

Aboriginal Transitions

Jurisdiction: Alberta

Contact: Robert Rock

Level: Post-Secondary

Theme: Transitions/Linkages

Description of Practice:

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology supports a number of activities across the province aimed at improving the transition of First Nations and Métis learners into and within the advanced education system. The department continues to support post-secondary institutions that develop adaptive and flexible learner transition programs that recognize past learning and ensure a smooth transition to the next stage of learning.

Background:

The following are examples of activities supported by the Ministry aimed at improving Aboriginal transitions:

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)

The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) develops policies, guidelines and procedures to facilitate transfer agreements among Alberta's post-secondary institutions. It encourages negotiations, where appropriate, for programs and courses not presently covered by the transfer agreements. ACAT has recently with representatives from First Nation college members (Blue Quills First Nations College, Maskwachees Cultural College and Yellowhead Tribal College) in the Alberta Transfer System to discuss how to encourage a greater number of transfer agreements both among Aboriginal colleges and other members of the transfer system.

- It was determined that articulation committees would best facilitate improved transfer credit for many courses from Aboriginal Colleges to other colleges and universities in the transfer system. The first subject area that will be looked at is Cree.
- The formation of a Cree Articulation Committee is in progress and is expected to meet early in 2007. Committee members will include Aboriginal Colleges, other member post-secondary institutions that offer Cree and participation from Alberta Education.
- Currently, there are over 500 active transfer agreements involving Aboriginal Colleges.

Transition Programs

Support for Aboriginal transition programs (e.g. NorQuest College/University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge) and Aboriginal focused upgrading programs (e.g. Lethbridge Community College at Fort MacLeod).

For example, Norquest College, in partnership with the University of Alberta, offers a two-year university transition program for Aboriginal students. Students in this transition program acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be successful in a university undergraduate program. They experience the academic rigour of post-secondary studies in a safe and supportive environment where Aboriginal culture is integrated and celebrated.

The program focuses on university preparation, English, Aboriginal studies, and the study of Cree language and culture. Upon successful completion of this program,

students enter an undergraduate degree program at the University of Alberta with credits in the following first-year university transfer courses: English 114, Native Studies 101, Computer Studies 101, Sociology 100, and Psychology 100.

Memorandums of Understanding

Encouragement of Memorandums of Understanding between post-secondary institutions, (e.g. Portage College and Keyano College with the University of Alberta) aimed at increasing Aboriginal access, transfer possibilities and success in certificate, diploma and degree programs.

Student Supports

In December 2003, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) launched a \$4 million Aboriginal Educational Success Initiative with support from the Ministry and the private sector to help Aboriginal students transition into post-secondary education and training through customized programming. The centerpiece of the initiative is an Aboriginal Student Centre on NAIT's main campus in Edmonton. Its program development offerings including an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Program, an Aboriginal Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program, an Aboriginal Placement Program, an Aboriginal Mentorship and Role Model Program and Distance Delivery Programs featuring a mobile science laboratory, "Science in a Box" that can be moved from community to community to provide a full laboratory experience.

Development:

The Ministry continues to support the development and piloting of new programs/courses, learner support and transition programs, and student recruitment/retention activities.

Evidence:

Support for the type of activities described has led to:

- Increased numbers of Aboriginal learners accessing post-secondary programs who may not otherwise have participated without transition support
- Additional support services for Aboriginal learners
- Continuation of project activity as part of institutions' base funding once Ministry funding ended
- Relationship-building (and subsequent cultural understanding) from projects involving public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal colleges and communities.

Adaptability:

Other jurisdictions may wish to adapt elements of the specific initiatives described. Contact information can be provided upon request.

Further information:

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