

**Aboriginal  
Postsecondary  
Education  
and  
Training Policy  
Framework**

2011



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# Introduction

The Ontario government is dedicated to excellence in public education for all learners, including Aboriginal learners.<sup>1</sup> This position is reflected in *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs*, released by the government in June 2005, which envisions prosperous and healthy Aboriginal communities that will create a better future for Aboriginal children and youth. The Ontario government and Aboriginal leaders recognize the importance of education in improving lifelong opportunities for Aboriginal people. *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs* commits the government to working with Aboriginal leaders and organizations to improve education outcomes among Aboriginal learners.

Acting on this commitment, Ontario's Learning Ministries – the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities – have identified Aboriginal education as a key priority. The focus is on two key challenges: improving Aboriginal learners' achievements in educational settings, and closing the educational attainment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this province.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education released its *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, which provides the strategic policy context within which the Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools work together to improve the academic achievements of Aboriginal students who attend publicly funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario. Over the past four years, the Ministry of Education has deepened the implementation of that policy framework, and the ministry continues to work to implement and advance the Aboriginal education agenda at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Building on the successes of that policy framework and the lessons learned from the experiences of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities recognizes that, to achieve the government's

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1. The term *Aboriginal* includes First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people. In this document, First Nation, Métis, and/or Inuit learners are referred to specifically where appropriate to the context. The term *Aboriginal* is used throughout this document to include all people of Aboriginal ancestry and heritage.

long-term goals for Aboriginal education, coordinated efforts must be made, and effective strategies developed and implemented, to meet the particular postsecondary educational needs of Aboriginal learners. The *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* is not a comprehensive research study on the Aboriginal postsecondary education experience, nor is it a directory of services and programs available to serve the Aboriginal population in Ontario. Rather, it is intended as a flexible and broad framework to inform policy development and program design within the ministry, to continue to influence positive action and progress across the postsecondary education and training sectors, and to initiate and enhance meaningful dialogue and partnerships within and among Aboriginal leadership and communities, the ministry, postsecondary education and training stakeholders, and employment and industry leaders, all with the goal of achieving measurable changes in Aboriginal postsecondary education and training in Ontario.

This policy framework will provide the impetus and structure for implementing a renewed approach to postsecondary education and training with effective measures for change. Together with the *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, it establishes the foundations of the government's Aboriginal Education Strategy.

## Executive Summary

The *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* was developed by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities from March 2009 through December 2010 and included a multi-pronged community engagement approach across the province. This approach included gathering input and feedback from key informants and sector partners, representatives from postsecondary education institutions, skills-development and training service providers and delivery agencies, representatives from the ministry and other Ontario ministries, Aboriginal governing bodies and organizations, school board representatives, and individuals working in First Nation education. In addition, written feedback was received from

many individuals and organizations. From the inception of this process, the policy framework also benefited from the guidance and direction of a time-limited Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Working Table. Thus, this policy framework is the result of research and much dialogue.

The development and implementation of the *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* signals a renewed commitment by the provincial government to support positive outcomes in postsecondary education and training for Aboriginal people living in Ontario. It provides a vehicle for reflecting on the successes of the past and building upon the solid foundations established by those who have worked over the years to facilitate Aboriginal people's access to and success in postsecondary education and training. It provides an opportunity for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and its partners in the postsecondary education and training sectors to take renewed action and, in partnership with Aboriginal communities, engender more positive outcomes for Aboriginal learners across the province.

This framework recognizes that existing socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people cannot be addressed without dealing with gaps in educational attainment and achievement. Strategies to address the educational attainment gaps must reflect present and future economic and demographic realities, including projected increases in the Aboriginal population of Ontario that will outstrip increases in the non-Aboriginal population of the province. Future policies and programs must consider the changing demographic make-up of Ontario, along with the needs of and developments in the province's labour force and emerging economic sectors. Such considerations must include the costs of not having a skilled and educated population that is able to participate in the labour market.

This policy framework serves as a guide and departure point for improving Aboriginal postsecondary education and training outcomes, and sets out a long-term vision, as well as principles, goals, strategic directions, and performance measures. It reflects the view that every qualified person who wants to go to college or university, or pursue an apprenticeship, will find

a place, and that Aboriginal people will have opportunities to acquire the skills and formal education needed to actively participate in the changing labour market of the twenty-first century.

This framework has the following five foundational principles:

- excellence and accountability
- equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity
- cooperation on and shared responsibility for postsecondary education and training
- respect for Constitutional and treaty rights
- respect for Indigenous Knowledge, languages, and cultures

The key goals of this framework are as follows:

- *Accountability and Transparency:* Transparency and accountability are enhanced by improved reporting on and access to information about postsecondary education and training.
- *Responsiveness and Respect:* Postsecondary education and training environments are increasingly responsive to and respectful of the needs, choices, and aspirations of Aboriginal learners.
- *Aboriginal Learners' Success:* An increasing number of Aboriginal learners achieve high levels of success in postsecondary education and training.
- *Labour Market Readiness:* An increasing number of Aboriginal learners have the skills and formal education required to more actively participate in the changing labour market.

The overall strategic directions that will guide the development and implementation of policies, programs, activities, and initiatives are as follows:

- strategic communication
- accountability and reporting
- sustained engagement with Aboriginal communities
- leadership and professional development
- building the postsecondary education and training systems' capacity
- access and pathways to achievement
- retention and completion
- facilitating transitions to the labour market

In order to track progress in closing the gaps in educational achievement and attainment, a targeted Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Performance Measures Strategy will be developed.

The appendices to this document provide additional background information on the roles, responsibilities, programs, and services of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, as well as a summary of some of the unique challenges that may face Aboriginal learners when they engage with the postsecondary education and training sectors. A glossary of terms is also provided.

## Context

### **The Aboriginal Demographic Landscape in Ontario**

The 2006 census reported that the number of people in Canada who identify themselves as Aboriginal has surpassed the one-million mark, to 1,172,790.<sup>2</sup> Over one-fifth (231,000 or 21%) of this population lives in Ontario, a greater proportion than resides in any other province or territory. Aboriginal people make up approximately 3 per cent of the population of Ontario as a whole but upwards of 10 per cent in the northern part of the province, including 10 per cent of the population of Thunder Bay and almost 20 per cent of the population of Kenora. In the decade prior to 2006, the Aboriginal population grew faster than the non-Aboriginal population, increasing 45 per cent, or nearly six times faster than the 8 per cent rate of increase for the non-Aboriginal population.

The census provides us with a general snapshot of postsecondary education completion rates as well as economic indicators for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The 2006 census reported that 9 per cent of Ontario's

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2. As a one-day snapshot, the census under-reports the number of Aboriginal people because of the high mobility of the population, the lack of participation of some highly populated communities, and the under-documentation of homeless individuals. In the absence of a reliable provincial data system, the federal census is currently the primary source for educational attainment data on Aboriginal people. Other data limitations are detailed in the section "Measuring Success".

adult Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had completed a bachelor's degree, while upwards of 36 per cent were college or trades graduates.<sup>3</sup> While, according to census data, positive gains have been made in college and trades education completion rates, Ontario's postsecondary education institutions continue to identify significant gaps related to enrolment and retention of Aboriginal learners, as well as in the number of Aboriginal teaching and non-teaching staff within publicly assisted institutions.

There also continues to be gaps in the unemployment rate: in 2006 the rate for Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 (13%) was over four times the rate for non-Aboriginal people (3%). In addition, a higher proportion of Aboriginal families (31.2%) were living in low-income situations, compared with the average for all Canadian families (12.9%). In 2006, the average Aboriginal person's annual income in Ontario was \$28,000, compared with \$38,000 for the non-Aboriginal population.

