

REPORT

ON

**THE ROUNDTABLE ON ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION IN NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA**

MAY 12, 2009

PREPARED BY

HAN MARTIN ASSOCIATES

FOR

THE ADULT LEARNING KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

JUNE 2009

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Background Information.....	1
3	Opening Remarks.....	2
4	Keynote Addresses.....	3
4.1	<i>Bob Atwin</i>	4
4.2	<i>Dr. Michael Higgins</i>	6
4.3	<i>Questions for the Keynote Speakers</i>	7
5	Sample Best Practices	8
5.1	<i>Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Programme</i>	8
5.2	<i>Questions</i>	12
5.3	<i>Mi'kmaq College Institute – Cape Breton University</i>	12
5.4	<i>Questions</i>	15
5.5	<i>The Mawi Tan Etj Committee</i>	16
5.5.1	<i>NBCC Miramichi</i>	16
5.5.2	<i>Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute, UNB</i>	17
5.5.3	<i>Questions and Comments from Best Practices</i>	20
6	Improving Access and Retention to Post-Secondary Education for First Nation Students: Networking and Discussion in Small Groups	21
6.1	<i>Group One: Blue</i>	22
6.2	<i>Group Two: Yellow</i>	22
6.3	<i>Group Three: Red</i>	23
6.4	<i>Group Four: Purple</i>	24
7	Closing Comments.....	25

Appendix A: Program

Appendix B: Aboriginal Community Outreach Initiative Summary

Appendix C: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Context

Appendix D: Participant List

1 Introduction

This report summarizes the proceedings of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's Roundtable on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia held on May 12, 2009. The Roundtable was an information exchange session aimed at community colleges and universities in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia interested in providing a positive post-secondary experience for Aboriginal learners. This event was by invitation only and approximately 40 participants were invited. Invitees were senior university and community college decision makers who have the capacity to influence their institutions' policies with regard to Aboriginal recruitment and retention. The facilitated Roundtable featured two keynote speakers, a review of best practices and participant group discussions.

2 Background Information

Adult learning provides a way for adults to learn new skills and redress learning inequities. Adult learning is broad and inclusive and encompasses formal, non-formal and informal ways that adults learn in many spheres of community life, e.g. community development; social justice; post-secondary education; seniors learning; professional or personal development; literacy; citizenship development; arts and culture.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre was launched in September 2005 to address the gaps and lack of coordination in adult learning; to foster a vital, informed and coherent pan-Canadian culture of adult learning that is accessible and relevant to Canadians as individuals, communities and as a nation; and, to become a national reference point and key resource for Canada's adult learning activities.

Diversity and inclusion are central to the AdLKC's principles. Consequently, the AdLKC undertook a community outreach initiative with five diverse groups in the Atlantic region: Aboriginal Peoples; African-Canadians; Persons with Disabilities; Immigrants and Newcomers; and Francophones. The AdLKC recognized that the approach that would be used with each group would be different, given the diversity between the five groups.

With respect to the Aboriginal Outreach initiative, five community sessions were undertaken. The purpose of these sessions was to provide a discussion forum for participants on the adult learning needs and issues of Aboriginal Peoples in Atlantic Canada. The recommendations of the discussions were to be represented in AdLKC's activities and priorities for 2008-2009 and were to be of assistance in the AdLKC's mission of developing a culture of adult learning.

One of the many recommendations arising from the Aboriginal Outreach initiative that formed the basis for the Roundtable session was that:

AdLKC needs to start working with top administrators at post-secondary institutions to ensure policies and environments are inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal students. It is important to reach senior decision-makers who are in a position to influence and make concrete changes in institutions.¹

Aboriginal peoples represent the fastest growing sector of the population. The Aboriginal population in Canada is younger than the general population, with a medium age of 27 compared with 40 in the non-Aboriginal population. Statistics Canada anticipates that, over the next 20 years, the Aboriginal population will increase at a rate four times faster than the non-Aboriginal population. Many of these individuals will be pursuing post-secondary opportunities to further their personal and professional goals and to meet the growing capacity and administrative infrastructure needs of Aboriginal communities and organizations.

The experience of post-secondary education has a lasting impact on learners, determining the development of life-long contacts, friendships, and networks as well as career choices, opportunities, and independence. Everyone attending a college or university, whether for the first time or as a returning student, experiences an adjustment. For Aboriginal people this adjustment is coupled with a shift in the cultural context which adds additional stress to the experience. To ensure that Aboriginal students succeed, post-secondary institutions need to consider the Aboriginal perspective when developing programs and policies.

