

BCIT
Aboriginal
Strategic Plan
and
Recommendations

Prepared by

The President's Advisory Committee for the Development of an
Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan

September 2010

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Introduction

BCIT's 2008-2010 Service Plan identified the development of an Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan as a very important institutional priority. On May 31, 2009, BCIT published its first strategic plan since 2001; a plan that defines the Institute's goals and enables the BCIT community to work toward common goals and direction. Within the plan, Strategic Initiative 2 – OUR LEARNERS – included an objective related to *Learner Diversity*; specifically to "Improve the enrolment and success of Aboriginal Learners by expanding services and facilities, and by creating a supportive and welcoming community of instructors, staff and students."

In the resulting *BCIT Implementation Plan 2009-2014*, created to operationalize the strategic plan, two action initiatives were identified regarding Aboriginal individuals and *Learner Diversity*. One initiative called for the development of a strategic plan to increase the number of aboriginal students enrolling in and completing BCIT courses and programs. The second initiative recommended the creation of an Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendations for action, to enable the recruitment and graduation of increased number of aboriginal students.

Terms of Reference (Appendix A) for the BCIT President's Advisory Committee for the Development of an Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan were developed in the summer of 2009. The Committee held its first meeting on Tuesday October 13, 2009 and included Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student, faculty, administrative, alumni and community representatives (Appendix B). The Committee adopted a framework that combined Enrolment Management theory and information about factors impacting post-secondary education and Aboriginal people detailed in existing literature and/or through discussions with Aboriginal members of the Advisory Committee. It was recommended that four sub-committees (Appendix C) be established (Academic Programming; Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and Registration; Retention; Graduation and Employment) to explore each theme and to develop general, short, mid and long term strategies to address each theme. Each sub-committee included at least one Aboriginal representative to ensure an Aboriginal perspective was included in all discussions. The strategies and recommendations within this Strategic Plan reflect the work of the sub-committees.

We recognize, however, this is just the first step along BCIT's path to achieve the initiatives detailed in both its Strategic and Implementation Plans. More consultation, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and groups both within and outside BCIT, is necessary to develop specific action plans for the initiatives identified but also to ensure a continuous review of the BCIT Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan.

Committee Members,
President's Advisory Committee for the Development of an Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan
September 2010

Context

In the context of this Strategic Plan, the term “Aboriginal” refers to members of First Nations (Status and Non-status Indians), Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada¹ as defined under Section 35 (2) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Most Aboriginal youth, like their non-Aboriginal peers, want to pursue higher educational opportunities after they complete high school. Seventy percent of First Nations people aged 16 to 24 who live on reserves hoped to complete some form of post-secondary education; and almost 80% of their parents hope their children will do so.²

Literature pertaining to Aboriginal learning suggests it is a highly social process that serves to nurture relationships in the family and throughout the community and that learning from - and about - culture, language and tradition is critical to the well-being of Aboriginal people³. For example, First Nations education focuses on the well-being of the student; it is a holistic approach that prepares First Nation students for *total living*. Women and Elders are the *natural* teachers who transfer customs, through modelling behaviours and skills and through storytelling. Mothers and Elders are the *institutions* of education. The resulting education addresses itself in positive outcomes for the individual and the entire community.⁴

There is a confirmed lack of current quantitative and qualitative research on Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada and BC.⁵ However, the overall state of Aboriginal education in Canada, especially at the post-secondary level, is poor. Aboriginal people are significantly under-represented in terms of enrolment in Canadian colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions.⁶ Participation of Aboriginal people in post-secondary institutions across Canada lags far behind that of non-Aboriginal people; high school completion rates are lower and fewer are “university” eligible (15% versus 32%).⁷

In British Columbia, in 2008-09, 49% of Aboriginal students completed high school versus 80% non-Aboriginal students.⁸ Fewer Aboriginal high school graduates earn post-secondary credentials within five years, more “drop-out” of post-secondary institutions (particularly from urban colleges) and more “stop

¹ Statistics Canada (2008), *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 8, 38

² Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. (2008). *Changing Course: Improving Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Millennium Research Note # 2. Montreal: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Available online at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1974/5735>

³ Canadian Council on Learning. (2009). *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada, A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success*. Ottawa

⁴ Human Capital Strategies (2005). *Final Report. Review of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Best Practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program. A report prepared for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Province of British Columbia, June 30th, 2005*. Available online at: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/documents/Final_Report-June_30-05_REVISSED_April%2026-07.pdf

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Malatest. (2002). *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Ottawa