It must be acknowledged that the challenges of the global economic climate have affected many families and communities in Ontario and the rest of Canada in the past decade. However, even with the limitations of currently available data, it is clear that Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities face particular socio-economic challenges that require focused and sustained action.

Further to these considerations, Statistics Canada has projected a 16 per cent increase in Ontario's Aboriginal population, to 267,700, by 2017, and the number of young Aboriginal adults (aged 20 to 29) is expected to grow by more than 22 per cent, which is well beyond the projected growth of 9 per cent among those in the same age group in the non-Aboriginal population. Even if available data are incomplete, the statistics reveal the need to more strategically address postsecondary education and training for Aboriginal people in order to reduce substantial labour force gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people now and in the near future.

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3. In Ontario's overall population, the figures are 31 per cent university completion and 26 per cent college/trades completion.

## The Road We Have Travelled

Statistics aside, we know that some progress has been made in the area of Aboriginal education and training. For example, we know that, since the inception of the ministry's Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy in the early 1990s, and with the government's concurrent investments in adult literacy and in employment and skills development and training:

- increased numbers of Aboriginal people are attending colleges and accessing training and skills-development programs;
- colleges, universities, and Aboriginal institutes are increasingly committed to supporting Aboriginal learners so they achieve positive results in post-secondary education settings;
- the educational attainment gap is shrinking in the area of non-university postsecondary completion, as more Aboriginal learners are completing college or trade-school programs;
- increased numbers of employers and sectors are acknowledging the need for targeted strategies to recruit Aboriginal employees.

## The Road Ahead

Despite the progress that has taken place in Ontario's postsecondary education and training sectors over the past two decades, Aboriginal learners continue to experience social, cultural, financial, and geographic barriers to participation in postsecondary education and training opportunities. As a result, the access of Aboriginal people in Ontario to the labour market and economic development opportunities continues to be limited.

In addition to more obvious factors, such as poverty, lack of high school completion and academic preparedness, discrimination, and the difficulty and expense of relocation that is often necessary to pursue training or postsecondary studies, a large segment of the Aboriginal population may also face other less overt barriers, such as the challenge of entering into the postsecondary education system as an adult learner, the absence of Aboriginal role models, and institutional insensitivity to Aboriginal histories, cultures, world views, values, and knowledge systems.

The development of this policy framework signals a renewed commitment to support positive outcomes in postsecondary education and training for Aboriginal people in Ontario. The development process included both reflection on the successes of the past and discussions of ways to build on the solid foundations established by those who have worked over the years to facilitate Aboriginal people's access to and success in postsecondary education and training.

As Ontario moves forward with the Aboriginal Education Strategy, the following points need to be considered:

- The socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people cannot be addressed without dealing with existing gaps in educational achievement and attainment.
- The Learning Ministries must continue to work collaboratively to support learners' achievements at the early learning, elementary, and secondary levels (K–12) and in postsecondary education and training settings.
- The K–12 and postsecondary education and training sectors must be prepared to support Aboriginal learners' educational achievement at every stage, with appropriate approaches informed by engagement with Aboriginal communities and organizations.
- Reliable data systems must be developed and implemented in order to gather clear, consistent data so progress and achievement in Aboriginal education in Ontario can be accurately tracked.
- Future policies and programs must consider the demographic make-up of Ontario, along with the needs of and developments in the labour force and emerging economic sectors, including the costs of not having a skilled and educated population that is able to actively participate in the labour market.

# Purpose

This policy framework is intended for use by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; educators and administrators in publicly assisted colleges and universities; Aboriginal postsecondary education and training institutes; training service providers assisted by the ministry; employers; and industry leaders. Ultimately, it is intended for the benefit of Aboriginal learners. It is a flexible and broad framework within which ministry-led policies, strategies, and initiatives will be designed, developed, delivered, and evaluated.

While the focus and specific actions will change over time, the vision, principles, and strategic directions presented in this document will provide guidance and scope for the important work that lies ahead – closing educational achievement and attainment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Ontario. In order to guide the ministry and its partners towards a more strategic approach to postsecondary education, training, and skills development for Aboriginal learners, this policy framework is intended to be used to:

- inform and direct the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on the vision, principles, and strategies for Aboriginal postsecondary education, training, and skills development in Ontario, building upon the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2007;
- influence attitudes and approaches of the postsecondary education and training sectors so that these sectors become increasingly aware of, and responsive to, the unique needs, circumstances, perspectives, and knowledge systems of a wide spectrum of Aboriginal learners, ranging from those who require literacy and basic skills training in community-based programs to learners pursuing postgraduate studies in institutional settings;
- initiate dialogue with Aboriginal communities, organizations, and leaders, as well as with the federal government, to explore intersecting priorities and shared goals in postsecondary education and training outcomes for Aboriginal learners in the spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility.

This policy framework is the next step in honouring Ontario’s commitment to move forward with its partners on the Aboriginal Education Strategy.

# Vision

For many Aboriginal people, education is holistic and includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. By recognizing the unique and diverse perspectives of Aboriginal learners, and building them into the vision of this policy framework, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities seeks to balance positive social, cultural, and academic outcomes with sustainable results in the labour market.

Today, more than ever, educational achievement is essential in order to support and nurture safe, healthy, and prosperous families and communities. Education is an important tool that helps individuals and communities achieve their full potential and that shapes the leaders and educators of the future. For this reason, the ministry has committed to ensuring that every qualified person who wants to complete postsecondary undergraduate or graduate studies, or pursue an apprenticeship, will find a place within the postsecondary system, and that Aboriginal people will have opportunities to acquire the skills and formal education needed to more actively participate in the changing labour market of the twenty-first century.

In the long term, the vision of this framework will be demonstrated by:

- Ontario's postsecondary education and training sectors working together, and in partnership with Aboriginal leadership and communities, to articulate and advance the postsecondary education and training objectives of the ministry, and of Aboriginal learners, recognizing that improving educational and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people strengthens the social fabric for all Ontarians;
- Ontario's postsecondary education institutions – the public institutions of higher learning in the province – working in partnership with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities to support the revitalization of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and identities through the development and delivery of education in these areas for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners and communities, as well as through the encouragement of a broader recognition and inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge;

- the Ontario government’s facilitation of the development of sustainable partnerships with Aboriginal communities and leadership and other levels of government, and, in particular, endeavouring to ensure coordination between provincial legislation and the federal obligation to support the education and skills development of Aboriginal people.

## Principles

The following five principles guide all ministry-led programs, policies, and strategies with respect to Aboriginal postsecondary education and training, as well as the relationships integral to the success of these initiatives. The principles also set expectations for educators, administrators, and personnel in publicly assisted postsecondary education institutions, and for employment, training, and skills-development service providers. These principles encourage Ontario’s employers and industry leaders to find ways of contributing to better educational outcomes for Aboriginal people.

### **Excellence and Accountability**

The Ontario government believes that high-quality postsecondary education is essential for the continuing development – including social, cultural, and economic development – of all communities in Ontario, including Aboriginal communities. The educational achievements and labour-market participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people are supported through the availability and delivery of high-quality education and training programs and services. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities provides the postsecondary education and training sectors with resources to respond to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people who wish to pursue postsecondary education and training opportunities in Ontario. Service providers and delivery agencies in the postsecondary education and training sectors deliver high-quality programs and services that are efficient and effective, and they are accountable to the ministry and to the Aboriginal communities they serve.

### **Equity, Inclusion, and Respect for Diversity**

This policy framework is intended for the benefit of all Aboriginal people in Ontario, regardless of status, gender, age, geography, or political affiliation. Aboriginal people and communities have diverse needs that reflect their knowledge systems, perspectives, cultures, languages, lifestyles, geographic locations, and status. Flexible policies, programs, and services are required that respect and respond to the diversity within Aboriginal communities.

