, 1995, November 21, 22). In addition, the BCFNC wanted the wording in the document to be stronger and more directive. A former Ministry staff member recalled that in an early draft of the APF

the wording was quite a bit stronger. And of course people [BCFNC] wanted it that strong, but government's not going to do that because they don't want the heavy hand of government defining everybody's life. So you had to find that compromise." (RR03, para. 90)

There was also concern that rural issues would be underrepresented in the policy. In an era of financial restraint, the Council was particularly concerned about the ability and willingness of public PSIs to fund policy implementation from their base budgets, as articulated in the policy paper (First Nations Post-Secondary Education Coordinators/Advisors, 1995, January 26, 1995, May 1). The Council also played a role in pushing for the speedy completion of the APF. A

provincial election was nearing and Council felt that “having the policy framework in place before the next provincial election is imperative” (First Nations' Post-Secondary Education Coordinators Council, 1996, January 26).

#### **5.2.1.2 Consultation with AAPSI**

Determining the role of Aboriginal PSIs was a particular focus of the policy consultations. According to one senior government official, “around the province there was a push by First Nations to have their own institutions. And primarily what we [the Ministry] tried to do was develop a policy paper that gave some substance to it” (RR09, para. 20). The Ministry’s Director of Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, Robin Ciceri, played a key role in consulting with the AAPSI on issues related to Aboriginal-controlled institutions (First Nations Education Coordinators Steering Committee, 1994, July 12).

AAPSI “was quite a force to be reckoned with in its day” (RR04, para. 55). A former member of its executive described AAPSI as

a very political lobbyist type group. They certainly did work around networking and supporting Indigenous institutes in British Columbia, but their sole objective was to promote Aboriginal control of Aboriginal post-secondary education, but also they had a vision for Aboriginal institutions to have a means to be accredited and recognized and funded. So they worked very closely with government. (RR12, para. 15)

Like the BCFNC, AAPSI benefited from the strong leadership and policy capacity of its members, including Ron Shortt of NEC, who developed its vision statement; Don Fiddler of En’owkin Centre, who was President of AAPSI during the consultation process; the late Grace Mirehouse,<sup>30</sup> also from NEC, who followed Don Fiddler as AAPSI President; Jacqueline Dennis-Orr of Chemainus Native College; David Kane and later Grant Veal from NVIT; and Pauline

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<sup>30</sup> Grace Mirehouse, from the Cooks Ferry Band, Nlaka’pumx Nation, passed away in May, 2002.

Waterfall from Heltsiuk College (RR10, para. 39; RR12, para. 17; RR 14, para. 57). While policy capacity varied among institutions, by meeting together to discuss policy issues, AAPSI was able to build experience and policy capacity across its membership in a supportive environment (RR14, para. 69; RR15, para. 67).

AAPSI worked closely and collaboratively with Deputy Minister Garry Wouters, Director Robin Ciceri, and the Aboriginal unit to develop the criteria that would lead to public designation for Aboriginal institutions (RR12, para. 17). A former APPSI representative recalled how

that framework really grew out of a collaborative process between the Association of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes and the government to develop a policy framework. So we were actually involved in looking at it and saying here's what we would like and going back and forth and drafting and redrafting at various meetings. It took place relatively quickly over a period of a little over year. (RR15, para. 47)

In relation to Aboriginal public institutions, the Ministry's intent was to establish criteria that would facilitate institutional success and also be affordable:

Rather than simply creating these institutions that either didn't perform or failed or whatever, we tried to create a policy framework in terms of the number of students and those kinds of things that would make some sense. After all, budgets at the provincial level are not infinite. You can't just keep pouring money out there. There has to be a rationale for it. So we tried to set the stage through the policy development work we did for Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. (RR09, para. 20)

AAPSI took a pragmatic approach to the consultation process. A former AAPSI executive stated that while AAPSI wanted "the opportunity for Aboriginal institutions to receive the same sort of funding as public institutions ... we had to look realistically at what could or could not be done" (RR 15, para. 21). Like government, AAPSI was concerned about the proliferation of small Aboriginal-controlled institutions, many of which were formed to address short-term training needs. In contemplating the possibility of public funding for Aboriginal-controlled institutions,

this former AAPSI representative stated that AAPSI

did not want to have a whole bunch of institutions in British Columbia as public institutions, because they would be hard to be able to be supported publicly and we didn't think that that would fly too well. And as well, at that time a number of institutions were being set up, but they wouldn't really [qualify as] institutions as such. They were simply band education one-time programming because Human Resources Development Canada at that time was offering training dollars and lots of people were setting up their own little private companies to do one-off types of training in a particular area. We wanted people who were serious about education that might be sustainable over a number of years. As part of that framework with government we had looked at that whole aspect. (RR 15, para. 21)

AAPSI worked with the province to establish criteria to facilitate Aboriginal-controlled institutions gaining public status. Criteria included the size of the student population, length of operation, the presence of affiliation agreements with public PSIs, operational and institutional infrastructures similar to public institutions, and geographic distribution (RR15, para. 23, RR12, para. 17). After negotiating the criteria, AAPSI “finally signed the agreement for all of that to take place and allow public funding to flow” (RR 15, para. 23).

Not all Aboriginal institutions supported the position taken by AAPSI, however. A representative from a small, remote Aboriginal institution, who had limited participation in the consultation process, disagreed strongly with AAPSI's position: “They had a quota system that you had to have so many students so that you could be recognized and funded by the ministry, which is just crazy” (RR10, para. 55). This “quota system” penalized small, Aboriginal private institutions in remote areas, making them ineligible for recognition as public institutions.

### **5.2.1.3 Consultations with Others**

In relation to the development of the policy, a former Ministry staff member stressed “how political interfaces between Aboriginal political leaders and mainstream political leaders can really set the stage and help move things along” (RR04, para. 77). In addition to the BCFNC

and AAPSI, First Nations political leaders like Nathan Matthew (also an educational leader), Gordon Antoine, Saul Terry,<sup>31</sup> and Ed John<sup>32</sup> were important in advancing the APF, along with the support of a “group of educators who could work with the Chiefs in articulating very clearly what needed to happen” (RR04, para. 55). According to one participant,

Aboriginal political and education leaders were adamant that this policy framework had to have real teeth and had to have authority. So they were very wise in pressuring the Premier to make sure that this was a document that would go to Cabinet and get Cabinet approval so that... whoever would form subsequent governments wouldn't be able to just overturn it at the drop of a hat. (RR04, para. 59)

Public PSIs also had the opportunity to review and comment on the final draft of the policy.

While a number of institutions did not embrace the policy with open arms, it was understood that Aboriginal under enrollment in PSE had to be addressed because of future needs related to treaties and the economy. A former ministry staff recalled that

While a lot of them weren't very happy with it because it made them do things that they didn't necessarily want to do more of or do on top of what they were already doing, they knew that it was a compelling time. That there were treaties down the road, there was this huge gap in Aboriginal enrolment. Something had to be done. People certainly knew that. And the labour market was terrible. There were just no Aboriginal people anywhere in post-secondary. So there was reluctance but eventually the policy framework was signed off by cabinet. (RR03, para. 9)

In drafting the APF, the Ministry also worked closely with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and looked at similar policy developed in Ontario and Australia (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1997; First Nations Post-Secondary Coordinators/Advisors, 1995, November 21, 22)

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<sup>31</sup> Saul Terry, Stl'atl'imx Nation, served as Chief of UBCIC from 1983 to 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Edward John is a Hereditary Chief of Tl'azt'en Nation. He had previously been part of the committee that produced the *Green Report*, and was a strong advocate for the development of UNBC.



## **5.2.2 The Text**

While the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* was approved by Cabinet in April of 1995, it was not published until 1996 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a). Following is a detailed description of the text.

### **5.2.2.1 Objectives**

The APF begins with an “Objectives” section that identifies its purpose to increase participation and success rates for Aboriginal students; to support capacity building for self-government; to establish a long-term plan for capacity building for self-government in the “post-treaty environment,” and to maintain federal funding commitments for Aboriginal PSE and training. While the term “Aboriginal” is used throughout the text, it is often used in reference to First Nations specific concerns, as indicated in its use in relation to post-treaty self-government and federal funding for PSE, which was only available to First Nations people.

### **5.2.2.2 General Background and Principles**

The section, “General Background and Principles,” relates the APF to the province’s strategic priorities and the relevant legal context. Government priorities include Aboriginal self-government, treaty-making, and interim measures. Reference is made to the involvement of off-reserve and non-status Aboriginal groups at unspecified policy forums, but there is no mention of Métis involvement. Increasing Aboriginal participation, retention, and success in post-secondary is said to support these strategic priorities.

Recognition is given to constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and treaty rights, and to federal jurisdiction for “Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians.” While the text

acknowledges federal financial support for status Indian students and some education programs and services, the province asserts its jurisdiction over Aboriginal PSE and training.

Furthermore, the policy articulates three overarching principles. These principles replicate the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' mission statement (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1997),<sup>33</sup> and link the APF to the treaty process:

- i. Relationships between Aboriginal people and all British Columbians are based on equality and respect;
- ii. Aboriginal people can fulfill their aspirations for self-determining and self-sustaining communities; and
- iii. All British Columbians enjoy the social and economic benefits of cooperation and certainty. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 2)

Other principles address federal and provincial jurisdictional and fiscal responsibilities and assert equity for all Canadians and British Columbians. Current federal and provincial funding arrangements are to be maintained.

### **5.2.2.3 Post-Secondary Education**

This section of the APF summarizes provincial initiatives to increase Aboriginal participation and retention in K-12 and post-secondary systems, as well as initiatives to facilitate transitions between the two systems. AAPSI is discussed, and examples of successful initiatives in both public and Aboriginal PSIs in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba are highlighted.

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<sup>33</sup> Aboriginal Affairs mission is "to work with First Nations, the federal government, other provincial ministries and all British Columbians to help build a society in which:

- relationships between aboriginal people and all British Columbians are based on equality and respect;
- aboriginal people can fulfill their aspirations for self-determining and self-sustaining communities;
- all British Columbians enjoy the social and economic benefits of cooperation and certainty."(British Columbia, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1997, p. 2)

The text acknowledges the inadequacy of federal funding for status Indians students, and acknowledges that non-status Indians are not eligible for this funding. Funding sources for Aboriginal private and public PSIs are discussed. In addition, the importance of maintaining federal funding for Aboriginal institutions is stressed. Moreover, the APF limits future provincial funding of Aboriginal institutions to 75 percent. This section ends by listing barriers to Aboriginal PSE and the importance of addressing these barriers when developing new strategies.

#### **5.2.2.4 Policy Framework**

After spending the first eight pages setting the context, the APF proper begins by articulating a vision:

Post-secondary education participation, retention, and success rates for Aboriginal peoples will at least equal that of non-Aboriginal people, and will be attained within a post-secondary system in which both public institutions and Aboriginal organizations and institutions play appropriate roles and are supported by the combined resources of the Federal and Provincial Governments. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 9)

This vision is framed in terms of goals of relevance and quality, access, affordability, and accountability.<sup>34</sup> Relevance and quality refer to programming that is linked to the labour market and is culturally sensitive. Access speaks to increasing Aboriginal post-secondary participation and completion rates through greater choice in school location, delivery mode, and programming. Affordability considerations include the provincial fiscal framework and federal-provincial cost-sharing. Finally, accountability requirements include Aboriginal representation on institutional governing bodies, educational quality, student mobility, and participation, retention, and success outcomes.

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<sup>34</sup> These are the same goals found in *Charting a New Course*, reworked for applicability to an Aboriginal context.

Following the goals, the document discusses the province's mandate. Once again the document asserts provincial responsibility for Aboriginal PSE, and notes that the APF resides in PSE systems and legislation. The document also recognizes the role of Aboriginal institutions and organizations in achieving priorities, and promises to support an "appropriate balance of Aboriginal post-secondary education and training opportunities," utilizing existing resources and maintaining federal contributions (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 10).

The APF sets out three strategies:

- i. Strengthen public post-secondary institutions in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people;
- ii. Stabilize partnership agreements between public and private deliverers of post-secondary education for Aboriginal people; and
- iii. Provide for designation of public Aboriginally controlled institutions. (p. 10)

These strategies are discussed below.

#### **5.2.2.4.1 Strengthen Public Post-Secondary Institutions**

The document identifies ways that public PSIs can eliminate barriers for Aboriginal students' success and participation. Approaches include having "essential" student services delivered by Aboriginal coordinators; institution-wide responsibility for eliminating barriers; cross-cultural awareness training; Aboriginal employment equity; and outreach. Institutions "will be required" to fund Aboriginal initiatives from their base budgets, and institutional strategic plans and annual reports must include measures and outcomes related to increased participation and success rates.

The APF also gives substance to the role of the "required" Aboriginal Advisory Committees, which will

provide a liaison with the Aboriginal community. Committee responsibilities will include providing guidance regarding student recruitment, program promotion, curriculum design, cultural issues and content, and program evaluation including program relevance to employment in the region. All Aboriginal program matters should be referred by an institution's internal Education Council or Senate to the Aboriginal Advisory Committee before recommendations are forwarded to the Board of Governors. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 11)

Under program relevance, the APF links Aboriginal education to “skills for the economy” (p. 11) and promotes programs in “technology, commerce, natural sciences, environmental sciences and rural health” (p.12). Aboriginal curriculum, flexible program structures, and laddering are also promoted. Criteria for funding and performance indicators are included under the sections “Eliminating Barriers” and “Program Relevance.”

#### **5.2.2.4.2 Partnerships through Affiliation Agreements**

While acknowledging that affiliation agreements are sometimes experienced as “paternalistic relationships,” the APF promotes such agreements because they “have the potential to offer a flexible means of providing the accreditation and accountability standards of a public institution with the intrinsic and educational value of direct delivery by Aboriginal organizations” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, pp. 12-13). Guidelines for these agreements are to be developed by AAPSI and the Advanced Education Council of British Columbia.<sup>35</sup> Affiliation agreements are to be strengthened by increased accountability by public institutions for “effective relationships” with Aboriginal organizations and increased accountability by Aboriginal organizations for “quality and student outcome measurement” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 13). In addition, the APF calls on the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)

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<sup>35</sup> The Advanced Education Council of BC, an organization representing colleges, institutes, and university colleges, was established in 1990, and dissolved in 2001.

to formalize accreditation and transfer of programs, and outlines criteria and performance indicators for partnerships between public and Aboriginal institutions and organizations.

To support collaboration in the development and sharing of curriculum, funding was provided to AAPSI for the Education Resource Centre, which was governed by a board of six AAPSI representatives, one Ministry representative, and two public post-secondary representatives, and supported by an Advisory Council, including a representative from the First People's Cultural Foundation, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), and the BCFNC.

Partnerships are also recommended in the delivery of transition programs, and the APF promoted bridging programs, to be funded on a matching basis, to improve access to post-secondary training and career programs. Criteria performance indicators for bridging programs are also given.

#### **5.2.2.4.3 Establishing Provincial Aboriginal Controlled Institutions**

The APF allows for the designation of provincial Aboriginal-controlled institutions under the *College and Institute Act*. As well as the funding of these institutions was to be consistent with the funding of other public institutions. Such designation required the following:

- goals which provide the foundation for developing autonomy and self-reliance and have the support of Aboriginal leadership;
- appropriate governance structures to a degree consistent with that required of public institutions under the *College and Institute Act*;
- an established affiliation agreement with a public institution for a minimum period of 5 years;
- an established student population of 300 for a minimum period of five years;
- demonstrated standards required for articulation with public institutions and recognized levels of accreditation;
- an institutional evaluation demonstrating accountability to the learner through quality curriculum standards and teaching practice; and
- demonstrated educational practices and a statement of purpose with a formalized

educational plan of programming to achieve its mandate, goals, and objectives and fiscal plans for achieving these purposes. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 16)

Additional province-wide criteria include:

- geographic distribution of Aboriginally controlled institutions and numbers of students served and the extent to which programs for Aboriginal learners are available from public and private institutions;
- participation rates and the extent to which participation is being met by public post-secondary institutions or partnership agreements within college regions;
- fiscal considerations including available funds within a fiscal year; and
- Federal-Provincial cost-sharing above current expenditures. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, pp. 16-17)

The APF further states that smaller institutions unable to gain standalone designation as provincial institutes can form a consortium with an Aboriginal public institution. The document also makes reference to the designation of IIG and NVIT as public institutes.

#### **5.2.2.4.4 Linking to Government Priorities**

The final section of this document, entitled “Government Priorities,” weaves together government’s “core values” with those of the APF. These include:

- involving Aboriginal people in addressing Aboriginal post-secondary barriers;
- providing Aboriginal people with the skills necessary for sustaining the environment and communities;
- openness, accountability and fiscal responsibility in relation to Aboriginal public institutions, Aboriginal educational initiatives and affiliation agreements;
- equitable access for all Aboriginal people, and support for programs specific to Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people with disabilities;
- regional equity in the distribution of programming;

- consideration of the labour market, as well as partnerships with communities; business and labour in evaluation of program proposals; and
- economic independence and self-management for Aboriginal people.

Cabinet approved the AFP in April of 1995.

### **5.2.3 Implementation**

At the political level, there was broad and strong support for the APF by government, as indicated by Cabinet approval of the policy. There was also strong support for the APF within the Ministry. As noted earlier, senior Ministry staff “were driven to implement the government’s vision and just put their full weight behind it,” while the bureaucracy “was extremely willing and receptive to go with the political will of the day as well” (RR04, para. 69). Despite this strong political and bureaucratic support, two years passed before the Ministry began implementing the policy framework.

#### **5.2.3.1 Public Post-Secondary Institutions**

Although the APF had an immediate impact on the designation of two Aboriginal public institutions (see section 5.2.3.3), its influence on public PSIs was much slower in coming. A former Ministry staff member, who eventually became responsible for implementing the policy framework, explained that the policy “just sat there.... A policy framework doesn’t actually do anything until somebody implements it. ....nobody quite knew what that meant other than that money would drift over and that meant we could actually support initiatives” (RR03, para. 13).

In fact, Ministry spending on Aboriginal education declined from a high of \$6.5 million in 1994/95, to \$2 million in 1995/96 following cabinet approval of the APF (British Columbia Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, 1995; British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills & Training, 1996). The Ministry’s 1996/97 Annual Report gives no indication of monies spent on



Aboriginal programming, and only acknowledges ongoing funding for the Aboriginal coordinators and the establishment of IIG and NVIT (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills & Training, 1997). It was not until May of 1997 that the Ministry began officially implementing the APF (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1998).

While the APF makes no reference to *Charting a New Course*, and *Charting a New Course* says little about Aboriginal people, it is clear these two documents are intimately connected. While the focus of the APF is Aboriginal-specific, both the APF and *Charting a New Course* call for more coordination and accountability in the BC post-secondary system through the goals of relevance and quality, access, affordability, and accountability. In fact, the 1997/98 Annual Report claims the completion of the APF as one of *Charting a New Course*'s accomplishments (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1998). According to a former Ministry staff member, the integration of the APF into *Charting a New Course* "raised the Aboriginal post-secondary framework even higher" (RR03, para. 42). Funding for Aboriginal programs increased to \$3.8 million dollars in 1997/98, and remained between \$3.7 and \$3.9 million until 2000/01 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001).

Even after the Ministry began implementing the policy framework, activity in Aboriginal PSE was limited because of changes in the structure and leadership of the Ministry. Between February 1996 and February 1998, the Ministries of Education and Skills, and Training and Labour merged to form the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MEST), bringing together K-12 education, PSE, skills training, and labour market development.

According to a former senior government official,

While it was rather unwieldy ... one of the things that I did like about it was that it was much more compatible with the view that you're dealing with the same community of folks. That there isn't some dividing line between K-12 education and education at the post-secondary level, whether it is skills training, or whether it's basic undergraduate education or whether it's advanced research. Really the same people all the way through. (RR13, para. 17)

During this same time, the Aboriginal Education Branch was disbanded. As a former Ministry staff member recalled,

What happened was, when they married the two Ministries, they devolved the branch. The branch no longer existed. The Ab Ed branch. And post-secondary subsumed the MOE branch for a period of time. It was just nuts. And then it went the other way around for a while. So it was difficult. (RR03, para. 27)

An Aboriginal Education Team, serving both the K-12 system and the post-secondary system replaced the Aboriginal Programs Branch. At this same time, the Ministry decided to focus its attention on Aboriginal education at the K-12 level:

There was a very conscious effort to make some significant progress on the K-12 side of the equation. Believing, and I still believe, that while you need to make progress on all of these fronts, if we didn't begin to really get it much better than we had on the K-12 side then it wasn't realistic to believe that we were going to see significant improvements on the post-secondary side at some subsequent point. (RR 13, para. 17)

At this time, MEST staff member Barry Anderson made an "extraordinary contribution" to Aboriginal education by suggesting the Ministry publish data on Aboriginal students in the K-12 system, knowing that data would reveal the low graduation rates, as well as "desperately low" participation rates in key areas "like math and science, [and] the levels of participation within those subject areas leading to graduation as distinguished from a school leaving or a school completion certificate" (RR 13, para. 23).

Because of the decision to publish data related to Aboriginal K-12 education, the Ministry was "able then to focus attention in relation to the need for progress on this front in a

way that I don't think it had ever been done before" (RR13, para. 24). As a result of the Ministry emphasizing the importance of data as a measure of success in Aboriginal K-12 education with superintendents, secretary treasurers, principals, and others, "they began to treat it as a very significant priority and some progress was made" (RR13, para. 26).

While there was increased interest and action on the K-12 level, the BCFNC Council felt that Aboriginal post-secondary issues were "being overridden by K-12 issues" (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 1997, December 9). In December of 1997, the BCFNC Council brought their concerns to a meeting with Shell Harvey, then Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. The Council stressed that "it is critical that the Policy Framework be implemented" (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 1997, December 9). These concerns were raised again in April 1998 when the BCFNC Council met with the newly restructured Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) staff, including Deputy Minister Gerry Armstrong, Assistant Deputy Minister Robin Ciceri, Director of Colleges and Institutional Planning, Nick Rubridge, as well as Jeff Smith,<sup>36</sup> coordinator of post-secondary education, and Dixon Taylor,<sup>37</sup> coordinator of K-12 education on the Aboriginal Education Team.

At this meeting, the Council raised concerns about the implementation of the APF:

Our function as Council is to represent the needs of the Coordinators in the field (and that means, at least in part) doing what we can towards the implementing of the Framework Policy. Instead we've just hung onto the side of the boat trying to keep it floating. (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 1998, April 2)

They told Ministry staff that the Coordinators "have been in survival mode since 1995,"

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<sup>36</sup> Jeff Smith, from the Okanagan Nation, was previously managing editor of Theytus Publishing, and then worked for BC's Ministry of Education, and continued on as coordinator of Aboriginal programs when MEST came into being.

<sup>37</sup> Dixon Taylor is from the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation.

primarily because of Ministry restructuring. In addition to frequent Ministry restructuring, continuity was challenged by frequent changes in Ministers and Deputy Ministers. As a former senior government official remarked, with “constant change at the political level, you can’t lead anything” (RR07, para. 118). This same participant stated that “there’s no continuity. Even at the Deputy Minister level in British Columbia, there’s been virtually no continuity” (RR07, para. 110).

According to a former Ministry staff member, this restructuring was creating difficulty in stabilizing Aboriginal initiatives:

It was at a funny time in the Ministry. Ministries were reorganizing. At one point we were both [Education and Advanced Education] part of one ministry then broke apart with this marriage, and then divorce. The Ministry of Labour was involved and then it wasn’t. Why I say that is we had all these different program parts that were being put together and pulled apart at all these different times. (RR03, para. 05)

In addition to raising concerns about the impact that restructuring had on the implementation of the APF, the Council pointed out the lack of Ministry support and funding for implementing and sustaining new and ongoing initiatives and programs. Council was told that the Ministry had no funding for Aboriginal programming, and that they should seek funding from their institutions and from other sources such as the Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, federal funding, or youth employment funding (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 1998, April 2).

Concerns were also raised about staffing unfilled Aboriginal positions within the Ministry, including the Special Advisor and Manager of Aboriginal Programs positions that had previously existed within the Aboriginal Programs branch (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 1998, April 2). While the Special Advisor position permanently disappeared, the Manager of Aboriginal Programs position was eventually filled in 1999, and

responsibility for Aboriginal post-secondary programming returned to MAETT and an Aboriginal Education unit. Jeff Smith became Manager and Dena Carroll<sup>38</sup> took on the role of Coordinator (D. Carroll, personal communication, January 10, 2000).

Through the eventual development of the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund (ASPF), the Ministry finally provided funds to encourage PSIs to engage in implementing the policy framework (RR 03, para. 13). The ASPF provided limited, short-term funding on a competitive basis to public institutions to develop curriculum, programming, and support services for Aboriginal learners, and to enter into partnerships with Aboriginal institutions and organizations (Human Capital Strategies, 2005).

While the funds were limited, “it was enough that you could get people interested to do things” (RR03, 13). In 1999/2000, the ASPF supported 39 projects at 20 public PSIs and the Centre for Curriculum Transfer and Technology. During 2000/2001, the ASPF supported 43 projects at 21 public institutions (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1999, October 12; 2000, September 5). It was the Ministry’s hope that by accessing the ASPF, public PSIs would begin to develop capacity in the area of Aboriginal education and would commit to continue funding Aboriginal programs and services through their existing funding. Institutional ownership and responsibility for Aboriginal education was a key to how the Ministry envisioned the APF unfolding:

The ownership was really, really critical. I think, through the ten years I was there, that was the main purpose. To get institutions to take that little bit of money, but also to be able to build capacity to do it themselves, and understand what they are doing. That they’re not just taking money off the top, and you know “I’m going to hire an Aboriginal person, I’m done” or whatever. That was never enough. We needed to have outcomes. We needed to see improvements. (RR03, para. 13)

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<sup>38</sup>Dena Carol is Anishnawbe from Chippewa and Nawash First Nations.

However, at a time when the Ministry was expecting PSIs to increase their productivity without increased funding, many institutions were reluctant to use their own funding to continue initiatives funded by the ASPF. According to the BCFNC,

Initially there was an expectation that institutions would reallocate existing resources to Aboriginal program development. It proved to be very difficult to cultivate support from within the institution while at the same time arguing that resources should be taken from some programs for the purpose of supporting Aboriginal program development. As a result, the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund evolved to provide resources for Aboriginal program development.... If at the end of the development period the project could demonstrate success, the institution would be granted base funds for the continuation of the program. (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002, Appendix A, pp. v-vi)

While universities remained outside of the coordination of the college, institute, and university college system initiated by *Charting a New Course*, they eventually embraced the intent of the APF (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 2000).

However, like other institutions, some universities were also reluctant to reallocate existing resources to support Aboriginal programs (RR04, para. 145). A former Ministry staff member recalled that a university in southern British Columbia

was actually I think a leader in the country at that time in the number of programs and certainly the number of students that they had. The percentage of students that were Aboriginal was really quite impressive... But there was resistance too. A lot of their funding for their really interesting and unique programs was Ministry funding. There was discretionary funding from the Ministry. And part of the policy was to get universities to pick up and fund out of their own budget because they get big buckets of money over which they have autonomy of management. So they were supposed to develop their own policies and take money from their own pockets rather than separate amounts of money from the provincial government. So I had to do a lot of negotiating ... to get them to live up to their promises and pick up and base fund the programs. (RR04, para. 145)

#### **5.2.3.2 Partnerships through Affiliation Agreements**

To increase access, the APF promotes partnerships between public PSIs and Aboriginal organizations that facilitate community-based delivery of publicly accredited programming. A

number of such partnerships existed prior to the development of the APF. For example, for funding and/or accreditation purposes, partnerships were developed between NEC, Vancouver Community College, and Langara College; En'owkin Centre, the Okanagan University College, and the University of Victoria; the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society and Simon Fraser University; Chemainus Native College and Malaspina University-College, the Open Learning Agency, and NVIT; and the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and the College of New Caledonia (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a).

The development of such partnerships has continued. In 2001, the Ministry noted that one of the key outcomes of the APF was the development of an unspecified number of partnerships between public PSIs and First Nation groups and education centres financed through short term funding (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27). According to a former Ministry staff member, the development of these partnerships was “quite amazing”:

The other thing that did happen which was quite amazing was the whole growth and development of consortiums and partnerships in Aboriginal education, between private institutions, public institutions, and across numerous institutions. That to me was stunning too. You have four universities working together on a program. That was pretty new at the time. And I think that we still need the policy framework to do those things [inter-institutional partnerships], to make sure we're nurturing it. (RR03, para. 164)

Many of these partnerships have resulted in community-based delivery of courses and programs that articulate with and are transferable to other PSIs (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008, May). Furthermore, as a result these partnerships, some students in Aboriginal private institutions are able to access student loans (RR 14, para. 141).

However, affiliation agreements are not without their issues. The APF notes that such agreements “have been regarded by Aboriginal people as paternalistic relationships” (British

Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 12). Ironically, the policy framework and Ministry practices cemented that paternalistic relationship by ensuring that Aboriginal institutions are dependent upon public institutions for articulation, accountability, and funding. Moreover, funding for partnerships is short-term and limited, undermining long-term planning and the sustainability of partnerships. Provincial funding, like the ASPF, is only available to public PSIs. Any money received by the Aboriginal institutions has had to flow through public institutions.

Given this, it is not surprising that many feel that “partnerships with public institutions reduced the autonomy for private institutions” and that these partnerships are “more of a paternalistic mechanism” (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2001). As Leighton (2007) notes,

it is difficult to have a good working relationship when public institutes are seen as having “power over” Aboriginal institutes. This situation is created and perpetuated by the fact that public institutes are recognized and funded through the provincial government and Aboriginal institutes are, more often than not, barely surviving. (p.18)

While many public PSIs have developed partnership relationships with Aboriginal groups, most of those relationships were with First Nations institutions and organizations whose clientele were primarily registered Indians. Clearly, there are exceptions, like the collaboration between UNBC and the Prince George Métis Elders’ Society in developing courses and a certificate in Métis Studies, and the University of Victoria’s partnership with Nunavut Arctic College on the Akitsiraq Law School Program for Inuit students in Nunavut (Ableson, 2006; Evans et al., 1999). However, for the most part “such [partnership] activity is not overtly evident with Métis or Inuit groups” (Human Capital Strategies, 2005, p. 66).