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. (2009). *ALMD Update. BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Coordinators Council Fall Training Session. Empire Landmark Hotel, Vancouver, November 10, 2009*. Government of British Columbia, Victoria BC

out” than their non-Aboriginal peers. Nearly half of Aboriginal post-secondary students in Canada are in Developmental or Continuing Education programs; many others are involved in specific career training certificate programs that do not lead to receiving a formal graduation diploma.⁹

Social, cultural and racial discrimination continues to persist in the education system resulting in feelings of alienation and exclusion for Aboriginal learners. A legacy of distrust of non-Aboriginal educational institutions/systems exists in the Aboriginal community due to residential schools and other historical practices seen as having negative and assimilative effects on Aboriginal communities.¹⁰

Some factors that influence Aboriginal student post-secondary participation rates include: lower levels of parental education which results in lower levels of parental educational expectations of their children; significant family demands that act as financial and time restraints to individuals to pursue higher education; and lack of role models in the post-secondary domain.

Two significant deterrents are unemployment and crushing poverty¹¹ in Aboriginal communities which can make it difficult to meet the financial obligations of post-secondary education. Contrary to the commonly held belief that all Aboriginal people in Canada have access to free post-secondary education, the reality is that free access can be limited by the federal government, individual bands or other factors. For example, bands can view the priority of post-secondary funding as too low relative to other needs in the community. There is a documented lack of support from the federal government for Aboriginals who have little or no connection to bands; in particular, Métis, Non-Status and Bill C-31 Aboriginals may not be able to access financial support. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has sent a recommendation to the federal government for increased funding for the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP); at present 3,000 students are denied access each year. In British Columbia, there is pressure to increase the Adult Basic Education Student Financial Assistance to assist any non-traditional Aboriginal individuals who pursue higher education opportunities.¹² To overcome these barriers post-secondary institutions need to work with Aboriginal groups to develop academic and skills training that is supportive of their needs and reflective of their distinct status within society.¹³

The British Columbia Institute of Technology acknowledges its Burnaby, Marine, Aerospace Technology Centre and Great Northern Way campuses are located on Coast Salish traditional territory; the Kelowna Campus is located on Okanagan traditional territory. BCIT has been involved in the design and delivery of Aboriginal-specific Trades, Technology, and Apprenticeship programs since 1985.

In 1994 a department responsible for the provision of services to Aboriginal students was established; at the time, there were 34 self-identified Aboriginal students enrolled in the institution. Today, the Aboriginal Services department has three full-time staff members and an Elder contracted on a part-time

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Malatest. (2002). *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Ottawa

¹¹ Ministry of Education (2009), *B.C. Student Achievement Holds Strong*. Press Release, December 3, 2009, Public Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia, Victoria BC. Available online at: www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/EDUC0048-000719.htm

¹² Malatest. (2002). *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Ottawa

¹³ Atleo, S. (2009). *Assembly of First Nations Nation Chief Shawn Atleo Speaking Points*. Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada Membership Meeting, Wednesday, October, 2009, Ottawa.

basis. For the 2008-09 academic year 1,113 Aboriginal students were enrolled at BCIT (as self-identified or identified through Ministry of Education linkages to a declaration of Aboriginal status at the K-12 level).¹⁴

¹⁴ Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (2009). *Post-Secondary Central Data Warehouse, October 2009 Data Submission Standard Reports - Aboriginal Status*. Government of British Columbia, Victoria BC. Available online at: <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/datawarehouse/documents/aboriginalstatus.pdf>

1. General Strategic Objectives and Recommendations

Ensure the Aboriginal Strategic Plan and Recommendations reflect the needs of all Aboriginal students and staff; and that developed strategies appropriately reflect the specific needs of both urban and rural Aboriginal individuals. It is recommended that BCIT:

Short Term, Highest Priorities (0-12 months)

- 1.1 Complete the development and construction of the “Aboriginal Gathering Place” to create the sense of a “home away from home” and help alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness that many Aboriginal people feel especially at large urban post-secondary institutions. It will also be a place where social, cultural and recreational activities can occur which is critical to the well-being of Aboriginal people.
- 1.2 Enhance the BCIT community’s understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and traditions which showcase the richness and diversity of Aboriginal people.
 - 1.2.1 Develop informal learning and experiential learning activities designed to educate BCIT students and staff about Aboriginal culture, history, etc.
- 1.3 Ensure adequate funding is included in the annual operating and capital budgets to support the initiatives identified in this Strategic Plan and the BCIT’s 2009-2014 Implementation Plan.
- 1.4 Create an Honorary Aboriginal Advisor position to work with the President and Leadership Team regarding moving BCIT’s Aboriginal agenda and strategic plan forward.
 - 1.4.1 Honorary Advisor and Coordinator of Aboriginal Services will co-Chair the Aboriginal Advisory Council.
- 1.5 Create an Aboriginal Advisory Council to provide advice and input to the BCIT leadership, academic, non-academic and Student Association units concerning strategic planning for Aboriginal initiatives across all units and campuses.