Inclusiveness and respect must be integral to the postsecondary education and training environment and experience for all learners. Within the institutional classroom setting and in program delivery, there must be awareness of the needs and perspectives of Aboriginal learners, whether they are accessing community-based literacy and basic skills training or pursuing postgraduate studies in an institutional setting.

### **Cooperation on and Shared Responsibility for Postsecondary Education and Training**

Positive outcomes in postsecondary education, training, and skills development require all partners to work together, respecting each others' roles and cooperating for the benefit of all people in Ontario. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities believes that facilitating positive outcomes for Aboriginal people in postsecondary education and training is a responsibility shared by all levels of government, a number of ministries, and various communities, and supported by cooperation within and between postsecondary education institutions and community-based organizations.

Access to and effectiveness of programs and services for Aboriginal people will be enhanced through increased and sustained engagement with Aboriginal communities and their greater involvement in planning, delivery, and evaluation of those programs and services. Building and strengthening the relationships between the ministry, the postsecondary education and training sectors, and Aboriginal communities, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit leaders, and Aboriginal organizations across the province is paramount to achieving the ultimate goals of this policy framework.

### **Respect for Constitutional and Treaty Rights**

The Ontario government respects the Aboriginal and treaty rights protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Nothing in this policy framework suggests either directly or by implication the consent of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit communities to any amendment of the meaning and intent of their original treaties or of their Aboriginal rights, or to any measure that would constrain or prevent the full implementation of their treaties and Aboriginal rights.

### **Respect for Indigenous Knowledge, Languages, and Cultures**

The Ontario government recognizes that Aboriginal world views and cultures and the diversity of Aboriginal knowledge systems reflect valid ways of knowing the world and have a place in the development and delivery of postsecondary education and training programs, services, curriculum, and evaluation mechanisms. The interchange of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of knowing the world enriches the education of all Ontarians.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities recognizes the importance and respects the contributions of Indigenous Knowledge within postsecondary education and training settings. The ministry recognizes the benefits of sharing Aboriginal knowledge systems, perspectives, and world views with non-Aboriginal learners, faculty members of postsecondary education institutions, skills-development and training service providers and delivery agencies, and, more broadly, the general public.

## Goals

Through its Open Ontario plan, the provincial government's goal is to raise Ontario's postsecondary educational attainment rate to 70 per cent. Ontario's Student Access Guarantee commits to finding a place for every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university or pursue an apprenticeship program. The ministry supports this target through strategic investments and activities focused on increased enrolment at

postsecondary education institutions, improved supports in employment and training settings, and growth in Northern Ontario and in infrastructure.

To support Ontario's overarching goal and strategic directions for learners and the postsecondary education and training system, and as informed by province-wide community engagement in 2009 and 2010 with Aboriginal communities and the postsecondary education and training sectors, the ministry has set the following four goals for Aboriginal postsecondary education and training:

- Transparency and accountability are enhanced by improved reporting on and access to information about postsecondary education and training.
- Postsecondary education and training environments are increasingly responsive to and respectful of the needs, choices, and aspirations of Aboriginal learners.
- An increasing number of Aboriginal learners achieve high levels of success in postsecondary education and training.
- An increasing number of Aboriginal learners have the skills and formal education required to more actively participate in the changing labour market.



# Relationships

In order to achieve the goals set out in this policy framework, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities commits to continue to work with:

- First Nation, Métis, and Inuit leadership and communities;
- Aboriginal organizations;
- the postsecondary education and training sectors;
- the elementary and secondary education sectors;
- Ontario ministries;
- the federal government.

While it is important that goals and strategies be articulated for the ministry, it is equally important to recognize that its partners and other stakeholders share common goals and have established parallel strategies to support positive outcomes for Aboriginal learners. The ministry acknowledges and recognizes that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit governing bodies have articulated their own distinct frameworks and approaches to support and improve the education of their people. It will continue to work in partnership with these bodies to support Aboriginal learners' needs, choices, and aspirations in postsecondary education and training.

The Council of the Federation (COF), the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) have identified Aboriginal education and workforce outcomes to be priority issues deserving targeted activity and support. Ontario will continue to participate in these pan-Canadian forums as part of the province's commitment to Aboriginal learners in the postsecondary education and training sectors.

The ministry will continue to foster its relationships with its partner provincial ministries, including the Ministry of Education, to inform and influence the development of inter-ministerial strategies that better support Aboriginal people's education and labour force outcomes and that strengthen outcomes in health, justice, and overall community well-being. The ministry will also continue to work with federal departments, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Human Resources and Social

Development Canada (HRSDC), to improve coordination of postsecondary education and training systems. To meet the diverse and changing needs of a growing Aboriginal population in Ontario, the ministry will continue to promote a relationship with the federal government that is characterized by transparency and collaboration, and it will expect an appropriate level of support from federal resources as the Aboriginal Education Strategy moves forward.

## Measuring Success

Ontario is creating more open and responsive ways for government to work with the postsecondary education and training sectors and key community partners, including employers, to deliver results in the area of Aboriginal postsecondary educational achievement and attainment. Accomplishing these goals requires the ministry's effective stewardship of a system that must be prepared to meet the needs of the emerging knowledge economy of the twenty-first century while protecting the interests of all learners and the broader public.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the strategic directions of this policy framework, the ministry will coordinate a targeted Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Performance Measures Strategy. This performance measures strategy will utilize data and information from existing reporting mechanisms established between the ministry and postsecondary education institutions and service delivery agencies, and will also include supplemental research and evaluations that will be undertaken during the early stages of the policy framework's implementation. The performance measures strategy will have a number of components, including: the development of standardized data-collection approaches; the development of policies to better identify Aboriginal learners/clients; program evaluations; improved tracking of, and results-based reporting on, Aboriginal postsecondary education investments; and improved reporting back to Aboriginal communities and the postsecondary education and training sectors on their collective achievements. The performance measures will be refined and adapted, as necessary, during implementation of the policy framework.

The ministry recognizes that the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Performance Measures Strategy needs to include not only graduation and completion rates but also more holistic measures of success. In order to appropriately measure Aboriginal learners' success at the postsecondary level, the strategy must include appropriate assessment tools and methodologies that reflect Aboriginal knowledge systems. Sustained engagement with Aboriginal people in shaping the performance measures strategy is a priority, so that indicators and outcomes are relevant to both the ministry and Aboriginal communities.

The Ontario government will continue to participate in relevant pan-Canadian postsecondary education initiatives, including the work being undertaken by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to ensure that the provincial strategy is congruent with data initiatives being developed and implemented at the national level.

### **The Need for Consistent and Reliable Data Across Sectors**

Although considerable data about Aboriginal learners and the system that supports them are available throughout the province, data are not currently collected, analysed, and reported on in a systematic manner. A particular challenge is the inability to consistently identify and track all Aboriginal learners/clients who are enrolled in postsecondary education institutions, registered in apprenticeship programs, and/or receiving Employment Ontario programs and services. Although new mechanisms are being established to help identify Aboriginal learners/clients, more can also be done to improve existing data-collection strategies and approaches while streamlining and minimizing additional administrative responsibilities of publicly assisted institutions, the ministry's community partners, and service-delivery agencies.

There are several made-in-Ontario examples of measurement strategies that are working well. In addition to these, we can learn from other leaders in the field, as well as from recent studies on self-identification and data-collection methodologies in order to create an Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Performance Measures Strategy that tells the full story with respect to progress in achieving the goals set out in this policy framework.