Even though the Ministry had hoped that the ASPF would facilitate the development of stronger relationships between public and Aboriginal private PSIs and organizations, the call for



proposals and project approval timelines were seen to undermine consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal partners (Human Capital Strategies, 2005). According to a representative from an Aboriginal education organization,

The call for proposals comes out. Oh my god we've got to run around. We've got to find a community to do the partner with. Community X, hey will you partner with us on this? There's not a good community consultation on that. Projects are put forward that may support the communities, but they are not vested in by the community. And a lot of times I think the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund...serves probably the colleges better than the community." (RR02, para. 222)

Relationships between public PSIs and their Aboriginal partners were further undermined when projects proved unsustainable once the ASPF came to an end and public PSIs failed to continue initiatives under their base funding as anticipated by the Ministry (Human Capital Strategies, 2005). Nevertheless, even when affiliation agreements proved to be less than successful, they provided important opportunities for partners, particularly public PSIs, to develop capacity for collaboration (R. Price & Burtch, 2010).

### **5.2.3.3 Provincial Aboriginally Controlled Institutions**

Shortly after Cabinet approved the APF, and two years before the Ministry began implementing the policy framework, two Aboriginal institutes, the IIG and the NVIT, gained status as public institutes under the *College and Institutes Act*. As public institutes, these Aboriginal institutions became part of British Columbia's public post-secondary system and were able to offer credit and non-credit courses, diplomas, certificates, and associate degrees. As institutes rather than colleges, IIG and NVIT had provincial mandates.

#### **5.2.3.3.1 Institute of Indigenous Government**

While the designation of a number of Aboriginal private institutions as a public institutes

was anticipated, the designation of the IIG as BC's first public Aboriginal institute was a surprise to many, including AAPSI. According to a former AAPSI representative:

It really was the desire of the AAPSI at the time to position a number of institutes around the province to become public, including NVIT number one, and then the Native Education Centre number two. At the time the Ministry was looking to potentially support four institutes around the province... AAPSI was completely unaware that there was separate policy table between the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the Government of BC to politically establish an institution which eventually became the Institute of Indigenous Government.... Now that was disconcerting to AAPSI because that was exactly what AAPSI did not want was for the process to be politicized. (RR12, para. 17)

Another former AAPSI representative recalled that:

This came to us as a huge surprise because IIG was not in existence. IIG had come about as a promise that Premier Harcourt had made to George Manuel's family, that he would fund an institute. (RR15, para. 23)

The origins of IIG can be traced to the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) delivered workshops under the name "Institute of Indigenous Government." At the 1991 UBCIC annual general meeting, a resolution was passed to establish the "George Manuel Institute of Indigenous Government," a post-secondary institute focused on capacity building for self-government. In 1993, at the Premier's Summit on Skills Development and Training, government committed to broaden educational opportunities to underrepresented groups. That same year UBCIC entered into a joint policy council with the province, and worked with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs to further the development of the proposed institute. In March of 1994, Premier Harcourt announced that funding would be provided to UBCIC to develop and deliver leadership, management, and economic development programming through the IIG. UBCIC worked closely with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and MSTL, and by March 3, 1995, completed a planning proposal for IIG. In May of 1995, the month following Cabinet approval of the APF, IIG was designated a provincial institute (British

Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1995, 1997; British Columbia, Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, 1994; L. McElroy & Associates, British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, & Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, 1998).

By June 1995 a funding agreement was signed, with matching funds from the province and Human Resources Development Canada for IIG's first three years, and an ongoing commitment from the province until 2000. With the agreements in place, "IIG became an instant college and they then rushed about trying to find programming and faculty, etcetera" (RR15, para. 23). Nine weeks later, IIG had set up its facilities in Vancouver's Gastown, in a building shared with UBCIC. They had also hired administrative and teaching staff (some of whom were previously with UBCIC), developed curriculum, and registered 17 students for their first year of operation (L. McElroy & Associates et al., 1998; Perra & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003; Newswire, 1995).

According to Chief Saul Terry, President of UBCIC and chair of IIG's interim board of governors, "the institute is a milestone in the recognition of the principle of Indian control of Indian education at the post-secondary level. It is a step toward realizing our people's goal of self-determination" (Newswire, 1995).

Unfortunately, IIG's short existence was often troubled. One respondent explained that, "over the years they have had many problems because they didn't operate out of a strong beginning" (RR15, para. 23). IIG's initial set-up was hurried, and lacked comprehensive planning. Relationships between IIG and the Ministry were often strained (RR04, para.89). IIG suffered from low enrollments, high operating costs, insufficient funding, poor financial planning and monitoring, ineffective and unstable management and governance, and political interference by UBCIC executive and management. IIG relocated to Vancouver's Yaletown, and then to

Burnaby, but its problems continued. A 2003 evaluation of IIG recommended its closure or its amalgamation with another post-secondary institution (L. McElroy & Associates et al., 1998; Perra & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003). In 2006, IIG had a student population of 104, but only 20 of the students were Aboriginal, and 65 were international students. That same year the Ministry let go the President and disbanded the college's Board of Governors and Education Council. In 2007, NVIT expanded to include a Vancouver campus and took over the operations of IIG ("Institute of Indigenous Government", 2007; Bermingham, 2007).

#### **5.2.3.3.2 Nicola Valley Institute of Technology**

Under the criteria articulated in the APF, "one Aboriginal controlled institution qualified for designation as a public, and that was Nicola Valley Institute of Technology" (RR04, para. 87). NVIT was established in 1983, and by 1995/96 had an on-campus population of 250 full and part-time students and served another 350 full and part-time students through community-based extension programs. With designation as a provincial institute in September of 1995, NVIT could offer certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees, and could issue its own course credits and transcripts. It also had to conform to requirements under the *College and Institute Act*, including establishing a board of governors and an education council (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a; Weir, 2008).

A former Ministry staff member recalled no resistance and much excitement as government worked collaboratively with NVIT to apply existing public institution criteria and policies to support the development of this newly designated public Aboriginal institution:

And what was so cool was that once the decision had been made and approved by Cabinet it was like no resistance from the system within government. It was like OK, well they are going to be a public institute. They haven't ever gotten any facilities, any

major capital funding from the provincial government. They've done it on their own. So they need a building. So the capital folks were really excited and started meeting with the President and Board saying you guys are going to need a building. What are we going to do about this? They applied all of the normal funding criteria without any nonsense. Just did a straight forward application of the funding criteria for capital funding and came up with a really nice plan for NVIT's building. Then they had to have a Board of Governors so we applied the normal policies. They had to have an internal board for managing curriculum and all that kind of stuff and qualifications for instructors and all that kind of thing. We applied that policy normally. It was just really an exciting time. And we did a study on the level of program funding that they had as a new institution. I think overall we must have increased their funding tenfold from one day to the next, just because they were going into public institute mode. So it was really neat to take what had been a fledgling operation, but a very successful one, and turn it into a full college. That was the neatest thing to do. (RR04, para. 87)

In January 2002, NVIT moved to its new campus, Eagle's Perch, which it initially shared with the University College of the Cariboo (UCC). Eagle's Perch campus is a 4,519 square-meter facility situated on a 17.5 hectare site north of Merritt, BC. In 2003, UCC closed down its Merritt operations, and NVIT became the sole occupant of Eagle's Perch (Brotherton, 2001; Youds, 2003). As noted previously, in 2007 NVIT expanded to include a Vancouver campus, taking over IIG.

Initially, the Ministry was considering developing as many as four Aboriginal public institutions (RR12, para. 17). However, IIG and NVIT were the only Aboriginal institutions ever designated as public institutes in BC. The takeover of IIG by NVIT in 2007 reduced the number of Aboriginal public institutions to one.

#### **5.2.3.4 Aboriginal Private Institutions**

While the APF has provided significant support to Aboriginal public institutes, besides promoting affiliation agreements, the policy has been of little significance to Aboriginal private institutions. A former Ministry staff member stated,

if you look back to the 1995 Aboriginal Framework agreement from the Ministry of

Advanced Education, they made reference in that document about support to the Aboriginal institutes, but this has never happened yet. (RR03, para. 31)

A representative of a small Aboriginal institution shared this perspective:

I think virtually the policy is ignored by Aboriginal institutions because it doesn't serve them. It doesn't serve them at all, except maybe IIG and NVIT, because they're public institutions... so they are probably met by the policy. But the non-public institutions are probably not... It's a public document written for public [institutions]. So public institutions benefit, not the people on the ground. (RR10, para. 141)

A former senior Ministry official noted that the criteria developed to facilitate public status for Aboriginal PSIs were “probably unassailable the way it's developed, the way it's written. You need to have a basic number of students, right? Those are things that anybody can understand” (RR09, para. 64). However, the same criteria that facilitated public designation have created barriers to achieving such designation.

The APF requires Aboriginal institutions seeking public designation to sustain a student population of 300 over a period of five years. This has been seen to be inequitable because the same criteria did not apply to the development of IIG and non-Aboriginal public PSIs like UNBC, Royal Roads, and the Technical University of BC. In particular, the creation of IIG as a public Aboriginal institute outside of the criteria articulated in the policy framework caused resentment among some Aboriginal private institutions (L. McElroy & Associates et al., 1998).

In the words of a representative from a small Aboriginal institution,

when they started IIG they had seven [teen] students. So there's tremendous unfairness there. And when they started other institutions in the province of British Columbia, they started institutions where there were zip students. So I don't know why they have this discriminatory quota for Aboriginal institutions who are seeking core funding. I think that's really, really unfair. (RR10, para. 55)

According to this same participant, the student quota also reflected a geographic bias favouring

urban areas, and as a result of this bias, key professionals are not trained and do not provide services in more remote areas:

One of the arguments I've made to the province is that you are responsible for post-secondary education and it doesn't matter where you are, where you live. We shouldn't be discriminated against because of our geography. So the policy should not be discriminatory and serve people in larger centres and not in the smaller centres, because you're still not reaching those people. So we still don't have the nurses and doctors and teachers and the social workers that we need and retain them in isolated areas because we're not training them there. So they don't go there. They don't stay there. (RR10, para. 141)

The geographic restrictions in the APF also undermined NEC's expectations for public status, because NEC is situated in the same geographic location as IIG. According to a former AAPSI representative, AAPSI "fully expected that NEC would be a lock step behind NVIT [in gaining designation as a public institute], but because of the geographical provision, NEC was knocked out of the running basically" (RR12, para. 35).

For small Aboriginal institutions that lack the student population necessary for designation as a public institution, the APF holds out the possibility of forming a consortium with an Aboriginal institution for funding and accreditation purposes. However, this has never been operationalized, in part because the collapse of AAPSI led to a vacuum in the leadership necessary for such a consortium to form (RR12, para. 39; RR 15, para. 31).

Another representative from an Aboriginal-controlled institution stated that by "maintaining the policy we have a status quo" (RR 14, para. 141). The "status quo" is that Aboriginal private institutions continue to provide their students with culturally relevant programming in a community-based, supportive environment, despite the fact that they typically exist on unstable, short term funding which challenges their ability to provide more comprehensive programming, retain faculty, meet infrastructure and administrative costs, or

provide adequate learning facilities (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008, May).

#### **5.2.4 Impact**

According to a former staff member, the Ministry hoped that the Aboriginal Policy Framework, and the goals of access, relevance and quality, affordability, and accountability, would be embraced by the entire post-secondary system. “What we wanted to have happen is that it then became everybody’s policy in some way or another without diluting its meaning and intent, those four major goals” (RR02, para. 86). By the end of the NDP’s reign in 2001, Aboriginal PSE had changed significantly. These changes are explored in relation to the APF’s goals of access, relevance and quality, access, affordability, and accountability.

##### **5.2.4.1 Access**

According to the APF, access refers to increasing Aboriginal post-secondary participation and completion rates, and creating choice in terms of location, method of delivery, and programming.

Student support is said to be “essential” to Aboriginal students’ access and participation in PSE. By 2001, there were some 50 “First Nations” coordinators throughout the province who provided a wide range of services to Aboriginal students, liaised between the public PSIs and Aboriginal communities, and worked to ensure that institutional programming was meeting Aboriginal community needs. Of these, 22 were funded directly by the Ministry (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002; British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27). It appears that BC’s public PSIs, including universities, have been contributing funding from their core budgets to staff many of these positions.

The APF recognizes that responsibility for eliminating barriers rests within the broader



institution, and that cross-cultural training is necessary to address “biased attitudes and behaviors.” Much work has been undertaken in the area, and according to the *2001 BC College and Institutes Aboriginal Former Students Outcomes Report*,<sup>39</sup> in 1999 and 2001, 82% and 83% of Aboriginal respondents rated “a climate free from harassment” as “good” or very “good.” However, 90% of non-Aboriginal respondents rated this same question as “good” or very “good” in 1999 and 2001. (BC Outcomes Working Group, Centre for Education Information Standards & Services, & British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002). Racism remains a challenge for some Aboriginal students, and strategies are still needed to address this at the classroom, program, and institutional level (Human Capital Strategies, 2005).

The APF also calls for an increase in the number of Aboriginal employees at public PSIs. Unfortunately, there is no system-wide data on the number of Aboriginal faculty and staff employed by public institutions. Since the implementation of the AFP, both the Ministry and the BCFNC have reported an increasing number of “First Nations” faculty and staff, though the BCFNC has also noted that there continues to be a “critical shortage” of First Nations instructors, particularly in math and science (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2001; British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27). One participant, cognizant of the dependence of many institutions on Aboriginal-specific funding, questioned institutional commitment to equity hiring:

I notice that there are a few public institutions hiring a few more brown faces or Aboriginal people. And they are actually very capable people. But they are doing it so they’ve got a little bit more Aboriginal dollars. Would they hire them if it wasn’t Aboriginal earmarked dollars? I wonder. (RR10, 153)

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<sup>39</sup> Information from this report must be interpreted carefully, as discussed below.

Student access is also supported by changes in many of the public PSIs' institutional policies and practices, particularly those regarding Aboriginal student admissions, as well as through the creation of physical facilities for Aboriginal students (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002).

While the APF calls for increased access for all Aboriginal students, at institutional level the needs of First Nations students have often been given priority. This is suggested in the use of the term "First Nations" rather than the more inclusive term "Aboriginal" in the titles of some student support positions, and also in the name of the Aboriginal coordinators/advisors' representative body, the BCFNC. Similarly, some of the names of designated Aboriginal facilities at PSIs privilege First Nations; for example, UNBC's First Nations Centre, UBC's First Nations Longhouse, Douglas College's First Nations Centre, and Malaspina University-College's First Nations Student Services Centre and Student Lounge (Human Capital Strategies, 2005). A representative of a Métis organization expressed concerns about this:

I look at UBC. I always think it's great when I go to the Longhouse and so forth. Those things are great.... I just don't think they [PSIs] truly understand that the Aboriginal word itself refers to all three groups [First Nations, Inuit and Métis]. (RR08, para. 72)

Despite the prioritizing of First Nations in both the text of the APF and some institutional practices, the implementation of the policy has resulted in heightened awareness of Aboriginal education more generally, and the provision of services to a broad range of Aboriginal students. In the words of an Aboriginal Coordinator,

I think that whereas the policy tends to be skewed towards Aboriginal people who are status Indians affiliated with BC Indian bands, that it sort of created an awareness of all Aboriginal people and provided places where services are available for all Aboriginal people ...because the people are there, the service staff, the support staff, that have been in the different organizations [public PSIs] have been there for status Indians, for non-status Indians, for Métis, for people and Aboriginal people from all over BC, all over Canada. So that policy I think has had some positive effects even though the definition has been narrow and the goals may not be necessarily the goals I would see and that is to

create more opportunity for all Aboriginal people who live in BC. (RR01, para. 133)

Ideally, increased access is demonstrated by increased participation. According to Janice Simcoe, then Chair of First Nations Education and Services, Camosun College, and past Chair of the BCFNC Council, “we have seen student numbers explode. Most institutions report that their First Nations populations have at least doubled over the past ten years. Many have quadrupled” (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002).

Unfortunately, data on Aboriginal post-secondary participation, retention or success rates during this time period is not available (Schütze & Day, 2001). Given this data vacuum, surveys of former students in BC’s college, institute, and university-college system (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002), and former students in BC universities (Dumaresq, Sudmant, University Presidents' Council of British Columbia, & Centre for Education Information Standards and Services, 2004; Pendelton & Sudmant, 2006; Sudmant, Heslop, & University Presidents' Council, 1997; Sudmant et al., 2003) provide important but limited insight. It is important to note, however, that these surveys do not provide information on Aboriginal participation, success, or completion rates. Rather, these reports survey students after they have completed<sup>40</sup> their programs of study. They provide no information on students who left their programs early, who could not be located, or who did not participate in the study. These surveys also depend on respondents to self-identify as Aboriginal, and the extent to which Aboriginal students chose to identify is not known. According to the BC Outcomes Working Group et al. (2002), “in 2001, almost two-thirds of the institutions [colleges, institutes and university-colleges] provided a flag for Aboriginal students, but the match with those who identified

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<sup>40</sup> Or in the case of college, institute, and university-college respondents, almost completed their studies.

themselves as Aboriginal [in the survey] was less than 35 percent” (p. 47).

The percentage of Aboriginal respondents to surveys of college, institute, and university-college students increased from 2.8 % in 1995 to 4.1 % in 2001, suggesting a significant increase in post-secondary participation at this level (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002). The percentage of Aboriginal respondents with baccalaureate degrees from BC universities has also increased over time, though not to the same extent. Aboriginal respondents represented only 1.4% of those who graduated in 1991; 2% of those who graduated in 1996, and 2.3% of those who graduated in 2000 (Dumaresq et al., 2004; Sudmant et al., 1997, 2003). This data suggests that following the implementation of the policy, all PSE was more accessible to Aboriginal students; however colleges, institutes, and university-colleges are more accessible than universities.

In surveys of graduates from masters and doctoral programs at BC universities in 2001/02 and 2003/04, 2.5 % of the respondents identified themselves as Aboriginal, suggesting that once Aboriginal students attain undergraduate degrees, they participate in graduate studies in a more proportional manner (Pendelton & Sudmant, 2006).

These reports also suggest that access for Aboriginal students has been facilitated by the regional expansion of PSIs. Aboriginal respondents were more evenly distributed in PSIs throughout the province than were non-Aboriginal respondents, who tended to be more concentrated in PSIs the lower mainland (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002). Like Aboriginal students in colleges, institutes, and university-colleges, Aboriginal baccalaureate and graduate students accessed universities throughout the province, particularly in the north and on Vancouver Island (Dumaresq et al., 2004; Pendelton & Sudmant, 2006).

An unanticipated impact of this increased access by Aboriginal students has been

increased institutional competition for Aboriginal students. This competition has led to under enrollment, and challenged the viability of some Aboriginal institutions, including IIG and later, NEC (Native Education College, 2007, June 12; Perra & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003).

#### **5.2.4.2 Relevance and Quality**

The APF defines relevance and quality in relation to programming that meets the needs of Aboriginal learners, is culturally “sensitive,” and is linked to the labour market. The APF articulates a strong role for the AAPSI Education Resource Centre in supporting curriculum relevancy through collaboration on the development and sharing of curriculum materials. However, in the words of a former Ministry staff member, the APF has “mirrored successes and failures in moving ahead,” and one “key failure” was the AAPSI Education Resources Centre. Formerly known as the Knoowenchoot Centre for Aboriginal Adult Education Resources, it was pulled out of the Okanagan University College Resource Centre, turned over to AAPSI, and subsequently relocated to Westbank (RR04, para. 91).

The life of the Education Resource Centre was short. Part of the reason for its demise lay in the overreliance on the AAPSI leadership, who were already taxed with the running of their institutions and advocating for their membership. An AAPSI representative recalled that while the strength of AAPSI was its strong leadership, those leaders had few resources to call upon (RR12, para. 117). According to this participant,

I really think a lot of it is we are going through the process of decolonization and we want to take control, but then when we do take control, we don't always have the capacity to manage it. You may recall in those years there were many very strong leaders, a lot of leaders that worked together. But the workload fell on their shoulders, all the work load.... So there are very strong leaders with very strong skill sets and the entire work load falls on their shoulders. (RR12, para. 43)

A former Ministry staff member also cited AAPSI's capacity issues as a factor in the collapse of the Education Resource Centre:

It was a situation where government was willing to give the capacity to the Aboriginal community, but the capacity wasn't there to do it, or it wasn't done properly. The umbrella group that was set up to manage it didn't really have the capacity where we thought they did. (RR04, para. 91)

Capacity was only one of many issues that challenged the Centre. According to a former AAPSI representative, "in the end the reporting system, the policies, the procedures, all of the structures, the whole infrastructure of the organization was very fragile. In the end it just didn't have the infrastructure and the leadership" (RR12, para. 43). In 1998 the Education Resource Centre closed and its programs relocated to NEC (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 1998, April 2). Despite the "valiant efforts" (RR 12, para. 45) of Grace Mirehouse, who had assumed leadership of AAPSI, the resource centre folded. With the collapse of the resource centre, AAPSI also collapsed (RR04, para. 91), and when Grace Mirehouse passed away in 2002, "the organization passed with her" (RR12, para. 45).

Despite the demise of the Education Resource Centre, BCs public PSIs have continued to develop and implement Aboriginal courses and programming. In 1996, 22 of BC's 28 public PSIs were delivering some form of Aboriginal programming (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1997). By 2001 there were 200 "First Nations" targeted programs ranging from developmental programs like ABE to degree programs implemented throughout the public post-secondary system (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27). According to Janice Simcoe, then Chair of First Nations Education and Services at Camosun College and past Chair of the BCFNC Council,

We have seen a great deal of success in programming. Far more First Nations students now have access to relevant curriculum and career preparation. First Nations Studies has been established to the point that two provincial First Nations studies articulation committees are now in process of being established.<sup>41</sup> Choice and success have been increased. (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002)

A former Ministry employee spoke positively about the increased capacity of PSIs to integrate Aboriginal perspectives and issues in a wide range of program areas:

I think the other thing that is quite remarkable is the whole growth of institutional capacity to understand Aboriginal issues and embedded Aboriginal concepts and ideas throughout the curriculum. Everywhere. Medicine and health, and forestry, ecotourism, and all of that stuff. That's just stunning to me. That's had a huge impact. (RR03, para. 158)

While the APF promotes programming that meets the needs of Aboriginal learners and is “sensitive” to Aboriginal cultures, in practice, Aboriginal has often been interpreted to mean “First Nations.” This is illustrated by comments about “First Nations” programming found in Ministry and BCFNC documents. It is also shown by the development of First Nations studies programs, and BCCAT’s First Nations Studies articulation committee. Clearly, there have been exceptions, including the UNBC’s courses and certificate in Métis Studies, and the University of Victoria’s involvement with the law program for Inuit students in Nunavut (Ableson, 2006; Evans et al., 1999). However, for the most part, Aboriginal curriculum has tended to favour First Nations, and marginalize Métis and Inuit (Human Capital Strategies, 2005).

To facilitate labour market relevancy, the APF challenged public PSIs to “extend beyond the traditional social science and public administration focus to areas such as technology and commerce, natural resources and environmental sciences, and rural health” (British Columbia

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<sup>41</sup> BCCAT approved the First Nations Studies articulation committee in 2001/02; it began meeting in the spring of 2002 (British Columbia Council on Admissions & Transfer, 2000; British Columbia Council on Admissions & Transfer, 2002).

Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 12). In a survey of former students of BC colleges, institutes and university colleges, Aboriginal respondents participated in all of the broad program areas including: Art and Sciences, Business and Management, Legal and Social, and Construction and Precision Production. However, Aboriginal respondents participated at higher rates than non-Aboriginal respondents in Legal and Social and Construction and Precision Production programs. Within these broad program areas, Aboriginal respondents made different choices than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Between 1995 and 2001, Aboriginal respondents in four year Arts and Science academic programs<sup>42</sup> increased from 3% to 16% while the increase for non-Aboriginal respondents was from 3% to 11%. Aboriginal respondents studying Arts and Science programs were less likely to have taken shorter two-year programs, and more likely to have taken four-year programs. However, Aboriginal participation in applied programs showed a different pattern. In 2001, 69% of Aboriginal respondents, compared to 53% of non-Aboriginal respondents, reported taking short programs (a year or less), while 27% of Aboriginal respondents, compared to 40% of non-Aboriginal respondents, reported taking longer programs (a year to three years) (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002).

Compared to non-Aboriginal respondents, Aboriginal respondents within Legal and Social programs were more likely to have taken Social Work (59% compared to 28%) while less likely to have taken Criminology (13% compared to 20%) and Criminal Justice and Corrections (16% compared to 34%). Within Business and Management, more Aboriginal respondents studied Administrative and Secretarial Services (49% compared to 27%) and Accounting (13% compared to 12%) and were less likely to have taken Business Administration and Management

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<sup>42</sup> A breakdown of programs within Arts and Sciences is not given.



(22% compared to 30%) (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002).

At the university level, Aboriginal students also made different program choices than others. A survey of bachelor students who graduated in 2000 revealed that Aboriginal respondents were underrepresented, and only made up 2.3% of the survey respondents. However, compared to the overall respondents, Aboriginal respondents were overrepresented in education, law, natural resources, social sciences, and humanities. Additionally, Aboriginal respondents were underrepresented in fine and performing arts, computer sciences, engineering, health professions, health fitness and kinesiology, business, and the life and physical sciences (Dumaresq et al., 2004). At the graduate level, Aboriginal respondents were absent from the fields of health sciences and the fine and performing arts (Pendelton & Sudmant, 2006).

Despite apparent increases in Aboriginal participation in PSE, Aboriginal students remain underrepresented in university, particularly in areas like commerce, information technology, and natural resource, environmental health sciences, areas of study promoted through the APF. According to Human Capital Strategies (2005), “there appears not to be concerted efforts to change this and to provide support and encouragement to Aboriginal students to enter such disciplines” (p. ix).

The APF identifies labour market participation as another indicator of relevance and quality. Again, while comprehensive data is not available, surveys of former students provide some insight into the link between education and training and the workforce. At the colleges, institutes, and university-college level, unemployment rates for all survey respondents increased between 1995 and 2001, peaking in 1999. Significantly, in all years, the unemployment rate was higher for Aboriginal respondents than non-Aboriginal respondents. Similarly, full-time employment rates for all respondents declined between 1995 and 2001, with a low in 1999. In

all years, fewer Aboriginal respondents held full-time employment than non-Aboriginal respondents. Despite participation in PSE, Aboriginal former college, institute, and university-college students continued to be disadvantaged in terms of employment, suggesting that other factors, such as the availability of employment in a student's home community (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002) or discriminatory employment practices were at play.

While Aboriginal former students from colleges, institutes, and university-colleges experienced higher unemployment and lower employment levels than their non-Aboriginal peers, the same is not the case for graduates from universities. In a study of students who graduated with baccalaureate degrees in 1996, Aboriginal respondents had employment rates and annual incomes similar to non-Aboriginal students (Sudmant et al., 2003). In a similar survey of students who graduated in 2000, Aboriginal respondents had lower unemployment rates, higher earnings, and a higher number of professional positions than the overall respondents (Dumaresq et al., 2004).

Interestingly, another difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal former students is that Aboriginal respondents who did gain employment were more apt to see a link between their education and employment than non-Aboriginal respondents (BC Outcomes Working Group et al., 2002; Dumaresq et al., 2004; Sudmant et al., 2003).

#### **5.2.4.3 Affordability**

The third goal of the APF, affordability, calls for consideration of the provincial fiscal framework and federal-provincial cost-sharing in the delivery of Aboriginal PSE. By incorporating affordability into the goals of the policy framework, the Ministry has ensured that the APF would be self-limiting.

Clearly, like all students, Aboriginal students benefited from regulated tuition fees. In

support of increased access, the Ministry also continued to provide targeted funding for one Aboriginal coordinator at each public college, institute, and university-college. Unfortunately, no such funding was available to fund coordinator positions at universities. Funding for new programs was expected to come from the Ministry's Aboriginal Programs budget, and public PSIs were also expected to fund new initiatives from their base budget.

Even during the consultation period, the BCFNC expressed concerns about the ability and willingness of public PSIs to fund Aboriginal initiatives from their base-budget, and they repeatedly brought up this concern during meetings with Ministry staff who told them to look elsewhere for funding.

Eventually, the Ministry established ASPF as part of its Aboriginal Programs budget, and this funding supported many short-term initiatives throughout BC. While this fund was important in providing seed money to begin new initiatives, it was inadequate to resource the large number of projects throughout the province, or to support large-scale projects, and the short-term nature of the funding undermined sustainability of the programming (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27; Human Capital Strategies, 2005).

Clearly, these were difficult times for PSIs. Institutions were expected to increase enrollment numbers without corresponding budget increases, and Ministry-mandated tuition freezes prevented institutions from raising additional funds through student fee increases (Schütze & Day, 2001). Despite funding challenges, a significant number of programs and courses were sustained by institutional base funding (Human Capital Strategies, 2005).

The APF calls for the federal government to maintain 25% of the costs of publicly designated Aboriginal institutions, but according to one former government employee,

Trying to get money out of the feds. Well that was ridiculous. There's no way that you're going to compel that out of an Aboriginal policy framework. Maybe at the cabinet level, but even then I don't think it'll ever happen. (RR03, para. 134)

Both the province and the federal government (through HRDC) provided matching dollars to fund IIG's developmental period. However, when that funding agreement ended, IIG became fully supported by the province (Perra & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003). Similarly, government funding for NVIT is primarily provincial (Weir, 2008).

Given this, it is not surprising that in a 2001 paper prepared by the Ministry's Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, in which "key outcomes" of the APF are identified, there are no entries under "affordability." Instead, the paper lists a number of potential funding sources (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27).

#### **5.2.4.4 Accountability**

The NDP were committed to making PSIs more accountable to government and the public, and to that end they instituted a number of performance measures that PSIs were expected to report on (Fisher et al., 2012). According to the APF, accountability is aimed at ensuring that "post-secondary education structures are representative and sensitive to Aboriginal people[s] governance needs, while maintaining educational quality and mobility of students, and demonstrating participation, retention, and success outcomes" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 9). A former Ministry employee noted that one of the strengths of the APF is that it became embedded in different aspects of the post-secondary system (RR03, para. 17). The embedded nature of the APF is particularly apparent in relation to accountability.

A 2001 Ministry document lists a broad range of APF accountability mechanisms including: the BCFNC Council; Aboriginal representation on public institutions' governing bodies; Aboriginal Advisory Committees; the BCCAT; the Provincial Institutional Evaluation Framework; annual meetings with PSIs regarding *Charting a New Course*; surveys like the Aboriginal Former Students Outcome Reports at the college, university-college, and institute level, and the Graduate Follow Up Surveys at the university level; and the New Programs Review Committee process for reviewing both degree and non-degree programs (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Institutional Planning Branch, 2001, February 27). Unfortunately, nothing is said about the effectiveness of these accountability measures.

The BCFNC Council actively represented the voice of the BCFNC, advocated for Aboriginal post-secondary students, and provided policy advice to government. However, like the AAPSI leadership, the BCFNC Council had few resources to draw upon, and the work fell on the shoulders of a handful of strong leaders who managed the Council business on top of their increasingly demanding jobs as Aboriginal coordinators/advisors (RR12, para. 43). Furthermore, the Council was an advocacy group, and PSIs were not accountable them.