3 Opening Remarks

Dr. Kathleen Flanagan, Coordinator AdLKC

Dr. Kathleen Flanagan, coordinator of the AdLKC, welcomed the Roundtable participants to Fredericton and the UNB campus. After providing an overview of the AdLKC and the Canadian Counsel on Learning, she noted that the AdLKC's responsibilities lie with adult learning and that they work closely with the other centres across the country especially with the Aboriginal Learning Centre. Learning, she noted, is both formal and informal and can be found in work, home and community settings. There are particular values and principles around adult learning. It involves real life and is connected to values and principles of the common good, inclusion, respect and the transformative power of learning. The impact of learning is not only on individuals but on the community as a whole. It is a life long process and learning has the potential to increase wellbeing, communities and social equity to name a few. Dr. Flanagan stated that we must recognize the impact of racism and the barriers created by racism in dealing with the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students in post-secondary education.

¹ Full report can be found at:
<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AdultLearning/OurWork/CommunityOutreach/Aboriginal.htm>

In March of 2007 the AdLKC began a series of outreach sessions. The AdLKC hired an Aboriginal consulting firm who met with grass roots organizations that provided information and suggestions. Five sessions were held and a report was produced for each session. The Aboriginal Outreach sessions found that:

- 1) Learning institutes were not meeting the needs of the Aboriginal communities;
- 2) There is a need to be aware that the Aboriginal population is increasing quite significantly;
- 3) The Aboriginal population is a younger population and that learning stages are very important;
- 4) Education levels attained by the Aboriginal population tend to be much lower than the general population; and
- 5) Education is important to self-governance issues especially in the requirement for technical capacity, etc.

The community outreach process was necessary to reach Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal agencies. The report illustrated that the retention of language and culture is very important and others have to understand this. Funding was identified as a major problem combined with the insufficiency of learning readiness and the insufficiency of educational institutions readiness to take in Aboriginal students. The sessions demonstrated that partnerships are very important and critical between Aboriginal representatives, governments and educational institutions.

Dr. Flanagan concluded by outlining that the plan of the day was to develop some strategies for effective recruitment and retention strategies for Aboriginal learners and to develop some networks to implement and develop these strategies. She emphasized that the AdLKC has always been about networking and information sharing. She expressed her excitement about this session's results and thanked all of the participants for attending especially during this very busy time of the year for university and community college staff.

4 Keynote Addresses

Barbara Martin from Han Martin Associates facilitated the Roundtable sessions. She noted that those in attendance had been specifically invited because they were seen as individuals who could make things happen. The presenters represent a cross-section of individuals who know the issues from many different levels and angles and who are people who want to make things happen.

Ms. Martin reviewed the program and noted that the keynote speakers were Bob Atwin and Dr. Michael Higgins. Presenters for best practices were Sandra Germain, Coordinator for the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Programme; Lindsay Marshall, Associate Dean, Mi'kmaq College Institute at Cape Breton University; Doug Dolan, Coordinator New Brunswick Community College Miramichi Campus; and Dr. Lynda Doige, Director of the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute at the University of New

Brunswick. She passed on regrets that, due to an emergency, Anita Boyle from the Metepenagiag First Nation would not be able to attend the session.

4.1 Bob Atwin

Executive Director, First Nation Education Initiative

Bob Atwin has lived his entire life in the Kingsclear First Nation. He attended the University of New Brunswick (UNB) from 1969-1971 in the Faculty of Engineering. He obtained a Certificate in Social Counselling from the University of Toronto in 1973 and a Bachelor of Education in 1979 from UNB. In 1983, he completed his Masters in Guidance and Counselling at UNB.

Mr. Atwin was the Kingsclear Band Manager from 1986-2008 and served as Chief from 1992 until he chose not to re-offer in 2008. He has been active in First Nation education initiatives for many years. He is currently the Executive Director of the First Nation Education Initiative and serves on the following committees: The Ministerial Committee on Inclusive Education; The Provincial Aboriginal Education Committee; The Aboriginal Research Steering Committee; and The Chiefs Committee on Education (National Level).

Mr. Atwin began his address by recalling an anecdote from his early years. He commented on the challenges of going from Indian Day School to a non-Aboriginal school and he agreed with Dr. Flanagan's comment on racism. His father was a tradesperson who worked mostly off reserve. Mr. Atwin quickly realized, after a less than successful foray in shop class, that perhaps his future would be better served getting away from labour intensive work. This realization began the problems with the guidance counsellors in his school who believed that he could not have it in him to take on a university education. He was upset about this attitude and with the help of his father fought with the guidance people to allow him into college preparatory classes on a probationary period. He was allowed to stay in the college prep classes provided he could make it to Christmas in the program.