### **Student Identification and the Creation of Data Baselines for Aboriginal Learners**

The self-identification of Aboriginal learners within the postsecondary education and training system will be an integral component of the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Performance Measures Strategy. Self-identification is generally understood to be a process through which learners/potential learners are asked to identify their Aboriginal ancestry or heritage, often at the time of application to an institution or program. Several colleges and universities have independent self-identification processes, and the college and university application process also asks potential students to indicate whether they are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. However, there is currently no standardized approach across postsecondary education institutions and only limited data collection through Employment Ontario. Although it is important to recognize the potential limitations inherent in the standardization of self-identification policies across mainstream institutions, having clear metrics and reliable baselines that identify learners is a required step in tracking outcomes and measuring achievements.

Student self-identification policies will be developed, analysed, and evaluated in partnership with Aboriginal communities and organizations. From the outset, the ministry will be open and transparent about the intended use and control of Aboriginal learners' data.

### **Evaluation of Programs and Services in Achieving Results for Communities**

Collection and analysis of reliable and relevant quantitative and qualitative data is critical in determining how well programs and services are serving Aboriginal learners, as well as supporting postsecondary education institutions and employment, training, and skills-development service providers and delivery agents. The goal is to ensure that the formal education and training that Aboriginal learners/clients are receiving is meeting the needs and expectation of employers and is resulting in the employment of Aboriginal people in sustainable jobs that will support individuals, families, and communities.

Data are required on how publicly assisted institutions, service providers, and delivery agencies, and the ministry itself, are performing with respect to the delivery of services and the administration of investments. Data are also required to measure the effectiveness of investments and to maintain accountability to the Aboriginal communities that these initiatives are intended to serve.

Future policy and program development depends on consistent and reliable data collection and analysis.

### **Tracking Investments in Postsecondary Education and Training**

With the consolidation of targeted Aboriginal postsecondary education funding in 2009–10, the Ontario government now requires all postsecondary education institutions to report annually on their investments in Aboriginal education in a Multi-Year Aboriginal Action Plan for Postsecondary Education (MYAAPP). Colleges and universities are required to develop their action plan under the direction, and subject to the approval, of Aboriginal Education Councils (AECs). AECs or similar governing bodies are required to be in place in order for colleges and universities to be eligible for public funding to support Aboriginal students and programming related to Aboriginal education in their institutions.

The ministry will continue to engage with postsecondary education institutions when developing standardized performance tools and approaches to be used to evaluate the impact of current policy and determine future policies.

### **Progress Report**

The ministry will establish an implementation plan that will accompany this policy framework and identify activities, timelines, and more specific immediate and intermediate performance measures tied to activities. The ministry is committed to providing a progress report on implementation activities within three years of the launch of this framework.

# Strategic Directions

The strategies outlined in the following pages have been identified as necessary elements in achieving Ontario's goal of improving Aboriginal people's postsecondary educational achievements and closing the educational attainment gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The strategies build on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' key initiatives across the Ontario postsecondary education and training system. The strategies provide a framework that will guide the ministry and publicly assisted postsecondary education institutions, organizations, and service providers in the delivery of programs, services, and supports for Aboriginal learners.

The strategies identified here are meant only to be a starting point. All parties are encouraged to identify additional activities as well as immediate and intermediate measures that contribute to meeting the overarching goals, particularly strategies that reflect local circumstances, as all partners work together to implement the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework.

**GOAL: Transparency and accountability are enhanced by improved reporting on and access to information about postsecondary education and training.**

**STRATEGY: Strategic Communication**

- Develop information and resources on ministry-led postsecondary education, skills-development, and training initiatives, and distribute them to Aboriginal learners and their communities through appropriate networks and using protocols established in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

- Provide support through the ministry and its regional network to respond to requests for information from Aboriginal people, communities, and organizations in a timely and appropriate manner and through appropriate protocols and networks.
- Create opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration between and among Aboriginal, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, post-secondary educators, educators in the elementary and secondary system, industry representatives, and employers in order to foster innovative and creative approaches utilizing available training and skills-development programs and resources.
- Identify and share information broadly across the postsecondary education and training sectors, through professional development and other knowledge-sharing initiatives, regarding Aboriginal people's engagement patterns in postsecondary education and training.
- Celebrate Aboriginal postsecondary education and training successes and accomplishments, and learn from local, national, and international best practices.
- Improve information sharing and collaboration across levels of government.

#### **STRATEGY: Accountability and Reporting**

- Using existing reporting mechanisms and through the development of new evaluation tools, coordinate an Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Performance Measures Strategy that monitors the activities and progress of publicly assisted postsecondary education institutions and skills-development and service-delivery agencies, as well as other recipients of ministry investments that support the educational achievements of Aboriginal learners.
- Fully implement a funding approach for postsecondary education institutions that will be used for their Aboriginal-specific initiatives, as identified in institutional Multi-Year Aboriginal Action Plans for Postsecondary Education, and that will be based on actual activities and results achieved.

- Work with postsecondary education institutions and organizations, including Colleges Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, and Aboriginal institutes, to develop consistent data-collection approaches, including the development of voluntary, confidential student self-identification policies or other mechanisms, in order to establish reliable Aboriginal learner/client baselines and gather consistent data that can be monitored at the provincial level.
- Work with Employment Ontario’s service-delivery agencies to improve existing data-collection approaches and mechanisms in order to better track both service needs and outcomes for Aboriginal clients who access employment services.
- Learn from made-in-Ontario best practices, from other jurisdictions, where applicable, and from existing research – including research undertaken by Aboriginal learners, Aboriginal researchers, and Aboriginal communities – to identify the determinants of Aboriginal learners’ success and achievements.
- Create and make available provincial reports on Aboriginal postsecondary education and training investments.
- Share public reporting on Aboriginal postsecondary education and training investments with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit organizations, using appropriate approaches and mechanisms.

### **Key Performance Measures**

- Increased opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing between and among Aboriginal, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, the ministry, postsecondary educators, industry representatives, and employers on education, training, and skills-development initiatives
- Improved data collection on, and tracking and monitoring of, ministry investments in Aboriginal postsecondary education and training
- Improvement in demonstrated, measurable outcomes in Aboriginal postsecondary education and training as a result of ministry investments

**GOAL: Postsecondary education and training environments are increasingly responsive to and respectful of the needs, choices, and aspirations of Aboriginal learners.**

**STRATEGY: Sustained Engagement with Aboriginal Communities**

- Encourage and support the postsecondary education and training sectors to engage in meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal peoples, communities, and organizations in the planning, development, delivery, and evaluation of postsecondary education and training programs and services.
- Support Aboriginal communities and organizations in their engagement with the postsecondary education and training sectors.
- Acknowledge the importance of the presence of Aboriginal staff and faculty, across all disciplines in postsecondary education institutions, including their ability to serve as mentors and role models to Aboriginal learners and to contribute to improving receptivity to and understanding of Aboriginal knowledge, including Aboriginal histories, identities, world views, values, and cultures.
- Review and assess ministry-supported decision-making, planning, advisory, and/or governance bodies (e.g., Aboriginal Education Councils, Local Training Boards) to ensure that they continue to involve Aboriginal people in the development, planning, and evaluation of, and decision making related to, publicly assisted initiatives.
- Support ongoing collaboration and engagement between Aboriginal organizations and communities and postsecondary education stakeholders, including the Council of Ontario Universities Reference Group on Aboriginal Education, Colleges Ontario's Indigenous People's Education Circle, and the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium.

**STRATEGY: Leadership and Professional Development**

- Promote the development of a workforce within the ministry that is aware of and grounded in Aboriginal knowledge, including Aboriginal histories, identities, world views, values, and cultures, in order to better address the postsecondary education, training, and employment service needs of Aboriginal people.