Following the practice initiated by the Socreds, the province continued making Aboriginal appointments to the governing bodies of public institutions. In 1992, there was Aboriginal representation on the governing boards of 21 public PSIs. Unfortunately these were not Aboriginal-specific positions, and when these positions were vacated, they were not always refilled with an Aboriginal person. By 2005, only nine of BC's public PSIs had Aboriginal representation on their governing bodies (Human Capital Strategies, 2005). The effectiveness of Aboriginal representation on boards of governors is unknown.

By 2001, most public PSIs did have Aboriginal advisory committees, and some institutions had multiple Aboriginal advisory committees. These committees were intended to liaise between the institutions and Aboriginal communities; provide guidance on student recruitment, program development and promotion, cultural issues, curriculum content, and relevance to the local labour market; and have significant input into decisions about Aboriginal programs. According to the APF, “all Aboriginal program matters should be referred by an institution's internal Education Council or Senate to the Aboriginal Advisory Committee before recommendations are forwarded to the Board of Governors” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 11).

The efficacy of Aboriginal advisory committees is unknown. While some of these committees were considered very effective, others were completely inactive. Reporting relationships varied among institutions: some Aboriginal advisory committees reported to presidents or vice-presidents; others reported to a faculty, department, or program; and in some cases, the reporting relationships of Aboriginal advisory committees was unclear. As stated in Human Capital Strategies (2005), “how these committees are used, reporting relationships and overall effectiveness are variable” (p. 72).

BCCAT plays an important role in coordinating and supporting articulation and transfer arrangements among BC PSIs, supporting student mobility between institutions, and providing educational planning materials. BCCAT worked with both IIG and NVIT to facilitate transfer arrangements with other PSIs, and also established a First Nations articulation committee to facilitate inter-institutional transfer (British Columbia Council on Admissions & Transfer, 1998; 2000; 2002). Aboriginal private institutions can only gain accreditation indirectly through affiliation agreements with public institutions, a standard prerequisite for provincial funding

(Morgan & Louie, 2006).

Most problematic of all, given the APF's vision of increasing Aboriginal participation, retention, and success rates compared to those of non-Aboriginal peoples, is the lack of data on Aboriginal participation, retention, and success outcomes. While the Ministry began publishing data on key performance indicators for the college and institute sector in 1997, no Aboriginal-specific data is available during this time period (British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2004a; Schütze & Day, 2001). According to the *British Columbia Public College Sector Performance Report 2000*,

Comprehensive and reliable reporting on how the college sector is meeting the educational needs of Aboriginal persons in BC is dependent upon a number of factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, the development of a standardized process among the institutions on how to define and record the aboriginal status of their students at time of registration, and how to ensure this information is accurately and reliably included in their data submissions to the Data Warehouse. While work is continuing to resolve these issues, it is unknown at this time when data for this indicator will be available for inclusion in the report. (Cited in British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002b, p. 17)

While the Aboriginal Former Students Outcome Reports at the college, university-college, and institute level and the Graduate Follow Up Surveys at the university level provide important insight into the experiences of Aboriginal respondents, they provide no data on Aboriginal participation, retention and completion rates at the institutional or systems level.

### **5.3 Discussion and Findings**

Like the stories told about the *Green Report*, policy stories about the formation, the text, and the implementation of the Aboriginal policy framework reveal interesting themes. These themes include the influence of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; the privileging of First Nations; the importance of relationships, leadership and ownership; the selective implementation of recommendations and policy; and the lack of accountability.

### **5.3.1 The Influence of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs**

Under the Socred government, the Ministry of Native Affairs played a significant role in Aboriginal PSE developments. This pattern continued when the NDP succeeded the Socreds as BC's governing party. With increasing pressures to resolve "certainty" over land and resources for economic reasons, the NDP government began actively engaging in the BC treaty process. As the treaty process progressed, there was a critical need to build capacity among First Nations for the post-treaty environment, and in 1992 MAETT announced that they would develop an Aboriginal PSE policy in consultation with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in order to meet the province's and First Nations' priorities that arose in negotiations. Not only did Aboriginal Affairs participate in the development of the APF, they also undertook negotiations with UBCIC that lead to the development of IIG, the first Aboriginal-controlled public post-secondary institution in BC and Canada.

The influence of Aboriginal Affairs is clearly apparent in the text of the APF. The policy's objectives include building capacity for self-government as well as developing a plan for capacity building for self-government after treaties are negotiated. The APF is framed in terms of government priorities, which include self-government, treaty-making, and interim measures. The overarching principles articulated in the AFP are identical to those articulated in the mission of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. Furthermore, the public designation of Aboriginal-controlled institutes is linked to the treaty process through the criteria that the institute's goals "provide the foundation for developing autonomy and self-reliance and have the support of Aboriginal leadership" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 16). The final sentence of the document states that "the Framework emphasizes and supports movement from economic dependence to independence and self-management for



Aboriginal people” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996a, p. 19).

### **5.3.2 Privileging First Nations**

According to Alcantara and Kent (2010) the Ministry developed the APF “to increase Aboriginal post-secondary education completion rates, especially for Aboriginals living in Vancouver” (p. 280). My findings contradict this statement. Despite the use of this more inclusive term, “Aboriginal,” the APF continues the pattern established by the *Green Report* in emphasizing the needs of First Nations, particularly those from BC. Given the province’s involvement with the treaty process, the APF understandably reflects government’s strategic priorities of treaty-making with BC First Nations. Unfortunately, by privileging BC First Nations, the text of the policy framework marginalizes other Aboriginal people.

For example, the section “General Background and Principles contextualizes the policy in terms of the treaty process, and only passing reference is made to policy forums with off-reserve and non-status Aboriginal people. In discussing the legal context, the APF notes the existence of “197 First Nations” in BC and acknowledges federal responsibility for the education of on-reserve status Indians between the ages of 7 and 17, but makes no reference to other Aboriginal people living in BC. Additionally, reference to federal jurisdiction for status Indians appears in the jurisdiction section, but there is no mention of other Aboriginal people. Similarly, the discussion on federal fiscal responsibility is in reference to status Indians.

The section on funding sources for Aboriginal PSE and training acknowledges the inadequacy of federal funding for status Indian students and notes that non-status Indians are not eligible. There is no discussion of the funding needs of other Aboriginal people. The Indian Studies Support Program is acknowledged for supporting post-secondary program development for “Aboriginal” people. The fact that this funding supports programming specifically for status

Indian students is not mentioned.

While the APF makes passing reference to off-reserve and non-status Aboriginal people, Métis, Inuit, First Nations originating from other jurisdictions and the growing urban Aboriginal population are ignored. The First Nations bias evident in the policy text also plays out in the implementation of the policy framework.

The APF has created the circumstances under which Aboriginal-controlled institutions could gain public status. Only two Aboriginal institutions have been designated public institutes, and both of them were institutions that were tied to First Nations political organizations: IIG was established by the UBCIC, while NVIT was established by the Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooatich, Shackan, and Upper Nicola bands. The establishment of IIG, outside of the criteria articulated in the Aboriginal policy framework, prevented the anticipated designation of NEC, an urban-based Aboriginal post-secondary institution.

The privileging of First Nations is also apparent in the areas of student services, affiliation agreements, and programming. Many of the institutional-based Aboriginal coordinators have the term “First Nations” in their titles and their umbrella organization is called the “British Columbia First Nations Coordinators.” Many of the institution-based physical facilities for Aboriginal students also include “First Nations” in their titles. In addition, affiliation agreements tend to be between public PSIs and First Nations groups and organizations, and Aboriginal curriculum tends to focus on First Nations.

### **5.3.3 Relationships**

Throughout the formation of the APF, one sees the importance of developing and solidifying relationships in moving the policy framework forward. Educational leaders working in Aboriginal-controlled institutions maintained their relationships to each other and formalized

them through the creation of APPSI. During its existence, APPSI was able to work with many Aboriginal institutions to help develop their policy capacity. In addition, APPSI developed positive relationships with the Ministry, enabling them to provide strong leadership during the APF consultation process. Similarly, the Aboriginal coordinators came together and organized an umbrella organization, the BCFNC, and an executive body, the Council. Like the APPSI leadership, the BCFNC Council maintained strong relationships with the Ministry and provided steady leadership during the consultation process.

#### **5.3.4 Leadership and Ownership**

The importance of leadership emerged as another strong theme. Individual Aboriginal educational leaders are acknowledged for raising the profile of Aboriginal education throughout the country. Aboriginal educational and political leaders played important roles in advocating for the development of an Aboriginal post-secondary policy that had the authority of Cabinet approval behind it.

Within the Ministry, a number of senior bureaucrats played important roles as champions of the policy. However, leadership within the Ministry was undermined by frequent changes in the structure and leadership of the Ministry. As one participant remarked, with “constant change at the political level, you can’t lead anything” (RR07, para. 118).

Members of the BCFNC Council, particularly Shirley Joseph, were strong advocates for the needs of Aboriginal initiatives within the public post-secondary system, and lobbied extensively for the development and implementation of the policy. AAPSI executives, particularly Ron Shortt, Don Fiddler, and Grace Mirehouse, played key roles in advocating for the public designation of Aboriginal institutions. While APPSI enjoyed strong leadership for a time, they proved incapable of sustaining that leadership when APPSI took on the additional

responsibility of running the Education Resource Centre. A leadership void was created by the collapse of APPSI.

Initially, there was strong support for the APF within government. This is illustrated by Cabinet's approval of the document and the designation of both IIG and NVIT as public institutions. Senior bureaucrats, like Deputy Minister Garry Wouters and Robin Ciceri, Director of Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, proved to be strong advocates for the policy, and the policy had the support of many people within Ministry. Over time however, the Ministry's commitment to the policy waxed and waned, as illustrated by the Ministry's funding of Aboriginal PSE. Spending on Aboriginal services and programming increased during the early 1990s, reaching a high of \$6.5 million during the final year of consultation process. Once the APF was approved, however, spending decreased markedly to \$2 million. After implementation began, the Aboriginal program funding ranged from \$3.7 to \$3.9 million annually.

Given their involvement in the consultation process, it's not surprising that both the BCFNC and APPSI were committed to the policy. BCFNC's commitment to the document is demonstrated in their ongoing lobbying for funds to implement the policy. APPSI leadership saw themselves as co-creators of the APF, and strongly endorsed the policy, even though they did not support the creation of IIG outside of the policy framework.

Successful implementation of the policy depended upon public PSIs taking ownership of the policy and utilizing resources from their base-budgets to implement it. Given the economic climate they were working in, some institutions were reluctant or unable to do this. However, it's clear that many institutions rose to the challenge and utilized their base-budgets to hire additional support staff for Aboriginal students, to create Aboriginal-specific facilities, to

develop courses and programs of special relevance to Aboriginal students, and to enter into affiliation agreements with Aboriginal partners. Institutional ownership is also apparent in the development of Aboriginal advisory committees, and the creation of institutional policies that facilitate Aboriginal participation.

Given the limited support that the policy provided to Aboriginal private institutions, it is not surprising that these institutions saw the APF as contributing to the continuation of their marginalization. As one participant remarked, “it’s a public document written for public [institutions]. So public institutions benefit, not the people on the ground” (RR10, para. 141).

### **5.3.5 Selective Implementation of Recommendations and Policy**

As discussed above, many of the recommendations advanced through the Green Report were incorporated into the APF, and provincial resources were directed to support their implementation. However, not all of the positions advanced in the Green Report were formalized through policy or implemented through practice.

The *Green Report* maintains that First Nations PSE is a federal responsibility that can only be devolved to the province with the consent of First Nations. The province, however, used the APF to affirm provincial jurisdiction over PSE for all British Columbians, including First Nations and other Aboriginal groups. After claiming this jurisdiction, the province asserted its authority through Cabinet approval of the APF and through the designation of two public Aboriginal-controlled institutions under the authority of the *College and Institute Act*. The NDP initially followed the practice initiated by the Socred government of exerting its authority by appointing Aboriginal representatives to institutional governing bodies. However, these were not Aboriginal-designated positions. When the positions were vacated they were often replaced by non-Aboriginal appointments.

At the institutional level, implementation of the APF was also selective. Unlike colleges and institutes, universities were not bound the APF. Despite this, universities did eventually embrace the intent of the document. Prior to 1995 when the APF was approved, the Ministry provided discretionary funding to PSIs to support Aboriginal initiatives. Once the APF was formalized, Aboriginal specific funding to PSIs decreased, and institutions were expected to utilize base funding to implement the APF. During the 1990s, PSIs were under considerable financial pressure, and many resisted utilizing base-budgets for Aboriginal-specific services and programs as necessitated by the APF. Eventually, the Ministry provided seed money through the ASPF to stimulate PSIs' Aboriginal initiatives. Overtime, many public PSIs directed a portion of their base-funding to support Aboriginal initiatives.

#### **5.3.6 Accountability**

The *Green Report* recommends that the Ministry and public PSIs be accountable to First Nations for spending on Aboriginal PSE and for Aboriginal participation rates. The NDPs accountability initiatives were aimed at making PSIs more accountable to government and the general public through reporting on key performance indicators, and the APF makes no mention of accountability to First Nations. In the APF, accountability refers to institutional governing bodies being representative of and sensitive to Aboriginal people, and the need to maintain educational quality and demonstrate student outcomes. As discussed above, the Ministry identified a number of accountability mechanisms, but there is limited information about the effectiveness of them. Significantly, no data is available on Aboriginal post-secondary participation, retention, or complete rates during this time frame.

#### **5.4 Summary**

When they came into power in 1991, the NDP inherited the *Report of the Provincial*

*Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners*, also known as the *Green Report*, a policy paper that was penned a year before the Socreds lost the election. The NDP demonstrated their commitment to Aboriginal PSE by continuing to selectively implement many of recommendation in the *Green Report*. The NDP further demonstrated their commitment to Aboriginal education when Cabinet approved the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, a document clearly influenced by the *Green Report*. The most innovative aspect of the policy, the public designation of Aboriginal institutions, was implemented when IIG and NVIT became public institutions under the *College and Institute Act*.

While implementation of the APF was not without its challenges, the policy has been responsible for significant changes. By 2001, the end of the NDP's governing reign, most of BC's public PSIs had responded to the policy framework with enhanced Aboriginal student services and programming, and entered into affiliation agreements with Aboriginal organizations and institutions. Aboriginal engagement with PSIs had also been facilitated through the creation of Aboriginal advisory committees and Aboriginal representation on institutional governing bodies. The policy, however, did little to support small Aboriginal private institutions, and furthermore tended to privilege BC First Nations.

Following the election of May 2001, the NDP were replaced by the Liberals. Shortly after gaining power, the Liberals turned their attention to revising the APF. This revision was place on hold, and the Ministry refocused its efforts on developing and implementing the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*. The next chapter will explore these initiatives in depth.

## **Chapter 6: The Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan**

The May 2001 provincial election brought the Liberals to power under the leadership of Gordon Campbell, who continued as Premier until March, 2011. This chapter explores the ongoing development and implementation of Aboriginal post-secondary education (PSE) policy under Gordon Campbell's Liberals. It begins with a look at the context in which the policies emerged, including the Liberal's evolving relationship with Aboriginal people, the growing importance of Aboriginal rights and title to BC's fluctuating economy, and PSE under the Liberals. After setting the context, this chapter explores developments in Aboriginal PSE, turning first to attempts to revise the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* before focusing on the development and implementation of the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*. As with previous chapters, the chapter closes with a discussion of emerging themes.

### **6.1 The Context**

#### **6.1.1 The Province's Relationship with Aboriginal People**

Following the 2001 election, massive cross-government reorganization resulted in the elimination of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. Treaties became the responsibility of the Ministry of the Attorney General's Treaty Negotiations Office. In January of 2002, government announced wide-ranging restraint measures. While budgets for the Ministries of Education, Advanced Education (AVED) and Health were frozen, other Ministries received massive cuts (averaging 35%) and there was substantial job loss within the public service. The budget for the Treaty Negotiations Office was reduced by 40% (British Columbia Office of the Auditor General, 2006; McKee, 2009; Phillips, 2010).



During the election campaign, Campbell promised to hold a highly controversial referendum on treaty principles. The May 2002 referendum posed eight yes or no questions on treaty negotiation principles. All but one of the questions were based on government's existing negotiation positions. Question six, however, proposed a municipal-style government for Aboriginal people, with delegated powers from the federal and provincial governments. This was a divergence from the position that self-government is an inherent Aboriginal right, a position supported by many First Nations and the federal government, and negotiated into the Nisga'a treaty. While only a third of the ballots were returned, over 80% of the voters supported the Liberals position on treaty principles, giving the Liberals a strong mandate for their minimal self-government position (McKee, 2009).

In late 2002, the focus on treaty negotiations shifted to a "results-based" focus on a few tables where the possibility of final agreements seemed most likely and could be supported by the limited resources available to the Treaty office, as well as on incremental treaties that allow treaties to be built over time (British Columbia Office of the Auditor General, 2006; McKee, 2009; Phillips, 2010).

During Campbell's reign, only modest progress was made at treaty tables. Two treaties were completed: the Tsawwassen treaty came into effect in April 2009 and the Maa-nulth treaty came into effect in April 2011 (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 2010; British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation). Three other groups, the Lheidli T'enneh, Sliammon, and Yale First Nations, negotiated final agreements that await ratification.<sup>43</sup> Two incremental treaties were signed in 2009 with the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation and the Klahoose

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<sup>43</sup> A ratification of the final agreement by the Lheidli T'enneh membership failed in 2007, but another ratification vote will likely be held in the future.

First Nation (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2009, March 5; British Columbia Office of the Premier & British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2008, November 13). Movement on these tables was at the expense of other treaty negotiations where a lack of resources and even up-to-date information on the government's treaty position has frustrated many First Nations involved with the process. By 2010, there were 19 inactive treaty tables (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 2010; British Columbia Office of the Auditor General, 2006; McKee, 2009).

A shift in the province's relationship with First Nations followed court decisions which held that the Crown had a duty to consult and accommodate First Nations when Aboriginal rights and title were infringed upon. The 2002 BC Court of Appeals decision in *Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. Ringstad* found that the province had a duty to consult with First Nations before authorizing projects that might infringe on their interests. That same year, the BC Court of Appeal ruled on *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)* and found that both the province and Weyerhaeuser had a duty to consult, and accommodate, when development might infringe on title, even when that title is yet to be proven. Both cases were appealed in the Supreme Court (Harris, 2009; McKee, 2009; R. T. Price, 2009).

In November 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada decisions on *Haida* and *Taku River Tlingit* confirmed the Crown's responsibility to consult with and accommodate First Nations interests, even when Aboriginal rights and title have not been proven. The level of consultation and accommodation necessary would vary depending on the strength of the claim, and participation in the BC treaty process is evidence of support of Aboriginal rights and title. In *Haida*, the court found that the duty to consult did not extend to third parties like Weyerhaeuser.

The court also promoted the adoption of interim measures outside of the treaty process to address these sorts of issues (Harris, 2009; McKee, 2009; R. T. Price, 2009).

A shift in the Liberals' relationships with First Nations is evident as early as 2003 when the Throne Speech acknowledged and apologized for the province's long history of colonial policies. The speech also stated that First Nations should benefit from economic development, as well as improvements to health care and education, and announced shared forestry revenue with First Nations in exchange for certainty (Wood & Rossiter, 2011). In addition, the Throne Speech recognized Aboriginal rights and title: "The future will be forged in partnership with First Nations — not in denial of their history, heritage and culture. It will be won in recognition of First Nation's constitutional rights and title — not lost for another generation because we failed to act" (cited in British Columbia, Office of the Auditor General, 2006, p. 45).

After the speech, Campbell became much more accessible to the Aboriginal leadership, and the Aboriginal leadership utilized meetings to change Campbell's thinking about BC's relationship with Aboriginal people. A representative of an Aboriginal political organization recalled:

We had successive court decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada that said we need to see reconciliation; we need to see the honour of the Crown reflected. As a Premier, I'm not sure if he's ever read a court decision in his life. He relies on his Attorney General or the lawyers from the Attorney General's office to provide advice, in the best interest of the province, granted. But in our discussions with him, ...[in the Spring of 2004], one of the things that personally I did was I brought photocopies of the court cases, excerpts of *Delgamuukw*, and his [Campbell's] court case against the Nisga'a, and others. And I started taking passages from that. Here's what the Chief Justice said. You can read it. My own view is he started seeing that he just didn't need to listen to advice from the Attorney General, but in fact here is my own independent analysis and thinking about what the Chief Justice wrote in this case, or a Supreme Court judge wrote in this case. You saw I think in that a light being shone on those ideas, the truth of what is there. And I think he had to grapple with that.... What he said is we've been losing all these court cases; we've got to do things differently. And so we suggested to him, here's how we can do things differently. Here's what you can do. Recognize that we exist. Every time we end up in court, his lawyers file documents that say we don't exist. His lawyers file

documents that say we have no rights until we can prove it. And we said that's a fundamentally racist approach. It's self-serving for the government. It contravenes international human rights commitments and obligations of Canada, and you cannot continue to expand on that approach. It's so foul in its approach that it needs to be reconsidered. I think that he started seeing that. (RR 17, para. 91)

The February 2005 Throne Speech announced the Liberal's five "Great Goals for a Golden Decade." The goals are as follows:

1. Make BC the best-educated, most literate place in North America.
2. Make BC a model for healthy living and physical fitness.
3. Build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk, and seniors.
4. Lead the world in sustainable environmental management.
5. Lead Canada in job creation. (British Columbia Office of the Premier, 2005, February 8)

These goals formed the Liberal platform for its reelection in May of 2005, and guided Liberal initiatives throughout the rest of the decade. They were also integrated into *The New Relationship*, a document crafted by Campbell and the First Nations Leadership Council<sup>44</sup> in the spring of 2005. This document promotes relationships between First Nations and the province "based on respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights" (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation & British Columbia, Treaty Negotiations Office, 2005, p. 1) in order resolve title and jurisdiction issues. The document also addresses socio-economic concerns including education, children and families, health, and the environment.

In June 2005, treaty negotiations moved out of the Attorney General's Office and became the responsibility of the newly formed Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (McKee, 2009; Wood & Rossiter, 2011). In addition to treaty negotiations, Aboriginal Relations

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<sup>44</sup> The First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the BC Assembly of First Nations formalized their alliance as the First Nations Leadership Council in March 2005.

and Reconciliation was responsible for working across government to ensure that Aboriginal people benefited from the “Five Great Goals” (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2005).

In discussing the changes evident between the time of the referendum and the *New Relationship*, one participant remarked:

When you look at it, again going back to the referendum, when you consider what a significant change it is from where that government was at, it really was a gutsy move that you make a decision pretty well overnight that you are going to strike out in a completely new direction. The potential for that to have gone sideways, without support of the people in his caucus, to be able to go there, I would have thought, was pretty significant. He [Campbell] must have been doing an extraordinary job behind closed doors in moving the hearts and minds of his caucus [and convincing them] that they needed to take a different approach. (RR13b, para. 86)

In his conversations with the Aboriginal leadership, Campbell brought forward the idea of having a First Ministers’ meeting to address Aboriginal issues, and he gained the support of provincial and national Aboriginal leadership (RR 17, para. 91). In November 2005, Campbell hosted, and emerged as a leader in, the First Minister’s and Aboriginal leaders’ meeting in Kelowna, BC, that culminated in the *Kelowna Accord*.<sup>45</sup> The accord proposed to eliminate broad-ranging socio-economic disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in ten years (Patterson, 2006).

The same day the *Kelowna Accord* was signed (November 25, 2005), Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council signed the *Transformative Change Accord*. Like the *New Relationship*, this accord aimed to establish new relationships between First Nations, Canada, and the Province based on respect and recognition; to reconcile Aboriginal

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<sup>45</sup> Formally known as First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders: Strengthening the Relationship and Closing the Gap.

rights with the rights of the Crown; and to address socio-economic disparities within 10 years (Government of British Columbia, Government of Canada, & Leadership Council Representing First Nations of British Columbia, 2005, November 25; Patterson, 2006). While Canada's commitment to the *Kelowna* and *Transformative Change* accords ended with Paul Martin's defeat in the 2006 federal election, BC continues to pursue the objectives of the *Transformative Change Accord* (McKee, 2009).

In May of 2006, the province and Métis Nation British Columbia<sup>46</sup> (MNBC) signed the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*, a watered down version of the *Transformative Change Accord*. Despite the 2003 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the *R. v. Powley* case, which recognized the existence of constitutionally protected Métis rights (M. Stevenson, 2008), the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord* fails to recognize Métis rights but promotes relationships of "respect, responsibility and sharing" and working collaborative to address socio-economic issues (Métis Nation British Columbia & British Columbia, 2006, May 12). Nevertheless, the MNBC signed it because they were hopeful that the *Accord* would assist in addressing pressing socio-economic issues facing Métis people. One participant reflected on the difficulty of this choice:

So we need the rights-based agenda, but we can't let it hold up the social and economic issues. And at what cost are we going to wait for a rights-based agenda to get to this? Our leadership says, do we spend all this time and resources focusing just purely on fighting the courts and getting rights that costs endless amounts of money that we may or may not have? Or can we find a way to recognize that this is our rights and we'll get there and build the social programs and services that we need to help heal communities and heal people one family at a time. And we've made the choice to say look, we're not saying that there aren't Métis rights. We'll fight those fights when we have to. But we've got an agenda now, and we're going to try and heal the social and economic. Because the majority of the people we work with deal with - you know we have 35 Métis community associations well established here, and 99% of those people want to know they have good

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<sup>46</sup> MNBC was established in 1996 and represents 37 Métis Chartered Communities in British Columbia.

paying jobs, they can take care of their families. They don't want their kids in care. These are real hard hitting issues. How do you balance those needs? And those are huge.

But I really think the stuff we're doing here in BC is really innovative. It's not a trade-off. It's not saying the rights-based agenda isn't important. It's saying that's going to take us a long time, Métis rights in BC. So I guess it is really very important to recognize that it's definitely needed. We don't have time to wait for the feds and the province to banter back and forth about who really has jurisdiction over us. We just need to work together. So we work with the feds and the province and we try to make it work. Right now we have to deal with real big issues. Those aren't easy. I guess it's a choice we make. (RR08, para. 49-50)

As a result of *the New Relationship*, policy tools emerged to address First Nations land and resource issues outside of the treaty process. For example, in 2002, four short-term forestry agreements gave First Nations access to timber. By 2010, there were 61 agreements that provided access to timber, and another 145 agreements that provided access to both timber and revenue sharing. In 2010, the province introduced the *Forest Consultation and Revenue Sharing Agreements*; by September 2011, 59 First Nations had signed agreements (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation; British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Mines and Lands, 2010).

The province also entered into *Strategic Engagement Agreements* with the Nanwakollos (2009), Tsilhqot'in (2009), Ktunaxa (2010), and Tkau River Tlingit (2011) Nations to support economic development through increased certainty, consultation, and accommodation arrangements, as well as to facilitate treaty-making (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, n.d.-e). Furthermore, *Economic and Community Development Agreements* between the province and the McLeod Lake Indian Band (2010) and the Stk'emlupsemc (2010) ensure that mineral tax revenue will be shared with the First Nations (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, n.d.-a). The 2010 Doig River, Prophet River and West Moberly First Nations agreements involve land planning and

management and revenue sharing from oil, gas, mining, and forestry developments in Treaty 8 territory (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, n.d.-d).

In collaboration with Aboriginal governments and organizations, the province also undertook a wide number of initiatives to address issues related to education and training, housing, health, and economic development. Highlights of the *New Relationship* initiatives related to education and training include Bill 11, the *New Relationship Trust Act* (2006), which provided \$100 million for capacity building for BC First Nations and Bill 46, the *First Nations Education Act* (2007), which recognized the educational jurisdiction of BC First Nations on First Nations land (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2011a; British Columbia Ministry of Education & First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2007, November 22). The 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, which will be discussed in detail below, was developed to “fulfill the post-secondary component of the Transformative Change Accord” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b).

The *New Relationship* was also signaled by a number of more symbolic actions important in the ongoing recognition of, honoring of, and relationship building with First Nations (Abele, LaPointe, & Prince, 2005). The October 2007 appointment of Steven L. Point (from Skowkale First Nation) as British Columbia's Lieutenant Governor was said to be “a symbolic and meaningful commitment by governments in Canada to build better relationships with First Nations” (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2008). In addition, historic paintings on the walls of BC's legislature that were demeaning to Aboriginal people were finally covered up in 2008 (Wood & Rossiter, 2011). In 2010, ceremonies were held in Old Massett and Victoria to mark the renaming of Queen Charlotte Islands as Haida



Gwaii, and the creation of the term Salish Sea to refer to coastal waters, including Puget Sound and the Juan de Fuca Strait, or the Strait of Georgia (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2011a).

In 2008, the province began working with BC's First Nations leaders on the *Recognition and Reconciliation Act*. This proposed legislation was to have recognized the existence of Aboriginal rights and title, facilitated shared decision-making over lands and resources, and enabled revenue and benefit sharing. The 2009 Throne Speech announced the government's intention to create the act; however, there was significant opposition from Liberal MLAs, business, First Nations, and others. By the end of August 2009 this "cornerstone" initiative of the *New Relationship* was dead (McKee, 2009; Wood & Rossiter, 2011).

### **6.1.2 The Economy**

While BC's economy had been relatively weak during the late 1990s, by 2000, BC was enjoying modest economic growth, and the Liberals inherited a budget surplus of \$1 billion from the NDP. At the time the Liberals took power, BC had been impacted by the weak US economy, which worsened in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001. However, by 2002 the economy had recovered as a result of international demand for commodities, particularly energy, metals, and agricultural products (McMartin, 2009; Phillips, 2010), and the economy remained strong until the latter half of 2008, when the US housing market crisis triggered a global recession. BC's economy only grew 0.2% in 2008 and declined by 2.3% in 2009. Manufacturing, forestry, wood products, and residential construction were particularly hard hit. A strong real estate market and Olympic-related projects helped to mitigate the situation, and by 2010, BC's economy was on the upswing due to growth in resource industries and tourism associated with the 2010 Olympics. Despite an increasingly diversified economy and urbanized

population, resource industries continue to be important contributors to British Columbia's economy and the provincial revenue. While the economic significance of forestry has declined, energy and mining have become increasingly important (British Columbia Ministry of Finance, 2010; 2011; Hoberg, 2010; McMartin, 2009; Phillips, 2010).