Mr. Atwin noted that if the guidance person had managed to influence his parents and convince them that he should stay in the Trades stream he would not be speaking at this session today. Had he followed the guidance advice he would be at home making baskets and so would many other First Nations individuals. The public school system has not embraced a change of attitude regarding First Nation children. He acknowledged that there are factors within the communities affecting them but this does not mean that the children are not as capable as their non-native counterparts. Expectations for First Nation children by educators are set very low and the bar should be set higher.

His father told him to go out into the world and exceed the expectations of the non-native world. He acknowledged that the first two years at UNB were a challenge. A combination of being young, having fun and being in a program that was not suited to his abilities created a fair share of challenges. The best advice he received was to take a course that would best allow him to open up his options. After a break from the Faculty of Engineering, he obtained a Certificate in Social Counselling from the University of

Toronto in 1973, a Bachelor of Education in 1979 and a Masters in Guidance and Counselling in 1983.

The Bachelor of Education program at UNB was a new experiment to integrate First Nation students into the university community. Mr. Atwin was part of the first class to enter this program. The strength of the UNB program was that it was supportive in that it reached out to First Nation students. The program's staff acknowledged the fact that these students had different backgrounds, had families, challenges and baggage. For example, many students brought their families with them to UNB and what was important was that there was a support group within the program. For all the success of the program, during his internship he encountered blatant and overt racism from other teachers. Mr. Atwin concluded that biases exist and challenges are still being faced.

Upon graduation from his Masters he soon met other challenges. He applied for a position as a guidance specialist and never heard back from the employer regarding his application. He eventually heard through a friend that although his qualifications were sound, they were not the type of experience they were looking for on reserve. The challenges that First Nations have to deal with are multi-faceted and many times you are taking on the role of counsellor, educator, and social worker all in one.

Eventually Mr. Atwin bid on a national consulting project designed to evaluate Band Manager training. It allowed him to look at what was working and what was not. He found that in British Columbia when a university was in close proximity to a First Nation community that there was typically a First Nation liaison person hired who was employee of the university but costs were shared between the province and the university. This practice has proven to be very successful. He extended a challenge for post-secondary educational institutions to reach out to the First Nations. He noted that there is an impression that there exists a pile of money within First Nations communities for education and this is simply not the case. Furthermore he noted that one of the challenges is to look at providing more culturally appropriate teaching materials combined with the recruitment of First Nation instructors within the institutions.

Noting a study completed by David Bruce, Mr. Atwin explained that success was a result of:

- a) family support,
- b) community support,
- c) monetary support, and most importantly
- d) support of the training institution.

He concluded by commenting on how First Nations now realize they cannot hire everyone who goes to school. There is a need to connect with industry and with people who want to employ First Nation people, both young and old, who want to be successful. There is a need to match the child to the education program and work is being done with provincial government departments and student loans to create creative and innovative funding structures.

He concluded by welcoming the challenge of working with people who want to work with First Nation people.

4.2 Dr. Michael Higgins President and Vice-Chancellor, St. Thomas University

Dr. Michael William Higgins completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Philosophy (*magna cum laude*) at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia in 1970. He pursued graduate studies in English at York University, where he was mentored by the distinguished poet-scholar Eli Mandel, receiving his Masters degree in 1971 and his Doctoral degree in 1979. In addition, he did a Bachelor of Education degree (Theatre Arts specialization) at the University of Toronto in 1973 and graduate studies in Theology. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut. Dr. Michael Higgins has authored numerous publications, books, articles, journals and reviews. Dr. Higgins has an extensive media record as a columnist, commentator, scriptwriter, narrator, researcher, and consultant dating back to 1978.

On July 1, 2006, Dr. Higgins was appointed as the 11th President and Vice-Chancellor of St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick. He is listed as a faculty member in the Department of English and in the Department of Religious Studies.

Dr. Higgins noted that at a recent meeting of university and community colleges in Scarborough that was called to talk about Aboriginal issues that not one member of the Aboriginal community was present. He commented that you would have thought a group of educators would have thought that issue through and he was pleased to see the format for this session was focused on the communities. It is important to bring awareness to this issue and there is a need for creative empathy to see with a different lens.