- Embed the vision and principles of this policy framework in ministry strategies, policies, and programs.
- Create learning opportunities within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities about the realities of Aboriginal experiences, contributions, and issues, both historical and contemporary, in Ontario and Canada.
- Encourage the postsecondary education and training sectors, through professional development, education, and awareness strategies, to incorporate spaces within their organizations and institutions that reflect Aboriginal needs and identities, including programming that is reflective of Aboriginal histories, identities, world views, values, and cultures.
- Support Aboriginal leadership development and opportunities for Aboriginal contributions to postsecondary education institutions through, where appropriate, Aboriginal people's involvement in institutional governance, administration, and teaching.

### **Key Performance Measures**

- Improved receptivity to and respect for Aboriginal knowledge systems in postsecondary education and training settings
- Improved Aboriginal engagement and participation in the planning, design, development, and delivery of policies, programs, and initiatives related to Aboriginal postsecondary education and training in Ontario, including increased participation of Aboriginal people on ministry training boards
- An increased number of formal partnerships between the ministry, its service providers, and Aboriginal leadership and organizations
- Improved knowledge among professionals within the ministry of the rich cultures, histories, values, perspectives, and knowledge systems of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people in Ontario

**GOAL: An increasing number of Aboriginal learners achieve high levels of success in postsecondary education and training.**

**STRATEGY: Building the postsecondary education and training systems' capacity**

- Provide multi-year funding and support to Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities to deliver programs and services for Aboriginal learners, enabling them to provide sustainable, longer term, and more strategic planning and program delivery.
- Support the delivery of recognized postsecondary education and training programs and student supports provided by Aboriginal postsecondary education and training institutes, acknowledging the unique role that Aboriginal institutes play in providing Aboriginal learners with access to, and opportunities to succeed in, college and university programs that are offered by the institutes through alternative delivery modes and utilizing indigenous pedagogical approaches.
- Work with Aboriginal service providers and other organizations to support Aboriginal people's access to the services they need through Ontario's employment and training network, Employment Ontario.
- Conduct program evaluations and assessments on the effectiveness of postsecondary education and training investments to ensure that targeted initiatives are addressing their intended goals.
- Work with the Ministry of Education, faculties of education, and Aboriginal organizations to increase the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in the education system.

**STRATEGY: Access and Pathways to Achievement**

Addressing Aboriginal access to postsecondary education and training includes consideration of the following factors: financial resources, academic preparedness, cultural and social values, limitations and opportunities associated with physical spaces and geographic locations, and availability of information and guidance.

- Support successful transitions between and among institutions, communities, the labour market, and the K–12 education sector, as well as between undergraduate and graduate studies.

- Use Contact North/Contact Nord’s network of 112 local access centres across Ontario and existing online learning and distance education infrastructure to increase access to literacy and postsecondary education in small, remote, and rural communities through flexible learning opportunities available from Ontario’s colleges, universities, and literacy and other training providers, as well as from OntarioLearn.com.
- Continue to implement the Aboriginal Student Bursary Fund for Aboriginal students enrolled in postsecondary education institutions, or in apprenticeships, in order to provide additional support to Aboriginal learners who demonstrate financial need.
- Support initiatives to ensure academic preparedness of Aboriginal adults and youth for postsecondary education and training across the province.
- Continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Education to ensure that Aboriginal students are completing high school and, while in publicly funded secondary schools, have access to information about, and receive encouragement to pursue, postsecondary education.

#### **Key Performance Measures**

- A significant increase in Aboriginal learners’ applications to, and registration in, colleges, universities, and Aboriginal institutes for full-time and part-time programs and courses, as well as in apprenticeship programs
- Increased satisfaction and comfort of Aboriginal learners in postsecondary education and training settings and experiences

**GOAL: An increasing number of Aboriginal learners have the skills and formal education required to more actively participate in the changing labour market.**

#### **STRATEGY: Retention and Completion**

- Provide resources to postsecondary education institutions for the maintenance of physical spaces that reflect Aboriginal needs and identity and for the continued implementation of programming that encourages a broader recognition and inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge, including Aboriginal histories, identities, world views, values, and cultures.

- Encourage postsecondary education institutions to offer targeted academic support and counselling, in addition to student supports currently available, to Aboriginal students, including the use of distance education networks and new technologies to reach out to students who are not on campus on a regular basis.
- Provide Employment Ontario service providers and delivery agents with the resources and tools they may require to be informed about and responsive to the unique needs and perspectives of Aboriginal clients.
- Partner with key apprenticeship organizations and other stakeholders to identify retention strategies for Aboriginal apprentices, as well as the needs of employers and journeypersons, in order to increase the number of Aboriginal apprentices entering trades and pre-apprenticeship programs.

**STRATEGY: Facilitating Transitions to the Labour Market**

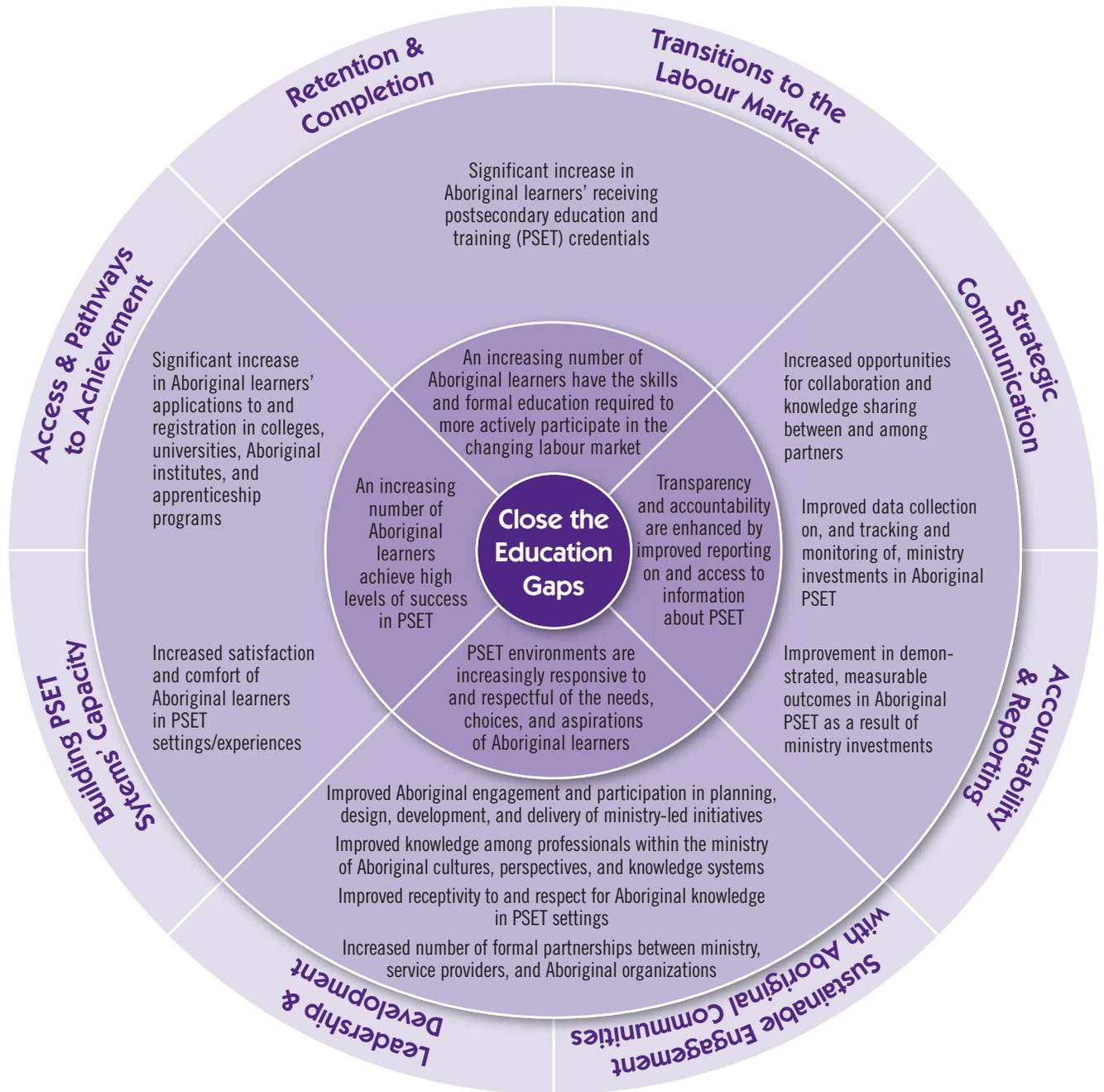
- Work with and support postsecondary education institutions and Aboriginal organizations and communities to address Aboriginal learners' transitions to postsecondary education settings.
- Explore opportunities to work with employers, the College of Trades, and the skilled trades sectors to facilitate and increase Aboriginal participation in the skilled trades through innovative partnerships and approaches.
- Explore opportunities to support Aboriginal service providers and organizations that seek to establish innovative delivery of on-the-job training that leads to recognized postsecondary education credentials, including trades/skills certification, and ultimately sustainable employment.