Thus, certainty over land and resources continues to be of growing importance to the province's economy, as noted by BC's Auditor General: "There has been increasing recognition that the lack of treaties is detrimental not only to First Nations, but also to the province's economic development and social well-being" (British Columbia Office of the Auditor General, 2006, p. 1). A 2004 Mustel Group study found that the lack of treaties caused one in five BC businesses to reduce investments, while one in four businesses would increase investment if treaties were signed (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 2009, November 18). A 2009 study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers confirmed earlier findings that showed negotiating treaties would have a positive economic impact for First Nations and all British Columbians, and that the quicker treaties are signed, the sooner economic rewards will be received (British Columbia Treaty Commission & Grant Thornton Management Consultants, 2004; British Columbia Treaty Commission & PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2009).

While progress on the treaty front was minimal during Campbell's reign, a significant number of non-treaty measures were used to ensure a more stable climate for resource development. According to BC's auditor general, "as treaty negotiations continue, there is no longer a need for First Nations in negotiations to stand up for their rights using blockades and other measures to halt the harvesting of trees and other resources from their traditional territory" (British Columbia Office of the Auditor General, 2006, p. 39). The same can be said of the non-treaty policy tools that developed as a result of the *New Relationship*. However, while many

Aboriginal groups entered into agreements that facilitated resource development, Aboriginal opposition did not disappear.

Between 2001 and 2007 there were sporadic demonstrations in Secwepmec Territory, northwest of Kamloops, protesting the Sun Peaks Resort development (Alcantara & Kent, 2010; Burrows, 2005). In 2004, some 1,500 First Nations from all over British Columbia gathered in front of the legislature to protest the infringement on Aboriginal rights and title by government and industry (Meissner, 2004). In March and April of 2005, forestry activities on Haida Gwaii were shut down as the Haida and their allies joined forces in the “Island Spirit Uprising,” a response to Weyerhaeuser’s forestry practices. This movement ended when the province passed an order-in-council to protect culturally significant areas in Haida Gwaii (Ramsay, 2005).

The Tse Keh Nay Nations (Takla Lake, Tsay Keh Dene, and Kwadacha First Nations) utilized a number of tactics, including a public information strategy, annual spiritual gatherings, and participation in an environmental assessment in their opposition to the proposed Kemess North mine, which was later rejected by a joint federal-provincial panel in 2007 (Laplane, 2009; Paulsen, 2007). In the northern interior, Tsilhqot’in First Nations demonstrated against the development of the Prosperity Mine, and Tsilhqot’in’s opposition was a major consideration in the federal government’s rejection of the project (Ebner, 2010; Hitchcock, 2010). Throughout BC, energy developments are becoming increasingly contentious, as demonstrated by the growing opposition to Enbridge’s Northern Gateway project (Kimmet, 2010, March 23; Thomson, 2010).

Given that resource development continues to be a major contributor to both BC’s economy and the province’s revenue, there are significant economic incentives to resolve Aboriginal land issues. Pierre Gratton, President of the Mining Association of Canada, has stated

that "the future of mining in British Columbia will be shaped by no issue greater than how we relate to First Nations" (Hunter, 2011). The same can be said about all resource development projects in the province.

Changing demographics are also having an impact on BC's economy. With fewer young people entering the labour force due to declining birth rates in the general population, and the imminent retirement of baby boomers, there have been growing concerns about labour shortages. Increasingly the young and growing Aboriginal population, if educated, was seen as a small but significant part of the solution to address these labour shortages (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009b; Sharpe, Arsenault, & Lapointe, 2007, November; Sharpe, Arsenault, Lapointe, & Cowan, 2009). A representative from an Aboriginal education organization reflected upon a presentation by economist David Foot, who stresses the need to recognize that educated Aboriginal youth could fill workplace needs:

he was talking about the youth and the Aboriginal youth coming up and you know the aging work force, therefore needing to get more people in the workforce. But look to the Aboriginal youth as people to put into the workforce. We obviously need more educated people, therefore making sure that the Aboriginal individuals are being able to participate in that. (RR02, para 107)

As economic development initiatives develop within Aboriginal communities, so will the need for a trained workforce, and Aboriginal employers will also look to the growing Aboriginal youth population to fill human resource needs (RR02, para. 119).

A former Ministry staff member discussed the possible contributions to BC's economy by a trained Aboriginal workforce:

The changing demographics, our aging population, the real need to recognize that, I guess this is more economic, but we have Aboriginal people who need to be much more involved in and contributing to our economy. The demographics show that [the Aboriginal population] is where the young people are growing and coming from. It's very important for us to recognize that and make sure we have the policies and programs in

place to maximize and ensure that Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal people can be a part and help us move forward both economically and socially. (RR 18, para. 38)

The link between the economy and PSE was strengthened in 2008 when AVED was recreated as the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. This new Ministry was to play “a key role in creating a prosperous British Columbia where the economy is driven by a dynamic, educated and skilled workforce” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009a, p. 6). To respond to changing demographics and labor force needs, the Ministry promoted greater educational opportunities for underrepresented groups, particularly Aboriginal people.

Dramatic and long-standing examples of under representation in the labour force are found in almost every one of BC’s Aboriginal communities. This population is not only underrepresented in the labour market, but also in post-secondary participation. In 2006, unemployment among working-age Aboriginal people was 3 times higher than among the non-Aboriginal population (13.1 per cent compared with 4.6 per cent). Increasing the participation of Aboriginal people in education (and in related employment opportunities) will not only help fill labour and skill shortages in the provincial economy, but will also have a positive effect on individuals, families and their communities and on the overall economic and social prosperity of the province. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009a, p. 9)

### **6.1.3 Post-Secondary Education**

While the Ministry’s overall budget was frozen during the Liberals’ first term, PSE did not escape significant reductions. Between 2002-03 and 2004-05, institutional budgets were decreased between 1.6 and 8% (Fisher et al., 2012). A number of agencies established by the NDP, including the Centre for Curriculum Technology and Transfer and the Centre for Education Information Standards and Services, were shut down. The Open Learning Agency was eliminated and replaced in part by the BC Campus. PSIs also underwent change. The Technical University of BC was shut down and became Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) Surrey Campus in 2002. In 2005, Okanagan University College was split in two, becoming the University of

British Columbia, Okanagan (UBC-O) and Okanagan College, and the University College of the Cariboo was recreated as Thompson Rivers University (TRU), a “special purpose” teaching university (Cowin, 2007; Fisher et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2009).

Bill C-28, the *Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act* was passed, undermining collective bargaining rights in the college and institute sector by giving employers the right to establish class sizes and student enrollment, to assign the use of educational technology and online-teaching, and to exert greater control over faculty work, professional development, and vacation time.

Students began bearing an increased load for the cost of their education when tuition fees were deregulated between 2002 and 2005, resulting in dramatic increases in tuition fees, particularly in professional programs. Funding for a number of student programs, including work study, cooperative education, and graduate student assistants was eliminated. In 2004, all provincial student grants were eliminated, and loan remission programs for those in select health care programs were instituted. In 2005, with funds from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, some grant funding for low-income students was reinstated (Duffy, 2003; Fisher et al., 2012).

The privatization of PSE was further facilitated in April 2002 through the passing of the *Degree Authorization Act*, which allows private universities to grant degrees, public colleges to grant applied degrees, and public university-colleges to grant applied Masters. In May 2002, legislation was passed to establish BC’s first private university, the Sea to Sky University (now known as Quest University Canada). The following year, the Degree Quality Assessment Board was established to review proposals from private and out-of-province public institutions that want to offer degree programs in BC. By 2011, there were 17 private or out-of-province public

degree-granting institutions with a total student population of 7,000 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012, n.d.-a; Dennison & Schütze, 2004; Duffy, 2003).

During their second term, the Liberals' Five Great Goals shaped the direction of PSE. Once again, tuition fees were regulated, with increases limited to match the inflation rate. Government also committed to enlarging the capacity of the post-secondary system by expanding facilities and increasing student seats by 25,000 by 2010 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2005, September).

In 2007, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) took over the Institute of Indigenous Government (IIG). In 2008, five more provincial institutions joined TRU as teaching universities: University College of the Fraser Valley became the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), Kwantlen University College became Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Malaspina University College became Vancouver Island University (VIU), Capilano College became Capilano University, and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design became Emily Carr University of Art and Design. According to Minister Coell, university designation for these institutions provides greater "clarity of purpose" and recognizes program quality, "allowing these institutions to market themselves more effectively across Canada and around the world" (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2008). This institutional restructuring was followed by a capital investment of \$2.1 billion to develop campus facilities. This included some 50 buildings and seven new campuses for: TRU, UFV, VIU, Kwantlen, Emily Carr, and UBC – O (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012).

## **6.2 The Policy Process**

When the Liberals first came into power, Aboriginal PSE was apparently of little interest. The Ministry's *2001/02 Annual Report: A New Era Update*, makes no mention of Aboriginal

education, and outside of acknowledging the funding of two public Aboriginal institutions, the Service Plan<sup>47</sup> for 2002/2003 – 2004/2005 is mute on Aboriginal education (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002a, 2002c). Funding for the Aboriginal Special Project Fund (ASPF) continued, but decreased from \$1.9 million in 2000/01 to \$1.3 million in 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04. In 2004/05, the ASPF funding increased slightly to \$1.5 million (Human Capital Strategies, 2005). Aboriginal students benefited somewhat from the Liberal's expansion of medical programs and targeted spaces in social work and childcare (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003).

In January 2002, the Ministry reorganized and downsized. Three branches previously responsible for universities and institutes, colleges, and university-colleges were combined in a single Public Institutions Branch while the Aboriginal Programs Unit was disbanded. By this time, Jeff Smith, Manager of the Aboriginal Programs Unit, had left the Ministry, and in February 2002 Karen Abbott, Aboriginal Coordinator, also left the Ministry (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002, May 9-10). According to one participant, "there was a shift in government, a big shift. You saw an Aboriginal unit under a director with Aboriginal staff that suddenly evaporated. And so there was a long time when there was no Aboriginal anything in government" (RR12, para. 83).

Much of the Aboriginal education capacity that the Ministry had developed during the 1990s disappeared with the dissolution of the Aboriginal Programs Unit. Furthermore, the educational policy capacity within the Ministry diminished as a result of

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<sup>47</sup> Amendments to the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* require that Ministries produce three year plans, which are much like business plans and include goals and objectives, performance measures, and three-year targets. Annual Service Plan Reports replaced annual reports and provided information on activities and outcomes of programs and initiatives.



the tendency to recruit a lot of people out of treasury boards, as important as those skills are... It became more about the management of the money than it was about the longer term educational policy and direction of [the] Ministry.... I do see it getting better, particularly over the last two or three years, when Phillip Steenkamp<sup>48</sup> was there too. But it will take some time to move that in a different direction and increase the area specific policy capacity with the Ministry within a number of areas, including this one [Aboriginal education]. (RR13b, para. 92)

In 2002, Juanita Berkhout, a non-Aboriginal person who had previously worked with the Treaty Negotiations Office, was hired as the coordinator of Aboriginal programs, and was the only Ministry staff member dedicated to working on Aboriginal education (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002, May 9-10). Her efficacy, however, was challenged by a lack of support from more senior Ministry staff. According to one participant, “Juanita Berkhout at the Ministry has really been trying to make a difference. But again needs that support from further up the food chain to move some of the things along” (RR13, para. 53).

In addition to eliminating the Aboriginal Programs Unit, targeted funding for Aboriginal coordinators was rolled into the institutions’ block funding, giving institutions the discretion to maintain or eliminate these positions (British Columbia First Nations Coordinators Council, 2002, February 26; British Columbia First Nations Coordinators, 2002, May 9-10). A former Ministry staff member remembered that “at that time it was felt that the institutions had an understanding of what was required in their communities or regions, and that [block funding] was the best approach” (RR18, para. 52).

In meetings with the Ministry, the British Columbia First Nations Coordinators (BCFNC) Council raised concerns that without targeted funding, “institutions may be inclined to neglect Aboriginal education. Not necessarily because institutions are unconcerned about Aboriginal

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<sup>48</sup> SteenKamp was Deputy Minister of Advanced Education from October 2003 to June 2005, and again between April 2010 and June 2011.

education, but because institutions are focused on getting the most from their limited resources” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Public Institutions Branch, 2002, June 12). Unfortunately, these concerns were not addressed.

Yet there were pressing concerns related to Aboriginal education that needed to be dealt with. One of those concerns was that “the Aboriginal population and the youth are growing astronomically, especially in BC” (RR02, para 103). Between 2001 and 2006, the Aboriginal population grew from 170,020 to 196,075, an increase of 15.3%. During this same time, the non-Aboriginal population only grew by 4.9%. Moreover, the Aboriginal population was relatively much younger; the median age for the Aboriginal population during this time was 28, compared to the median age of 41 for the non-Aboriginal population. Over 28.2% of the Aboriginal population were under 15 years, compared to 16.1% of the non-Aboriginal population (BC Stats, [2005]; Stock, 2009).

A former Ministry employee remarked that because of the implications for the number of Aboriginal people seeking access to PSIs, and for institutions’ abilities to accommodate those students, this “phenomenal growth” in the Aboriginal population “cannot be ignored” (RR05, para. 41).

With the possibility of more treaties being signed, capacity building has remained an issue, and PSE has been seen as critical for this development. A representative from an Aboriginal post-secondary organization spoke to this concern:

I think we are close around more treaties going to be in place. We have a big issue around capacity.... This is where education comes in. The people who are going to be involved in being able to self-govern and to be able to be leaders in their community do need to have the post-secondary education, the ability to be in those communities, be attracted back to the communities to be able to assist in moving forward. I think post-secondary education has a big role to play in that area. (RR18, para. 40)

Successful completion in the K-12 system has continued to “one of the biggest challenges” (RR05, para. 43) in Aboriginal PSE. Despite modest improvements in graduation rates, Aboriginal students still lag far behind non-Aboriginal students. “If we can’t get Aboriginal learners through the K to 12 system, then we can’t get them to the post-secondary level” (RR05, para. 43).

Escalating tuition fees have been identified as another barrier to Aboriginal post-secondary participation. A former Ministry staff member noted, “the whole policy of allowing institutions and universities to increase tuition to the rate they have has really ... made post-secondary education again the bailiwick of privileged families” (RR04, para. 161) and dramatically decreased participation of Aboriginal people as well as those from lower or middle income levels (RR04, para. 161). A representative from an Aboriginal political organization spoke about how unregulated tuition fees perpetuate intergenerational privilege and inequality:

I don’t think post-secondary education should be treated the way it is now, as a privilege. I think it should be a right. I think post-secondary education should be open to all students. I don’t think it should just be open just to those who can afford it. People say it brings the best people in and it’s what we need for our society. I don’t subscribe to that approach. I think it’s narrow and self-serving to certain groups. And those certain groups have largely driven public policy in this country and this province for a long time, and I think those policies should be challenged. It’s a bit of an elitist approach to education. And if you have the parents and the grandparents and the pedigree that has allowed them to be in university and college and access to the wealth that that provides, then it’s in their interests to perpetuate a system like that in the name of individual success.... It doesn’t really jive with the pattern of Indigenous thinking that’s more egalitarian in its approach. Whereas out there in the public, it’s not that. It’s very competitive. And then you have clash of philosophies or a clash of cultures. We have a cultural thinking that doesn’t jive with the major dominant societies thinking. So in that clash, who wins and who loses? It’s our students who lose in the end. (RR17, para. 23)

Another participant from a post-secondary education organization recognized that tuition levels influence the decision to attend or not attend post-secondary, but felt that low tuition rates

effectively transfer wealth to the middle and upper-middle classes who attend university, and that some of the money raised through tuition increases “could have been much more effectively spent on targeted initiatives to increase the level of participation by groups of people that have up until that point been relatively underrepresented” (RR13b, para. 100).

### **6.2.1 Consultations Processes**

Like other Ministries, AVED embarked on a deregulation plan in the early 2000s with the intention of reviewing all policy and legislation and reducing red tape by one third by 2005 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002c). In 2002, the Ministry began to review and revise the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (APF). A former Ministry staff member remarked that:

It was all a part of that process of looking at funding differently, looking at the Ministries relationship with post-secondary institutes in a different way, i.e. less directive, looking at a block grant. And that then translated to... Aboriginal education. Somewhere here in the Ministry the view was we needed to take a look at the [Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training] Policy Framework now in this new political context. (RR05, para. 31)

It was anticipated that this policy work would be completed early in 2003 (British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services, Aboriginal Directorate, 2002, October).

#### **6.2.1.1 The Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework**

In preparation for redrafting the APF, the Ministry consulted with other Ministries, including the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services (MCAWS); the Treaty Negotiations Office, “but not really a whole lot,” (RR05, para. 65); and social Ministries, including Education and Human Resources, in order “to get a handle on, from their perspective, what they were doing in the area of Aboriginal policy, just to ensure from a policy perspective

that there was some level of consistency so there weren't any surprises" (RR05, para. 65).

Additionally, the Ministry undertook a literature review on Aboriginal PSE. Two key documents they reviewed were the *Green Report* and Malatest's (2002, May) *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates* (RR05 para. 67).

The key external group that the Ministry consulted with during the drafting process was the BCFNC and their Council. According to a former Ministry employee,

I realized that obviously this is one of the key groups that I need to be speaking with.... The coordinators were the pulse; they are the front line workers. They understand the issues more than anybody. They were so willing to allow me, allow the Ministry, to use their process as a means for getting input and ideas for ideas of how to work this first draft of the policy framework.... We were working with the Coordinators Council, and in fact with the Coordinators group. If I recall correctly we did provide to several folks initial confidential versions. (RR05, para. 71)

However, developing a policy that met the expectation of the BCFNC, while maintaining government's position on institutional autonomy by being less directive, proved challenging. A former Ministry staff member recalled that

Everybody [in the BCFNC], while being very respectful, was saying you're missing the mark here, you're not getting it. I was getting it. But you know one of the challenges was at that point in time, being someone who is working for the Ministry, and also being non-Aboriginal, and having a fairly good sense of what the response was going to be. It was a challenging situation to be in.... The whole issue around autonomy, being less prescriptive was something I was asked to do as well [by the Ministry]. To try to find that balance. Again, in this part of the consultation with the Coordinators group, they were very understanding and respectful of that. But of course they needed to do their job too and say no, just keep pushing. And my role as the Ministry person was to bring that message back and try to be a facilitator. My role became more facilitator and trying through those channels, in my position here at the Ministry, trying to work my way up through the system to help folks here understand the implications. (RR05, para. 73)

The BCFNC continued to raise concerns about the draft policy, but they were unable to change the direction the Ministry was taking. A former Ministry staff member remembered engaging in a number of consultation rounds with the BCFNC, "and each time we tried to get it a little bit

better, a bit closer, but at the same time maintaining this balancing act around this issue of autonomy and such” (RR05, para. 75).

In November 2003, the Ministry released the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework Draft for Discussion* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003, November 14) and circulated it to PSIs, Aboriginal representatives for the K-12 system, and Aboriginal political organizations (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2006, March 1).

Comments on the draft were frequently critical and pointed out the need for stronger, more directive language; a more wholistic educational vision; targeted funding to facilitate implementation; a coordinated approach to collecting systems-level data; and a broader range of performance indicators linked to the AVED’s accountability framework. In addition, commentators highlighted gaps in the document around strengthening transitions from K-12 to post-secondary and post-secondary to work; addressing the needs of Aboriginal graduate students; building Aboriginal research capacity; updating “best practices” examples; and supporting Aboriginal controlled PSIs (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2004, January 9; 2006, March 1; First Nations House of Learning, [2004]).

Aboriginal private post-secondary organizations were particularly concerned that the draft policy discouraged the development of new public Aboriginal PSIs, and directed them to seek degree-granting or university status through the *Degree Authorizations Act* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003, November 14). According to a representative of a private Aboriginal PSI,

The province wanted this to die. So I think that’s still there. It’s very much still there. We haven’t been declared [a public institution] after 13 years of success, and still going onto success. You know we are going to do a master’s degree and a PhD degree in Nisga’a Studies. Because that’s our claim to fame, that’s what it evolved to be. We could do it

with the grace of the province or not. So I think that there is still a lot of ill will [towards Aboriginal private institutions], and I think that's manifest in the document on behalf of the province, unfortunately. It's a very sad reality, but it's true. (RR10, para. 93)

To gain broader input on the draft policy, the Ministry invited representatives from public and Aboriginal private PSIs, Aboriginal K-12, Aboriginal political organizations, the BCFNC, Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holders, band education coordinators, as well as representatives from provincial ministries and the federal government to meet. On February 23, 2004, some 150 people gathered at the First Nations Longhouse at UBC for this conference, called "*Issues and Opportunities for the Future of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training in British Columbia*" (Corrigan, 2004).

The conference was based on an Open Space approach, through which participants identified agenda items and then self-selected into groups to address these items (Corrigan, 2004). From the perspective of an Aboriginal coordinator, while this process was successful in generating discussion on a wide variety of topics (in total 29) from a number of perspectives, it provided little direction:

It was an interesting focus, but it left things wide open because one of the things that came out of it is that we have a number of really divergent trajectories in terms of interests from Aboriginal communities. The Indian bands/First Nations whose interests are mainly status Indians on-reserve that are BC originated. You have another group that is more focused on Métis peoples. Another group that's focused with urban issues. And there's a lot of places where people sort of fall into the cracks. People that sort of identify with multiple origins like Métis and Indian or non-status Indian, urban Aboriginal versus rural, smaller urban centres, larger urban centers. All of these things. When you get people from the entire region of BC into one room, everybody's talking as if they know what the problems are or what the issues are involving Aboriginal people. And it's true, they do for the group they are involved with, for what they see is challenges that the group they're involved with is facing. But all these different groups that are out there often have different issues and have different solutions for solving it. So it's difficult to bring all these people together and say this is the definitive answer for all Aboriginal people in the region of BC. So that first meeting I felt was brought in all of these different perspectives and views and really didn't come out with any documentation that sort of

teased out the information and came out with any definitive focus on the issues for these very different groups in the province. (RR01, para. 39)

A representative from an Aboriginal private institution reported being “very upset about that forum because they invited us to critique, we came prepared to critique, but they wouldn’t accept critiques. It was a completely different way of looking at it” (RR10, para. 39). This participant, who was asked to provide feedback on the draft policy from a number of perspectives, including the Indian Studies Support Program Committee<sup>49</sup> and a northern Aboriginal post-secondary institution, felt the forum did not facilitate consultation:

That was not consultation at all. It was pie in the sky. “Let’s vision about this. Let’s vision.” It was not consultation about something that was written or that invited critique at all. And no feedback in terms of the critical responses to it and what the province was willing to do in that regard. Even to investigate it further, didn’t even give it that kind of value, which is really bad. From my perspective anyway. It’s hard to do this sometimes and not get angry about some of the points. (RR10, para. 117)

Even the Ministry recognizes that “many of the recommendations and issues raised by forum participants were not directly related to AVED’s mandate” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2004b, p. 4).

Nevertheless, the forum was successful in drawing the Ministry’s attention to a number of Aboriginal post-secondary issues. Following the forum, the Ministry made commitments to improve communication, collaboration and information sharing; to strengthen links with the K-12 system; to use the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund to improve post-secondary Aboriginal programs and services; to improve systems level accountability measures for Aboriginal students; to encourage the federal government to increase post-secondary funding; and to finalize

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<sup>49</sup> In BC, the Indian Studies Support Program Committee receives and reviews applications from bands, tribal councils, and First Nations institutions, and makes recommendations to Indian and Northern Affairs regarding federal funding for First Nations post-secondary programming.



the Aboriginal policy framework.

The Ministry hosted three subsequent forums (discussed below) and undertook an external review of the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund and Aboriginal post-secondary programs, services, and strategies.<sup>50</sup> In addition, they provided funding to the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to hire an Aboriginal post-secondary coordinator tasked with creating an Aboriginal post-secondary advisory committee and providing support for FNESC's Post-Secondary Education Sub-Committee and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learner Association (IAHLA).<sup>51</sup> In June 2004, FNESC's Executive Director, Christa Williams, was also appointed as the Aboriginal representative to the newly formed Minister's Advisory Council on Post-Secondary Education (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2004b).<sup>52</sup>

The privileging of FNESC was of concern to the BCFNC, in part because FNESC only served the on-reserve status Indian population and there were concerns about FNESC's ability to represent the perspectives and needs of other Aboriginal groups. In addition, while FNESC has a long history of working on Aboriginal K-12 issues, their expertise in the post-secondary arena was seen to be more limited (Hermansen, 2004, November 22). This view was supported by a former member of a post-secondary organization who stated that

many of the parties that are most significantly engaged around the issue [Aboriginal education] are mostly interested in what's happening on the K to 12 side. So whether it's the Nathan Matthews, or FNESC generally, or the Aboriginal leadership, if you talk to them about education they focus almost entirely on things [that] are happening in the schools that need to happen. And when they talk about the schools, they are talking about the K to 12 system, period. There's some discussion about post-secondary but

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<sup>50</sup> For information about the review findings, see Human Capital Strategies (2005).

<sup>51</sup> IAHLA was established in 2003, filling the vacuum created by the demise of AAPSI.

<sup>52</sup> A complete list of actions undertaken by the Ministry following the forum is available from British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education (2004b, pp. 19-21).

disproportionately, the focus of the attention from the Aboriginal side is on K to 12. (RR13, para. 56)

One of the Ministry's commitments was to complete revisions to the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, and by October of 2004 a final draft of the policy had been completed (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2004, October).

However, as one respondent said, "it was just sort of floated as a trial balloon, and then it was shelved" (RR12, para. 79). While the consultation process did not result in a revised APF, it did serve as an important capacity building process for the Ministry. According to a former Ministry representative,

If I can think of anything positive out of the early stages around the consultation around the policy framework, [it is that] it helped people here [in the Ministry], the decision makers here, have a much better understanding of the issues because the people who we consulted with pushed back and respectfully pushed back.... So if anything, even though we don't have a final product yet, people who are the decision-makers understood the issues as a result of the consultations. And that's a good thing, that's a positive outcome. (RR05, para. 83)

Aboriginal PSE issues were once gaining significance in the eyes of the Ministry: "Increasing post-secondary participation and success rates among Aboriginal people is a priority for the ministry and public PSIs" (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2005, p. 30). In part, the Ministry's interest was due to demographic changes:

Statistics Canada data reveal that from 1951 to 2001, while the Canadian population doubled, the Aboriginal ancestry population grew sevenfold. In BC from 1996 to 2001 the overall youth population aged 15-24 grew 6.3 per cent but the Aboriginal population of the same age grew 15.9 per cent. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2005, p. 31)

But the government's changing relationship with Aboriginal people was also influencing the way it was looking at Aboriginal post-secondary policy (RR05, para. 137). While the Ministry maintained its intention to revise the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training*

*Policy*, the AVED turned its efforts towards developing an Aboriginal post-secondary strategy, with the intention of incorporating the strategy into the revised Aboriginal post-secondary policy document (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2006, March 1).

#### **6.2.1.2 The Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy**

The idea of developing a strategy emerged from the second annual Aboriginal PSE forum, *Enhancing Communication & Partnerships – How Do We Work Together*, held on March 10, 2005. Some 120 people gathered to discuss transition from K-12 to post-secondary, accountability measures, cultural programming and services, and funding. One of the recommendations coming from the forum was that the province form a partnership with FNEC and other key players involved with Aboriginal PSE. This group would then be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of an Aboriginal post-secondary strategy that incorporated other recommendations made at this forum (Merkel, 2005).

On March 11, 2005, the day after the forum, FNEC, the First Nations Summit's (FNS) Strategic Action Committee, BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), Métis Provincial Council of BC (MNBC's secretariat), United Native Nations Society (UNNS), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), AVED- Aboriginal Programs, The University Presidents' Council of BC, University-College presidents, BC College presidents, and IAHLA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entitled Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training.<sup>53</sup> These organizations agreed to work together to improve Aboriginal students' post-secondary participation and success by building on strengths, identifying needs, and implementing strategies to improve success. From this MOU emerged the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary

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<sup>53</sup> A copy of the MOU is available on line at <http://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/pubdocs/BCdocs2011/470556/mou.pdf>

Education and Training Partners Group (PSE Partners or the MOU Partners), who were responsible for operationalizing the MOU (Human Capital Strategies, Jothen, & Merkel, 2010). The BCFNC was unsuccessful in its bid to be represented on the PSE Partners group, and the PSE Partners quickly replaced the BCFNC as the key organization that the Ministry turned to for policy advice on Aboriginal post-secondary education.

The Ministry also began to reevaluate the merits of institutional autonomy in relation to Aboriginal initiatives. A former Ministry staff member commented that in some cases, Aboriginal programming and services

is done fairly marginally in our institutions, that it's not integrated in many ways. So it's always the balance between targeting and having specific programs or trying to ensure that institutions are working to integrate those programs and services a bit more as part of their base budgets and supported by the institutions themselves. (RR18, para. 56)

This same participant called for Ministry leadership through both policy and targeted funding to create institutional change:

The Ministry needs to take leadership around policy. I think that we kind of stepped back a little too much from working closely, from a program perspective in particular, with our institutions. So we are trying to take much more of a learner perspective now, and when we are developing policy to make sure that [happens], and there is a possibility that we feel that in some cases targeted programs are necessary. We are hoping to see an increase to our Aboriginal Special Projects Fund with some additional monies for this next couple of years, and in that way give institutions the mechanism to put some priorities in this area. (RR18, para. 54)

In June 2005, Human Capital Strategies released its *Review of the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Best Practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program*, which included 35 recommendations. The first recommendation was that the Ministry issue a revised Aboriginal policy framework for consultation. The second recommendation involved incorporating subsequent recommendations

into a strategic action plan:

We recommend that with the release of the Policy Framework, that the Ministry work to develop a bold Strategic Action Plan including appropriate targets for improving Aboriginal post-secondary education in British Columbia; and that this plan be an “umbrella” for the actions on the rest of the recommendations in this report as well as other actions determined by the Ministry and stakeholders. (p. vii)

By this time, the Liberal’s *New Relationship* with Aboriginal people was influencing the Ministry, necessitating a rethinking of the policy framework (RR05, para. 137). A Ministry staff member spoke enthusiastically about the *New Relationship* and its impact on Aboriginal PSE;

I’m excited. The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation has been established. And there’s the *New Relationship*, the *New Relationship Trust* and the First Nations Leadership Council... It’s basically the hallmark priority of government right now, Aboriginal education, K to 12 through to post-secondary, and also on the private side as well, private Aboriginal education and supporting Aboriginal institutions and band operated schools and so forth. It’s a provincial agenda; it’s a national agenda. (RR12, para. 95)

Another former Ministry staff member said that the *Transformative Change Accord* has

been a very strong political impetus right now that sets the policy environment that we are working within in the Ministry. And certainly we are working very closely with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, which has the broad policy lead on some of that. So I think from a political context, it’s just my understanding having worked in government for quite a while, it’s when there is a lead by a particular government who want to make a change, that that’s a key piece. (RR18, para. 36)

However, changes were slow to be implemented. A representative from a PSE organization was frustrated that, despite strong political leadership from Campbell for change, the bureaucracy was slow to respond. This participant spoke about some of the limiting factors:

They [Ministry staff] have a lot of things on their plate. There are fewer of them than there once was.... And they’ve been dealing with a number of fairly significant budget challenges. They’ve been addressing significant changes in the system. We’ve had institutions disappear. We’ve had changes in mandates for a number of other institutions. So there has been a lot of churn, if I can put it that way, in the system. (RR13, para. 92)

Nevertheless, this participant was amazed “that bureaucracy isn’t paying more attention to the fact that this is somehow important to this premier and this government” (RR13b, para. 88).