St. Thomas University is taking a lead role on Aboriginal issues. There is a movement to take this issue head on. At provincial and national level committees and within larger issues about funding, Aboriginal education has become a significant issue. It has finally begun to get national attention and there is a need to achieve a shift in attitude in order to recruit and retain Aboriginal Students. St. Thomas believes it is important to establish a key investment in education from secondary through to post-secondary. The appropriate level of funding needs to be in place. Aboriginal students should be encouraged to participate in all programs across the board without streaming of students. We need a constructive strategy.

How could this strategy be done across Canada? How do we effect change in Aboriginal education? A consultant was hired to identify items required for crafting a national strategy that could have local and provincial impact. Key elements included:

- 1) Increase Aboriginal faculty
- 2) Proactive Aboriginal recruitment

- 3) Proactive admission of Aboriginal students
- 4) Bridging programs
- 5) Academic Outreach programs
- 6) Financial support
- 7) Student support
- 8) Cross-cultural support
- 9) Aboriginal involvement in governance.

The report was comprehensive but takes note of regional representation and provides an integrated mosaic. Communication of profiles of success is important as they provide models. There is a need to identify what the success stories are and who is involved. The challenges identified in the report are not new but the response must be. For far too long Aboriginal education has not been at the forefront.

Dr. Higgins stated that “St. Thomas wants to proceed with specific programs and we need to know how to do that and how to fund them.” St. Thomas currently has 113 Aboriginal students from various First Nations in a variety of programs. A recent undergraduate survey demonstrated that St. Thomas has the highest percentage of self-reporting Aboriginal students. St. Thomas’s multilayered process, consortium, marketing, importance of setting up life culture for students, leadership awards, staffing are aimed at increased and effective retention of Aboriginal students. St. Thomas is concerned with how you create the structures to ensure the successful completion after the student has made the initial commitment to enroll.

Dr. Higgins noted that the need to listen is the basis of an effective strategy that will work. His vice-president has spoken to various First Nations asking how can St. Thomas become a conduit for success. This is based in the idea that if the students are successful then St. Thomas as an institution is successful. How can St. Thomas work collaboratively with the communities? The University can be the driver but it needs the community to identify the rough points that need to be smoothed out and refined.

The aim is to lead and innovate. How do you provide an opportunity to innovate? Post-secondary education priorities and accessibility will become very important. Institutions must charge to take the lead and it is St. Thomas University’s desire to move forward in that regard.

Dr. Higgins concluded by thanking the organizers for providing him with the opportunity to attend.

4.3 Questions for the Keynote Speakers

When asked about his perception about sources of funding at the school level in regard to the federal, provincial and band level, Bob Atwin responded that the question has to be answered on two different levels. From Grade 12 and less the money needs to be invested back into the programs and there needs to be a readiness to entertain post-secondary training. On the post-secondary side they are looking at changes in process. The federal

government criticized the post-secondary education process and said First Nations need to be innovative. Mr. Atwin stated that many communities, Kingsclear First Nation among them, are looking at bringing up programs in an innovative way. There is a need to support a child who wants to go on to university or trade school.

He commented on the value in leaving home for a young person. He said that he would take every First Nation child and get them off reserve for one year to experience life off reserve. In terms of innovative programs the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is currently involved in looking at various challenges such as student loans. As for sole source revenues, Mr. Atwin said that these agreements can go a long way to support young adults. He further cautioned that universities need to look at how tuition is charged, i.e. \$3000 vs. \$22,000 if a First Nation child is on reserve. He concluded that being forced to collaborate on cost sharing is a good thing and that bringing communities together to manage challenges together should be considered. He noted that communities need to look at systemic issues together.

5 Sample Best Practices

As a result of the community outreach sessions various best practices were identified. The invited speakers reviewed a variety of these identified programs during the session.

5.1 Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Programme Sandra Germain, Coordinator

Sandra Germain is Mi'kmaq from the Listuguj First Nation. She completed her undergraduate degree as a mature student and continued on to obtain a Masters in Adult Education degree from the University of New Brunswick. Ms. Germain is currently the Coordinator for the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work (MMBSW) Programme. The MMBSW programme offered by St. Thomas and Dalhousie Universities is designed to meet the learning needs of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet adult learners from the Atlantic region and Quebec. She is also involved in several committees that strive to address the learning needs of Aboriginal people in general and women in particular. She currently resides in Fredericton with her husband, 2 adult children, 6 granddaughters and one great granddaughter.

