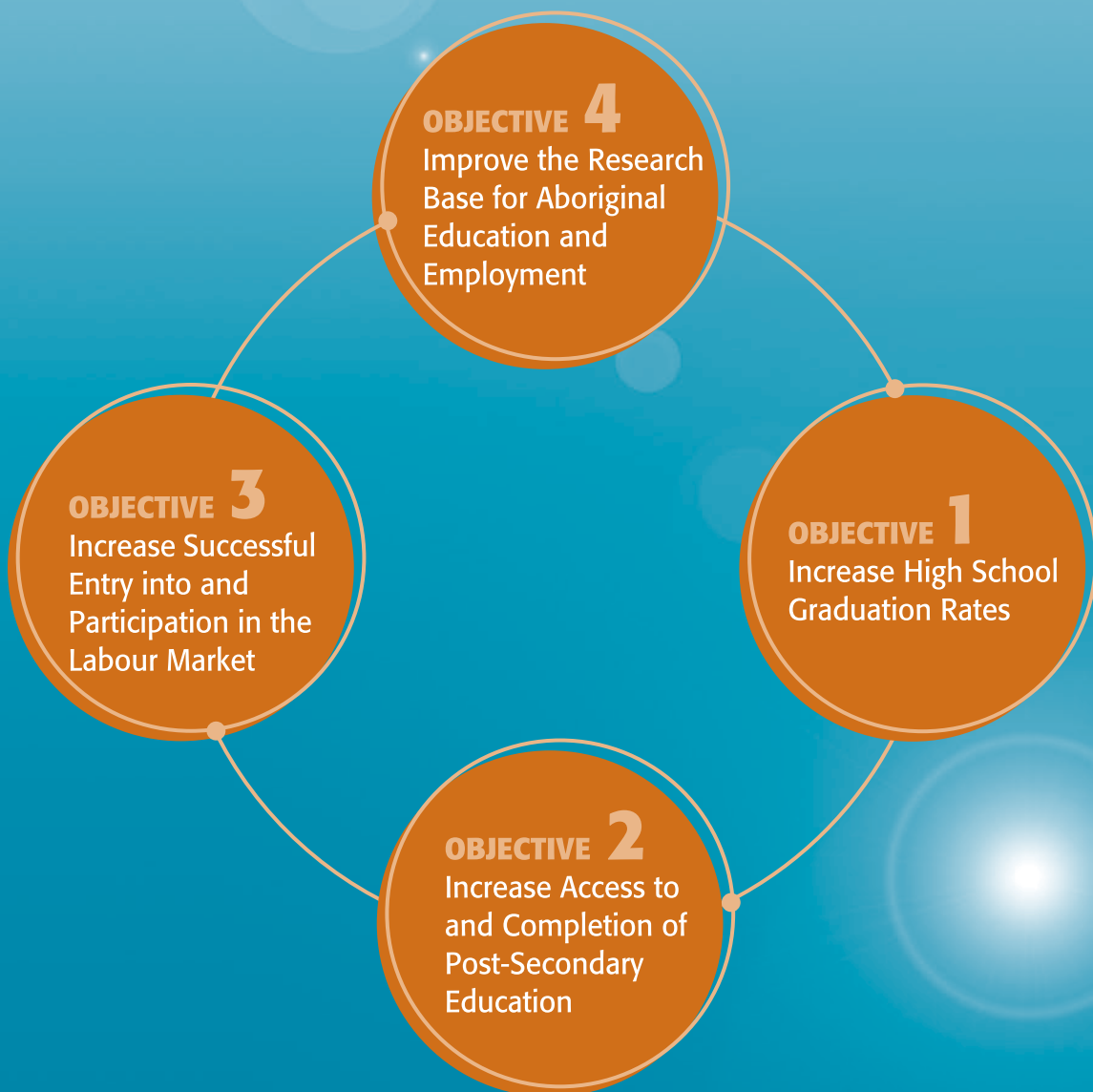


# ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ACTION PLAN

**MARCH 2007**

## **HIGHLIGHTS REPORT**



The **Aboriginal Education Action Plan (AEAP)** was announced in October 2004.

The Aboriginal Education Directorate provides overall coordination for the AEAP, which was developed to provide a comprehensive strategic approach to support improved outcomes for Aboriginal learners within the education system.

This Highlights Report captures significant AEAP activities.