While progress was slow, it didn’t stop. Building on insights gained during the first two Aboriginal PSE forums, and the 2005 Human Capital Strategies report, the Ministries of AVED and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation developed the *Proposed Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy: Discussion Draft* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2006, March 1, 2006).

The third forum, *Moving Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forward*, “*Developing a Strategy*” was held March 16, 2006. About 100 people attended the meeting, during which Minister Murray Coell and Deputy Minister Moura Quale presented the *Proposed Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy: Discussion Draft* followed by presentations on the Ministry of Education’s *Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements*. The strategy was then work shopped (Merkel, 2006).

The proposed strategy consisted of the following six actions:

1. Seek additional funding to establish a new sustainable and accountable funding mechanism for Aboriginal post-secondary education through the development of institutional Aboriginal Post-Secondary Enhancement Plans;
2. Facilitate Aboriginal representation on institutional governance bodies;
3. Develop a system-wide standard for data collection and tracking;
4. Develop new performance measures focused on Aboriginal achievement;
5. Work with the federal government to enhance support for Aboriginal learners; and,
6. Revise the Aboriginal Policy Framework to reflect the Strategy. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2006, March 1, p. 9)

While most of these actions had been the subject of discussion for years, there were two ideas that caused some concern. One was the idea of establishing an Aboriginal full time equivalent (FTE) value of \$1000 to \$1,500 and then funding PSIs based on Aboriginal student enrollment.

The other was that PSIs work with Aboriginal organizations/communities and others to develop ‘Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Enhancement Plans.’ Both proved to be controversial.

Forum participants critiqued the Aboriginal FTE model for a number of reasons: the funding was inadequate; it did not take into account the needs of small, remote institutions who could not take advantage of economies of scale; Aboriginal students under identify; it did not support institutions that were trying to increase their Aboriginal student population; the same support services are necessary regardless of the size of the Aboriginal student population; and the funding model may undermine program quality (Merkel, 2006).

An Aboriginal coordinator was concerned that the Aboriginal FTE model might reduce support in the sciences, an area that 2005 Human Capital Strategies report had identified as important:

The proportion of students that we have in the sciences is so small that if they have a funding formula based on the number of students they have in a faculty or in a school then it’s really problematic because that means proportionately [PSIs] will get virtually no money in the sciences because the proportion of Aboriginal students in the sciences is so small. (RR01, para. 45)

A key component of the proposed strategy was the development of Aboriginal post-secondary enhancement plans. These plans were modeled after the *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements* that were being implemented in the K-12 system and were built on collaborative agreements between school districts and Aboriginal communities and organizations. According to some participants, these enhancement agreements had not been successful at the K-12 level, so should not be implemented at the post-secondary level (Merkel, 2006).

A representative of a Métis organization reported feeling that *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements* marginalized Métis peoples. When members of the Métis community asked for representation in the Aboriginal enhancement agreements, explained the respondent,

the response from

various school superintendents [were] well we have to ask the First Nations if it's okay for you to sit there, even though in some of those schools there's more Métis children in school than First Nations. It's really unfortunate and I think that kind of stuff is very dangerous because on our side it creates challenges and it pits us against First Nations. And this isn't about us and them; it's about culturally relevant services. (RR08, para. 64)

Another participant thought that a single approach for diverse institutions that address a variety of issues in different regions was inappropriate:

I think that that the whole idea of a one size fits all kind of approach ... seems like a bit of grasping of straws. And I think that going for one type of agreement for all post-secondary institutes with respect to Aboriginal people even though there's such a diverse set of issues in many of the areas that these colleges and universities exist that trying to come up with one type of enhancement agreement for all post-secondary institutes was premature. (RR01, para. 105)

Others pointed out that such agreements may be appropriate at the K-12 system because it deals with children. However, students in the post-secondary system are adults, many of whom are parents, and that it is important to talk to them directly, rather than deal with groups or individuals who are said to represent their interests (Merkel, 2006). This position was articulated by a former representative of a post-secondary organization: "there is almost a parental or guardianship relationship between the community and the children of that community in the nature of agreement that would be congruent with an educational institution, in this case a K to 12 school" (RR 13b, para. 110). However, at the post-secondary level the context is different,

When your profile of your average student at the post-secondary level is a single parent around thirty or post-thirty, I think you've got to think about it in a completely different way. And I think the community is the community of students inside the institution, not an external entity, First Nations or otherwise, that speaks on behalf of those people, and I think I am in a significant minority in thinking that way. (RR13b, para. 112)



Some respondents expressed concerns that institutions would interpret “Aboriginal communities” to be local bands and tribal councils, and ignore other Aboriginal peoples served by their institutions. The interpretation of community has been particularly complicated in the case of large institutions with broad provincial, national and international mandates;

Well, at UBC who is the community? I’ve been amazed when I raise that question [by] how many people have said Musqueam. My answer is oh, really. [Musqueam has an] interest, absolutely no question about that. But that institution serves the interests, or it should, well beyond the borders of Musqueam. Everybody’s here, including some Inuit. (RR 13b, para. 110)

Another issue raised by participants is the lack of attention paid to Aboriginal PSIs in the draft strategy. Finally, there is the issue of “some mistrust about how the draft Strategy was developed and the commitment to continue the discussion process with a larger audience” (Merkel, 2006. p. 2).

Following the forum, the Ministry and the PSE Partners Group formed a Consultation Working Group (RR12, para. 55). The Consultation Working Group took the lead on a new round of consultations. They

helped to frame all the questions and the critical path and the process for the strategy consultation which transpired from the forum until the end of June. So all of the stakeholders in the system, plus many individuals, were interviewed. The students, the post-secondary system, all the developmental deans, the directors, the college presidents, the BCFNCC, Aboriginal groups, Aboriginal leaders, the funding groups, governments and Ministries as well, and we did a student focus group as well. (RR12, para. 55)

Since the development of the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (APF), the capacity of many groups to engage policy work has changed significantly. While the Ministry’s Aboriginal unit was scrapped in 2002, the Ministry began rebuilding its internal Aboriginal capacity through participation in earlier consultations on the

APF revisions, and also through the hiring of Jacqueline Dennis-Orr,<sup>54</sup> who replaced Juanita Berkhout as coordinator of Aboriginal Programs, and Bryan Dreilich,<sup>55</sup> who was hired as a Research Officer in 2006 (McKay, 2006, February 26). The Aboriginal Programs unit was also reestablished.

The policy capacity of First Nations communities has also increased. A representative from an Aboriginal education organization remarked that:

we are dealing this time around with a very different level of expertise in the communities. Because a lot of the people now in the communities are educated - and are educators as well as educated - so come with that understanding, and that base of direction. It's a higher level of comprehension. (RR 14, para. 100)

While not all First Nations communities have had the same ability to engage in policy work, FNESC's structure has facilitated collaborative policy work, benefitting those communities with more limited capacity:

There is a higher level of understanding of what policy is, why it's important and who it impacts. And I think that sophistication again around that is because bands have hired very informed people to work in that environment. I'm not saying that everybody is. We still have communities who still have to do what they can and piecemeal a lot of things.... There is the ability for those that have the capacity to help those that don't. There's a policy structure that First Nations communities can take on and work through. A lot of that work is done of course through the First Nations Education Steering Committee. (RR14, para. 108)

A number of other consultations on PSE issues were also underway during the mid-2000s. In addition to consultations on the APF, the Aboriginal post-secondary strategy, and *Campus*

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<sup>54</sup> Jacqueline Dennis-Orr, from the Okanagan Nation, has previously worked for NEC, NVIT, Chemainus Native College, and the BC Centre of Curriculum Transfer and Technology.

<sup>55</sup> Brian Dreilich is Métis, with a background in policy coordination, journalism, and publicity. He has also interned with the former BC Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs as a negotiations research assistant.

2020,<sup>56</sup> the federal government was consulting with First Nations on post-secondary funding. A representative from IAHLA spoke very positively about these consultation processes, and IAHLA's ability to work collaboratively with both FNEC and the Indian Student Support Program Committee:

The consultation process is very structured this time around. And it's structured more so through IAHLA and the First Nations Education Steering Committee. We've had consultations in communities, we've had consultations at provincial meetings, and we've had consultations in regions. So there are three levels of this happening. Not only are we talking with administrators and leadership of First Nations communities and/or First Nations institutions, but also parents and students. So there's a lot more involvement around what this new policy is going to look like. We've also chatted with post-secondary students, and those not only in certificates, diplomas, and degrees, but also in post-graduate work. So that we have the whole scope and the whole framework is around lifelong learning, and it's the foundation. Lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is defined from birth to death. We're working in that whole process around ensuring that everybody's issues are heard. And we have had several drafts that go constantly back out to the communities and constantly back to the institutions for feedback. We've also tagged on with FNEC, First Nations Education Steering Committee, and the Indian Student Support Program (ISSP) with their reviews and consultations. And so we've constantly had those moving. And I think we are probably at, hopefully, the final draft of that framework now that will form part of the submission for the Campus 2020 visioning. (RR14, para. 86)

This same participant shares that "some of the work that was done with the post-secondary education review with INAC... [was utilized] in designing the framework for the province as well. It wasn't wasted work" (RR14, para. 90).

An unanticipated result of successive consultations has been a more positive relationship among Aboriginal institutions. A representative from one of these institutions contended that persistent inadequate resourcing was creating tensions among the Aboriginal-controlled private institutions. These institutions were "struggling to keep things going and so see each other as a threat sometimes. It's getting better but it's still difficult" (RR10, para. 55). According to a

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<sup>56</sup> Campus 2020 was comprehensive review of PSE in BC, undertaken in 2006 to guide future policy changes in PSE.

representative from IAHLA, there has been more collaboration among Aboriginal-controlled PSIs than was evident under AAPSI, and this collaborative spirit is due in part to policy learning that resulted from multiple consultations:

Interestingly, it's more collective, it's more collaborative. This time around there's a lot of buy in. In fact by in from all of the First Nation post-secondary institutes around what's important, around priority. And that I think came out of the whole education system of the consultations. Everybody was coming in with the same kind of foundation, same information. So there's very little tension right now with the First Nations institutions around what's important and what isn't. (RR 14, para. 96)

Not all Aboriginal organizations, however, have enjoyed the capacity to participate so effectively. While the Ministry provided funding for a PSE coordinator to support FNESC's Post-Secondary Sub-Committee and IAHLA, similar support was not extended to other groups, who have struggled to respond to consultation requests. For example, the BCFNC participated in consultation meetings, but they were unable to produce a written submission for the *Campus 2020* consultation process. A Ministry employee noted that

the Coordinators really don't have a lot of capacity to be doing this policy work because they are so flat out. And it's so important for them to do that work. So someone has to off the side of their desk, burn the midnight oil and crank out a response and vet it with everyone in the organization of the BC First Nations Coordinators Council. That's an enormous amount of work. (RR12, para. 117)

A former Ministry employee remarked positively on the MNBC's policy capacity (RR18, para. 76); however, MNBC's policy capacity has proven to be a serious challenge. One participant shared the following:

our ability to respond effectively to policy is around capacity. If government is really interested in having us effectively get policy voice. We get zero dollars for education. We actually carve it out of everything else we can to try to get some of the focus on this now.... But the way to effectively do this is to give us the tools to be able to get that policy voice.... The capacity issue is huge. That's the crux of it. That could be financial. It could be other types of capacity. But if they [the Ministry] are truly meaningful about that, they really have to start recognizing that our groups have such limited capacity to properly engage in this. For us to get policy direction from our Métis citizens we need to

be out there to our thirty-five Métis communities. And that takes money, it takes resources. We can't just build it off the end of someone's desk that happens to be effective at it. It really falls on a handful of people to try to move policy forward. I call it moving the white elephant.... That's the one criticism that I do have. They [the Ministry] seem to be open to it [policy input], but they need to translate it to empowering us to be able to do it. There's got to be increased investments around that. That's critical. (RR08, para. 68)

Respondents further expressed concerns that the consultations have privileged the needs of BC First Nations over the needs of other Aboriginal groups. An Aboriginal coordinator said that:

the BC government is skewed towards dealing with status Indians that are strongly affiliated with BC Indian bands, tribal councils, not to the total exclusion but basically they're not really involved with looking at status Indians that are not from BC originally or non-status Indians or Métis. And they're not looking at urban Aboriginal issues even though we know that over 72 % of the Aboriginal population are in urban settings. (RR01, para. 93)

The Ministry has looked to UNNS to represent these interests; however, their ability to engage effectively in policy development has been challenged both by internal organizational and resource issues. A former Ministry staff member remarked that UNNS has “been struggling as an organization. There are a lot of issues. They don't have the supports as you say as the on-reserve. So I think we are missing a piece of that” (RR18, para. 76). In 2009, these internal problems eventually resulted in the removal of UNNS's President and Vice-President (UNNS board takes decisive action to save society, 2009), rendering UNNS incapable of advocating for the post-secondary interests of its membership.

Many participants shared their concerns about the educational needs of the urban Aboriginal population. A former Ministry staff member reported being “most concerned about ... the urban Aboriginal group because they are growing and the challenges are growing (RR19, para. 105), while a representative from a post-secondary organization pointed out that

the second largest Aboriginal community in this country is within a block and a half of where you and I are sitting in downtown Vancouver right now. So we can't develop

policies that are blind to the urgent realities and needs of that community. (RR13, para. 75)

This same participant spoke about the need for significant support to meet the needs of the urban Aboriginal population:

many of those kids are much more at risk and we are not doing the things that we need to do there, either on the K to 12 side of the equation or ultimately on the post-secondary side, because those kids maybe just aren't going to have much of a chance to think about getting there without a higher degree of intervention and support. (RR13b, para. 19)

As a representative from a Métis organization explained,

I look at some of the groups trying to lobby to put things together for the urban Aboriginal community. We have a fight, but at least we signed an accord with government for the Métis Nation. I don't know what they are going to do. (RR09, para. 88)

Even more troubling is the observation of an Aboriginal coordinator who had participated in two of the consultation forums: "What I saw with the consultation process is that these issues continue to come to the foray but weren't making it into what was being written" (RR01, para. 97).

Following the final round of consultations, revisions were made and incorporated into the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* (RR12, para. 55; British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007a). In April 2007, the Premier's Office and AVED jointly announced the release of the Aboriginal post-secondary strategy (British Columbia Office of the Premier & British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007, April 24). In the news release, Premier Campbell is quoted as saying

We are honouring the commitments made in the Transformative Change Accord to close the education gap and, through this strategy, Aboriginal people will have the higher learning opportunities they need to take their places in BC's thriving economy.

The same news release also quotes Shawn Atleo, then Region Chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations, who states that

This strategy recognizes many of the barriers First Nations face in achieving higher level education and training, and it begins to address the glaring divide between First Nations aspirations and realities.... I feel encouraged by this step forward as First Nations' socio-economic well-being must include the strengthening of capacities and skills.

The news release contained no similar statements from other Aboriginal representatives.

### **6.2.2 The Text**

The *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b) begins with a section on the context, followed by vision and goals, then background information, before articulating strategies and actions. An appendix summarizes the document's goals, objectives, strategies, and actions.

#### **6.2.2.1 Strategic Context**

The document opens with a brief discussion of the province's *New Relationship* with First Nations people, which "will reshape our social and economic landscape and create a more inclusive and prosperous future for all British Columbians" (p. 1). This is followed by reference to the *Transformative Change Accord* between the provincial and federal governments and BC First Nations, and the commitment to close socio-economic gaps and reconcile Aboriginal rights and title with the Crown. There is no reference to the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*. In fact, references to Métis, Inuit, non-status, or urban Aboriginal people are absent from the document.

The Strategy is purposefully linked with the *Transformative Change Accord*: it "will fulfill the post-secondary component of the Transformative Change Accord" (p. 1). The MOU Partners Group is identified as the vehicle for "key" Aboriginal groups to provide input and improve coordination. Aboriginal organizations/communities and PSIs are to develop and

implement initiatives together.

Performance indicators are identified, including the number of and percentage of Aboriginal students in PSIs, as well as the level of educational attainment and credentials awarded to Aboriginal students. Additional performance indicators are to be developed by the MOU Partners.

#### **6.2.2.2 Vision and Goals**

The document offers a vision for Aboriginal PSE that is very similar to that found in the APF:

Aboriginal post-secondary education outcomes are comparable to those of non-Aboriginal learners, and that public institutions and Aboriginal organizations and institutions play appropriate roles and are supported by the combined resources of the federal and provincial government. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 1)

To this end, the Strategy proposes two goals. The first goal is to “close the educational gap for Aboriginal learners” by increasing “access, retention, completion and transitions opportunities”; increasing institutional “receptivity and relevance”; and “strengthening partnerships and collaborations.” The second goal, to ensure “effective and accountable programs and services implementation and delivery,” is to be achieved through measurement and monitoring (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 2).

#### **6.2.2.3 Background**

A brief background section mentions that the Aboriginal population is growing quickly; that Aboriginal high school graduation rates and Aboriginal post-secondary enrollment are increasing, but that the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational outcomes continues; and that the gap in employment outcomes disappears when higher educational levels



are achieved by Aboriginal people.

This section also provides a brief overview of the consultation process undertaken in developing the document, and lists a host of barriers that undermine Aboriginal students PSE, including low high school completion rates; a lack of culturally appropriate programming; gaps in appropriate student services; limited involvement in decision making; few role models; discrimination; geographical distances; limited collaboration among public PSIs, private Aboriginal institutions, Aboriginal communities, and industry; lack of data; and limited student funding.

Initiatives undertaken to address these barriers are noted, including the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund, Aboriginal PSE coordinators, Aboriginal advisory committees, Aboriginal representation on institutional governing bodies, Aboriginal programming, affiliation agreements, Aboriginal private institutions, and the work of FNEESC and the MOU Partners.

#### **6.2.2.4 Strategies and Actions**

The document then turns to identify a number of strategies and actions the Ministry will undertake to realize its vision and goals. These are to

- Increase access, retention, and success for Aboriginal learners through implementation of Aboriginal Service Plans;
- Reduce financial barriers through targeted scholarships for Aboriginal learners;
- Increase participation in strategic program areas;
- Support Aboriginal learner transition;
- Enhance opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be reflected within the infrastructure of institutions;
- Increase the number of culturally relevant programs and services;
- Encourage Aboriginal representation on institutional governing bodies;
- Strengthen agreements and partnerships;
- [Implement] Effective planning based on system-wide data tracking and performance measures based on student success (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, pp. 5-9).

### **6.2.3 Implementation**

The *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* was developed to address the Ministry's goals of closing the Aboriginal education gap and ensuring effective and accountable implementation through its four objectives: increasing access, retention, completion, and transition opportunities; increasing receptivity and relevance of PSIs and programs; strengthening partnerships and collaboration; and ensuring effective performance measures and monitoring. These objectives form a framework for discussing implementation of the Strategy.

#### **6.2.3.1 Increasing Access, Retention, Completion and Transition Opportunities**

In order to increase educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, the Ministry funded Aboriginal Service Plans (ASPs) at select public PSIs, established Aboriginal student awards, funded Aboriginal-targeted seats in "strategic programs," and supported Aboriginal transition initiatives (Jothan et al., 2011).

##### **6.2.3.1.1 Aboriginal Service Plans**

ASPs are a key component of the Strategy and are meant to increase educational outcomes for Aboriginal learners, increase institutional receptivity and relevance, and strengthen collaborations between public and Aboriginal PSIs. Public PSIs were to work with Aboriginal communities and organizations to develop the ASPs (Jothan et al., 2011).

On December 21, 2006, the call went out to PSIs to submit letters of interest in developing Aboriginal Service Plans to the Ministry by January 31, 2007. The short turnaround time, combined with the Christmas break, stretched the ability of institutions to respond to the call and undermined their ability to develop collaborative submissions with Aboriginal partners.

The Ministry was aware of this, but funding pressures necessitated that ASPs be rolled out quickly. According to a former Ministry staff member,

We recognize around Aboriginal policy and with Aboriginal people, there has got to be time to engage and to discuss and to move forward on things. And we had hoped, for example, to be able to do that around our Aboriginal Service Plans. Because of the environment that we are working in and because we've had to grab the opportunity to use some one-time funding, that process is going to move forward more quickly than we would like it to move. On one hand we want it to move forward quickly, but we heard through our forums that the Aboriginal people need to be engaged and need to have ownership and need very much to take the time to develop what they think is right. So I guess from a policy perspective, I guess I really do feel that you do need to ensure that you are working with the Aboriginal learners and community and I do believe that we've probably not done enough of that, particularly in our Ministry. There's my frank comment. (RR18, para. 86)

While the Ministry intended to fund ASPs system-wide, the budget constraints prevented this from happening. The same participant stated that

We had wished that we could roll it [Aboriginal Service Plans] out totally right across the system, but there was a decision by treasury board. We weren't able to get any new money. We had to reallocate within our Ministry.... Aboriginal post-secondary education and literacy are two of our Ministry hallmarks. Through the budget process we were able to say that these are key priorities, so we were able to move forward on some of this. (RR 18, para. 52)

ASP funding was awarded to seven individual institutions: Vancouver Island University, the College of New Caledonia, North Island College, NVIT, Northwest Community College, TRU, the University of Northern BC (UNBC), and two consortiums (Camosun College with the University of Victoria and the Coastal Corridor Consortium, a collaboration between Vancouver Community College, Capilano University, the Native Education College (NEC), the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Sechelt, Tsleil-Waututh Squamish First Nations, the UNNS, and MNBC). Over a period of four years (one year of planning and three years of implementation), the Ministry provided these institutions with \$14,950,000. In 2010/2011, after the pilot project ended, the Ministry provided an additional \$1,003,000 in transitional funding (Jothan et al., 2011).

The nature of ASPs varied from institution to institution, and a wide variety of initiatives were undertaken. Some common focuses included: hosting cultural events, celebrations, and speakers; strengthening student support and outreach; creating or renewing courses and programs, and delivering community-based programming. Overall, ASPs were believed to be successful in supporting Aboriginal student access, retention, completion, and transitions, though Métis specific programming was limited (Jothan et al., 2011).

Prior to the implementation of ASPs, one participant expressed concern about the effectiveness of a single system-wide approach in meeting the needs of Aboriginal learners (RR01, para. 105). The apparent success of several non-ASP institutions in increasing educational opportunities for students lends weight to that concern. Jothan et al. (2011) find that:

Mechanisms like funded Aboriginal Service Plans have been – and could continue to be – an effective tool to accelerate services to Aboriginal students and communities and perhaps, over time, to shift the numbers on recruitment, retention and completion success. The ASP approach is, however, not the only option and the Ministry may wish to consider the value of institution or sector-specific approaches that would fund strategic plans designed to more directly address core objectives. (p. vii)

At both ASP and non-ASP institutions, successful Aboriginal programs and services were seen to be related to institutional leadership. According to Jothan et al. (2011),

when institutional commitment was evident at senior management level, there were stronger indications of success factors across the entire campus(es). The Ministry could encourage public post-secondary institutions to identify Aboriginal education as a priority through institutional leadership and policy development and by making it a consistent point of discussion between institutions and the Ministry. (p. ii)

In some cases, ASP institutions were able to secure ongoing funding from either internal reallocation of base-funding or access to external funding to continue ASP initiatives beyond the end of funding. However, there was much concern that constraints on base funding would undermine the future sustainability of ASP initiatives. These concerns were temporarily allayed when the Ministry provided additional funding for ASPs in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

#### **6.2.3.1.2 Reduce Financial Barriers**

To address financial barriers facing many Aboriginal students, the Ministry provided funding for two awards, the BC Aboriginal Student Award and the Chief Joe Mathias BC Scholarship, and proposed to work with the MOU Partners to advocate for more effective federal funding for status Indian students (Jothen et al., 2011).

The BC Aboriginal Student Award is open to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit BC residents in the first or second year of full-time study in a program of at least nine weeks duration at a BC public or “approved” Aboriginal private post-secondary institution. Students in Adult Basic Education (ABE) or non-credit continuing studies courses are ineligible for this award. The province’s funding included a \$10 million endowment in 2007, plus an additional \$500,000 awarded in 2008/09 as the endowment had not earned money for disbursement. In 2009/10 and 2010/11, awards amounting to \$515,000 were distributed to 179 students. Awards tended to favour students in degree programs, and only nine of these students attended Aboriginal private institutions (Jothen et al., 2011).

In 2006/07 the Ministry contributed \$100,000 to the existing Chief Joe Mathias BC Aboriginal Scholarship Fund Society. This scholarship is limited to BC First Nations students in full or part-time studies leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees in public post-secondary and eligible private PSIs. Between 2008 and 2010, awards were distributed to 70 students. As the Ministry is only one of the scholarship funders, the Ministry’s contribution to these awards is unknown (Jothen et al., 2011).

As a result of one-time funding awarded to the Minierva Foundation, Aboriginal women students received twenty-five awards, ranging from \$1,250 to \$2,500. Some ASP institutions, including Kwantlen Polytechnic University and the Coastal Corridor Consortium, also

established awards for Aboriginal students (Jothan et al., 2011).

Undoubtedly, these awards helped ease financial stress for the Aboriginal students who received them. However, the extent to which these awards contributed to the Ministry's objective of increased access, retention, completion, and transition is minimal. There continues to be a need for financial support for Aboriginal post-secondary students, particularly for those in trades and technology, in Aboriginal-controlled institutions, as well as for Métis and other Aboriginal students in general for whom financial barriers undermine post-secondary participation (Jothan et al., 2011).

The Ministry was to work with the MOU Partners Group to lobby for increased federal support for Aboriginal students. The extent of this work is unclear. However, whatever efforts were undertaken bore no results. Despite the increases in the Aboriginal population, Aboriginal high school graduation rates, and tuition costs, federal funding for First Nations students remained at the same level between the mid-1980s up to 2011, with annual adjustments limited to 2% (Jothan et al., 2011). This has been the subject of an ongoing critique by Canada's Auditor General (Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011). Similar support, however insufficient, remains unavailable for Métis and non-status students.

#### **6.2.3.1.3 Increase Participation in Strategic Programs Areas**

As part of its Targeted Aboriginal Seats initiative, the Ministry committed to fund 100 student full-time equivalents (FTE) annually for three years to address workforce shortages in nursing/allied health positions, Aboriginal business/commerce, public administration, teacher education programs (including language instruction), early childhood education/development, law and justice studies, and tourism management. Because of higher costs associated with community-based delivery and partnership development, the FTE value for these seats was set at

\$9,200, approximately \$2,000 higher than general FTEs. Some institutions received new FTE seats, while others received additional dollars to change regular FTEs to the Aboriginal FTE level (Jothan et al., 2011).

Despite the Ministry's rhetoric about the importance of training Aboriginal people to meet future labour market shortages, the Targeted Aboriginal Seats initiative was only funded for two years (2007/08 and 2008/09). Over the two years, the Ministry only funded 192 FTE's, and PSIs utilized the funding to deliver 203 FTEs. However, institutional utilization varied widely: some institutions significantly underperformed while others exceeded expectations. The Ministry rationalized cutting the program in 2009/10 because of budget constraints due to a weakening economy (Jothan et al., 2011).

#### **6.2.3.1.4 Support Aboriginal Learner Transition**

The Ministry's main initiative addressing Aboriginal transitions was the Aboriginal Transition Research Fund. Originally the Ministry had hoped to fund seven research projects addressing the following seven points of transition for Aboriginal learners:

- K-12 to post-secondary education, including skills and trades training
- Adult Basic Education/Developmental to post-secondary
- Aboriginal private institution to public post-secondary institution
- College to university
- First year to second year
- Undergraduate to graduate
- Post-secondary education to workforce (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 95)

Although 21 proposals were received, few proposals met the research criteria that required applicants to undertake research on Aboriginal student transition at key points while maintaining "research rigour, academic excellence, community partnerships and provincial applicability" (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 101). In the end, only three projects were funded: the University of British Columbia received funding for undergraduate to graduate transition research; the

University of Victoria received funding for Aboriginal post-secondary to public post-secondary transition research; and Thompson River University received funding for adult basic education to post-secondary transition research. Funding for these projects totaled \$1,666,757 (Jothan et al., 2011).

Phase One of the project involved gathering data and developing approaches. Phase Two involved piloting the strategies identified in Phase One. By March 2011, all three research projects had successfully completed Phase One of the project. Two research projects had completed Phase Two, and the third project was nearing completion. The research projects were seen to be successful in identifying barriers to transition and implementing pilot projects to address them. The research projects were also seen to be successful in developing partnerships, particularly between the PSIs, research experts, and Aboriginal organizations. One of the institutions, however, was said to be challenged in its relationships with Aboriginal communities (Jothan et al., 2011).

Obviously a research vacuum remains in relation to the transition points that these research projects did not address. Jothan et al. (2011) particularly stress the need for research on Aboriginal transitions from K-12 to post-secondary and from post-secondary to the labor force. A key criterion in selecting the projects was their provincial applicability, suggesting that the Ministry hoped that the research findings would be applied elsewhere. Research reports are available on the Ministry's website.<sup>57</sup> However, implementing successful transition initiatives province-wide will require additional resources.

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<sup>57</sup> For more information, go to <http://www.aved.gov.BC.ca/aboriginal/educator-resources.htm>



### **6.2.3.2 Increase the Receptivity and Relevance of Institutions and Programs**

It's clear that many of the ASPs initiatives, discussed previously, contributed towards increased receptivity and relevance for Aboriginal learners. Other initiatives aimed at creating more a welcoming and relevant learning experience for Aboriginal students include Gathering Places, the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund, and Aboriginal representation on Boards of Governors.

#### **6.2.3.2.1 Gathering Places**

The province provided funding to build Gathering Places in order to facilitate Aboriginal community ceremonies and events, support student retention, strengthen partnerships between public PSIs and Aboriginal communities and organizations, promote Aboriginal culture and history, and to be a resource for students and community. Although a number of these facilities existed prior to the implementation of the Strategy, all public PSIs, except the Justice Institute, applied for and received funding to either build or augment facilities. Government budgeted \$13.6 million towards this initiative, and by March 2011, \$13.29 million had been distributed to 23 institutions to build or enhance Gathering Places. Some institutions were able to supplement this funding substantially with funding from other sources, while others used this limited funding to improve institutional infrastructure or consolidate student services (Jothen et al., 2011).