Mid Term Priorities (12-24 months)

- 1.6 Establish an online repository of Aboriginal articles and an Aboriginal reference collection in the Library. Easy availability of these would enable faculty to consult current references that would assist in developing teaching strategies, delivering courses and ensuring Aboriginal inclusiveness. Solidly-based references are the basis for sound and credible teaching.

Longer Range Priorities (24-36 months)

- 1.7 Create and enhance data collection tools to identify Aboriginal ancestry and Aboriginal student entrance-to-employment statistics. Some Aboriginal people for various reasons do not choose to self-identify and consequently, the statistical evidence needed to make policy and sound decisions is compromised.

- 1.8 Develop diversity initiatives to assist BCIT's Human Resources department in the recruitment, support and professional development of qualified Aboriginal employees for schools and units across BCIT. Previous studies demonstrate that increasing Aboriginal staff correlates with an increased sense of belonging for Aboriginal students. The absence of specific provincial and institutional strategies for recruitment/retention of Aboriginal faculty/staff was a major concern expressed by Aboriginal organizations and students involved in a review of British Columbia's Aboriginal post-secondary programs that occurred in 2004.¹⁵
- 1.9 Explore the creation of an Aboriginal student seat on the BCIT Student Association. Currently, there is no automatic representation by an Aboriginal student on the BCIT Student Association. Creating an "Aboriginal seat" would demonstrate Aboriginal inclusiveness by the BCIT Student Association.

¹⁵ Human Capital Strategies (2005). *Final Report. Review of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Best Practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program. A report prepared for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Province of British Columbia, June 30th, 2005. Available online at:* http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/documents/Final_Report-June_30-05_REVISSED_April%2026-07.pdf

2. Academic Programming

The responsibility for credit course development and review at BCIT is an academic function within the various schools; provision of non-academic courses (such as study skills, upgrading, job ready workshops, etc.) could be delivered by the Aboriginal Services department. BCIT needs to establish academic programs and training that prepares Aboriginal students for employment in both urban and rural communities. It is recommended that BCIT:

Short Term, Highest Priorities (0-12 months)

- 2.1 Establish working agreements between each academic school and Aboriginal Services to:
 - 2.1.1 Determine realistic and measureable Aboriginal student enrolment targets. Achievement toward these transparent targets will demonstrate the degree of success of the BCIT Aboriginal strategy.
 - 2.1.2 Ensure Aboriginal input and consultation is part of ongoing academic program development and program review. Validity and credibility of Aboriginal programming is promoted when there is demonstrative Aboriginal involvement.
 - 2.1.3 Include a culturally supportive Aboriginal perspective (i.e. multicultural aspects, history, cultural, jurisdiction, etc.) in new program/curriculum development and review. There are uniquely Aboriginal aspects that colour the creation of any academic program. Visibility of these aspects helps validate the credibility of the Aboriginal input. These components are important to Aboriginal students and demonstrate Aboriginal inclusivity by the “system”. The more demonstrable the inclusivity is, the more students get involved with the course. Consider utilizing elements of existing BCIT courses (EENG 7200: Principles of Sustainability; RENR 8002 – Renewable Resources, First Nations Perspectives & Natural Resource Management) as starting points.
 - 2.1.4 Ensure employment prospects for Aboriginal students are fully identified and evaluated prior to program development and delivery. Some Aboriginal students have taken a program and/or courses that have not led to expected employment due to issues other than education. These situations result in critical losses in time and resources by the students involved.
 - 2.1.5 Explore delivering summer academic programs targeted at Aboriginal youth. Academic understanding would be reinforced and strengthened and students would be better primed to undertake regular school programs in the fall. Early academic intervention helps ensure retention of students in the school system and their ultimate participation in post-secondary studies.
 - 2.1.6 Ensure continued academic support is in place once an Aboriginal student begins his/her program. The continuity of support helps ensure retention and graduation of the student. Aboriginal students sometimes have marginal academic backgrounds and they directly benefit from the availability of continuous support. The Learning Commons is one such venue which could be

further developed to meet the specific needs of various student groups including Aboriginal learners.

