

Accord on
INDIGENOUS
EDUCATION



ACDE



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Section 1 | Preamble

The Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, section 35, defines Aboriginal people as Indian, Métis, or Inuit. Indian people are either status (registered with an Indian band or community) or non-status (not registered but are members of an Indian band or community). Aboriginal treaty rights are recognized in the Constitution Act. Scholars have argued that Aboriginal knowledge and heritage are Aboriginal rights protected under the Constitution and that Aboriginal people should be able to preserve their cultures, languages, customs, and knowledges because they are part of an Aboriginal right.¹

This Accord uses the term Indigenous to include the distinct Canadian terms Aboriginal, First Nations, Indian, Métis, and Inuit as well as the more global context of First Peoples' epistemologies, ways of knowing, knowledge systems, and lived experience. Indigenous is both an international and local term, reflecting the reality that issues such as the impact of colonization have both global and local implications. Indigenous is the preferred term for the Accord on Indigenous Education; however, the terms Aboriginal, First Nations, Indian, Métis, Inuit, and Indigenous are used deliberately throughout this document to reflect the diverse, complex, and evolving nature of Indigenous identities in Canada. The use of the term Indigenous focuses attention on Aboriginal education in Canada, while at the same time engaging in a movement to address global educational issues.

Section 2 | The Context for Indigenous Education in Canada

Establishing mechanisms and priorities for increased Indigenous educational engagement, establishing partnerships with Indigenous organizations and communities, and using educational frameworks based on Indigenous knowledge are trends that have important implications for the

¹ See Battiste, Marie & Henderson, James (Sa'ke'j). (2000). Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge. Saskatchewan: Purich Publishing Ltd.

Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE). New ways of engagement are required in order to address these trends. The time is right for a concerted and cooperative effort that creates transformational education by rejecting the “status quo,” moving beyond “closing the gap” discourse, and contributing to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and their communities. At the same time, ACDE recognizes that it has a role and responsibility to expand educators’ knowledge about and understanding of Indigenous education.

The processes of colonization have either outlawed or suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems, especially language and culture, and have contributed significantly to the low levels of educational attainment and high rates of social issues such as suicide, incarceration, unemployment, and family or community separation. In secondary schooling, for instance, 2006 graduation rates are still below 50 percent nationally for Aboriginal students and only 8 percent for university degree attainment, in contrast to the 14 percent Canadian average for persons over 15 years of age. In response, Indigenous people and their organizations and communities have become more involved in decision-making and policy development in order to improve all levels of education. Major national studies and government commissions have called for this type of political and educational involvement, and have recommended that Indigenous knowledge systems have a central position in educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy, in order to make significant improvements to Indigenous education.² Individual and collective efforts to make such improvements are being enacted in local, regional, provincial, and national contexts. ACDE joins these efforts through its member faculties, schools, colleges, and departments of education across Canada. As a national organization, ACDE supports and encourages increased national dialogue and cooperative action for improving Indigenous education.

Formal Indigenous education takes many different forms and happens in every village, town, and city in Canada, and includes early childhood education, kindergarten to grade 12, college, trades, Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, and university. In 2007, the Canadian Council on Learning’s Aboriginal Learning Centre worked with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to represent models of their learning in a national context. Common traits include a wholistic and life-long framework. Wholism addresses spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual development in relation to oneself, family, community, and environment.³ A wholistic learning model implies multiple and diverse strategies. Other factors such as the geographical, cultural, and linguistic diversity of Aboriginal people in Canada add to the complexity and richness of Aboriginal education. Aboriginal people have diverse languages and cultures. There are 615 First Nations across Canada,

2 See Hawthorn, H. (1967), National Indian Brotherhood’s Indian Control of Indian Education (1972); and Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996).

3 See Canadian Council on Learning, <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessReport.htm#models> accessed Sept 2, 2009.

comprising 10 distinct larger First Nations language families and speaking at least 60 different Aboriginal languages.⁴ A fast-growing Aboriginal population adds another pertinent dimension to future educational planning.