The effectiveness of some of the Gathering Places have been limited by institutional policies around access and use, and some small institutions with multiple campuses have been particularly challenged to meet the infrastructure needs of the Aboriginal students. At one institution, the Gathering Place funding “resulted in the development of an impressive atrium and courtyard filled with Aboriginal art and artifacts,” but its use by Aboriginal students and

community members is limited (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 69). Given that these facilities are either under construction or have only recently opened, their contribution to enhancing institutional receptivity and relevance remains to be seen. Nevertheless, Gathering Places are considered “one of the most important symbols of positive change at public post-secondary institutions” (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 67).

#### **6.2.3.2.2 Aboriginal Special Projects Fund**

Jothan et al. (2011) report that the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund began in 2001; however, Ministry documents indicate that the ASPF was initiated earlier under the NDP (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1999, October 12; 2000, September 5). The ASPF continued under the Liberals and was incorporated into the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* until 2009 when the Ministry cancelled the program. Between 2006/07 and 2008/09, the ASPF supported 117 projects at a total cost of \$8.98 million (Jothan et al., 2011).

Initially, the ASPF was intended “to support the development and pilot of new programs and courses, cultural education support and transition programs, student recruitment activities and student support services” (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 72). Each year, however, ASPF guidelines privileged different initiatives. Jothan et al. (2011) show that in 2006/07 the preference was “Aboriginal language/culture/history, adult basic education, teacher training, health, sciences (particularly physical), business and trades” (p. 72); in 2007/08 it was treaty capacity-building and language programming (an additional \$1.5 million was allotted to support language programs); and in 2008/09 preference was given to “collaboration, on-line learning programs, transition projects, language projects and capacity building projects (re: Treaty Process)” (pp. 72-73). Although the 2007/08 and 2008/09 ASPF guidelines specify that non-ASP institutions

might be given preference for ASPF funds, this did not occur.

The ASPF was widely supported by students, faculty, senior institutional staff and the Aboriginal community. The main critique of the ASPF was its limited, short-term nature and the fact that it was cancelled in 2009. Because the ASPF fund predated the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, Jothan et al. feel it would be “misleading” to attribute ASPF outcomes to the Strategy. Nevertheless, they state that the ASPF “complemented the other elements of the Strategy and contributed to the apparent acceleration of Aboriginal student numbers, participation, and increased longevity in the BC post-secondary education system” (2011, p. 82).

#### **6.2.3.2.3 One-Time Grants**

Between 2006/07 and 2009/10, the Ministry awarded \$2.7 million in one-time grants to public and Aboriginal private PSIs, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, and Aboriginal organizations and communities to fund 14 different initiatives. This is the only *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* initiative that provided funding directly to Aboriginal organizations and communities.

The Ministry used one-time funding to support initiatives that were not funded by other means, but that still addressed the Strategy’s various goals and objectives, such as facilitating Aboriginal student recruitment, participation, transition and retention; reducing financial barriers; supporting capacity development for treaty; and creating relevant curriculum. One-time funding for FNESE was unique in that FNESE received \$100,000 a year for 4 years to support the activities of FNESE, IAHLA and the PSE Partners (Jothan et al., 2011).

#### **6.2.3.2.4 Aboriginal Representation on Institutional Governing Bodies**

Appointments to public post-secondary institutional governing bodies are determined by legislation. While some positions are elected, the majority of positions are government appointments following recommendations from the Ministry of Finance's Board Resourcing Development Office based on candidates identified by the institutions. The Strategy states that the issue of Aboriginal representation will be dealt with through policy, and that public PSIs will be encouraged to identify Aboriginal candidates to fill vacant positions.

Identifying appropriate Aboriginal representation is complex, and the Ministry resists taking responsibility for this. As a former Ministry staff person explained,

There's no way that the Ministry can say you have to do it this way or that way.... The Ministry can set some general parameters or suggest the benefits, but it's up to the institutions in consultation with Aboriginal faculty and staff, the Aboriginal learner, the Aboriginal community [to identify appropriate candidates]. (RR05, para. 101)

The Ministry sent a single letter in April 2008 to public PSIs, encouraging them to identify Aboriginal candidates for vacant board positions. No policy actions addressing Aboriginal representation were initiated with the Board Resourcing Development Office. In 1992, 21 public PSIs had Aboriginal representation on their governing bodies (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Colleges and Social and Aboriginal Programs, 1992, November). By 2005, only nine public PSIs had Aboriginal representation on their Boards of Governors. In 2009, 14 institutions had a total of 24 Aboriginal representatives; and in 2010, 16 institutions had a total of 26 representatives. While more institutions had Aboriginal representatives on their governing boards, the number of representatives had not reached 1992 levels, and nine PSIs still lacked an Aboriginal voice on their governing bodies, including British Columbia Institute of Technology, Douglas College, Justice Institute of BC, Selkirk College,

Vancouver Community College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria and the University of British Columbia (Jothan et al., 2011).

### **6.2.3.3 Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration**

The *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy and Action Plan* called for stronger partnerships between public PSIs and Aboriginal organizations and communities. This objective was to be addressed through a number of initiatives including: Aboriginal Service Plans, Gathering Places, the revised Aboriginal PSE policy, and the MOU Partners Group.

#### **6.2.3.3.1 Aboriginal Service Plans**

Given the short time that institutions had to prepare expressions of interest for Aboriginal Service Plans, it's not surprising that only one application included Aboriginal partners. However, over time, as the ASPs were further developed and implemented, public PSIs' collaboration with Aboriginal communities and organizations increased significantly, though that engagement varied from institution to institution.

Some notable collaborations and partnerships highlighted by Jothan et al. (2011) include: Vancouver Island University (VIU) and Aboriginal partners developed a five-year student transition, support, and outcomes plan; NVIT and community stakeholders developed a "Virtual Aboriginal Gathering Place" and NVIT also developed partnerships with Douglas College, Seabird Island College, VIU, Heywaynoqu Healing Society, Coastal First Nations Turning Point, North East Native Advancing Society, and Camosun College; the University of Victoria, NVIT, and IAHLA collaboration on a Best Practices Toolkit<sup>58</sup> and a Successful Transitions Forum; and

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<sup>58</sup> This toolkit was intended for system-wide use to assist public and Aboriginal private post-secondary institutions develop positive, effective relationships.

UNBC's deepening partnerships with the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, the Dakelh Elders, the Lake Babine Nation, the Lheidli T'enneh, the Prince George Friendship Centre, the Prince George Métis Association, the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association, and the Saik'uz First Nations.

In some cases these relationships were formalized through “terms of references, communication plans, protocols, Memorandums of Understandings and other formal agreements to further the goals of their respective ASPs. The experience here was not uniform and there was significant variation in the level of sustained community engagement” (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 46). Perceptions of the quality of these partnerships and collaborations varied, depending in part on ASP initiative. PSIs tended to speak more favorably of these relationships than did Aboriginal communities and organizations, who saw partnerships and collaborations in a more limited way.

As anticipated by some research participants prior to the development of ASPs, there was a tendency for the “Aboriginal community” to be interpreted as First Nations, causing Jothan et al (2011) to note that “real engagement of and partnerships with Aboriginal ‘communities’ must include a broad definition and include off-reserve, urban Aboriginal populations and Métis people” (p. 62).

While some Aboriginal organizations and communities were critical of some non-ASP institutions for not developing meaningful collaborations and partnerships, other non-ASP institutions were able to maintain or develop significant relationships with Aboriginal communities without ASP funding. Jothan et al. (2011) highlight UBC-Okanagan's work with En'owkin Centre on the Aboriginal Access Studies program, which includes Okanagan language courses taught by En'owkin Centre. UBC-O pays En'owkin Centre for the courses they deliver to Access students. Jothan et al. (2011) report that UBC-Vancouver's Aboriginal Strategic Plan

is “impressive and perhaps reflects not only the level of institutional commitment to Aboriginal education but also the benefits of many years of work with faculty, with students and with the broader Aboriginal community” (p. 54).

#### **6.2.3.3.2 Gathering Places**

In addition to creating a more receptive environment, Gathering Places were intended to contribute to partnerships and collaborations between public PSIs and Aboriginal communities and organizations. In the development and early operations of these facilities, such collaborations varied greatly, with some institutions and Aboriginal communities/organizations developing deep working relationships, while others developed more superficial relationships. The sustainability of these relationships after the facilities become operational is a concern (Jothen et al., 2011).

#### **6.2.3.3.3 Revised Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Policy**

As discussed earlier, revisions to the 1995 APF predated the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*. A final draft was completed in the fall of 2004, and while the Ministry maintains its intention to complete the policy, as of this writing the policy has yet to be finalized.

At first, policy revisions were delayed so that findings from the *Review of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Best Practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program* (Human Capital Strategies, 2005) could be incorporated into a renewed policy. While working on the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, the Ministry re-engaged with its work on APF revisions. According to a former Ministry staff member,

We've gotten involved in taking it [the APF] on again. It's been a reasonably slow process, so we're still just involved in revising the policy framework. We've also been developing a strategy and an action plan. And we've been struggling a little bit with how the action plan and the strategy fit in with what should be the overarching Aboriginal policy framework." (RR18, para. 15)

In 2006, the province initiated *Campus 2020*, a review of BC's public PSE system, and once again the completion of a revised Aboriginal post-secondary policy was delayed so that findings from *Campus 2020*, particularly in relation to Ministry policy on Aboriginal private institutions, could be incorporated into the policy (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b). During the consultations for *Campus 2020*, a former Ministry staff member said that

One of the pieces that we are waiting upon, which is kind of from the policy perspective in our Ministry ... is Campus 2020 that Geoff Plant is heading. That is taking a look at the future of post-secondary education in the broadest policy context and sense. We are hoping to have some initial feedback from that context probably in the spring sometime. And so we are unable... to completely solidify our revisions to our policy framework until we have the response and we are able to, as a Ministry, take a look at what Geoff Plant is going to be putting forward in the report back to the Ministry. (RR18, para. 15)

A representative from an Aboriginal education organization was optimistic about the impact that *Campus 2020* was going to have on the revised APF, and had worked with the Campus 2020 secretariat to ensure strong Aboriginal representation at *Campus 2020* consultation meetings:

We've been very successful with *Campus 2020* secretariat, getting them to interview all the key aboriginal groups, which is quite an ordeal because it is quite a compressed timeline that they are working with. I'm really happy that they are doing that. It's very critical because we will need direction from *Campus 2020* in terms of how we move forward with the policy framework. (RR 12, para. 67)

Unfortunately, *Campus 2020* did not rise to the task. Metcalf et al. (2007) pointed out that the initiative



briefly and cautiously acknowledges an unspecified role for Aboriginal institutions “provided that such institutions meet appropriate standards of quality, and can deliver education programs on a fiscally viable and sustainable basis” (p. 39). No mention is made of what these standards should be or who should determine what quality means in relation to the standards. Notwithstanding, there is recognition that different standards can still be rigorous. The Report remains silent on the significant role that Aboriginal institutions play in educating and preparing students to participate in public post-secondary institutions and their contribution to the culture of learning in Aboriginal communities. Nor is reference made to the challenges inherent in delivering community-based, culturally relevant programming in small rural or remote communities, often using inadequate facilities and learning resources while depending upon unstable and insufficient funding. No recommendations are made regarding the allocation of resources to Aboriginal institutions so that they can continue and serve their students and communities. (p. 18)

Ultimately, *Campus 2020* failed to meet Ministry’s expectation of guiding policy revisions regarding Aboriginal private institutions.

A fourth Aboriginal PSE forum was held November 21, 2007. During this forum, the idea of recognizing Aboriginal PSIs as a “third sector”<sup>59</sup> in the public post-secondary system was advanced (Matthew, 2008). The following year, FNEC produced a policy paper recommending that the province “create policy and legislation that establishes a more integrated PSE system in BC by recognizing the unique and critical role of Aboriginal institutes” (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008, May, p. D). There has been no movement on this. In fact, a recent review of the PSE Partners Group reveals that the role of Aboriginal private institutes remains a quandary:

Do we want two parallel education frameworks? Do we want separate streams for Aboriginal institutions and mainstream institutions? Do we have one system where parties support each other and attempt to harmonize all activities? While this underlying question remains uncertain many find it difficult to move ahead.” (Human Capital Strategies et al., 2010, p. 4)

It is likely the changes in the Ministry structure and leadership also served to delay revisions to

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<sup>59</sup> The other two sectors being public and private post-secondary institutions.

the Aboriginal post-secondary policy framework. In June 2008, the Ministry was restructured as the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market. It was initially under the leadership of Murray Coell, followed by Moira Stilwell in June of 2010. Moira Stilwell was Minister when the Ministry was restructured in October 2010 into two separate entities. The Ministry of Regional, Economic and Skills Development included colleges and institutes, while the Ministry of Science and Universities was responsible for universities. Ida Chong became the Minister of both ministries.

In 2010, Minister Moira Stilwell said that

It is not enough to simply react to the current, short term economic realities. We must take steps now to ensure that our province has the skills and talent it needs to seize the opportunities of the future. To this end, the Ministry is developing the long-term strategies that will guide us. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2010, p. 4)

These long-term strategies included the revised Aboriginal PSE policy, which AVED and the Ministry Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation had been working on. Again, the policy revisions were put on hold. This time they were delayed pending the evaluation of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy and Action Plan* (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation) which was released in March 2011 (Jochen et al., 2011).

During 2010 and 2011, the Ministry continued to work with a subcommittee of the PSE Partners Group on the development of a draft policy framework, with plans to undertake consultations during the fall and winter of 2010 and 2011 (BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group, 2011). As part of that consultation process, in January 2012 the Ministry's website was revised to include an interactive site where Aboriginal learners are invited to share their reactions to the "2020 Vision for the Future," which includes the

following goals: a relevant, responsive and receptive public post-secondary system; public post-secondary and Aboriginal institutions/community partnerships for community-based programs; reduced financial barriers; “seamless” transitions from K-12 and post-secondary; and decision making based on research, data, and practice (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, n.d.-b). The revised policy is expected to be released shortly.

#### **6.2.3.3.4 Work with the MOU Partner’s Group**

The signing of the 2005 MOU is an important symbol of strong, high-level commitment by multiple stakeholders to improve Aboriginal PSE. The PSE Partners Group played an important role in developing the Aboriginal Service Plan initiative and maintaining a focus on Aboriginal PSE issues (Human Capital Strategies et al., 2010). Between 2006/07 and 2009/10, the Ministry channeled \$400,000 in four ‘one-time’ grants to the First Nations Education Steering Committee, in part to support the work of this group (Jothan et al., 2011).

The Ministry had high hopes for the PSE Partners Group’s work to collaboratively and effectively address a wide range of post-secondary interests. According to a Ministry staff member,

Working through a group like the MOU Partners, who bring all of those groups to the table, is really critical for government. It’s such a blessing to be able to have an entity that has signed an agreement. They will work together collaboratively and strategically with all of the key stakeholders in the Aboriginal community both on the education and training side with the urban, the rural, and the institutional representatives. To have that kind of vehicle to work through is really the ideal. We are actually looked at as being the Mecca by other provinces across Canada because we have this infrastructure in place. (RR12, para. 131)

Unfortunately, the PSE Partners Group has not lived up to these high expectations. Following the development of the PSE Partners Group, FNEC emerged as a major player in Aboriginal post-secondary policy discussions. A former representative of a post-secondary organization, who

participated in PSE Partners Group meetings, said that:

On the First Nation and Aboriginal side, clearly the most significant driving force is FNEESC, in part because they have a long history of engagement with educational issues, albeit more focused on the K to 12 side. But they've always had a working knowledge on what's going on the post-secondary side and have been much more engaged in that issue over the course of the last couple of years. [They] have also developed some backup support from government through people like Karen Bailey-Romanko to be able to have some policy development capacity. (RR13, para. 51)

However, other groups have not been as effective, as evidenced by this statement:

I think some of the other groups don't have either the history or the capacity to be engaging in some of the policy work in quite the same way. So I notice there is a bit of a gap between FNEESC, who are very focused in relation to the development of educational policy, and at least one or more of some of the other groups that are still significantly focused on the broader political issues of control and are having a hard time getting beyond that to some of the practical issues associated with the kind of agendas that are coming before that MOU group. (RR13, para. 51)

Three of the five original members of the PSE Partners Group represented First Nations, and a representative from a Métis organization felt that First Nations issues dominated the PSE Partners meetings, undermining the interests of Métis and other Aboriginal groups. The following was shared:

One [of] our biggest challenges in British Columbia has been helping people identify that Aboriginal policy has to include a Métis policy. Aboriginal is all three indigenous groups, if you will, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit... It's not that we want to see our needs over and above any other, especially First Nations. They've got a whole set of issues that is sometimes different, sometimes the same. We respect their requirements.

But the moment we talk about Métis-specific policy, we hear right away we have got to respect the rights of the First Nations first. It's almost like a hierarchy of who's important in the Aboriginal community. We're not going to get into that dispute. We're not going to fight with people over who is more important. That's not what this is about.... Like I said, I don't think people do it intentionally, I think there is still so much misunderstanding. I can't tell you how many times I've gone out to do a presentation to help people understand what we're looking for. It's not adversarial. It's not us taking resources away. But let's make sure we're sensitive to the other needs out there.... But the way they've set it up to throw us all together and just assume that we're all going to come out together. By us I mean First Nations, Métis, and the urban Aboriginal community.... [the] off-reserve First Nations and so forth. The needs are drastically

different, and you can't just have a one window approach to Aboriginal policy in post-secondary.... It's just not effective. (RR08, para.27, 64)

The PSE Partners Group never really embraced the idea of Métis-specific policy initiatives, preferring to pursue the development of a more global Aboriginal policy. A representative from an Aboriginal education organization involved with PSE Partners' meetings said that:

The Métis group sits at the Partners' table. They were a little quiet for the last little bit, but they are very much at the Partner's table.... One of their key priorities originally was more Métis content. We've [the PSE Partners] rolled it into more Aboriginal content now in the key priorities. But they're working alongside First Nations groups now. So at the Partner's table everyone gets a voice in what's happening. (RR02, para. 210)

As a result of the minimization of Métis concerns, the MNBC "stepped back" from the PSE Partners Group, choosing to work on their own, and hoping to utilize the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord* to move forward on education issues (RR08, para. 54).

UNNS, which was the only voice for off-reserve, non-status, and urban Aboriginal peoples, was plagued by internal difficulties and limited capacity during the period under examination. By 2010, neither MNBC nor UNNS were participating in the PSE Partners Group (Human Capital Strategies et al., 2010).

AVED's participation in the PSE Partner's Group was also problematic. One participant compared the participation of Ministry of Education's senior staff in the K-12 MOU partners group<sup>60</sup> with that of the AVED senior staff's participation with the MOU Partner's Group:

You have a Partner's Group that meets regularly that in K to 12 education that... the Deputy [Minister] is at consistently. The Deputy [Minister] is never at the meeting of the MOU's group that was established in post-secondary education. It's down to the Director level or below. So the level of engagement tells me where it sits in the [Ministry's]

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<sup>60</sup> In 1999, a MOU on Aboriginal education was signed by the Chiefs Action Committee, the Ministry of Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, First Nations Schools Association, BC College of Teachers, BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association, BC School Trustees Association, and BC Teachers' Federation. (*Memorandum on Aboriginal Education*, 1999, February 2)

hierarchy of priorities. And I think that's nuts. (RR 13, para. 62).

The effectiveness of the federal government's participation has also been limited by the lack of participation by senior staff, as well as by inconsistent participation by various federal departments:

Federally it remains a source of considerable frustration to me on a couple of levels. One is just the clarity of an opportunity for one stop shopping with the federal government. You end up with DIAND there for part of it, and HRSD or whatever they are these days, or maybe another federal ministry who has different parts of the puzzle. So there isn't coherence on the federal side that allows for effective engagement. And there too, the participation is from pretty far down the food chain at times. And as a result that means the opportunity to be able to get things done, to secure a level of commitment that's necessary to move them along and where necessary some resources to help it to happen is pretty [well] lost. (RR13, para. 53)

The Ministry relies on the PSE Partners "to ensure ongoing communication, collaboration, and advice" (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 9). However, according to internal and external critics of the PSE Partners, the group has not been successful in seeking input from or communicating to relevant stakeholder groups and organizations. Furthermore, the PSE Partners Group struggles with internal issues related to governance, management, and relationships, and also lacks strategic direction. These problems all undermine its mission of improving Aboriginal post-secondary learners' access, support, and success. Despite these challenges, there is broad support for a revitalized PSE Partners Group (Human Capital Strategies et al., 2010).

Following an evaluation of the PSE Partners, a strategic planning session was held in January 2011, where the PSE Partners recommitted to working together to improve Aboriginal learner's educational outcomes and experiences. MNBC and UNNS have since apparently re-engaged with this group (BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group,

2011).

#### **6.2.3.4 Ensure Effective Measurement and Progress Monitoring**

This objective was to be achieved through system-wide data tracking and the development of new performance measures.

##### **6.2.3.4.1 System-Wide Data Tracking**

Over the years, the Ministry has worked to ensure more effective system-wide data collection on Aboriginal post-secondary learners. In 2008, the Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard, developed by the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, was introduced system-wide to standardize data collection on self-identified Aboriginal students (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Intergovernmental and Community Relations, 2007, March 22; Jothan et al., 2011). More complete data on Aboriginal post-secondary participation is obtained by merging the Aboriginal post-secondary self-identification data with information on BC students who were identified as Aboriginal during their K-12 education. This aggregated information is used to determine the number and percentage of Aboriginal students attending BC's PSIs based on head counts. The usefulness of information is limited, however, because

Headcount measures all students who were enrolled in a program at a BC public post-secondary institutions, including non-credit courses (developmental and continuing education) as well as those leading to a post-secondary credential. Program duration varies from, for example, under 15 days to full semester. Non-credit courses under 15 days in duration could include, for example, occupational safety, first aid courses, or summer camps for high school students looking to enroll in post-secondary. (Jothan et al., 2011, p. 15)

While head counts provide an overall view of those who attended public PSIs, they provide no insight into what is being studied, or the level of certification being earned. As one participant

pointed out, “a three-week fire suppression course counts the same as a doctorate” (RR13, personal communication, June 25, 2009). Much more disaggregation is necessary for this data to be useful in understanding the post-secondary opportunities and challenges of Aboriginal learners.

The Student Transition Project is a collaborative project involving public PSIs, and AVED and the Ministry of Education. It follows the educational path of BC K-12 students, and continues tracking them as they transition to BC public PSIs. The report, *Educational Achievements of Aboriginal Students in BC* (Heslop & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009), provides information on educational outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in both the K-12 and the post-secondary system. Post-secondary data includes information on K-12 to post-secondary transition, destination institutions, continuous enrollment, stop-out and drop-out rates, and credential completion.

Unfortunately, the information from the Student Transition Project’s most current Aboriginal report (Heslop & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009) predates the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, and cannot be used to understand the Strategy’s impact. The report does establish base-line data and subsequent reports will provide important insights into Aboriginal students’ educational journeys. Another challenge related to the Student Transitions Project data is that it only reports on identified Aboriginal students transitioning from BC’s public school system. It does not include information about Aboriginal post-secondary students who did not identify as Aboriginal, who attended K-12 in First Nations schools and private schools, or who attended K-12 in other regions.



Heslop (2009) states that “As the gaps in education, participation and attainment begin to narrow, the Student Transitions Project will closely monitor and report these achievements over the coming years” (p. 19). Let us hope that the Student Transition Project can also give us indications as to whether the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners widens.

Other sources on Aboriginal post-secondary measures include Student Outcomes surveys and the Ministry Central Data Warehouse, which gathers data from BC’s public colleges, institutes, and teaching universities. Aboriginal private institutions are not included in these data sources. However, IAHLA has expressed interest in working with the Ministry to incorporate data from Aboriginal-controlled institutions into the Ministry’s data collection processes (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008, May).

#### **6.2.3.4.2 New Performance Measures**

According to the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* new performance measures were to be developed. To date, the only performance measure the Ministry has used is the number and percentage of Aboriginal students participating in the post-secondary system, based on headcounts. This performance measure predates the Strategy, and has been incorporated into Ministry Service Plan Reports since 2003/05 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2004a). As of 2011, plans were underway to expand Aboriginal performance measures by including the full-time equivalent enrollments of Aboriginal students, and the Ministry was considering reporting on the number of credentials awarded (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011). However, there appeared to be no plans to monitor other performance indicators such as the type program studied, the level of credentials awarded, or withdrawal and completion rates.

## **6.2.4 Impact**

The *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* proposed two goals: to “close the educational gap for Aboriginal learners” and to ensure “effective and accountable programs and services implementation and delivery” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 2). Given that the strategy has only been in place since 2007, many of the initiatives have only recently been implemented, and many of the students are still undertaking their studies (Jothan et al., 2011). With this in mind, the progress made on these two goals is discussed below.

### **6.2.4.1 Closing the Education Gap**

The *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* was intended to increase Aboriginal students’ “access, retention, completion and transition opportunities” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 2). Aboriginal Service Plans, a key element of the Strategy, were seen to be particularly important in achieving this goal.

As indicated in Table 5 below, between 2007/08 and 2009/10 Aboriginal students’ participation in BC’s public post-secondary system increased 16%, from 20,697 to 24,118. During this same time, the percentage of Aboriginal students among all domestic students in BC’s public post-secondary system increased from 5% to 6%.

However, increased Aboriginal participation was common to both ASP and non-ASP institutions. NVIT, an ASP institution, increased its Aboriginal student headcount by 43%. Meanwhile, there were also significant increases in the percentage of Aboriginal students at a number of non-ASP institutions including Okanagan College (42%), College of the Rockies (36%), Emily Carr University of Art & Design (36%), and Kwantlen Polytechnic University

(31%). The increase in the absolute number of Aboriginal students between 2007-08 and 2009-10 was highest at Northwest Community College, an ASP institution that increased the number of Aboriginal students by 550. However, Aboriginal student numbers also increased impressively by 400 at Okanagan College, a non ASP institution. Other ASP institutions, including College of New Caledonia (350), Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (310), Thompson River University (265), and Vancouver Island University (245), had impressive increases in the number of Aboriginal students enrolled. Between 2007/08 and 2009/10, the number and percentage of Aboriginal students at two non-ASP institutions, Simon Fraser University and the Justice Institute of BC, actually declined, while at UNBC the number and percentage of Aboriginal students was the same in 2007-08 and 2009-10 (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education. Student Transitions Project, 2010).

Table 5

*Aboriginal Student Headcount for B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions, Academic Year 2007-08 to 2009-10*

Institution	Aboriginal Student <sup>a</sup> Headcount <sup>b</sup>			Change in #	Change in %	Non-Aboriginal Student <sup>c</sup> Headcount			Change in #	Change in %	Aboriginal Student Headcount as a Percent (%) of All Domestic Students <sup>d</sup>		
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
British Columbia Institute of Technology	1,145	1,190	1,195	50	4%	42,390	41,290	39,705	-2,685	-6%	3%	3%	3%
Camosun College	820	835	895	75	9%	16,865	17,235	17,590	725	4%	5%	5%	5%
Capilano University	455	495	515	60	13%	11,890	12,415	12,830	940	8%	4%	4%	4%
College of New Caledonia	1,970	2,210	2,320	350	18%	7,975	7,425	7,280	-695	-9%	20%	23%	24%
College of the Rockies	485	595	660	175	36%	11,595	11,385	11,650	55	0%	4%	5%	5%
Douglas College	795	925	880	85	11%	21,205	22,920	23,735	2,530	12%	4%	4%	4%
Emily Carr University of Art + Design	70	80	95	25	36%	3,705	3,860	4,155	450	12%	2%	2%	2%
Justice Institute of British Columbia	890	945	845	-45	-5%	30,310	29,440	29,600	-710	-2%	3%	3%	3%
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	385	495	505	120	31%	16,500	16,410	17,100	600	4%	2%	3%	3%
Langara College	310	305	330	20	6%	17,130	17,770	18,805	1,675	10%	2%	2%	2%
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	715	945	1,025	310	43%	235	270	220	-15	-6%	75%	78%	82%
North Island College	1,175	1,260	1,320	145	12%	8,655	8,305	8,560	-95	-1%	12%	13%	13%

Institution	Aboriginal Student Headcount <sup>a</sup>			Change in #	Change in %	Non-Aboriginal Student <sup>c</sup> Headcount			Change in #	Change in %	Aboriginal Student Headcount as a Percent (%) of All Domestic Students <sup>d</sup>		
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10			2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08			2008/09	2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Northern Lights College	1,340	1,435	1,445	105	8%	7,530	8,430	8,015	485	6%	15%	15%	15%
Northwest Community College	2,530	2,805	3,080	550	21%	3,935	4,160	4,515	580	15%	39%	40%	41%
Okanagan College	935	1,130	1,335	400	42%	17,465	17,985	19,110	1,645	9%	5%	6%	7%
Royal Roads University	100	115	125	25	25%	2,880	2,960	3,165	285	10%	3%	4%	4%
Selkirk College	490	480	520	30	6%	11,500	11,540	10,650	-850	-7%	4%	4%	5%
Simon Fraser University	515	490	465	-50	-10%	26,140	27,045	27,475	1,335	5%	2%	2%	2%
Thompson Rivers University	2,115	2,370	2,380	265	13%	21,580	22,715	23,600	2,020	9%	9%	9%	9%
University of British Columbia	830	905	925	95	11%	46,100	47,050	48,560	2,460	5%	2%	2%	2%
University of Northern British Columbia	535	580	535	0	0	3,375	3,445	3,305	-70	-2%	14%	14%	14%
University of the Fraser Valley	750	825	905	155	21%	12,765	13,140	13,590	825	6%	6%	6%	6%
University of Victoria	675	680	745	70	10%	17,550	17,840	18,530	980	6%	4%	4%	4%
Vancouver Community College	530	640	720	190	36%	21,435	22,495	22,160	725	3%	2%	3%	3%
Vancouver Island	1,795	1,945	2,040	245	14%	16,120	16,210	15,330	-790	-5%	10%	11%	12%

Institution	Aboriginal Student Headcount <sup>a</sup>			Change in #	Change in %	Non-Aboriginal Student <sup>c</sup> Headcount			Change in #	Change in %	Aboriginal Student Headcount as a Percent (%) of All Domestic Students <sup>d</sup>		
				2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10				2007/08 to 2009/10	2007/08 to 2009/10			
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2009/10	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2009/10	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
University													
Institution Headcount Total <sup>e</sup>	22,355	24,680	25,805	3,450	15%	396,830	403,740	409,235	12,405	3%	5%	6%	6%
Unique Headcount Total <sup>e</sup>	20,697	22,873	24,118	3,421	16%	373,986	381,318	388,146	14,160	4%	5%	6%	6%

Note: Adapted from British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education. Student Transitions Project (2010), *Fall 2010 submission*. Aboriginal student headcount by economic development region and institution, domestic students only [data table]. Unpublished data table. Each number has been rounded to the nearest 5. The effects of rounding may result in totals in different reports not matching exactly when they would be expected to match.