Mid Term Priorities (12-24 months)

- 2.2 Create partnerships with First Nations governments, groups or organizations to educate Aboriginal students in their own community in order to bridge the isolation gap often caused when Aboriginal students relocate to urban or distant schools and to develop a degree of trust and confidence in mainstream higher education in Aboriginal communities.
 - 2.2.1 Establish the coordination and delivery of Aboriginal programs in rural communities within a specific area at BCIT, e.g. Part-Time Studies departments.
 - 2.2.2 Develop courses and/or programs that begin in an Aboriginal community and that can be completed at a BCIT campus. The local learning environment would be enhanced by low stress and conducive to student achievement. The shift to BCIT campus would involve students with a momentum of achievement that would help them make the transition to a higher stress, unfamiliar environment. Partnerships between BCIT and communities can be progressive and will have diverse shared benefits down the road.
 - 2.2.3 Investigate the use of broadband internet services as a viable delivery method for academic programs (only 17% of First Nations communities have access to broadband; 18% of off-reserve Aboriginal adults are enrolled in post-secondary courses through distance education mode). Broadband access is steadily increasing and will become a feasible choice for delivery in the future.
 - 2.2.4 Explore the feasibility of funding a mobile classroom to deliver courses and programs in rural Aboriginal communities. This approach involves going directly to the student cohorts and minimizes the stress associated with registering and attending a distant campus.
- 2.3 Offer multiple, flexible educational and enrollment program options to Aboriginal individuals. Aboriginal students commonly have a fragmented academic history with a need for selective academic upgrading. Parental responsibilities, poverty and the effects of discrimination increase their need for flexibility within the system.
 - 2.3.1 Explore the possibility of designating seats for Aboriginal individuals in specific, or possibly, all BCIT programs. The combination of funding systematics and personal issues such as finances, housing and transportation make it difficult for Aboriginal students to register early in BCIT programs. Availability of designated seats would promote increased enrollment.
 - 2.3.2 Conduct culturally appropriate academic assessments to establish academic capability of Aboriginal applicants. The presence, involvement or assistance of Aboriginal Services staff in carrying out academic assessments helps to lessen anxiety and ensure that there are no cultural clashes. Assessments are more accurate when the participants are culturally comfortable.

- 2.3.2.1 Consider alternative assessment of Aboriginal applicants (i.e. utilize the results from the 2010 Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association's [IAHLA] Better Learner Assessments Project).
- 2.3.3 Expand entrance criteria for Aboriginal individuals to include non-academic factors such as community service, traditional knowledge, cultural knowledge, etc. The Aboriginal worldview differs from the Western perspective which has shaped most educational institutions.
- 2.3.4 Provide the option to Aboriginal students (after completion of their 1st term) to either complete year-2 of the program or to extend their program to a third year. Aboriginal students' situations vary and some would benefit with a slower pace of learning and/or extended period for academic achievement and completion of a program.
- 2.3.5 Provide upgrading/bridging Technical Entry and/or Trades Discovery programs with an Aboriginal focus to encourage/enable student success. Inclusion of Aboriginal aspects in programs would increase relevance and raise credibility of the programs to Aboriginal learners - a direct relationship to student success.
 - 2.3.5.1 Offer pre-requisite prep courses for Technical Entry programs. Availability of these courses can be constrained by remote locations, lack of broadband and/or facilities, etc. BCIT delivery would ensure a seamless upgrading path that would bode well for student retention.
 - 2.3.5.2 Modify Technical Entry programs for Aboriginal students, with a possible duration of two semesters. Aboriginal students commonly have fragmented academic histories and a time extension for learning would increase their completion rate.
 - 2.3.5.3 Provide Aboriginal students, who have successfully completed a Technical Entry program, a provisional acceptance into BCIT programs. This availability would increase retention and encourage students to complete because they would be assured of continuity in their path.
- 2.4 Establish partnerships with other post-secondary institutions in BC (i.e. Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the School of Business *Chinook Scholars Program* partnership with UBC) to promote BCIT's articulated and credit transfer programs.
 - 2.4.1 Develop articulated programs. It is important for students to be able to compare and contrast available programs to ensure that their academic needs are met as appropriately as possible.
 - 2.4.2 Develop credit transfer programs. Academic paths for Aboriginal students commonly involve transfer from one institution to another. The greater the availability of credit transfer, the more opportunities students will have to enter, carry through and complete their chosen paths of study.