**Key Performance Measure**

- A significant increase in Aboriginal learners' receiving postsecondary education and training credentials

The figure on page 30 provides a summary of the goals (inner circle), key performance measures (second circle), and strategic directions (outer circle) of the framework.

# Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework: Goals, Strategic Directions, and Performance Measures



# Conclusion

Persistent gaps remain in educational achievement and attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Ontario. However, the gap is shrinking in the area of overall non-university attainment, as increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are completing education in colleges and trades schools.

Closing the educational attainment gap has important consequences. Research has revealed that Aboriginal people with university degrees have the potential to earn 50 per cent more income in a lifetime than those who do not complete postsecondary education. Moreover, higher educational attainment is directly linked to increased socio-economic, physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as other overall wellness indicators in all communities.

The postsecondary education and training sectors must be prepared to support Aboriginal learners at every stage in postsecondary educational attainment, with appropriate approaches that are informed by engagement with Aboriginal communities and organizations. It must be recognized that, given the diversity within First Nation, Métis, and Inuit populations, varied approaches to Aboriginal postsecondary education and training are required. Programs and services assisted by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will be more effective, and reflective of the diverse needs of Aboriginal people, if Aboriginal communities are involved in the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of those initiatives, and when learners and Aboriginal communities are aware of the opportunities available to them.

The Aboriginal population in Ontario is projected to grow more rapidly than the non-Aboriginal population in the coming decades. As a large portion of Ontario's non-Aboriginal population ages, labour force growth will slow. The future growth of the labour force in Ontario will be greatly enhanced by the participation of Aboriginal people who have the education and skills to meet the needs of a changing labour market and developing economic sectors.

More data and evaluations are needed in order to have a clearer understanding of the efficacy of various approaches used to improve Aboriginal postsecondary education and training outcomes, particularly when resources are limited and the demand for services is increasing. However, the strategies articulated in this policy framework will help to lead the way in the important work needed to achieve progress on Ontario's Aboriginal Education Strategy.

# Appendix A

## Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training in Ontario – Background

### **The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has a range of responsibilities with respect to postsecondary learning in Ontario. It provides operating and capital funding to publicly assisted colleges and universities, establishes provincial objectives and targets for the use of public funds, and designs frameworks for achieving these objectives. It ensures that high-quality postsecondary education is accessible to all qualified candidates through tuition regulation, student financial assistance, targeted funding, and accountability mechanisms. In the area of employment and training, it develops policy directions for adult education and labour market training; sets standards for occupational training such as trade certification and apprenticeships; manages provincial services and programs for employment training and preparation, including adult literacy and basic skills; and undertakes labour market research and planning.

To help learners in Ontario get the education and training they need to build a rewarding career after high school, the ministry collaborates with a number of partners, including other provincial ministries; publicly assisted postsecondary education institutions; and employment, skills-development, and training providers and delivery agents. Learners can choose from a variety of university and college programs, apprenticeships, and many other kinds of training and education. Through Employment Ontario, Ontario's employment and training network, the ministry helps people build careers and continue learning throughout their working life. Employment Ontario provides information about jobs, job-search skills, training, education, and other services for employees and employers.

The ministry provides targeted resources to postsecondary education institutions to deliver programs and services for Aboriginal learners enrolled in those institutions. In 1992, the Ontario government established the

Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS) in partnership with provincial Aboriginal organizations. From 1992 to 2009, the AETS was the mechanism that provided funding to colleges, universities, and Aboriginal institutes and organizations for the development of programs and services supporting the following three goals:

1. to increase the number of Aboriginal students participating in post-secondary education
2. to increase the sensitivity of mainstream universities and colleges to Aboriginal cultures, issues, and realities
3. to increase the participation of Aboriginal peoples in decisions affecting Aboriginal postsecondary education

Under the Reaching Higher plan for postsecondary education, which was announced in the 2005 Ontario budget, the ministry has provided additional supports to colleges, universities, and Aboriginal postsecondary education institutes through the Access to Opportunities Strategy, with the goal of improving access to and success in postsecondary education for Aboriginal people.

In 2007, the ministry commissioned an independent evaluation of the AETS. Results from this evaluation – combined with research and advice from postsecondary education institutions, provincial Aboriginal, First Nation, and Métis organizations, and other sector partners, as well as feedback from the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Postsecondary Education – indicated that a renewed Aboriginal postsecondary education and training strategy should focus increasingly on the *outcomes* of postsecondary education and training for Aboriginal people.

In order to better manage, monitor, and evaluate its overall investments in Aboriginal postsecondary education initiatives, the ministry in 2009–10 announced a new consolidated funding approach to Aboriginal postsecondary education. This new approach is administered primarily through post-secondary education institutions, which request funding by completing a Multi-Year Aboriginal Action Plan for Postsecondary Education (MYAAPP). Each year, the ministry also administers a number of special projects designed to support positive outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

In February 2008, the Ontario government signed the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement with the federal government. This agreement secures more resources for unemployed individuals not eligible for training from Employment Insurance (EI), for employed and underemployed individuals who have low levels of skills or who are working in low-skill jobs, and for individuals from groups, such as Aboriginal people, who are under-represented in the labour market.

## **The Postsecondary Education and Training Landscape**

### ***Postsecondary Education Institutions***

Ontario's colleges, universities, and Aboriginal education institutes offer Aboriginal students opportunities for study in a wide range of disciplines. In addition to these disciplines, a number of programs have been developed specifically for Aboriginal students or for the benefit of Aboriginal communities.

Along with specific academic programs, virtually all colleges, universities, and Aboriginal institutes provide some services for Aboriginal students. At a minimum, a full-time counsellor is available to assist Aboriginal students who are enrolled in the institution. Other support services and programs for Aboriginal learners in Ontario's postsecondary education institutions include the following:

- Aboriginal counsellors, Elders, and/or peer support workers
- promotion, admissions, and recruitment personnel
- student services and resource centres
- academic support services
- general administrative supports
- special events and cultural programming

More information can be obtained from individual institutions, through their websites or their Aboriginal services offices.