## OBJECTIVE 1: Increase High School Graduation Rates

### **Family Involvement in Aboriginal Student Success**

*Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents and Families of Aboriginal Students* was launched in September 2006. Developed by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth with input from Aboriginal people, the guide recognizes how partnerships with families, schools, and communities support Aboriginal students. It suggests activities that Aboriginal families can use to support their children's learning at home and in school. The guide is also available in a CD format, with narration in two Aboriginal languages, Cree and Ojibwe.

### **Community Schools Partnership Initiative (CSPI)**

The CSPI began in January 2005 to support schools in lower income communities to enhance learning outcomes for students. Community schools are encouraged to develop partnerships by bringing together parents, community agencies, and services. These partnerships can provide a broad range of services that strengthen and support schools, families, and communities. In the 2005–2006 school year, the Province funded 15 projects of \$45,000 each to assist schools to build community partnerships and to form strategic plans. Five additional projects are being funded in 2006–2007, for a total of 20 project schools.

### **Aboriginal Perspectives and the New Social Studies Curriculum**

Manitoba schools began system-wide implementation of a new provincial Kindergarten to Grade 12 social studies curriculum, starting with Kindergarten to Grade 4 in the 2006–2007 school year. With its focus on inclusion, citizenship, and recognition of diversity, the curriculum embeds concepts related to Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) perspectives at each grade to support students' academic success.

Curriculum learning outcomes related to Aboriginal culture and history fall into two categories:

**1** Specific learning outcomes intended to develop knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal perspectives *for all students*.

Beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through every grade to Grade 11 (Grade 12 optional), all students in Manitoba have the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal perspectives in Canada. As well, all students in Grades 3, 7, and 8 focus on indigenous peoples in other places in the world.

**2** Distinctive learning outcomes intended to enhance the development/understanding of language, identity, culture, and community *for Aboriginal students*.

Aboriginal students have the opportunity to engage in deeper study of perspectives and issues related to their particular language, culture, and community. The distinctive learning outcomes are intended for First Nations, Métis, or Inuit students in educational settings that include locally controlled First Nations schools. They can also be taught in Aboriginal-controlled schools in off-reserve or urban settings, or where there is agreement in the school or school division.

## ***Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures Framework***

The *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in Manitoba: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes (Draft) 2007* is now available on-line at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/abedu/framework/index.html>. The framework provides the basis for developing curricula in specific Aboriginal languages. While the document is geared for Manitoba use to promote the knowledge of languages and cultures, the outcomes can be used by educators in other subject areas and can be taught also in immersion, bilingual, or English classrooms.

## ***Cultural Competency and Diversity Education***

Cultural competency is an essential aspect of building a more inclusive and appropriate school and classroom environment for all learners, including students of Aboriginal and other cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is important that all educators are responsive to the needs of diverse learners and can communicate and interact appropriately with Aboriginal learners and their families.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners benefit from school environments and programs that welcome diversity and provide opportunities for students and educators to learn about the cultural, linguistic, and religious aspects of historical and contemporary communities. Initiatives that recognize these characteristics include:

- building inclusive curricula that challenge bias and prejudice
- integrating Aboriginal perspectives that reflect different world views and experiences
- developing teacher support materials on integrating Aboriginal perspectives
- developing a Grade 12 Aboriginal Studies course
- developing a multi-year ethnocultural equity action plan that will renew and enhance Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth's commitment to diversity and equity education

## ***Increase the Number of Aboriginal Teachers***

In Spring 2006, an Aboriginal Teachers Questionnaire (ATQ) was distributed to all Manitoba certified Teachers teaching within the provincial public and First Nations school systems to gather information about the number of Aboriginal teachers in the province, their education background and where they are teaching. A statistical analysis of the survey was

completed. The survey findings will form a Profile to outline addressing the need to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers within the public school system.

The Community Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP) is offered by the University of Winnipeg as part of their Teacher ACCESS program. Aboriginal education assistants currently employed in Seven Oaks and Winnipeg School Divisions can earn their Bachelor of Education through summer, evening and weekend coursework.

University College of the North (UCN) is developing its own teacher education program. A transition process is underway to transfer the mandate for the Northern Teacher Education program from Brandon University to UCN.

## ***Essential Skills (ES) and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)—Igniting the Power Within***

The former Advanced Education and Training (AET), now Advanced Education and Literacy (AEL) and Competitiveness, Training and Trade (CTT) formed a dynamic partnership with First Nations and Métis organizations to answer a growing need for ES and PLAR information and training. This collaboration, led by CTT, has resulted in Igniting the Power Within, a four-level certification training program for local first-point-of-contact advisors and counsellors in Aboriginal communities. This training has developed the capacity of participants to use ES and PLAR within their services.