Longer Range Priorities (24-36 months)

- 2.5 Adjust academic program offerings to meet Aboriginal government needs and funding challenges.
- 2.6 Explore and eliminate barriers to federal government and other funding sources based on BCIT's polytechnic (i.e. non-university, non-college) status.
- 2.7 Lobby First Nation funding groups and the Federal government to include non-credit Tech Entry programs into the accepted funding envelope. Many Aboriginal students are involved as adults in a "catch-up" within the academic system which sees them heavily involved in upgrading and/or remedial education. This zone between K-12 and the post-secondary system is necessary for the ultimate success of many Aboriginal students.
- 2.8 Utilize BCIT's Learning and Teaching Centre resources to assist with research on pedagogical "best practices" concerning what is most effective for Aboriginal learners. Ongoing learning and teaching methods generated at BCIT will contribute to ensuring "best practices" are carried out. It is critical to maximize success of Aboriginal students as much as possible.

3. Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and Registration

Particular strategies are required to promote BCIT as the post-secondary institution of choice for Aboriginal people in British Columbia, to promote post-secondary benefits and options, to provide relevant information about academic programs and ensure career opportunities and to assist Aboriginal individuals in navigating the admissions/registration process complexities associated with higher education.

Student representatives on the Steering Committee recommended the following communication strategies to recruit Aboriginal students to BCIT:

- Word of mouth (Have young BCIT students and graduates speak to elementary and high school students of Aboriginal descent)
- Youth relate to youth; expand the participation of BCIT's Aboriginal students in on-campus information and recruitment events such as the Big Info Sessions, career fairs, campus tours, Campus Ambassadors
- Invite prospective Aboriginal students to sit in on a class in a program that may be of interest to them
- Conduct workshops to assist Aboriginal high school and non-traditional students with funding applications
- Conduct draws at BCIT recruitment events where all Aboriginal individuals could fill out a form to win a prize; contact information gathered could be utilized to market BCIT programs and assist BCIT identify Aboriginal individuals who might eventually enroll in programs
- Expand the use of online messaging strategies focused at Aboriginal youth

Additionally, It is recommended that BCIT:

Short Term, Highest Priorities (0-12 months)

- 3.1 Establish a working relationship between Aboriginal Services and the Marketing/Communications (MARCOM) department to:
 - 3.1.1 Ensure Aboriginal input and consultation is part of ongoing marketing, recruitment planning and delivery. Validation and credibility of BCIT to Aboriginal communities and potential students is enhanced by acknowledged Aboriginal participation in Aboriginal-related BCIT communications. Historically, there is much miscommunication that has been preventable.
 - 3.1.2 Develop a diversity campaign that includes respect for Aboriginal culture and cultural differences that, as a component, encourages individuals to self-identify as Aboriginal; use the voices and faces of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students and the general Aboriginal population, in some cases, have personal reasons that lead them not to self-

identify. The result is a shortfall in umbrella Aboriginal funding, records and statistics, let alone individual self-esteem.

- 3.2 Promote post-secondary funding opportunities available for Aboriginal individuals. Aboriginal students commonly have overly severe financial constraints that hinder them from pursuing post-secondary education. In fact, money was cited as the number one barrier to getting a post-secondary education among 36 per cent of Aboriginal individuals planning to attend – and 45 per cent of those already enrolled in – a university or college.¹⁶ In Canada, average Aboriginal income is 64 percent of average total income. While Aboriginal identity groups have substantially lower incomes than the general population, North American Indian incomes have the lowest incomes, at 58 percent of total income. On-reserve incomes are lowest of all, at 49 percent of total income.¹⁷
- 3.3 Provide more Aboriginal content in institutional marketing materials and campaigns.
 - 3.3.1 Use the “faces” of our Aboriginal students on internal and external promotional vehicles (such as the Website, view book, bookmarks, etc) to promote programs and services to potential Aboriginal students.
 - 3.3.2 Create an “Aboriginal Student of the Month” promotion to publicize the involvement of Aboriginal students in BCIT activities.

Mid Term Priorities (12-24 months)

- 3.4 Develop a strategic marketing campaign focused at Aboriginal individuals who do not possess a high school diploma; focus on:
 - 3.4.1 Academic upgrading programs.¹⁸
 - 3.4.2 Skill training programs.¹⁹
 - 3.4.3 Life skills programs.²⁰
- 3.5 Develop a strategic marketing campaign focused at Aboriginal individuals outside of the Lower Mainland.

¹⁶ Environics Institute for Survey Research. (2009). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. Main Report*. Scarborough, ON : The Interprovincial Group. Available online at: http://uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/UAPS-Main-Report_May.pdf

¹⁷ Mendelson, M. (2006). *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*. Ottawa: The Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Available online at: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/595ENG.pdf>

¹⁸ Full or part-time Academic upgrading programs are delivered in an applied setting for students who wish to obtain a preparatory credential for enrolment into a trades or technical studies program at BCIT. The objective is to provide students with the pre-requisite practical skills and knowledge they will need to successfully complete a trades or technical studies program. For details, visit *Programs and Courses* at <http://www.bcit.ca/study/>

¹⁹ Employment Skills Training program prepares BCIT students for entry-level employment. Basic theory and related information along with hands-on practice enable BCIT students become competent in basic duties.