### ***Distance Education Networks***

Contact North/Contact Nord is a distance education and training network established by the Ontario government in 1986 to serve residents of Northern Ontario. Part of its mandate is to collaborate with Aboriginal

peoples to facilitate access to education providers in order to meet identified needs. Of the ninety-four Contact North/Contact Nord access centres, twenty-four are located in First Nation communities.

In 2007, the ministry established [elearnnetwork.ca/reseaelearning.ca](http://elearnnetwork.ca/reseaelearning.ca) to provide access centres where residents of eastern, western, and central Ontario can pursue e-learning opportunities with colleges and universities. There are now eighteen centres in the province, two of which are in First Nation communities.

Ontario Learn is a consortium of twenty-two Ontario community colleges dedicated to developing and delivering online courses. Currently, OntarioLearn.com offers more than 950 courses to thousands of online students each semester.

### ***Employment Ontario***

Employment Ontario helps people get the training, skills, and experience they need to achieve their career goals. It also connects people looking for work with employers looking for workers. Among the programs and services available across the province through Employment Ontario offices are the following:

- employment services
- literacy and basic skills training
- apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs
- Second Career, which helps retrain people for new careers in high-demand fields, including health care, mining, power generation, housing, and construction

### ***Literacy and Basic Skills***

Aboriginal people can access literacy and basic skills training services through a system of 340 Literacy and Basic Skills program sites, 30 of which are designated as delivery sites for Aboriginal people. Included among these sites are those of twenty-seven Aboriginal organizations and agencies that deliver literacy programs using culturally sensitive materials that have been researched and developed by Ningwakwe Learning Press and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. In addition, the Sioux Hudson Literacy Council

is the delivery agency for an online e-channel learning project designed to meet the literacy and numeracy needs of Aboriginal people.

### ***Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship***

An apprentice is someone who learns a skilled trade on the job under the direction of more experienced workers. Apprentices also complete classroom instruction as a part of their training. As employees, they earn a salary while learning a skilled trade. Becoming an apprentice can be an important first step in learning new skills and building a rewarding career. Jobs in the skilled trades pay well and can be interesting and challenging.

In cooperation with stakeholders, including the college system, industry, and Aboriginal organizations, the ministry has taken steps to enhance apprenticeship opportunities for Aboriginal people. Strategies include the following:

- developing Aboriginal-specific trades
- recognizing Aboriginal-specific organizations as apprenticeship training–delivery agencies
- including Aboriginal organizations in the development of the Ontario College of Trades (COT), as well as involving them in its decision-making processes
- providing funding for conferences for Aboriginal employment agencies, with the goal of increasing awareness of apprenticeship opportunities and requirements

Pre-apprenticeship training for Aboriginal students takes place through several employment and training agencies in Ontario. The province's Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program provides opportunities for individuals to learn trade-related skills necessary for becoming an apprentice.

Prospective apprentices must find an employer who is willing to hire and train them. People who want to become apprentices usually apply directly to an employer, union, or local committee. High school students can use the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program to help them start training to be an apprentice while completing high school. In addition, the Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship program can help students train as an apprentice while completing a related college course.

# Appendix B

## Aboriginal Learners' Challenges in the Postsecondary Education and Training Environment

Aboriginal people in Ontario face a number of specific challenges related to postsecondary education:

- **Higher proportion of adult Aboriginal learners entering postsecondary education and training.** While a higher proportion of Aboriginal students leave high school during their teenage years, a higher proportion also complete high school education after the age of twenty-four. Later transitions to postsecondary education and training can be more challenging for learners with limited academic preparedness and/or with family and community commitments.
- **The realities of northern and remote communities.** The education and training of Aboriginal people living in northern and remote communities is often negatively affected by prohibitively high costs of living; inadequate access to information and communication technologies; lack of, or limited, access to education and training resources; and lack of professionals with appropriate credentials who are willing to take on new apprentices. In addition, intensive transitional programs are often required to support young people's transitions from northern, remote, and/or reserve communities to urban centres while they pursue secondary and post-secondary studies.
- **Funding and access to federal resources for postsecondary education.** The federal government provides resources for the postsecondary education of some First Nation (i.e., registered Indians) and Inuit people in Canada. However, not all Aboriginal people are eligible under the federal government's funding arrangements, and the limited resources that are available do not cover all the costs for all those who are eligible. Similar to other students with financial challenges or limited financial resources, some Aboriginal students may not perceive student loans as an option because of poor credit ratings or previous loan defaults.

- **Limited use of indigenous pedagogy.** The current pedagogy in most mainstream universities and colleges and the approaches used in mainstream training and skills-development programs/centres are often not readily compatible with indigenous ways of knowing. In addition, mainstream approaches to evaluation and performance measures often assess success only with respect to the completion of studies, and do not factor in aspects that relate to the impact on the whole student, the family, the community, and the nation.
- **Diversity of Aboriginal populations.** There are differences in educational attainment levels among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit populations, and between urban and non-urban Aboriginal populations. The Métis appear to have the highest level of attainment and the Inuit the lowest. As a group, Aboriginal women are more likely than Aboriginal men to complete a university degree, but Aboriginal men are more likely than Aboriginal women to complete a trade certificate or college diploma.

# Glossary

**Aboriginal Education Councils (AEC).** A mandatory body established by each publicly assisted college or university to ensure that Aboriginal people are consistently and regularly engaged in decision making within the institution. Institutions must ensure that representatives from Aboriginal communities/organizations have direct access to the board of governors and the senate (e.g., by reserving a seat on the board for an Aboriginal representative or by having the president serve as a member of the Aboriginal Education Council). The establishment of an AEC is required if a college or university is to be eligible to receive targeted Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL).

**Aboriginal postsecondary education/training institutes.** Institutions that:

- are Aboriginal/First Nation–controlled postsecondary institutions, duly established under a First Nation jurisdiction, and that demonstrate support from and accountability to the Aboriginal community;
- offer a range of postsecondary education/training programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and/or degrees for their students, in partnership with provincially recognized universities and colleges;
- demonstrate the inclusion of First Nation history, culture, languages, and traditions;
- have an operational governing body comprising Aboriginal community members;
- have an institutional action plan approved by the governing body;
- are legal/incorporated, non-profit entities or are part of an Aboriginal legal/incorporated, non-profit structure;
- demonstrate financial accountability;
- demonstrate quality assurance mechanisms. (*Source:* Ontario Chiefs Resolution 07/40; Aboriginal Institutes’ Consortium)

**Aboriginal peoples.** A collective name for the original people of North America and their descendants. The Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians, Métis, and Inuit.

**Aboriginal rights.** Collective rights, based on Aboriginal occupation and use of lands, and on customs, traditions, and practices that make Aboriginal societies distinctive. Aboriginal rights are protected by section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

**academic upgrading programs.** Delivered through colleges, universities, and other community-based providers, these programs focus on adult learners (nineteen years of age and older) who are eligible to work in Ontario and who want to improve their skills (e.g., math, English, science, computer skills), prepare for a postsecondary education program or an apprenticeship, and generally improve their job opportunities and employment skills.

**apprentice/apprenticeship.** An apprentice is someone who learns a skilled trade on the job, under the direction of more experienced workers (journeypersons). Apprentices also complete classroom instruction as a part of their training. Co-op diploma apprenticeship programs allow students to get apprenticeship training while earning a college diploma. Apprentices are employees and earn a salary while they learn a skilled trade. There are currently over 150 apprenticeable trades in Ontario in four sectors: construction, industrial/manufacturing, motive power, and service. There are also three additional trades for Aboriginal people: Aboriginal early childhood educator, Native clothing and crafts artisan, and Native residential construction worker.