Based on the 2006 Canadian Census, 3.8 percent (1,172,790) of the Canadian population is of Aboriginal identity, which includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The majority are First Nations (60 percent), followed by Métis (33 percent), and then Inuit (4 percent). Just over half of Aboriginal people (54 percent) live in an urban centre. Almost half of the Aboriginal population (48 percent) are aged 24 or younger. They are the fastest-growing segment of the Aboriginal population. In 2017, Aboriginal people from 20 to 29 years may comprise 30 percent of the total population in Saskatchewan, 24 percent in Manitoba, 40 percent in the Yukon, and 58 percent in the Northwest Territories.⁵ Diversity also exists in the types of educational settings in which Indigenous learners attend.

Diversity also exists in relation to the problematic area of nomenclature. To name an Aboriginal person as “Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nation, Indian, Métis, Native, North American Indian, or Inuit,” is to participate in a complex process of either self-identification or, as Chartrand (1991) puts it, “outside-naming.”⁶ We are very aware that this process is often fraught with interactional discord and can be either emancipating, painful, or both for Indigenous persons.

To this point, the governance of Indigenous education has been the responsibility of Aboriginal communities, the provinces, and the federal government. A focused concern over governance issues has been insufficient to address what are substantive educational concerns. This sharing of responsibilities has caused a number of jurisdictional issues. A growing trend involves First Nations and Inuit peoples acquiring jurisdiction over education. Examples include the Mi’Kmaq Education Act (1999) that gives the Mi’Kmaq of Nova Scotia control of education at the K-12 and post-secondary levels, and the First Nations Jurisdiction Bill C 34 in British Columbia (2006) that enables specific First Nations to have control over on-reserve K-12 education.⁷ There are more than 500 First Nations schools located on Indian reserves⁸ and 51 Aboriginal post-secondary institu-

4 See Canadian Council on Learning, <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessReport.htm#models> accessed Sept 2, 2009.

5 Government of Canada. (2008). Census Canada, Ottawa, 2006.

6 Chartrand, P. (1991), “Terms of division: Problems of ‘outside-naming’ for Aboriginal people in Canada,” *Journal of Indigenous Studies* 2 (2), p.2.

7 Carr-Stewart, S., Cooke, S., & Dillon, T. (2008). First Nations education in Canada: Regaining responsibility. In Robert Heber, (Ed.), *Indigenous education: Asia/Pacific*, (pp. 189-197). Saskatchewan: Indigenous Studies Research Centre, First Nations University of Canada.

8 See First Nations Socio-Economic Forum Fact Sheet - Aboriginal Education. <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/is/aedu-eng.asp>, Accessed March 13, 2009.

tions⁹ across the country. The majority of Aboriginal students attend public schools and public post-secondary institutions where there is often no or limited influence on Indigenous curricular and organizational matters.

Some Indigenous teacher education programs were established in faculties or schools of education across the country in the mid-1970s. They still exist today, providing Indigenous people another option for acquiring a teaching credential besides initial teacher education programs. Even fewer Indigenous graduate programs exist. A major concern with teacher education and graduate education is that Indigenous education and Indigenous knowledge systems are marginalized and have limited application to students in general. ACDE believes it can enhance the profile and benefits of Indigenous education within its member institutions and to the public at large.

Section 3 | ACDE and Indigenous Education

ACDE's General Accord emphasizes a strong framework for its signatories to work together to advance education in Canada based on its goals, values, and principles. All institutions signing the Accord on Indigenous Education are expected to aspire to its vision, principles, and goals in their education programs and research initiatives. Signatories will use this Accord to guide program review and transformation, working collaboratively to prioritize the educational purposes and values of Indigenous communities and people. ACDE will encourage its signatories to share their progress, challenges, and successes in implementing this Accord in order to learn from and to help each other.

Section 4 | Vision

The vision is that Indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing, and knowledge systems will flourish in all Canadian learning settings.

9 See INAC Fact Sheet: Education. <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/is/fct-edu-eng.asp>. Accessed March 13, 2009.

Section 5 | Principles

We believe that this Accord:

- supports a socially just society for Indigenous peoples;
- reflects a respectful, collaborative, and consultative process with Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge holders;
- promotes multiple partnerships among educational and Indigenous communities;
- values the diversity of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing and learning.