²⁰ Life Skills are problem solving behaviours individuals use to manage their lives successfully; skills can be applied in all areas of a person’s life: career/work, family, community, self, leisure. Some of the topics addressed include goal setting, problem solving, conflict resolution, values clarification, communication skills, and managing change.

- 3.5.1 Establish a network of BCIT Aboriginal graduates throughout British Columbia to conduct promotions of BCIT's academic programs and Aboriginal support services.
- 3.6 Develop a strategic marketing campaign focused at Aboriginal individuals living in urban communities within the Lower Mainland, especially areas with easy access of public transit connections to the particular campus locations.
 - 3.6.1 Attention should be given to urban school districts with high Aboriginal enrolments (i.e. New Westminster, Coquitlam).
- 3.7 Develop an early-intervention marketing strategy geared to elementary school-aged Aboriginal children to encourage them to complete high school and subsequently enroll in post-secondary programs.

Longer Range Priorities (24-36 months)

- 3.8 Develop a marketing campaign, focused at Aboriginal families, that promotes the benefits of higher education and encourages Aboriginal families to have their siblings pursue a post-secondary education.
- 3.9 Promote the array of educational supports available for Aboriginal students in all marketing forums.
- 3.10 Adjust academic program offerings to meet Aboriginal government needs and funding challenges.
- 3.11 Promote the array of educational supports available for Aboriginal students to the broader BCIT community.
- 3.12 Develop a marketing strategy to establish partnerships with external Aboriginal service agencies. There are many windows into the Aboriginal communities and an understanding of the range is critical to market effectively.
- 3.13 Review the annual student survey data BCIT collects, extrapolating data from Aboriginal individuals, and develop specific marketing campaigns geared to results of the collected data.

4. Retention

BCIT, under the lead of the Aboriginal Services Department, should provide and adequately finance a series of proactive and reactive culturally appropriate personal and academic support services that focus on the needs of Aboriginal people, both those relocating from rural communities to cities as well as those individuals living in urban areas. It is recommended that BCIT:

Short Term, Highest Priorities (0-12 months)

4.1 Develop the following new support services for Aboriginal students:

- 4.1.1 Financial planning and assistance programs to assist Aboriginal individuals managing on student-sized incomes, especially with additional personal responsibilities such as children. Aboriginal students are commonly parents at earlier ages compared to the mainstream.
- 4.1.2 In conjunction with MARCOM and the BCIT Foundation, solicit new awards, bursaries and scholarships and aggressively market existing Aboriginal funding opportunities including the “Aboriginal Student Success Grant” program. The expense of living away from home communities, the need to continue to financially support families and other funding issues are a significant barrier to an Aboriginal individual’s access to post-secondary education.
- 4.1.3 Workshops to assist Aboriginal students with funding applications.
- 4.1.4 An “Aboriginal Student Assembly” that meets on a regular basis to coordinate activities and services of need and interest to Aboriginal students.

Mid Term Priorities (12-24 months)

4.2 Continue the existing support services for Aboriginal students including:

- 4.2.1 Personal and academic counseling including referrals to community and BCIT support services.
- 4.2.2 “Elder in Residence” program; 40% of off-reserve Aboriginal youth interact with an Elder at least once a week outside of school. Elders can act as role models and provide a sense of stable community support to many Aboriginal students. Students away from home miss the support that home communities can provide.
- 4.2.3 “Aboriginal Peer Tutoring” program which should be better promoted and expanded to provide more hours and a broader range of academic program content.
- 4.2.4 Informal and experiential learning opportunities including social, cultural and recreational activities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Certain activities and events will occur in the existing Aboriginal Student Lounge and study area until the completion of the Aboriginal Gathering Place.

4.2.5 Off-campus housing. Assist Aboriginal students locate appropriate housing, particularly for students with families. Options may include:

4.2.5.1 Partnerships with outside agencies to build housing on campus for Aboriginal students

4.2.5.2 Agreements with local rental facilities/agencies for long-term housing

Longer Range Priorities (24-36 months)

4.3 Investigate the need for a series of new support services for Aboriginal students including:

4.3.1 “Mentoring” programs (i.e. a “Buddy system” between year-one and year-two students; a network of BCIT departmental contacts for Aboriginal individuals to whom Aboriginal students can be referred to) to guide new Aboriginal students through the administrative/academic processes of BCIT.