<sup>a</sup>Aboriginal Student identity is self-declared by students at a public post-secondary institution, or identified through Ministry of Education linkages to a declaration of Aboriginal identity at the K-12 level. <sup>b</sup> Non-Aboriginal category includes students whose Aboriginal identity is unknown. <sup>c</sup>In any given year, some students attend more than one institution. Since these students are included in the headcount of each institution they attend, the sum of all institutions' headcounts will include some students more than once, producing an overstated institution headcount total. <sup>d</sup>Data excludes international and off-shore students. <sup>e</sup> In the unique headcount, students who are identified as attending more than one institution are only counted once. This number represents the number of students served by the public PSIs as a whole.

Understanding the role of ASPs or other elements of the Strategy in increasing Aboriginal participation is further complicated by a host of other factors that influence post-secondary participation, such as Aboriginal population growth, improved high school graduation rates, increased awareness of the importance of education, stronger community support for education, employment opportunities, and so forth. Nevertheless, it is clear that Aboriginal public post-secondary participation grew significantly during this time period. However, increases in Aboriginal participation numbers does not necessarily mean that the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners is closing. Ultimately, a broader range of measures of educational outcomes is necessary to understand the comparability of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational outcomes.

#### **6.2.4.2 Effective & Accountable Programs and Services**

A first glance at the data on overall participation in the post-secondary system, based on head count, suggests that parity has been met in that Aboriginal people represent 4.8 of BC's population, and Aboriginal learners make up 6% of the post-secondary student population. This begs the question of parity in what? Jothen et al. (2011) point out that that head count data includes participation in all post-secondary programming, from high school summer programs to continuing and developmental education to degree programs at the undergraduate, professional, or graduate level. According to the Student Transitions Project (2009), 30% of BC Aboriginal high school graduates take developmental programs at PSIs. That rate is likely higher for those who go on to post-secondary without the benefit of high school graduation. This highlights the critical need for greater disaggregation of Aboriginal post-secondary participation data so that we can understand not only overall participation rates, but also the kinds of programs that Aboriginal learners are enrolling in and the types of certification they will receive upon

completion. Without greater and carefully chosen disaggregation, the data is misleading as it gives the perception of parity while likely hiding great disparity.

The implementation of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* was also expected to increase Aboriginal student retention, completion rates, and transition rates. The Strategy identifies several possible student performance indicators:

- Participation rate: overall growth in enrolment, Aboriginal learners as percentage of total student population, regional rates, participation by program.
- Transition rate: number and rate of learners transitioning into post-secondary education from K-12 within one year of K-12 completion, rate of transition from Adult Basic Education to further post-secondary.
- Completion rate: completion of program (certificate, diploma, degree).
- Level of Credential awarded: number of learners in certificate, diploma, undergraduate, and graduate programs. (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 8)

Jothen et al. (2011) note that

Several institutions participating in ASPs report robust improvements in retention and completion rates, although it remains a central concern that too many students continue to “drop out,” particularly at the first year level. Some institutions have uneven numbers on retention and completion, which, in part, may be attributable to other factors. And, once again, it must be observed that the performance of non-ASP institutions was impressive. (p. 62)

Unfortunately, at this time the only data available about Aboriginal post-secondary learners’ performance is participation numbers and percentages based on head-counts. There is no information available on a wide range of educational outcomes, including retention, completion, programs of study, and credentials awarded. Without additional information, it is not known if the strategy contributed to more comparable education outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners.

Furthermore, under the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, performance measures have focused on Aboriginal student performance. No performance indicators have been developed and implemented to monitor institutional change that supports Aboriginal



learners.

### **6.3 Discussion and Findings**

As in the previous chapters, this section explores a number of themes that emerged during the discussion of Aboriginal policy development under Gordon Campbell's Liberals. These themes include the influence of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, the privileging of First Nations, the importance of relationships, leadership and ownership, the selective implementation of policy, and the meaning of accountability.

#### **6.3.1 The Influence of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation**

Shortly after the Liberals were elected, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was dissolved and the Treaty Negotiation Office became part of the responsibility of the Attorney General's Office. During the early revisions to the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, the Ministry did consult minimally with the Treaty Negotiations Office and the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. In the wake of the *New Relationship* and the *Transformative Change Accord*, and with the establishment of a stand-alone Ministry for Aboriginal issues, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation and worked closely on developments in Aboriginal PSE.

Because the *MOU: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training* was signed prior to the creation of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, they are not signatories to the MOU. However, they did become members of the PSE Partners, who are responsible for implementing the MOU, and who were actively involved with consultations on and development of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* and other aspects of Aboriginal PSE. For example, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation developed the Aboriginal Administrative Data Standard, which was used throughout the post-

secondary system to collect more consistent information on Aboriginal self-identification.

The 2006 *Proposed Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy: Discussion Draft*, and the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, were co-developed by the AVED and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. The text of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* links it to the *New Relationship* and frames the Strategy as the post-secondary part of the *Transformative Change Accord*. This is reinforced by Premier Campbell who has stated that the Strategy honours “the commitments made in the Transformative Change Accord to close the education gap” (British Columbia Office of the Premier & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007, April 24).

Prior to and during the development and implementation of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, the Ministries of AVED and Aboriginal Affairs worked together on revisions to the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*. They continue to do so.

### **6.3.2 Privileging First Nations**

Given that the *New Relationship* and the *Transformative Change Accord* set the policy context in AVED, it is not surprising that the privileging of First Nations interests is evident in the formation, the text, and the implementation of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*.

During the 2000s, multiple consultations were held on revisions to the 1995 APF, the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, and *Campus 2020*. However, the ability to participate effectively in these consultations varied widely from group to group.

The policy capacity of many First Nations communities had grown, and through FNESC, First Nations worked collaboratively to respond to consultation requests. IAHLA also engaged

effectively in the consultation process, and their effectiveness was enhanced by their collaboration with FNEC and the Indian Studies Support Program Committee. Both FNEC and IAHLA benefitted from the fact that they were also engaged in post-secondary consultations with INAC, and thus were able to build on these various consultations. Furthermore, the province provided funding to FNEC to support the work of FNEC's Post-Secondary Education Committee and IAHLA, and appointed a FNEC representative to the Minister's Advisory Council on Post-Secondary Education.

No such support was extended to other Aboriginal groups like the BCFNC, the MNBC, or UNNS, who struggled to participate in these consultations. This is particularly problematic in that in 2006, 30% of BC's Aboriginal population was Métis, and 60% of BC's Aboriginal population lived in urban centres (BC Stats, 2005; Stock, 2009).

After the *MOU: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training* was signed, the PSE Partners Group emerged as a key policy actor in Aboriginal PSE. Original members of the group included three First Nations groups (The First Nations Summit, the BC Assembly of First Nations, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee), one Métis group (MNBC), and one group to represent the interests of off-reserve, non-status, and urban Aboriginal people (UNNS). Given their PSE capacity, it is not surprising that FNEC emerged as a leader in this group. The PSE Partners' minimization of Métis interests resulted in the MNBC stepping away from the group, and UNNS' internal issues left off-reserve, non-status, and urban Aboriginal people voiceless on this committee. Inuit people were never represented on this group.

The privileging of First Nations continues in the text of the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*, which is linked to the *New Relationship* and contextualized as "the post-secondary component of the Transformative Change Accord," both

these agreements being between First Nations and the province. Absent from the document is any reference to the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*, or to the interests of off-reserve, non-status, urban, or Inuit populations. Most of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* speaks about “Aboriginal” post-secondary issues; however the emphasis on the *New Relationship* and the *Transformative Change Accord* makes First Nations PSE a priority.

In this context, implementation of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* tended to favour First Nations over other Aboriginal groups in program and service development, and in building collaborative partnerships. Furthermore, the province contributed money to two Aboriginal awards: while one award is open to all Aboriginal students, the other award is limited to BC First Nations students. As one participant observed, “it’s almost like a hierarchy of who’s important in the Aboriginal community” (RR08, para. 64).

### **6.3.3 Relationships**

In the era of the *New Relationship* between the province and Aboriginal people, it is not surprising that relationships continued as a theme in Aboriginal PSE. Following a Ministry-hosted forum on Aboriginal PSE in 2004, the Ministry strengthened its relationship with FNEESC by appointing Christa Williams, FNEESC’s Executive Director, to the Minister’s Advisory Council on Post-Secondary Education. The Ministry also provided funds to FNEESC to establish an Aboriginal post-secondary advisory committee and to support to FNEESC’s Post-Secondary Education Sub-Committee and IAHLA.

This importance of relationship-building to the Ministry is also apparent in the second forum that the AVED hosted in March 2005. It was called *Enhancing Communication & Partnerships – How Do We Work Together*. The day following the forum, the Ministry, along with Aboriginal political and education organizations, PSE organizations, and INAC, formalized

their relationship and intentions to work collaboratively on Aboriginal post-secondary issues through the 2005 *MOU on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training*. The importance of productive relationships was also demonstrated during the consultation processes. Both FNEC and IAHLA worked collaboratively with their members and each other, enabling them to effectively represent their interests

Relationship-building is the foundation of the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*. The Strategy is contextualized in terms of the *New Relationship* and the *Transformative Change Accord*, and promotes change through collaboration. To this end, the Ministry funded a number of partner-building initiatives including ASPs, Gathering Places, the ASPF, the on-going work of the PSE Partners Group, and revisions to the Aboriginal PSE policy.

Poor relationships within the PSE Partners Group, and also with external stakeholders, undermined their effectiveness. The Aboriginal PSE policy has not yet been revised. In part this is due to the unresolved issue of what relationship private PSIs will have with the Ministry.

#### **6.3.4 Leadership and Ownership**

During the Liberal's first term, the Ministry stepped back from a strong leadership role in PSE by instituting base-budget funding for colleges, institutes, and university-colleges, giving these institutions greater control over how funds were spent. Targeted funding for Aboriginal coordinators was rolled into institutions' base budgets, and institutions were only required to report on the number and percentage of Aboriginal students enrolled. The Ministry further divested itself from responsibility for Aboriginal education when it reduced funding for the ASPF and disbanded the Aboriginal Programs unit, leaving only one staff member with responsibility for Aboriginal education. The only significant engagement that the Ministry had

with Aboriginal education during the Liberal's first term was through attempts to revise the APF as part of the government's overall deregulation plan. Not surprisingly, without strong leadership from the Ministry, and with limited resources and many competing interests, some PSIs neglected Aboriginal programs and services.

As the province moved towards a renewed relationship with First Nations, the Ministry took on greater ownership of Aboriginal PSE. Evidence for this is found in the four forums hosted by the Ministry, the 2005 evaluation of Aboriginal post-secondary programs and services, the hiring of additional Aboriginal staff, increased funding for the ASPF, re-establishing the Aboriginal Programs unit, and in the development, funding, implementation and evaluation of the 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*.

Certain individuals within the Ministry also demonstrated a strong commitment to Aboriginal education. Despite limited support from more senior Ministry staff, Juanita Berkhout maintained strong connections with the BCFNC, and continued to bring their issues forward. Later, Ministry staff like Jacqueline Dennis-Orr worked diligently on the development of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*.

It's clear that the strong leadership of Christa Williams, with support from Karen Bailey-Romanko, contributed to FNEESC's powerful leadership role in the policy process. The IAHLA executive also emerged as strong leaders. Limited capacity prevented other groups, like the BCFNC, MNBC, and UNNS, from taking a stronger role. The creation of broader and more formal ownership for Aboriginal PSE was attempted through the signing of the *MOU on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training*, though this was not as successful as anticipated.

With strong leadership from the Ministry, and with additional resources, most public PSIs

demonstrated greater ownership of and responsibility for Aboriginal education, resulting in increases in relevant programs and services, Aboriginal-specific facilities, and greater collaboration and partnerships between institutions and Aboriginal communities and organizations. A commitment to Aboriginal PSE by PSIs' senior management was linked to positive changes in Aboriginal education at their institutions. This was the case even when the institutions did not benefit from Aboriginal-specific funding.

### **6.3.5 Selective Implementation of Policy**

As discussed above, during the Liberal's first term, the Ministry eliminated its Aboriginal programs unit, reduced ASPF funding, and incorporated targeted funding for Aboriginal coordinators into institutional budgets. At the same time the Liberals created a new educational context in which institutional autonomy and accountability prevailed, enabling public colleges, institutes, and university-colleges greater control over budgeting and programming. In this new context, many institutions continued to implement Aboriginal initiatives. However some institutions exercised their new power over resources and programming to shift limited resources away from Aboriginal education.

During their second term, the Liberals exerted their influence across many Ministries in order to realize the goals of the *New Relationship and Transformative Change Accord*. For AVED, this was manifest in the development of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* and the re-emergence of Aboriginal-targeted funding to facilitate the Strategy's implementation. Funding constraints resulted in competition for resources, and not all institutions were able to implement the wide range of initiatives promoted in the Strategy. However, all institutions implemented some Aboriginal initiatives.

### 6.3.6 Accountability

Increased accountability is one of the hallmarks of the Liberal's reign. During their first term, AVED developed an accountability framework for PSE, and incorporated a wide range of performance measures into Ministry service plans and reports. For Aboriginal education, the only performance measure implemented was the number and percentage of Aboriginal students participating in PSE, based on head counts. As promised in the Strategy, the Ministry has worked to improve the quality of the data collected on Aboriginal participation, and implemented the Aboriginal Data Standard. Aboriginal groups, however, have lobbied for broader performance measures, that look beyond Aboriginal students' participation and performance and include indicators of PSIs' abilities to better meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. Although the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* promised the development of additional performance indicators, those measures have not yet materialized.

### 6.4 Summary

When the Liberals came into power in 2001, they inherited the 1995 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*. As part of a government-wide initiative to reduce red tape, AVED began a process to revise the APF, with the intention of bringing it in line with the Ministry's focus on institutional autonomy and accountability. Before the policy revisions were complete, the province underwent significant changes in its relationship with First Nations peoples. The Ministry became much more involved in Aboriginal PSE and, working with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, shifted their focus from revising the APF to writing the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan*.

While the effectiveness of different initiatives varied, as a result of the Strategy and funding that went with it, many public PSIs implemented measures intended to increase



Aboriginal educational outcomes, create more relevant and effective programs and services, and improve institutional receptivity for Aboriginal peoples. Many institutions also developed more collaborative relationships with Aboriginal communities and organizations. Furthermore, system-wide changes to data collection resulted in more consistent measurements to track student participation. Although it is apparent that participation rates increased, it is also clear that participation numbers alone are inadequate for understanding whether or not the educational gap for Aboriginal students is closing relative to their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

In the context of the *New Relationship*, the needs of Aboriginal learners who are not First Nations are often ignored. Métis, off-reserve, non-status, and urban Aboriginal people were marginalized during the development of the Strategy, in the text, and in the implementation.

In 2011, Christie Clark succeeded Gordon Campbell as the leader of the Liberal Party. In this new political context, Aboriginal post-secondary policy is still on the table. The Ministry's most recent Service Plan states that the Ministry will "continue to advance initiatives to increase participation rates, learning outcomes and economic and social opportunities for Aboriginal learners" (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011, May, p. 9). AVED continues to work with the PSE Partners on a revised Aboriginal PSE policy, which is expected to be released shortly. The anticipated new policy is outside of the boundaries of this case study.

## **Chapter 7: Revisiting the Policy Process**

In exploring the question, “How have changing political, economic and social circumstances in British Columbia influenced the development and implementation of Aboriginal post-secondary policy?” this dissertation analyzes a quarter-century of Aboriginal PSE discourse, developed under three different political parties. This final chapter re-visits the contexts that influenced policy formulation and highlights themes that emerged during the policy-making processes. This is followed by a discussion of implications for policy and research, and ends by linking this dissertation to critical practice.

### **7.1 The Context**

While Aboriginal people were largely absent from BC’s post-secondary system until the late 1970s, they had long understood, as Chief James Stacker said, “that education was as necessary to the Indian as to the white man” (cited in Haig-Brown, 1995b, p. 55). Indian leaders were strong advocates for education and training to meet the emerging needs of Aboriginal people in their new colonial environment. The federal government limited its response to providing funding to Indian and Inuit students to support post-secondary studies and to PSIs for services and programs that supported Indian and Inuit education. Until the latter half of the 1980s, Aboriginal PSE was not even on BC’s “radar screen” as it was seen to be a federal jurisdiction.

During this time, when the Social Credit Party (the Socreds) governed BC under the leadership of Bill Vander Zalm, the province’s relationship with Aboriginal people began to change. BC’s economy, though diversifying, was still largely based on resource industries and subject to periods of expansion and recession. As BC’s economy emerged from a recession in the mid-1980s, the province enjoyed a period of economic growth. This economic growth was

made vulnerable, however, by a more widespread recognition of Aboriginal rights in the courts, and by direct action campaigns by Aboriginal people that strategically targeted resource industries and transportation infrastructures.

In response to Aboriginal rights judicial decisions, direct action, and pressure from business and the broader public, the province's relationship with First Nations began a fundamental shift. Rather than continue its longstanding denial of Aboriginal rights and title, BC began to see unresolved title as an impediment to BC's economic development, and treaties as offering the possibility of resolving rights and title issues. In 1990 the Socreds set the stage for the BC Treaty Process by establishing the BC Claims Task Force to define the scope and organization of treaty negotiations.

Many factors contributed to developments in Aboriginal post-secondary education under the Socreds. A more positive economic environment likely facilitated an expansion of the post-secondary system following the 1988 *Access to Advanced Education and Job Training in British Columbia* report, which promoted increased and more equitable access to the post-secondary system for underrepresented groups, including Aboriginal people. Media coverage of demonstrations protesting federal capping of the post-secondary funding for Indian and Inuit students drew attention to Aboriginal post-secondary issues. There was also a growing recognition that educated Aboriginal people could contribute to BC's economy by filling future labour shortages. The 1989 creation of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners created space for BC Aboriginal people to engage directly in policy discourse about Aboriginal PSE. It also provided BC with the opportunity to address educational issues raised in treaty discussions by First Nations while developing some capacity to work with Aboriginal people. The Committee's work resulted in the 1990 *Report of the*

*Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners* (also known as the *Green Report*).

Following the Socreds, the New Democratic Party (NDP) governed BC for a decade. For much of that period, BC's economy was weak, and continuing direct action and court decisions underscored the economic value of resolving Aboriginal rights and title issues. The NDP built on the Socred initiatives and established the BC Treaty Commission to oversee the BC Treaty Process. By 2001, only the Nisga'a Treaty had been finalized, but 49 First Nations were involved in the treaty process.

With the understanding that economic, labour, and social interests were linked to education, the NDP continued the Socreds' focus on access by expanding the post-secondary system and regulating tuition fees. The NDP's *Charting a New Course* resulted in more coordination among colleges, institutes, and university-colleges, through a focus on the goals of relevance and quality, access, affordability, and accountability. These same goals set the parameters for the development of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (APF). The development of the APF was further influenced by the reality of a young and rapidly growing Aboriginal population, socio-economic disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and concerns about the capacity of First Nations to be self-governing in the wake of treaties.

In 2001, the Liberal Party succeeded the NDP. For much of the time that Campbell led the Liberals, BC enjoyed a relatively strong economy. Initially, relationships with First Nations were strained as a result of the Liberals' minimal position on self-government. After significant court cases that clarified the Crown's responsibility to consult with and accommodate First Nations interests when rights and title were infringed, the Liberals' position on Aboriginal affairs

underwent a fundamental shift, as articulated in the *New Relationship* (2005), the *Transformative Change Accord* (2005), and the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord* (2006). Around this time, the Liberals created “Five Great Goals” that guided cross-Ministry initiatives during the Liberals’ second term, including initiatives undertaken by the Ministries responsible for Aboriginal affairs and post-secondary education.

During their first term, however, the Liberals reduced institutional post-secondary funding, de-regulated tuition, and eliminated provincial student grants. Tuition fees skyrocketed, requiring students to take on the increasing costs of PSE. The Liberals also facilitated the privatization of PSE through the *Degree Authorization Act*. While Aboriginal PSE support continued under the Liberals, during their first term the Liberals rolled targeted funding for Aboriginal coordinators into institutional budgets, decreased Aboriginal project funding, and eliminated the Aboriginal Programs’ unit. As part of the Liberal goal of reducing red tape, revisions to the APF were initiated, but never completed.

During their second term, the Liberal government’s Five Great Goals resulted in significant changes to PSE including a dramatic expansion of student spaces and institutional infrastructure, and the re-regulation of tuition fees. In relation to Aboriginal education, the focus shifted from revising the ASP to developing and implementing the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy and Action Plan*. In addition, the Aboriginal Programs’ unit was re-established. Finally, while the Ministry continued to articulate its intention to revise the APF, a revised policy has not yet been released.

## 7.2 Themes

In examining policy formulation and implementation under three different governing parties, a number of common themes emerge, including sector intersection between the

Ministries responsible for post-secondary education and Aboriginal affairs; privileging of First Nations; relationships between policy actors and policy structures; the importance of leadership and ownership; the exercise of state and institutional power; and different understandings of accountability.

### **7.2.1 Sector Intersection between the Ministries Responsible for Post-Secondary Education and Aboriginal Affairs**

Aboriginal post-secondary policy documents are closely aligned with other developments in BC's post-secondary policy discourse. The *Green Report* can be seen to fill the Aboriginal side of the Socreds' *Access for All* initiatives. The APF is linked to the NDPs' *Charting a New Course* through the common goals of access, relevance and quality, affordability, and accountability. Similarly, the uncompleted revisions of the APF reflect the Liberals' commitment to greater institutional autonomy and accountability, and the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* is linked to the Liberals' Five Great Goals.

However, policy documents were also shaped by the province's changing relationships with First Nations and its involvement in the BC Treaty Process. As this new dynamic emerged, various Ministries responsible for Aboriginal affairs engaged with the Ministries responsible for post-secondary education to co-develop Aboriginal post-secondary policy.

Policy spill-over occurs when "outputs from one policy sector ... [alter] the general conditions that affect the operation of another policy sector" (Hoberg & Morawski, 1997, pp. 389-390). An example of policy spill-over initiating change in provincial policies and practices occurred when the federal government capped post-secondary funding for Indian and Inuit students. Media coverage of high profile, nation-wide protests by Aboriginal students created a heightened awareness of Aboriginal post-secondary issues. Around this same time the federal

government cut funding to two Aboriginal PSIs, and the provincial government stepped in and funded them.

Even more salient to this case, however, is the notion of sector intersection, “the overlap of actors and institutions that comprise the policy regimes for different sectors” resulting from significant socio-economic disruptions or the strategic actions of policy actors (Hoberg & Morawski, 1997, p. 390). In this case, disruptions were caused by court cases and direct action that underscored the economic vulnerability of British Columbia resulting from unresolved Aboriginal rights and title issues.

Under the Socreds, when treaty negotiations emerged as a possibility, Aboriginal PSE policy was seen as an opportunity for government to respond to educational issues being raised at treaty discussions, and at the same time develop much needed Aboriginal policy capacity. The Ministry of Native Affairs’ involvement in post-secondary policy is demonstrated through their joint announcement with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training of the establishment of the Provincial Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners; Native Affairs’ membership on the Committee; and the Committee’s close relationship with the Premier’s Council on Native Affairs. Native Affairs was also involved in the report’s initial implementation.

Under the NDP, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs worked with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) on the development of the APF so that First Nations’ priorities identified through treaty negotiations were incorporated into the policy framework. Additionally, Aboriginal Affairs worked with Union of BC Indian Chiefs on the establishment of the Institute of Indigenous Government (IIG) as a public institution. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs’ influence on the text of the APF is illustrated by the linkages

between the APF and the need to build capacity for treaty and self-government; the replication of Aboriginal Affairs' mission as the APF's overarching principles; the linking of public designated Aboriginal institutes to the treaty process through the criteria that the institutes' goals facilitate the development of autonomy and self-reliance; and the final sentence of the APF which supports "self-management" for Aboriginal people.

During the Liberals' first term, Aboriginal Affairs was abolished so AVED consulted with the Treaty Negotiation Office and the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services on revisions to the APF that were never finalized. Following the *New Relationship*, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation was established and became a member of the PSE Partners that played a significant role in the consultation process toward an Aboriginal post-secondary strategy. The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation and AVED co-developed the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy*. Both Ministries continue to work together on the yet-to-be-completed revisions to the APF.

Graham et al. (1996) noted that Aboriginal education policy discourse developed by the federal government and Aboriginal groups between 1988 and 1991 emphasized the relationship between self-government and education, while provincial policy discourse tended to be influenced by multicultural discourse. However, they also note that national, provincial, and territorial Aboriginal education policy discourse developed differently.

In British Columbia, policy discourse on self-government changed over time. The *Green Report* framed PSE as an inherent Aboriginal right of self-government. The APF rejected this position by asserting provincial responsibility for PSE, but supported and promoted Aboriginal PSE for capacity building for both treaty and self-government. Given the Liberal position on self-government, it is not surprising that the term "self-government" is avoided in the *Aboriginal*



*Post-Secondary Education Strategy*. While the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* references the need to reconcile Aboriginal rights and title, its primary concern is addressing educational parity through greater collaboration.

### **7.2.2 Privileging First Nations**

The province's involvement with the treaty process, the *New Relationship*, and the *Transformative Change Accord*, and the involvement of Ministries responsible for Aboriginal affairs in Aboriginal post-secondary policy developments, has led to the privileging of First Nations over other Aboriginal groups. Under the Socreds, all Aboriginal representatives on the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, including the United Native Nations (UNNS) representative, were from BC First Nations, and text of the *Green Report* uses "First Nations" in reference to all Aboriginal people. The *Green Report's* history section focuses on the history of BC First Nations, briefly acknowledges non-status Indians, and ignores other Aboriginal groups. Moreover, the *Green Report* acknowledges bands and tribal councils as third levels of government, while the United Native Nations is referred to as an "advocacy group." In addition, the *Green Report* is framed by, and education is defined through, positions on education developed by the Assembly of First Nations. While a number of the *Green Report's* recommendations are applicable to all Aboriginal groups, many are specific to or privilege BC First Nations, and only a couple recognize needs of non-status and urban Aboriginal people. The post-secondary needs of Métis, Inuit, or First Nations from other provinces or territories are absent in the *Green Report*.

Despite the more inclusive use of the term "Aboriginal" in the text of the APF developed by the NDP, the privileging of BC First Nations continues. This is illustrated by references to the BC Treaty Process and the need to build capacity for it as well as frequent references to

federal responsibility for and programs applicable to First Nations. While limited acknowledgement is given to off-reserve and non-status peoples, the APF makes no mention of Métis, Inuit, First Nations originating from other jurisdictions, or the growing urban Aboriginal population.

During the complex consultation processes for the revised ASP, *Campus 2020*, and the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy*, the Liberal government provided funding to the First Nations Steering Committee (FNESC) to support the work of its Post-Secondary Committee and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA), whose policy capacity was already well developed. No support was extended to other Aboriginal groups, like the British Columbia First Nations Coordinators (BCFNC), the Métis Nation BC (MNBC), or the UNNS, who had limited policy capacity and struggled to engage in these consultations. FNESC was also funded to support the work of the PSE Partners, ensuring close ties between them. FNESC was the only Aboriginal Group appointed to the Minister's Advisory Council on PSE.

Of the five Aboriginal groups represented in the PSE Partners, a key policy actor in Aboriginal PSE under the Liberals, three were First Nations (the First Nations Summit, the BC Assembly of First Nations, and FNESC), and in 2009 the First Nations Human Resource Council became a member. The MNBC represented Métis, and UNNS represented off-reserve, non-status, and urban Aboriginal people. As their PSE capacity developed, FNESC emerged as a leader in this group. The PSE Partners' minimization of Métis interests resulted in the withdrawal of MNBC from the group, and the implosion of UNNS left off-reserve, non-status, and urban Aboriginal people voiceless on this committee. Inuit people were never represented in this group.

The text of the Liberals' 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy* shows a clear bias for

BC First Nations through references to the Liberals' *New Relationship* and *Transformative Change Accord*, and also through the absence of reference to the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*. The specific interests of Métis, Inuit, non-status, urban Aboriginal people, and First Nations from outside of British Columbia are ignored in the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*.

The favouring of BC First Nations continued in the implementation of the policies. For example, the titles of many of the Aboriginal coordinators included the term "First Nations," and until 2008 their umbrella organization was called BC First Nations Coordinators. Many of the physical facilities designed to enhance Aboriginal student's experiences also contained the term "First Nations." Furthermore, Aboriginal programs and services, curriculum development, and affiliation agreements all tended to favour BC First Nations.

The privileging of BC on-reserve First Nations, though understandable in light of the province's unresolved Aboriginal rights and title issues, created the "hierarchy of who's important in the Aboriginal community" (RR08, para. 64) and disregarded the reality of the significant presence of Métis, off-reserve, urban, and non-status Aboriginal people in BC while ignoring Inuit people entirely.

### **7.2.3 Relationships between Policy Actors and Policy Structures**

Graham et al. (1996) note that federal and provincial policy discourse in Aboriginal education between 1988 and 1991 emphasized formalizing relationships among various educational groups. This is also true of the policy documents discussed in this dissertation. The *Green Report* recommended formalizing relationships through establishment of First Nations Advisory Councils, First Nations appointments to institutional governing boards, a Provincial Council on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education, affiliation agreements between public post-

secondary and Aboriginal private institutions, a tripartite committee (federal, provincial and First Nations) to deal with cross-jurisdictional issues, and the establishment of a provincial education resource centre to support curriculum initiatives. The APF continued this trend by requiring that institutions have Aboriginal advisory committees, promoting Aboriginal representatives on institutional governance structures, emphasizing partnerships between PSIs and Aboriginal communities and organizations, and establishing the Education Resource Centre. With a strong focus on the *New Relationship*, it is not unexpected that the Liberals also supported formalizing relationships. They did this through their support of the PSE Partners, by promoting partnerships and collaboration as an objective of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, and by funding and implementing numerous initiatives to this end.

Policy formulation also benefited from strong positive relationships between individuals and groups that emerged alongside of policy developments. Chief Gordon Antoine's interaction with a senior Ministry official not only drew attention to Aboriginal post-secondary issues, but also developed into a strong personal relationship and likely influenced his appointment as co-chair of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners. Prior to the establishment of the Committee, many of the First Nations educators on the Committee had developed relationships through their work on post-secondary issues, and while policy formation was not without contestation, these strong relationships, combined with their commitment to the betterment of Aboriginal education, allowed them to work through issues and complete their report long before it was due.