**band.** A body of Indians (i.e., a First Nation) for whose collective use and benefit lands have been set apart or money is held by the Crown, or who have been declared to be a band for the purposes of the Indian Act. Each band has its own governing band council. The members of a band generally share common values, traditions, and practices rooted in their ancestral heritage. Today, many bands prefer to be known as First Nations.

**band council.** The governing body of a First Nation, which usually consists of one chief and several councillors.

**Bill C-31.** A bill, passed in 1985, to restore status to Indians who had lost their status. Starting in 1951, children whose mother and grandmother on the father's side of the family were not registered as Indians before their marriages could be registered as Indians, but they lost their status when they turned twenty-one. In addition, status women lost their Indian status if they married a man who was not a status Indian. Currently, a provision known as the "second generation cut-off rule" terminates status after two generations of intermarriage between Indians and non-Indians. (*See also* non-status Indians.)

**colleges of applied arts and technology.** Publicly assisted postsecondary educational institutions offering programs that enable students to develop knowledge and skills related to specific careers, including those in business, tourism and travel, journalism, computer programming, construction trades, and health care. Full-time students can complete a certificate program in one year or less, or a diploma program in two or three years. Programs that lead to a bachelor's degree and those offered in conjunction with universities are also available. Ontario has twenty-four colleges of applied arts and technology, including two French-language colleges, with more than 100 campuses.

**dual credit.** A college or university course taken by a high school student for which the student earns both college/university and high school credit at the same time. In some cases where the training model includes a co-op placement in an apprenticeship situation, credits may also be earned towards an apprenticeship program.

**Elder(s).** A person who is recognized by the community for his or her wisdom about spirituality, culture, and life. Elders can be any age. Aboriginal communities and individuals will normally seek the advice and assistance of Elders on various traditional and contemporary issues.

**Employment Ontario.** Ontario's employment and training network, which is operated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities,

and which provides information and services for students, job seekers, and employers. Through Employment Ontario, the ministry:

- delivers employment and training services to the public across the province;
- develops policy directions for employment and training;
- sets standards for occupational training, particularly for trades under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act and the Apprenticeship and Certification Act;
- manages various provincial programs to support workplace training and preparation;
- undertakes labour market research and planning.

**enfranchisement.** The practice by which, after 1857, First Nation people could give up their Indian status for the full rights of Canadian citizenship (including voting rights and the right to own property). If a male status Indian chose enfranchisement, the members of his family would also lose their status. Indian women who married non-Indians after 1869 lost their status, and their children were not entitled to be registered as Indians. In 1876, enfranchisement became mandatory for Indians who became doctors, lawyers, or Christian ministers, or who earned a university degree.

**First Nation(s).** One of the three Aboriginal groups in Canada. The term came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the term *Indian*. It has also been adopted by some Aboriginal communities to replace the term *band*.

**Friendship Centres.** Not-for-profit organizations that serve Aboriginal people, regardless of status or residency, in towns and cities across Ontario. Friendship Centres provide urban Aboriginal people with a continuum of culturally appropriate programming for each stage of the life cycle, from prenatal programming to supports and services for the elderly. The Friendship Centres' vision is "to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to and participation in Canadian society and which respects Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness" ([www.ofifc.org](http://www.ofifc.org)). There are twenty-nine Friendship Centres across Ontario. (*See also* Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.)

**Indian.** One of three peoples recognized as Aboriginal by the Constitution Act, 1982. The term is applied to indigenous people in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis and are legally defined and recognized as “Indian” by the Indian Act. (*See also* First Nation(s).)

**Indian Act.** Federal legislation first passed in 1876, and amended several times since, that sets out federal government obligations towards First Nations. Among its many provisions, the act currently requires the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage Indian lands and certain moneys belonging to First Nations and to approve or disallow First Nation bylaws.

**Indian status.** The legal position of a First Nation individual, as a status or non-status Indian, as defined by the Indian Act. (*See also* non-status Indians; status Indians.)

**Indigenous Knowledge (IK) or Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK).** Unique local knowledge held by indigenous people who belong to a particular culture or society. IK/ITK may include knowledge of ecology, agriculture, ethno-medicine, spirituality, and other aspects of traditional knowledge.

**Inuit.** One of three peoples recognized as Aboriginal by the Constitution Act, 1982. Inuit live primarily in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and northern parts of Labrador and Quebec. They have traditionally lived above the tree line in the area bordered by the Mackenzie Delta in the west, the Labrador coast in the east, the southern point of Hudson Bay in the south and the High Arctic islands in the north. The most densely populated community of Inuit in urban Ontario live in and around Ottawa.

**Local Training Boards.** Not-for-profit corporations sponsored by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, and led by business and labour at the local level, with the goal of improving conditions in the local labour market. Boards include representation from other constituencies that have an important stake in the vitality of their local labour market, including educators, trainers, women, francophones, persons with disabilities,

visible minorities, youth, and Aboriginal people. The twenty-one boards currently in operation across the province:

- engage communities in a locally driven process to identify and respond to the key trends, opportunities, and priorities in their local labour markets;
- facilitate a local planning process in which community organizations and institutions agree to initiate and/or implement joint actions to address local labour market issues of common interest;
- create opportunities for partnership development activities and projects that respond to the more complex and/or pressing local labour market challenges;
- organize events and undertake activities that promote the importance of education, training, and skills upgrading to youth, parents, employers, employed and unemployed workers, and the public in general.

**Métis.** One of three peoples recognized as Aboriginal by the Constitution Act, 1982. The Métis are a distinct Aboriginal people with a unique culture, language (Michif), and heritage. Their ancestral homeland includes Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.

**Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MCTU) and post-secondary education.** The ministry's responsibilities for postsecondary education include the following:

- developing policy directions for postsecondary education institutions, including universities, colleges of applied arts and technology, Aboriginal institutes, and private career colleges
- planning and administering policies related to basic and applied research in this sector
- authorizing universities to grant degrees
- authorizing and approving colleges to grant degrees, diplomas, and/or certificates
- distributing funds allocated by the provincial legislature to colleges and universities
- providing financial-assistance programs for postsecondary students
- registering and monitoring private career colleges

**non-status Indians.** People who self-identify as Indian or as members of a First Nation but are not recognized by the Government of Canada as Indians under the Indian Act. Non-status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to status Indians. Many people in Canada lost their Indian status through discriminatory practices in the past. (*See also* status Indians.)

**Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC).** A not-for-profit Aboriginal organization representing the interests of the twenty-nine member Friendship Centres in Ontario. The primary mandate of the OFIFC is to advocate on behalf of member centres with respect to issues of collective concern; to administer programs delivered in centres; and to assist centres with services, program delivery, and community development.

**Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).** An Ontario government program that provides grants, loans, and bursaries to qualified students from lower- and middle-income families in the province to help pay for their education. Students do not repay OSAP grants; however, students must start repaying OSAP loans six months after graduating, leaving school, or ending their enrolment as a full-time student.

**pre-apprenticeship programs.** Programs that help unemployed individuals upgrade and develop the job skills that can lead to an apprenticeship.

**status Indians/registered Indians.** First Nation individuals who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register maintained by the federal government. Only status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act, which defines an Indian as “a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian”. Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law that are not available to non-status Indians.

**treaty rights.** The specific rights of Aboriginal peoples embodied in the treaties they entered into with Crown governments (initially Britain and then, after Confederation, Canada). Treaty rights relate to, among other matters, the creation of reserves and the rights of Aboriginal communities to hunt, fish, and trap on Crown lands. Treaty rights are protected by section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

**universities.** Institutions of postsecondary education that offer undergraduate (bachelor's) degrees and, often, graduate (master's and doctoral) degrees. There are twenty publicly assisted universities in Ontario, including several French-language and bilingual universities. Each is an autonomous entity with its own act of the Legislature.

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