4.3.2 Childcare services. Aboriginal students are likely to have parental responsibilities and provision of daycare could be the difference that would enable many to undertake further education.

4.3.3 Mature student programs. Many Aboriginal adults need further education and would benefit from adult education programs to improve their employment potential and/or individual capacity.

4.3.4 Special interest activities such as feasts, potlatches, West Coast nights, etc. (1 in 3 Aboriginal youth participate in social, art or music clubs or groups on a regular basis; one quarter of off-reserve Aboriginal children participated in, or attended, a cultural gathering, ceremony or activity such as fiddling or drum-dancing).

4.3.5 “Peer Advisement” program (98% of Aboriginal adults regularly received some form of personal or emotional support from individuals in their community). Providing access to community peers (e.g. telephone &/or video conferencing) would support students who might be in need.

4.3.6 Co-delivery of programs, events and activities with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Simon Fraser University, Native Education Centre and others.

4.3.7 Transition and orientation programs specific to the needs of Aboriginal individuals.

4.3.8 “Volunteer” programs that involve Aboriginal students in various BCIT activities (56% of Aboriginal adults living off-reserve volunteered in their community on a regular basis).

4.3.9 Extramural athletic programs with other Aboriginal teams at post-secondary institutions in BC (70% of off-reserve Aboriginal youth participated in sports outside school at least once per week).

4.3.10 “Role Model” program that connects Aboriginal students with Aboriginal employees and students.

4.3.11 On-campus housing options.

5. Graduation and Employment

Many Aboriginal students may be the first in their family to graduate from an institution of higher education. A graduation ceremony provides an opportunity for the family to celebrate a milestone achievement and this can act as an incentive to other members of the student’s immediate family to pursue higher education. Aboriginal graduates become role models for other younger members of their extended family. It is recommended that BCIT:

Short Term, Highest Priorities (0-12 months)

- 5.1 Include elements of Aboriginal heritage and culture in graduation ceremonies.
- 5.2 Offer Aboriginal attendees and students the option of wearing traditional regalia including button blankets; cedar hats; ornate capes, vests and skirts; Métis sashes; ribbon dresses and shirts.
- 5.3 Host a graduation reception for Aboriginal students whereby family members, impacted by the restriction on tickets available for the formal graduation ceremony, can celebrate with family graduates.
- 5.4 Invite Aboriginal BCIT graduates from previous years to attend the graduation reception.

Mid Term Priorities (12-24 months)

British Columbia’s off-reserve Aboriginal labour force faces high unemployment; a rate that is three times that of non-Aboriginal people. The majority of individuals who leave reserves for post-secondary education do not plan to return to the reserve to work. Currently there is no mechanism in place at BCIT to connect Aboriginal students with finding employment. It is recommended that BCIT:

- 5.5 Create partnerships with private sector and BCIT alumni employers to promote Aboriginal graduates and to coordinate employee opportunities.
- 5.6 Deliver a series of resume, job ready workshops, etc. to prepare Aboriginal students for future employment.
- 5.7 Research the employment rate of BCIT’s Aboriginal graduates/participants and report annual figures to the Aboriginal Advisory Committee.
- 5.8 Establish a contact person within BCIT’s Employment Services department to assist Aboriginal students with career planning and searches.

Longer Range Priorities (24-36 months)

- 5.9 Establish formal relationships with agencies and other regional groups who arrange employment opportunities for Aboriginal individuals. For example, British Columbia has a network of 12 Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) Agreement holders, formerly known as Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) holders.

Notes

1. It should be expected that the Longer Range recommendations will probably change or be modified as the Short- and Mid-term recommendations are undertaken.
2. Traditional students are generally 17-18 years of age who start their post-secondary educational path directly from high school. Non-traditional post-secondary students are older and had interrupted formal education either before or after finishing secondary school.

Appendix A

President's Advisory Committee for the Development of an Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan

TERMS OF REFERENCE

September 2009

Purpose

The BCIT 2008-2010 Service Plan indicates that development of a BCIT Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan is a very important institutional priority.

The Aboriginal Student Advisory Committee will advise the President on strategic issues related to the recruitment, retention and graduation of BCIT Aboriginal students. This includes Aboriginal students enrolled in programs and/or courses offered on BCIT campuses, and/or through BCIT training programs specifically established to meet particular Aboriginal community training requirements.