Essential Skills are the foundation on which people can be successful at training, education and work, as well as at home and in their communities. They are essential for the achievement of goals throughout life. Essential Skills are described in various occupational profiles (see <<http://www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>>). They include: reading text, working with others, thinking skills, continuous learning, writing, oral communications, document use, numeracy (mathematics), and computer use.

*Cultural competency is an essential aspect of building a more inclusive and appropriate school and classroom environment for Aboriginal and diverse learners.*

PLAR is a more formalized process used to identify, document, and recognize the knowledge and skills that individuals have gained not only in formal environments such as school, but also through informal situations such as community. It provides a better means of understanding individuals and begins to identify appropriate training, education, and employment goals by building from people's strengths.

At each Igniting the Power Within event (Levels I and II) offered to date, the steering committee approached communities in a respectful and consultative manner to get direct feedback on their choices and priorities. In this way, information became available to refine the resources and training required to establish and sustain ES and PLAR in the community.

Level I familiarized 250 Aboriginal community advisors/counsellors with the concepts and applications inherent in ES and PLAR.

Level II focused 150 participants on the PLAR-related practice of building portfolios. Portfolio materials and methods have been developed using relevant models and respectful language. The response from the Aboriginal community to the piloting of these materials and methods has been impressive.

It is anticipated that Levels I and II of the four-level certification training program will be offered again in the future. Levels III and IV are currently under development.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: Increase Access to and Completion of Post-Secondary Education**

### ***University College of the North (UCN)***

UCN was established by legislation in July 2004. In addition to the main campuses in Thompson and The Pas, UCN also offers programming in ten regional centres. Two new degree programs have been approved and funded: the Bachelor of Arts in Aboriginal Northern Studies and the Baccalaureate in Midwifery (Kanáci Otinawáwasowin). In addition, a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) partnership was developed with Assiniboine Community College to increase the capacity of UCN to deliver LPN training.

### ***Manitoba Student Aid (MSA)***

MSA continues to provide assistance for Aboriginal learners through a number of bursaries and in 2006 introduced the Millennium Manitoba Opportunity Grants (MMOG) which provides independent Aboriginal students in first year of studies with up to \$4,000 toward tuition or up to \$3,000 for tuition to first year, first time dependent students from low income families. The Millennium Adult Learner Bursary provides support to post-secondary students who have

graduated from an adult learning centre. In more than 1/4 of Manitoba's adult learning centres, 80% of the students are Aboriginal.

### ***Adult Learning Centres (ALC)***

Aboriginal learners continue to access programming through ALCs to enable them to obtain their mature high school diploma. Aboriginal Community Campus, Yellowquill College and the Peguis Adult Education Centre are registered as stand alone centres under the ALC Act. Waywayseecappo is also registered in partnership with Parkland West School Division.

### ***Consultation on Improving Post-Secondary Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People in Southern Manitoba***

Discussions began in March 2006 with First Nations and Métis organizations engaged in training. Provincial and federal representatives are facilitating a consultation process to identify needs, gaps, and best practices.

## OBJECTIVE 3: Increase Successful Entry into and Participation in the Labour Market

### ***Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative***

This multi-year, \$60.3M Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative (the Initiative) is intended to prepare Northern Aboriginal people for employment opportunities in hydroelectric construction and related activity. The goal of the Initiative is to train over a thousand individuals for 800 jobs. A key platform of the Manitoba Government's Northern Development Strategy, this Initiative is the largest human resource strategy launched in the North in decades. Manitoba's contribution to the Initiative is coordinated through the Hydro Northern Training Initiative Branch of Manitoba Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Key features of Manitoba's training and employment model to support success and build capacity include:

- Aboriginal-led governance
- Aboriginal partners responsible for the design and delivery of training
- increased opportunity for community-based training to support participant retention and success
- emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach to provide key participant supports

Since 2001–2002, 1,278 individual trainees have completed 2,966 interventions, with an overall success rate in the range of 61 per cent. In 2005–2006, 730 trainees participated in 1,015 interventions.

### ***Wuskwatim and Keeyask Training Consortium Inc. (WKTC)***

Partners in the Initiative formed WKTC, an Aboriginal-led organization that operates at arms length from the government and oversees the Initiative. The organization reports on multi-year and annual training-plan activities and monitors financial and training outcomes of the project.