Section 6 | Goals

Recognizing the need for transformative educational change and acknowledging the unique leadership responsibilities of deans, directors, and chairs of education within the Canadian university context, ACDE supports, endorses, and fosters the following goals:

Respectful and Welcoming Learning Environments

- To create and sustain respectful and welcoming learning environments that instill a sense of belonging for all learners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in all post-secondary programs of which faculties, colleges, schools, and departments of education are a part.
- To ensure that all undergraduate and graduate education programs emphasize the importance of creating respectful and welcoming learning environments for all learners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- To advocate for educators to create learning environments (within all educational settings) that instill a sense of belonging for all learners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and that are more accepting, respectful, welcoming, and supportive of Indigenous learners.

Respectful and Inclusive Curricula

- To challenge existing curriculum frameworks and structures in order that they may engage learners in experiencing the Indigenous world and Indigenous knowledge in a wholistic way.
- To include Indigenous wisdom-keepers and knowledge holders in curriculum development and renewal activities.

- To promote the development of culturally responsive curricula and to infuse Indigenous content and ways of knowing into all curricula at all levels.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

- To promote comprehensive teacher candidate and faculty programs that create meaningful opportunities for learning about and practicing Indigenous pedagogies and ways of knowing.
- To improve the quality of knowledge, understanding, and pedagogic skills that all educators gain about Indigenous education and Indigenous knowledge systems.

Mechanisms for Valuing and Promoting Indigeneity in Education

- To value the study of Indigenous knowledge as scholarly activity.
- To create clauses and procedures in the tenure and promotion process so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty working on Indigenous education projects have their scholarship, teaching, service, and advocacy appropriately valued in their institutions.
- To include, mentor, support, and retain Indigenous scholars within our institutions.
- To recognize Indigenous knowledge and encourage its application to scholarship and teaching.
- To involve local, regional, and national Indigenous groups in education decision making.
- To accept the responsibility of consciousness-raising as a way to challenge and overcome institutional and systemic barriers to Indigeneity in education.
- To promote the use of culturally responsive program evaluation procedures that adequately account for the complexities of Indigenous Education programs.
- To promote partnerships with Indigenous learners, their families, and their communities to improve Aboriginal education awareness and knowledge for all educators and teacher candidates.

Culturally Responsive Assessment

- To promote assessment practices that support socially just relations within and beyond the classroom for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- To promote the elimination of cultural and other forms of bias in student assessment.

Affirming and Revitalizing Indigenous Languages

- To recognize the crisis in the demise of Aboriginal languages and the negative effects on community identity and world view.
- To fulfill a leadership role in supporting Aboriginal communities and involving other faculties in the promotion, reclamation, restoration, revitalization, and teaching of Indigenous languages.

Indigenous Education Leadership

- To support the development and extension of Aboriginal leadership in education.
- To substantially increase the numbers of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in leadership positions and to remove institutional barriers that prevent career advancement among Indigenous educators.
- To acknowledge the pressures on Indigenous scholars in promoting transformative change towards Indigeneity in education. ACDE therefore will actively seek out added supports for these scholars.
- To improve access, transitional support, and retention strategies developed in partnership with Indigenous communities, in order to increase substantially the numbers of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people enrolling in and completing secondary, post-secondary, teacher education, and graduate programs.

Non-Indigenous Learners and Indigeneity

- To foster all education candidates' political commitment to Indigenous education, such that they move beyond awareness and act within their particular sphere of influence.
- To provide opportunities within all teacher education programs for candidates to have authentic experiences in a variety of Indigenous learning settings, whether urban, rural, remote, band-funded, or provincially funded.
- To encourage all students, teacher candidates, and graduate students to explore and question their own sense of power and privilege (or lack thereof) within Canadian society as compared with others in that society.
- To increase ways that all Canadian teacher education programs and education partners work cooperatively for quality Aboriginal teacher education and teacher education programs that meet the needs of Indigenous learners.

Culturally Respectful Indigenous Research

- To create and mobilize research knowledge, including Indigenous epistemologies, in order to transform Aboriginal education, teacher education, continuing professional education, and graduate programs.
- To partner with Indigenous communities at all levels in ethically based and respectful research processes.
- To foster environments that encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, teacher candidates, graduate students, and researchers to use Indigenous methodologies and respect Indigenous protocols and ethics in conducting research.
- To promote the use of Indigenous languages in research and scholarly writing.

