

## Overview of Manitoba Aboriginal Education Policies and Initiatives

Jurisdiction: Manitoba

Contact: Helen Robinson-Settee

Level: K-12 and Post-secondary

Theme: Government or board policies

### Description of Practice:

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) and Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy (MAEL) state its goals and priorities in relation to Aboriginal education and training in Manitoba within the ***Aboriginal Education Action Plan 2004 – 2007 (AEAP)***. Collaborative efforts with stakeholders are the key to success in achieving the activities in the AEAP.

### Background:

The **Aboriginal Education Directorate (AED)** is a shared services branch which operates within Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) and Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy (MAEL). The Directorate has a solid mandate to ensure that Manitoba's education and training systems are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Successful achievement of this mandate is accomplished in the spirit of consultation with many groups and individuals, such as school administrators, educators, students, parents, Aboriginal and community organizations and other government departments.

The Directorate infuses Aboriginal traditional knowledge in the development of the Aboriginal Education Directorate Strategic Plan. Staff work collaboratively to strengthen the vision of the Directorate to meet their mandate. This is achieved through staff participation in activities such as traditional Sweat Lodge ceremonies and staff learning and teachings.

The Aboriginal Education Directorate works to:

- ensure an integrated approach to Aboriginal education and training within both education departments
- promote the removal of systemic barriers to Aboriginal student success in education and training
- collaborate across government departments related to Aboriginal education and training

Implementation of these objectives focus on activities such as:

- Coordinating the implementation of the *Aboriginal Education Action Plan*.
- Providing cultural workshops, anti-racism and diversity equity training to schools, parents, educators, post-secondary institutions, government departments and community organizations.
- Promoting and participating in Aboriginal-focused research activities.
- Participation in consultation sessions with education and Aboriginal stakeholders regarding Aboriginal education and training policy directions.
- Participation in the Aboriginal education sector of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol.
- Collaboration with parents, families, schools, and communities through initiatives such as *Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents* and the *Community Schools Partnership Initiative*.

Ongoing initiative directions include:

- strengthening and continuing to expand partnerships

- implement the Aboriginal Education Action Plan
- expand research and community resources in partnership with other organizations
- participate and collaborate in the on-going development of parent, school, family and community initiatives

#### Development:

An important connection to the Aboriginal community is maintained through partnership with the **Aboriginal Circle of Educators (ACE)**, formed in 1987 to support Aboriginal educators as contributors in the education system. The department has provided grants to ACE to assist them in the establishment of an office. The department also partnered on a Teacher Mentorship Project, helped with the planning of the Aboriginal Education Awards, and actively participates at ACE meetings, retreats, and the annual ACE Conference.

Similarly, consultations with education stakeholders have initiated research in Aboriginal education and training. The ***Making Education Work Project*** is a partnership of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy. The project goal is to improve high school graduation rates and success in post-secondary education. The research explores the impact of community, family, academic and career interventions.

Ongoing support and planning of a training manual “A Journey From Cultural Awareness toward Cultural Competency” was developed through consultations and focus groups with Aboriginal organization and other stakeholders.

The third annual Aboriginal Education Research Forum, **Shawane Dagoisiwin**, will be held May 1 – 3, 2007 in Winnipeg and will include workshops, panels, sharing circles, and collaborative presentations. People across all levels of research from pre-school to post-secondary and adult/community education are anticipated to be involved in this forum. Topics include:

- Sharing/collaborating and/or linking partnership approaches to Indigenous research
- Discussions of research methodologies that engage Aboriginal peoples and communities
- Community projects that demonstrate research processes
- Stories and lived experiences

#### Evidence:

Additional partnerships and connections have been made with the immediate community. For example:

- networking partnership with the **Urban Aboriginal Education Coalition**, a group of community members & organizations that are committed to creating an educational system.
- recognizing the contributions made by schools and organizations that are located in the community for their achievements (ie. Children of the Earth High School celebration in August 2005 for being honoured in *Macleans Magazine* for standards of excellence).
- networking with local grassroots organizations through **Aboriginal Visioning for the North End** revitalizing the North End community.
- assisting/volunteering in the coordination of Aboriginal and community events (ie. community clean-up and National Aboriginal Day Celebrations).

#### Adaptability:

The Aboriginal Education Directorate initiates learning opportunities with other government departments, Aboriginal organizations and community. Through 2005/06 AED staff provided a series of lunch and learn sessions to 150 participants from government and community. More recently, AED has offered additional sessions in the Pimatsiwin Sessions as part of the larger government Renewal Strategy. For the last several years, AED has delivered Aboriginal Awareness and anti-racist education to schools, parents and community (approximately 90 workshops annually). Finally, the Directorate has developed partnerships with the universities to participate and provide advice on programs, as well as assist in the delivery of the Summer Institute on Aboriginal education.

Further information:

Helen Robinson-Settee  
Director  
Aboriginal Education Directorate  
(204) 945-4763  
Helen.settee@gov.mb.ca