Partners include:

- the Manitoba Government
- Manitoba Hydro
- the Federal Government
- Northern Aboriginal partners: Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN), War Lake First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, York Factory First Nation, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., and Manitoba Métis Federation Inc.

### ***Increased Access to Training***

As a result of this initiative, several Aboriginal partners have developed/expanded training facilities in their communities, increasing access to training and capacity for members and others and contributing to improved participant retention.

The training facilities include:

- Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre (Regional Training Centre)
- Tataskweyak Cree Nation Regional Training Centre
- York Factory First Nation Learning Institute
- Fox Lake Cree Nation Learning Centre

### ***Pilot Projects in Essential Skills (ES) and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)***

Two pilot projects to develop community capacity in knowledge and application of ES and PLAR were implemented with NCN and TCN, facilitated by Industry Training Partnerships and staff from the provincial Apprenticeship Branch. The objectives of the pilot projects were to assist program staff in the communities to strengthen training and employment outcomes. This was achieved by developing knowledge and skills in curriculum development in ES and the application of PLAR to assessment, program design, and delivery.

Both TCN and NCN have focused on ES in the trades (carpentry). TCN staff have participated in curriculum development training and are delivering carpentry-related ES courses based on ES assessment. ATEC staff have developed a carpentry-specific mathematics ES course with Nelson House Education Authority. They are considering integrating ES into business administration offerings through ATEC.

Both TCN and NCN communities participated in Levels I and II of Igniting the Power, ES and PLAR certification and in intensive training in transformational PLAR.



## OBJECTIVE 4: Improve the Research Base for Aboriginal Education and Employment

### **Baseline Information on Aboriginal Teacher Population**

In April 2006 information was gathered about the Aboriginal teacher population in the education system to establish baseline information on the number and location of Aboriginal teachers and teachers-in-training. All Manitoba teachers received a one-page questionnaire asking whether they are of Aboriginal ancestry. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and the public school system will use this information to assess current and future capacity of Aboriginal educators. Further research will assist in program planning and in developing appropriate curriculum to better meet the needs of learners. A Profile on the findings of the 2006 Aboriginal Teachers Questionnaire will be available from the Aboriginal Education Directorate.

### **Sponsorship of Annual Aboriginal Education Research Forum**

Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth sponsored *Shawane Dagoosiwin*, the second annual Aboriginal Education Research Forum held in Winnipeg May 31 to June 2, 2006. *Shawane Dagoosiwin* is an Anishinabemowin term meaning being respectful, caring and passionate about Aboriginal research. The theme for the forum was Celebrating the Circles of Knowledge: Mind, Body, Spirit, and Emotions of Research. Attended by approximately 300 participants, the conference explored the inclusion of Aboriginal values in Aboriginal education research, to ensure that the research has integrity, is respectful, and honours family. The third annual forum will be held May 1-3, 2007 at the Victoria Inn in Winnipeg.

### **Aboriginal Identity Field (AIF)**

The AIF within the Education Information System (EIS) was introduced in 1999–2000 to assist Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, school divisions, and schools in collecting data to more accurately reflect the Aboriginal student population in Manitoba. The AIF collects information about the ancestral/cultural background of Aboriginal students so that the data can be used to plan programs and improve student success. Schools collect

the data within the EIS, an integrated database, to facilitate departmental, divisional, and school-based planning and decision making, and report the results to the Department annually in the fall. Voluntary parent/guardian consent is obtained each year by school staff when students register for school, through a letter distributed at the time of school registration or at the beginning of the school year, or on the student registration form. Parents/guardians are asked to identify their children's ancestral/cultural identity. Up to three identifiers can be selected from a list.

In December 2005, the Aboriginal Education Directorate coordinated a provincial promotional strategy to inform school divisions about AIF data collection and its benefits. From January to June 2006, presentations were conducted for superintendents of school divisions and school principals in 33 school divisions in Manitoba. These presentations initiated a dialogue to obtain feedback about the AIF and to increase the number of school divisions implementing the AIF. Department staff also provided evening parent/guardian sessions to encourage voluntary declaration in the AIF, thereby increasing participation rates.

The Aboriginal Education Directorate will continue to review the AIF annually, providing school divisions with updates in December each year. The Directorate, along with School Programs Division, will provide consultative support to school divisions and schools as needed during 2006–2007. Additional information about AIF data collection can be obtained at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/abidentity.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/abidentity.html).

For more information on the Aboriginal Education Action Plan or this Highlights Report, please contact:

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