

Northwest Nations Education Council (NNEC)

Jurisdiction: First Nations/INAC

Contact: Battlefords Tribal Council

Level: K-12

Theme: Organisational/Structural

Description of Practice:

The development of the Northwest Nations Education Council (NNEC) which is an arms-length education authority with a board of directors, a professional public service and a financial accountability framework. It provides educational services to the majority of First Nation-operated schools in the Battlefords area. Together, the schools have an enrolment of more than 1,000 First Nations students.

Background:

The Battlefords Tribal Council (BTC) presented a proposal to the INAC Saskatchewan Region Regional Director General in March 2003 entitled *Building a Strong Education Program For First Nations By Building Good Governance*. Six First Nations, Sweetgrass, Red Pheasant, Mosquito Grizzly Bears Head Lean Man, Little Pine, Moosomin and Poundmaker were part of the proposal.

Over the summer of 2003, BTC refined its proposal and developed a phased-in approach to implementation. The support of the Chiefs, school principals and communities was obtained, and by August, 2003, BTC had developed an overall approach which was practical and which the Chiefs could support.

Development:

In 2004-2005 numerous projects totalling \$706.4 thousand were funded through the regional "New Paths for Education" budget in support of this project. During this time period discussions were continuing between the six First Nations, BTC and INAC on the structure, authorities and continued implementation of NNEC. A Partnership agreement was agreed to in February of 2005. Based on the Partnership agreement the six First Nation's, and INAC Saskatchewan Region agreed to provide 5 year funding in the amount of \$800 thousand per year to NNEC. BTC ceased providing education services to the six FN's as of September 2005 and, NNEC staffed up and began providing the education services to the FN's.

Evidence:

Through a regional education authority NNEC has:

- Established a professional public service at both the Education Council and the school committee levels (professional educators have been hired as Directors).
- Developed a financial management package that includes standardized reporting. The Chiefs agreed that, as a part of this package, there needs to be openness, transparency and full accountability. Moreover, the Chiefs have committed that education funds will

be spent only on education. NNEC reviews the First Nation Education budgets and related expenditures to monitor this.

- Begun to establish a professional First Nations Teachers Association with affiliation to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF). A recent Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and Northwest Nations Education Council. Northwest Nations Education Council seeks to have its teachers as full members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. This will enhance the ability of the First Nations to recruit and retain teachers. As well, teachers will receive the support of a professional institution and will have the ability to move their pension funds from First Nation operated schools to other schools in the province without penalty or disadvantage.
- Implemented new initiatives to improve educational outcomes and reduce the current achievement gap for First Nation students, through enhanced instructional services, new cultural programming, and introduction of a parental engagement strategy.

Adaptability:

The capacity remains to integrate the NNEC model with a larger education framework. Other Tribal Councils are aware of this initiative and eagerly interested in measuring the effectiveness of the model in addressing the issues facing the youth in the First Nations communities and improving the quality of education for First Nations youth.

Further information:

INAC: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2005/2-02696_e.html

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation:

http://www.stf.sk.ca/inside_stf/bulletin/pdf/2006_2007_bulletin/nov22_2006_bulletin.pdf

Battlefords Tribal Council, (306) 445-1383