Educational leaders working in Aboriginal private institutions formalized and solidified their relationship through the development of the AAPSI. Similarly, Aboriginal coordinators came together under the umbrella organization, BCFNC. Both the AAPSI executive and the

BCFNC Council developed and maintained strong relationships with the Ministries responsible for post-secondary education and provided leadership throughout the APF consultation process. After the demise of AAPSI, IAHLA was created to represent the collective interests of Aboriginal PSIs. IAHLA's close ties with FNEESC helped both organizations to effectively represent the interests of their members.

Under the Liberals, AVED strengthened its relationship with FNEESC by appointing Christa Williams to the Minister's Advisory Council on Post-Secondary Education. In addition, they provided funds to FNEESC to support to FNEESC's Post-Secondary Education Sub-Committee and IAHLA, as well as to establish an Aboriginal post-secondary advisory committee (the PSE Partners). Other important relationship initiatives include the signing of the *MOU on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education* by representatives from federal and provincial governments, Aboriginal political organizations, and public and Aboriginal post-secondary organizations, and the establishment of the PSE Partners to realize the MOU's mission.

Relationships were also revealed as significant in the implementation of policies by PSIs. Implementation of the *Green Report*, the APF, and the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* did lead to greater collaboration and partnerships between public PSIs and Aboriginal organizations and communities, though the quality of these relationships varied depending on the institution and the community. However, some collaborative relationships between PSIs predated the *Green Report*, and partnerships were also established between institutions and Aboriginal groups outside of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Strategy and Action Plan*.

The PSE Partners' group was expected to facilitate two-way communication with external groups. Unfortunately, poor relationships within the PSE Partners, and also with external groups, undermined their effectiveness. The APF has not yet been revised. In part this

is due to the unresolved relationship that private PSIs will have with the Ministry in the future.

#### **7.2.4 Leadership and Ownership**

Throughout the development of BC's Aboriginal post-secondary policies, Aboriginal people were actively engaged in the policy processes as individuals, as representatives of educational organizations, and as representative of political bodies. This active engagement reflects what Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) refer to as taking responsibility through participation. Responsibility through participation by Aboriginal people was an important factor in the development of BC's Aboriginal post-secondary policy over the last quarter-century.

This is demonstrated through the leadership of specific individuals, like Chief Gordon Antoine, who is credited with getting Aboriginal education on the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training's "radar screen," and Jo-ann Archibald and Verna Kirkness who raised the profile of Aboriginal education throughout the country. Shirley Joseph and other members of the BCFNC, and AAPSI executives including Ron Short, Don Fiddler, and Grace Mirehouse lobbied extensively for the development and implementation of the APS. Furthermore, many unnamed Aboriginal political and educational leaders lobbied for Cabinet approval of the APF. Finally, Christa Williams and Karen Bailey-Romanko were important to FNEC's leadership in the development of the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*.

Responsibility through participation was also exercised by a number of Aboriginal post-secondary organizations including the BCFNC, AAPSI, FNEC and PSE Partners, as well as Aboriginal political groups including the First Nations Congress, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), the First Nations Summit, BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), MNBC, and UNNS. In some cases, however, the ability to participate effectively in Aboriginal post-secondary developments was constrained by a reliance on a handful of leaders, whose capacity

was already stretched. This is illustrated by the demise of both the Education Resource Centre and APPSI, and the challenges to the engagement of the BCFNC and MNBC in multiple policy consultations initiated by the Liberals. The ability of UNNS to effectively engage in policy deliberations was always limited, and the demise of the UNNS in the late 2000s left off-reserve, non-status, and urban peoples without representation in Aboriginal PSE policy developments, curtailing their ability to exercise responsibility through participation.

Leadership and ownership within the various ministries responsible for PSE was also critical to policy developments. MAETT's Christie Brown emerged as a strong leader during the formation of the *Green Report*, and was instrumental in its initial implementation. The Ministry supported the *Green Report* by funding a number of the recommendations, and by encouraging and pressuring institutions to implement recommendations. Provincial ownership of the APF is obvious in that it's a Ministry document approved by Cabinet and supported by senior Ministry officials like Garry Wouters and Robin Ciceri and by much of the bureaucracy. Provincial ownership of the APF is further demonstrated by the establishment of two Aboriginal public institutions and the Aboriginal Programs' unit, as well as by the funding of Aboriginal coordinator positions and the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund.

Ministry leadership was undermined over time as a result of frequent changes in Ministers and the structure of the Ministries. Initially, under the Liberals, Ministry leadership in and ownership of the APF declined. This is illustrated by the disbanding of the Aboriginal Programs' unit, the subsuming of Aboriginal coordinators' budgets into institutional base funding, and attempts to revise the APF to reflect the Ministry's focus on greater institutional autonomy and accountability. During the Liberals' second term, the Ministry's renewed commitment is apparent in their involvement in extensive consultations and the development of

the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, their targeting of significant funding for its implementation, and their on-going involvement in revisions to the APF.

Public PSIs' commitment to these policy developments varied from institution to institution and over time. Initially, while some institutions embraced recommendations from the *Green Report*, others resisted implementing them. Even with provincial funding to cover the costs of Aboriginal coordinators, some institutions had to be pressured before hiring them. Successful implementation of the APF depended upon public PSIs taking ownership of the policy and utilizing resources from their base-budgets to implement it. Given the economic climate they were working in, many institutions were reluctant or unable to do this. Nevertheless, some institutions rose to the challenge and utilized their base-budgets to provide services and programming for Aboriginal students, to work collaboratively with Aboriginal partners, to develop Aboriginal advisory committees, to ensure Aboriginal representation on boards of governors, and to create institutional policies and practices that facilitated Aboriginal participation.

With funding available to implement the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, all institutions implemented some of the recommended initiatives, though the success of initiatives varied from institution to institution. Institutional ownership, demonstrated by the commitment of institutions' senior management, was particularly important in creating the institutional change envisioned in the Strategy. This was the case even when the institutions did not benefit from Aboriginal-specific funding.

AAPSI played a critical role in the development of the APF, working hard to develop criteria for public designation of Aboriginal private institutions to the benefit of IIG and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). These same criteria, however, undermined the



aspirations of many Aboriginal institutions to gain public status. Both the APF and the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* offered little support to these institutions, except for promoting affiliation agreements between them and public PSIs. Aboriginal institutions rightly see these documents as supporting the public post-secondary system and maintaining the marginalization of Aboriginal private institutions. Consequently, these institutions were highly critical of these policies.

### **7.2.5 Selective Implementation of Recommendations and Policy**

Many of the recommendations articulated in the *Green Report* were supported and implemented by government. Even before the release of the *Green Report*, the Socreds appointed Chief Gordon Antoine to the governing body of a college, and following the *Green Report* Aboriginal representatives were appointed to governing bodies throughout the post-secondary system. The exercise of government's power is also apparent in the establishment of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Learning for Native Learners, as well as in funding, encouraging, and pressuring institutions to implement select recommendations from the *Green Report*.

Many of the *Green Report's* recommendations were formalized by the NDP in 1995 through Cabinet approval of APF. The NDP also designated IIG and NVIT as public institutes under the authority of the *College and Institute Act*, as well as through funding many Aboriginal post-secondary initiatives. The NDP also initially followed the Socreds' practice of appointing Aboriginal representatives to institutional governing bodies, though this practice waned over time.

During their first term, the Liberals support of Aboriginal initiatives was limited. The Liberals stressed greater institutional autonomy, and they refrained from appointing Aboriginal

people to institutional governing bodies and incorporated Aboriginal coordinator funding into institutional base funding, giving institutions control over how that money was spent. During their second term, the Liberals exerted their influence across many Ministries to realize the goals of the *New Relationship and Transformative Change Accord*. For AVED, this was manifest in multiple consultation processes, the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*, and the emergence of significant Aboriginal-targeted funding to facilitate the Strategy's implementation.

At times, the province also exercised its power to resist or undermine positions advocated by Aboriginal people. An obvious example is the position taken by the authors of the *Green Report* that First Nations PSE is an inherent Aboriginal right, and that it is a federal responsibility that can only be devolved to the province with the consent of First Nations. The province used the APF to reaffirm provincial jurisdiction for the PSE of all British Columbians, including First Nations. Turner refers to these kinds of situations as “Kymlicka’s constraint,” based on philosopher Will Kymlicka’s observation that it is “predominantly non-Aboriginal judges and politicians who have the ultimate power to protect and enforce Aboriginal rights, so it is important to find a justification of them that such people can recognize and understand” (Kymlicka, as cited in Turner, 2006, p.58). Paquette and Fallon draw attention to the importance of Kymlicka’s constraint to Aboriginal education:

Here as elsewhere in Aboriginal politics and policy, there is no escape from ‘Kymlicka’s constraint.’ Whatever proportion of Aboriginal people may believe that elementary, secondary and post-secondary education is an inherent right, that won’t carry much weight in policy unless the courts agree – or unless policy-makers believe they might. (2010, p. 153)

Some PSIs also used the power of institutional autonomy to resist implementing a number of the *Green Report* recommendations. Even with the availability of targeted funding, political pressure had to be applied to some institutions before they would hire Aboriginal

coordinators. During much of the time that the NDP were in power, public PSIs were under considerable financial pressure, and many resisted utilizing base-budgets for Aboriginal-specific services and programs as necessitated by the APF. In the late 1990s, the Ministry established the Aboriginal Special Projects Fund (ASPF) to stimulate PSIs' Aboriginal initiatives. Over time, many PSIs utilized the ASPF and/or directed a portion of their base-funding to support Aboriginal initiatives. The Liberals created a new educational climate in which institutional autonomy and accountability prevailed, giving PSIs greater control over programming and spending. Some institutions exercised their new power to shift limited resources away from Aboriginal services and programming.

#### **7.2.6 Different Understandings of Accountability**

Graham et al. (1996) reveal that developments in Aboriginal education policy underscore different understandings of key terms. This is illustrated by the previous discussion of education as an Aboriginal right. Certainly it is also the case that differing meanings were attached to the term "accountability." The *Green Report* recommended the creation of a legislatively enacted Provincial Council to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. The *Green Report* also recommended that the Ministry and PSIs account to First Nations for funds targeted for Aboriginal PSE, as well as for student participation rates. These accountability measures were never implemented, drawing attention once again to the importance of Kymlicka's constraint.

In the APF, accountability referred to institutional governance structures being representative of and sensitive to Aboriginal people and to the need to maintain educational quality and demonstrate student outcomes. The Ministry identified a number of accountability mechanisms, but there is limited information about the effectiveness of these mechanisms. Significantly, no data is available on Aboriginal post-secondary participation, retention, or

completion during this time frame, though information on the outcomes of former college, institute, university-college, and university students provides some insight into Aboriginal post-secondary students' experiences.

The Liberals' focus on accountability resulted in a wide range of performance measures integrated into AVED's service plans and reports. For Aboriginal education, however, the performance measures were limited to the number and percentage of Aboriginal students participating in PSE. Based on head counts, it would appear that parity in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation has been exceeded. However, the available data does not provide information on retention or completion rates, programs of study, or the level of certification awarded to those who complete their programs. Furthermore, these accountability measures focus on the performance of Aboriginal students, ignoring institutional change as a factor in enhancing Aboriginal educational outcomes. Although the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* promised that additional performance indicators would be developed, they have not yet materialized.

### 7.3 Summary

Over the last 25 years, Aboriginal PSE policies have reflected the intertwining of the goals of the ministries responsible for post-secondary education and Aboriginal affairs. Given this, it is not surprising that policy formation and implementation has tended to privilege First Nations. Aboriginal individuals, educational organizations, and political bodies have demonstrated their responsibility through active participation in the policy process.

At times, significant leadership and commitment was also demonstrated by many associated with the ministries responsible for post-secondary education, though such leadership was sometimes weakened by changes in Ministers and the structure of the Ministry, as well as

during difficult economic times. Ministry leadership was at its weakest during the Liberals' first term, when government was intent on reducing costs and red tape, and committed to creating a more autonomous and accountable PSE system.

The response of the post-secondary system varied over time and from institution to institution, but by 2010 all of the PSIs were implementing some of the initiatives associated with the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy*. A number of PSIs were actively engaged in the delivery of services, courses, and programs for Aboriginal learners; in making institutions more welcoming for Aboriginal learners and communities; and in working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities, organizations, and institutions.

Over time, the Ministry used its power in a number of ways to selectively advance Aboriginal post-secondary policy formulation and implementation. It also used policy to refute Aboriginal education as an inherent Aboriginal right, and to reaffirm PSE as provincial jurisdiction. Discourse on accountability was particularly varied in these policy documents, and despite contestation, the province used the policy documents to maintain its control of accountability.

While the province recognizes the importance of Aboriginal institutions in delivering culturally relevant community-based learning, the relationship between the province and these institutions is unresolved, and Aboriginal private institutions remain marginalized in BC's post-secondary system.

#### **7.4 Implications for Policy**

The development of the BC Treaty Process, the *New Relationship*, and the *Transformative Change Accord* have all had a significant influence on the development and implementation of BC Aboriginal post-secondary policy, resulting in strategies that reflect the

interests of BC First Nations and marginalize the interests of other Aboriginal groups, who make up the majority of Aboriginal people in the province. Yet in addition to reconciling Aboriginal rights and title issues, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is responsible for “relationship-building with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal people” and working “across government and with other partners and stakeholders to better address the socio-economic gaps that separate Aboriginal peoples and other British Columbians” (British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2011b, p. 10). For this reason, the Ministry needs to undertake significant work to build strong relationships with Métis, urban, non-status, off-reserve, and Aboriginal peoples from other jurisdictions. Both the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation and AVED need to review policy consultations and texts to ensure that underrepresented Aboriginal groups are engaged in policy formulation and present in policy texts.

The First Nations focus in policy texts has translated into a focus on First Nations in the implementation of those policies, and the continued marginalization of other groups, even when the term “Aboriginal” is used. Future policy developments would benefit from the active engagements of the diverse Aboriginal groups in policy formation and implementation. Policy texts need to specifically recognize the diversity of Aboriginal people by identifying group-specific actions. PSIs also need to make recognition of this diversity visible through their actions.

The PSE Partners continue to play a significant role in the formulation of Aboriginal post-secondary policy. The organizations that currently form the PSE Partners are significantly different from those that signed the original 2005 *MOU on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training* (see Appendix D). The PSE Partners should review and renew their membership to

better represent the diversity of the Aboriginal population living in BC, and develop a new MOU to reflect these changes. Consideration should also be given to including a representative from the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Coordinators,<sup>61</sup> who have extensive experience working with Aboriginal post-secondary students. Aboriginal student representation should also be sought. The PSE Partner representatives need to take a principled stand and ensure the post-secondary needs of the broader Aboriginal community are addressed.

Leadership and ownership have been important in taking “responsibility through participation” in post-secondary policy formation. The Liberals have favoured consultation through provincial Aboriginal organizations, and this has challenged the ability of Métis and urban Aboriginal peoples to participate effectively. Provincial resources to support MNBC’s policy engagement would likely result in more effective participation, but there is no provincial or even municipal body that represents urban Aboriginal people. For decades urban organizations like Aboriginal friendship centres, housing societies, child and family service groups, and justice organizations have worked to address conditions facing urban Aboriginal people. In Vancouver, these individual organizations have developed the Vancouver Metro Aboriginal Executive Council “to ensure that urban Aboriginal issues are considered, included, and meaningfully addressed at all levels” (Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, 2012). To foster more effective consultation with urban Aboriginal people, the province needs to put aside its preference for dealing with provincial representative bodies and work at the municipal level with relevant urban Aboriginal organizations, or their representative bodies.

The costs associated with a PSE are consistently cited as a significant barrier to PSE, and federal funding for Indian and Inuit students is inadequate to meet the growing demand. Further,

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<sup>61</sup> Formerly known as BCFNC.

given that Métis are recognized as a third Aboriginal group with constitutionally protected rights, the federal government's exclusion of Métis from federal programming for Indians and Inuit, such as the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSP), is increasingly untenable (Abele et al., 2005). The federal government should increase funding for the PSSP to meet the needs of all Aboriginal learners, including Indians, Inuit, and Métis students. For those students who do not qualify for this program, both Canada and BC could increase financial support for Aboriginal learners through the establishment of grants and loan forgiveness programs. They could also work with education institutions and the private sector to expand bursaries and scholarships for all Aboriginal learners.

Successive policy documents have strived for parity in PSE between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners. A first glance at the data on overall participation in the post-secondary system suggests that parity has been met in that Aboriginal learners make up 6% of the post-secondary student population. This begs the question of parity in what? According to the Student Transition Project (Heslop & British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009), 30% of BC Aboriginal high school graduates take developmental programs at PSIs. That rate is likely higher for those who go on to post-secondary without the benefit of high school graduation. This highlights the critical need for greater and appropriate disaggregation of Aboriginal post-secondary data so that we can understand not only participation, retention, and completion rates, but also the kinds of programs that Aboriginal learners are enrolling in and the types of certification they are receiving upon completion. Without appropriate disaggregation, the data is misleading as gives a perception of parity while likely hiding great disparity.

Furthermore, while it is important to understand Aboriginal student participation,



retention, completion, and transition rates, a continued focus on this data alone distracts from institutional factors that shape Aboriginal post-secondary learners' experiences. How have institutional policies changed to accommodate Aboriginal participation? Do institutional strategic plans incorporate the aspirations of Aboriginal learners? How is Aboriginal content reflected in courses and programs? What percentage of institutional faculty and staff is Aboriginal? These are only a few of the accountability measures that could be developed to monitor institutional change, and they highlight that the responsibility for change lies with the institution as well as Aboriginal learners. The province, institutions, and Aboriginal representatives could work together to develop and implement institutional performance measures.

The province maintains that Aboriginal private PSIs play an important role in PSE, but as of yet that role has not been defined, and the province selectively provides only limited, short-term resources to support these institutions. There is a need for the province to work collaboratively with Aboriginal private PSIs to define the relationship between Aboriginal private institutions and the province, and to ensure that these institutions are adequately resourced.

Importantly, “Kymlicka’s constraint” is always present, and highlights the need for Aboriginal educators, organizations, and their allies to work carefully and strategically with government to build relationships, understanding, capacity and political will so that future policy developments better reflect Aboriginal aspirations for PSE.

## **7.5 Implications for Research**

While some work on federal Aboriginal PSE policy exists, little has been written about provincial or territorial Aboriginal post-secondary policy, despite the fact that PSE is provincial

jurisdiction. This work addresses the development of Aboriginal PSE in British Columbia. Much could be learned from research on similar developments in other provinces and territories, as well as research of a comparative nature.

The focus of this thesis has been on the formation and implementation of various Aboriginal post-secondary policies and their consequences for Aboriginal learners and the environments in which they learn. Little has been said about the broader consequences of these policies. For example, to what extent did Aboriginal post-secondary policy contribute to capacity building for Aboriginal self-government and treaties, as envisioned by the authors of the 1995 APF? Have Aboriginal PSE policies helped to reshape “our social and economic landscape and create a more inclusive and prosperous future for all British Columbians” (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007b, p. 1), as envisioned in the *New Relationship*? Research on questions like these can help us understand the potential of PSE policy in shaping the world outside of the post-secondary system.

Organizations including the BCFNC, AAPSI, and IAHLA have played critical roles in the development of Aboriginal PSE policy in British Columbia, yet little is known about them. Research on their development, the challenges and successes in their engagement in policy formation, and their contributions to more accessible and relevant learning environments for Aboriginal students would be welcome.

Satzewich and Wotherspoon (2000) and Wotherspoon (2003) report the rise of an Aboriginal middle-class. Others note that while both Aboriginal men and women are underrepresented in PSE, particularly at the university level, a greater proportion of Aboriginal women attend post-secondary than do men (Hull & Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Research & Analysis Directorate, 2000; Hull, 2005; Mendelson, 2006; Milligan & Bougie, 2009;

Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000). Given this, a more nuanced analysis of PSE that includes an analysis of class, gender, sexuality, and so forth would be welcome.

The primary focus of this dissertation has been on the public post-secondary system. Discussion of Aboriginal private institutions is limited to where the two systems intersect in relation to policy. The development, roles, contributions, and struggles of private Aboriginal institutions warrant research of their own.

## **7.6 Limitations of Study**

This dissertation, like other research, is constrained by the question asked and the strategy involved in exploring the question. It reflects the perspectives of key policy actors involved in the formation and implementation of provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policies in British Columbia over the last quarter century. The stories of others involved with PSE (for example students, post-secondary administrators, faculty, and student service professionals) would undoubtedly contribute to different narratives and understandings of policy formation and implementation (for example, changing institutional culture, the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into curriculum, Indigenous faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion). Finally, given that Aboriginal post-secondary policy has developed differently in various provinces and territories (Graham et al., 1996), findings in this dissertation cannot be generalized to other jurisdictions.

## **7.7 Contributions of this Study**

The literature reviewed demonstrates a need for research that examines provincial policies on Aboriginal PSE. This dissertation set out to address this gap in relation to developments in British Columbia. Through the stories shared by interview participants and policy documents, this dissertation offers a critical historical examination of developments in

Aboriginal PSE, with links to the broader political and economic landscape in British Columbia.

Frequent changes in the structure, mandate, and leadership of the Ministry, as well as turnover and renewal of the bureaucracy, pose a challenge to institutional memory. This dissertation provides an historical record of change in Aboriginal PSE policy, addressing at least some concerns about memory loss.

The stories shared by some of the people involved with the development and implementation of Aboriginal post-secondary policy has greatly enriched this dissertation. While many of the research participants continue to work in Aboriginal PSE, some now work in other areas, others have retired, and one has passed away. Their engagement with this research has been critical to understanding changes that occurred over time in Aboriginal PSE policy. Their experiences and contributions are shared with others through this dissertation.

Currently, British Columbia is engaged in consultations on a penultimate draft of an Aboriginal post-secondary policy and, undoubtedly, other Aboriginal post-secondary policies will be developed over time. This dissertation adds to the understanding of the challenges and successes inherent in the development and implementation of past policies, and can therefore inform future policy developments.

## **7.8 Linking Theory and Action**

Critical theory challenges us to do more than think about the world; it challenges us to take action. Such action may range from changes in thinking to direct political action (Thomas, 1993). This call to action resonates with the intent of the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy to engage students in study “in order that they can both critique and improve their own practice” (University of British Columbia, Department of Educational Studies, 2002, April, p. 4). This dissertation responds to this challenge in a number of ways.

It is clear that undertaking a critical policy study of the development of Aboriginal PSE policy has influenced my own thinking about policy. Furthermore, the research represents the application of critical theory to a specific policy context that was a part of my practice.<sup>62</sup> As an administrator working in Aboriginal PSE at a public university, forays into critical policy analysis provided me with the opportunity to work collectively and productively with a broad range of people within the university, with AVED, and with the BCFNC on Aboriginal post-secondary issues. A more critical understanding of policy also enabled me to participate more effectively in policy consultation processes on Aboriginal PSE and *Campus 2020*, in the evaluations of BC's Aboriginal post-secondary programs and services, and in the PSE Partners. I have been able to share my policy insights with others through classes, conferences, and publications. This dissertation and future publications will make this work accessible to those interested in learning more about Aboriginal PSE policy in British Columbia. In these small ways, I have, and will continue to, respond to the call to action inherent in critical works.

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<sup>62</sup> I retired in January 2011.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Provincial involvement in policy that addresses Aboriginal PSE begins with the 1990 *Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on PSE for Native Learners (Green Report)*. Many of the Report's recommendations were incorporated into the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (1995), which is currently under revision.

1. Can you tell me about your work in Aboriginal post-secondary education?
2. How have you been involved in the development or implementation of Aboriginal post-secondary education policy in British Columbia?
3. Given the historic under representation of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education, why do you think that Aboriginal post-secondary education became an important provincial policy item in the late 1980's?
4. Policies are said to be shaped by the contexts that they evolve in. What can you tell me about the social, political or economic context for the development of Aboriginal post-secondary policy in BC?
5. What can you tell me about the consultation process? For the Green Report? For the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework? For the current revisions?
6. Different people bring different interests to the policy process. Sometimes these interests are complimentary, and sometimes they are contradictory. How have these different interests been accommodated in the policy?
7. Different groups have different abilities to respond effectively to policy? What can you tell me about the policy capacity of the various groups involved in the policy process?
8. What impact has the policy had on Aboriginal post-secondary education specifically and post-secondary education generally?
9. What advice could you give to policy makers interested in closing the educational gap between Aboriginal people and other British Columbians?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

## Appendix B: Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners

Table 6

*Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners, Affiliation of Committee Members*

Committee Member	First Nations	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal PSI	Public PSI	Band/Tribal Council	Non-status/ Off reserve / Urban	Ministry of Native Affairs
Chief Gordon Antoine (Co-Chair), Coldwater Band	X		X		X		
Dr. Peter Jones (Co-Chair), President, Fraser Valley College		X		X			
Jo-Ann Archibald, Supervisor, Native Indian Teacher Education Program, UBC	X			X			
Jeannette Armstrong, Director, En'owkin Centre	X		X				
Doug Baker, Principal, NVIT		X	X				
P. Terrance Brown, Barrister and Solicitor, L'ax Ghels Community Law Centre Society	X						
Nicholas Butchart, Student, University of Victoria		X		X			
Ernie Collison, Band Manager, Masset	X				X		
Minnie Croft, Haida Elder, Vancouver	X				X		
Eric Denhoff, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Native Affairs		X					X
Pat Etzerza, President, Tahltan Tribal Council	X				X		
Dr. Glenn Farrell, President, Open Learning Agency		X		X			
Howard Green, Former Director, NEC		X	X				
Chief Robert Louie, Barrister and Solicitor, West Bank Indian Band	X				X		
Edward McMillan, Vice Principal, (Nisga'a Tribal Council)	X				X		
Theresa Neel, Education Coordinator, Service Branch, Sto:lo Nation Canada (Chilliwack Area Indian Council)	X				X		
Rozalee Tizya, Self-Government and Education Coordinator, UNN	X					X	
Richard Vedan, Board Chairman, NEC and faculty, Vancouver Community College	X		X	X			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

## Appendix C: Governing Parties, Premiers, Ministers Responsible for Post-Secondary Education, and Ministers, and Key Policy Initiatives

Table 7

*Governing Parties, Premiers, Ministers Responsible for Post-Secondary Education, Premiers, Ministries, and Key Policy Initiatives, 1986-2011*

Governing Party	Premier	Ministry	Minister	Key Policy Initiatives
Social Credit	William Vander Zalm 1986-1991	Advanced Education and Job Training	Stanley Brian Hagen 1986-12-10 to 1987-07-29 1987-08-06 to 1989-11-01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Advanced Education and Job Training in British Columbia (1988)</li> <li>• Establishment of Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (1989)</li> </ul>
		Advanced Education, Training and Technology	William Bruce Strachan 1989-11-01 to 1991-04-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (1990)</li> </ul>
	Rita Johnston 1991			
New Democratic Party	Michael Harcourt 1991 - 1996	Advanced Education, Training and Technology	Tom Perry 1991-11-05 to 1993-09-15	
		Skills, Training and Labour	Dan Miller 1993-09-15 to 1996-02-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework approved by Cabinet (1995)</li> <li>• IIG and NVIT designated as public institutions (1995)</li> </ul>



<b>Governing Party</b>	<b>Premier</b>	<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Key Policy Initiatives</b>
<b>New Democratic Party</b>	Glen Clark 1996 - 1999	Education, Skills and Training	Paul Ramsey 1996-02-28 to 1996-06-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charting a New Course: A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System (1996)</li> </ul>
			Moe Shiota 1996-06-17 to 1996-12-12	
			Joy MacPhail 1996-12-12 to 1997-01-06	
	Dan Miller 1999 - 2000  Ujall Dosanjh 2000 - 2001	Advanced Education, Training and Technology	Paul Ramsey 1997-01-06 to 1998-02-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy begins (1997, fall)</li> </ul>
			Andrew Petter 1998-02-18 to 1999-08-25	
			Andrew Petter 1999-08-25 to 2000-02-24	
			Graeme Bowbrick 2000-02-29 to 2000-11-01	
			Cathy McGregor 2000-11-01 to 2001-06-05	
<b>Liberals</b>	Gordon Campbell 2001 - 2011	Advanced Education	Shirley Bond 2001-06-05 to 2004-12-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signing of MOU Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training (2005)</li> </ul>
			Ida Chong 2004-12-15 to 2005-06-16	

<b>Governing Party</b>	<b>Premier</b>	<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Key Policy Initiatives</b>
<b>Liberals</b>	Gordon Campbell 2001 - 2011	Advanced Education	Murray Coell 2005-06-16 to 2008-06-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007)</li> <li>• Campus 2020 (2007)</li> <li>• IIG closes and becomes Vancouver Campus of NVIT (2007)</li> </ul>
			Murray Coell 2008-06-23 to 2009-06-10	
		Advanced Education and Labour Market	Moira Stilwell 2009-06-10 to 2010-10-25	
		Regional, Economic and Skills Development <sup>63</sup>	Moira Stilwell 2010-10-25 to 2010-11-22	
			Ida Chong 2010-11-22 to 2011-03-14	
		Science and Universities	Ida Chong 2010-10-25 to 2011-03-14	

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<sup>63</sup> From October 25, 2010 to March 14, 2011, two Ministries were responsible for PSE: colleges and institutes fell under the Ministry of Regional, Economic, and Skills Development and universities fell under the Ministry of Science and Universities. In March of 2011, the Ministry of Advanced Education re-emerged, and included responsibility for all of the post-secondary system.

## **Appendix D: PSE Partners Membership 2005 -2011**

### **2005 MOU on BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training, Signatories**

- British Columbia College Presidents
- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- First Nations Summit
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
- Métis Provincial Council of BC
- Ministry of Advanced Education - Aboriginal Programs
- Strategic Action Committee
- United Native Nations Society
- University College Presidents
- University Presidents' Council of BC (BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group, 2006).

### **2006 BC Aboriginal PSE and Training Partners**

- British Columbia College Presidents
- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- First Nations Summit
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
- Métis Provincial Council of BC
- Ministry of Advanced Education - Aboriginal Programs
- University College Presidents
- University Presidents' Council of BC
- BC AHRDA Society
- Ministry of Education – Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Service Canada
- Strategic Action Committee
- United Native Nations Society (BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group, 2006).

### **2011 BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners**

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
- BC Assembly of First Nations
- BC Association of Institutes and Universities
- BC Colleges
- BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
- BC Ministry of Advanced Education
- BC Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Enhancements Branch

- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- First Nations Summit Task Group
- First Nations Public Service
- Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
- Métis Nation BC
- Research Universities' Council of BC
- Service Canada
- United Native Nations Society (BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group, 2011, p. 1).