The Advisory Committee's goals are to:

1. Provide access of Aboriginal students to BCIT by establishing desired Aboriginal student enrolment targets;
2. Improve the retention of Aboriginal students, enabling their graduation, and leading to entry in successful careers;
3. Enhance the BCIT community's understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and traditions while showcasing the richness and diversity of Aboriginal people. This will enable BCIT to become increasingly more culturally attractive to Aboriginal learners, creating a supportive and welcoming community of instructors, staff and students;
4. Strengthen the ability of our employees, students and graduates to develop and maintain positive partnerships with Aboriginal bands, communities, and organizations, demonstrating BCIT's commitment to Aboriginal education.

The Advisory Committee will specifically focus on providing advice and recommendations with respect to:

1. Recruiting and retaining Aboriginal students into BCIT courses and programs;
2. The provision of services to prospective and enrolled BCIT Aboriginal students;
3. Provision of culturally appropriate training for BCIT students, instructors and staff;
4. Assisting BCIT to develop an institutional approach to customized Aboriginal training;
5. Establishing and developing BCIT relationships with the Aboriginal bands, communities, and organizations in BC.

Membership

The Advisory Committee will feature an internally focused membership. External groups will be consulted annually to ensure effective communication with Aboriginal bands, communities, and organizations in BC. External groups may be invited to particular meetings to contribute on specified issues or topics.

- Dean/Associate Dean/Industry Services Representative from each BCIT School (6)
- Aboriginal Students (2)
- Aboriginal Instructors (2)
- Aboriginal Staff Member (1)
- Aboriginal Graduate/Alumni (1)
- Aboriginal Services Department (3)
- Director OF Student Services
- VP Education (Co-chair)
- VP Student Services (Co-chair)

Time Frame

The Advisory Committee will develop an action plan for implementation in the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic years. Subsequent plans to be developed will cover the succeeding 5 academic years.

Appendix B

President's Advisory Committee for the Development Aboriginal Student Strategic Plan

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Aboriginal Graduate/Alumni

Adrian Duke, *Alumnus, School of Business*

Aboriginal Instructors

Earl Einarson, *Adjunct Instructor, New Media, School of Business*

James Morin, *Faculty, Aboriginal Minerals Training/Mining Technology Program, School of Construction and the Environment*

Aboriginal Staff Member

Kathryn Heyes, *Customer Service Representative, Apprenticeship Office, Registrar's Office*

Aboriginal Services Department

Kim Cameron, *Past Coordinator/Graduate, BCIT Broadcast Communication Program*

Derik Joseph, *Advisor*

Rose Point, *Elder Advisor*

Joanne Stone-Campbell, *Coordinator*

Celeste Dunstan, *Administrative Assistant (Committee Recorder)*

Aboriginal Students

Keith Clement, *Mechanical Engineering Program*

Lisa Girbav, *Radio Broadcasting Program*

Dean/Associate Dean/Industry Services Representatives

Kumi Abercrombie, *Industry Service Manager, School of Construction & the Environment*

Vicki Asada, *School Development Manager, Electrical and Industrial Processes, School of Manufacturing*

Laura Davie, *Associate Dean, Broadcast & Media/Digital Arts, School of Business*

Tru Freeman, *Associate Dean, School of Health Sciences*

Trudy Handel, *Program Head, Broadcast and Media Communications, School of Business*

Barry Hogan, *Director, Program Planning and Review*

Gloria Katnyk, *Assistant to the Director of Student Services*

Rob MacGregor, *Associate Dean, School of Transportation*

Carly Seddon, *Dean, School of Computing and Academic Studies*

Vice Presidents/Directors

Paul Dangerfield, *Vice President of Education*

Val Karpinsky, *Acting Vice President of Student Services*

Larry Vezina, *Director of Student Services (Committee Chair)*

Appendix C

SUB-COMMITTEES

Academic Programs

Kim Cameron
Paul Dangerfield
Kathryn Heyes
Barry Hogan
James Morin
Carly Seddon
Larry Vezina (Chair)
Gloria Katnick (Recorder)

Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and Registration

Kumi Abercrombie
Adrian Duke
Lisa Girbav
Derik Joseph
Val Karpinsky
Larry Vezina (Chair)
Gloria Katnick (Recorder)

Retention

Laura Davie
Lisa Girbav
Trudy Handel
Derik Joseph
Carly Seddon
Joanne Stone-Campbell
Larry Vezina (Chair)
Gloria Katnick (Recorder)

Graduation and Employment

Adrian Duke
Earl Einarson
James Morin
Rose Point
Joanne Stone-Campbell
Larry Vezina (Chair)
Gloria Katnick (Recorder)