Sandra Germain began her discussion by noting that this day had been a long time coming. She thanked the AdLKC for all the support they have given Aboriginal adult learners over the last 4 to 5 years. She noted that her role was to provide a First Nation perspective for the AdLKC and through her participation realized the benefits that existed for the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work programme as well.

Ms. Germain spoke to the session about the Mi'kmaq/Malisset Bachelor of Social Work programme. From the beginning the programme was based on the sense of ownership by

the students. Even the logo was a collaborative design created by the first class and has been the logo of the programme ever since.

The programme's origins began in 2003 with the release of Professor John Coates of St. Thomas University's report entitled "*Present and Future Needs for First Nation Social Workers in the Maritime Provinces.*" In response to the report, Directors of Children and Family Services and First Nation leadership in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia approached St. Thomas University and Dalhousie University to establish a Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work programme. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs provided developmental funds but no operational funds.

Initially the programme's objectives were to:

- 1) Establish a Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work programme;
- 2) Hire a Programme Coordinator and Student Support Worker;
- 3) Modify the existing curriculum to incorporate adult learning practices and to ensure Mi'kmaq and Maliseet cultural relevance;
- 4) Recruit 25 to 30 Mi'kmaq and Maliseet students;
- 5) Launch the first three-year cohort in 2005; and
- 6) Ensure maximum student retention and success.

Ms. Germain discussed the curriculum modification and noted that it did not "cost a penny" to transform. As an adult learner herself she understood and could appreciate the struggles of the students and the need to answer the question: "What does this have to do with me?" Making the curriculum culturally relevant meant respecting people's background and experiences. When trying to develop policy for the programme or a First Nation one must recognize that all are very unique. The programme had to recognize the differences between not only the Mi'kmaq and the Maliseet but differences within those two groups.

Organizers were amazed at the expression of interest when they went out to recruit students for the programme. They had to sort through many applications and with some they could recognize the potential but realized they would not have the required academic background. This brought forward a discussion of flexible admission for those with experience but not the formal credentials.

The programme was launched on time in September of 2005. The first session was held in an arena in Sackville and the students met for 1 week each month. Although not originally thought of as an ideal location, the arena proved to be a good thing. It provided a neutral space that the students were able to make their own over the period of the course.

Ms. Germain explained the various unique features of the programme. The programme is comprised of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet students, a Mi'kmaq Coordinator fluent in the language and a full time Student Support Worker. She explained that she had no idea how you could have a successful programme without a Coordinator. The Coordinator and Student Support Worker positions could be combined but she thought it might be a

challenge given the responsibilities required for both positions. You need someone who can advocate for the student. She has had to go to the university on behalf of students to have policy changed. This type of intervention made it possible to accept many students who would have otherwise been rejected. Ms. Germain noted that St. Thomas University has allowed 3 seats for those who did not have the minimum required credits but who had other work and life experience relevant to the programme. The onus is on the student to demonstrate that they have the support of their employer and community and that they can come up with a plan that can allow them to graduate with not only their BSW but also their BA.

On a personal note she mentioned the impact of the Native Teachers Programme out of the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Institute at UNB. She was a member of the second cohort. They were 30 to 40 of them at the time and she is constantly working with people on various committees who were students of that programme. These individuals have had a huge influence on their communities and society at large. Ms. Germain asked: "What could have happened if we had not been given that opportunity?" Many of the success stories from this programme have become role models to the next generations.

She made a call to institutions to give the students a chance. She emphasized that just because students do not have all of the mandatory requirements for acceptance does not mean that they do not have the "fire in the belly". She urged those in the room to let people in on their merits and to look to see if the standards imposed are really barriers that keep Aboriginal students out of university.

The programme runs under the guidance of a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of St. Thomas and Dalhousie Universities, Directors of Education, First Nation Agencies, and Mi'kmaq and Maliseet student representatives. The programme invites Aboriginal specialists and Elders as guest speakers and ensures that the culturally relevant curriculum reflects Aboriginal experience and respects Aboriginal ways of learning. The culturally relevant curriculum is the key to the programme's success. The programme attracts very seasoned and flexible instructors many of whom are retired. Instructors who come to teach feel privileged to be invited and they find they can get more out of the students than in the regular programme.

Ms. Germain stated that First Nation control affirms First Nation's ownership. Where does this leave the role of the Universities? The Universities have been very supportive and seem to recognize that the programme is being well run and there is no need to interfere with its progress. The programme is flexible in admissions and programming. As mentioned previously, 3 seats are set aside for flexible admission. The potential is there and the needs exists to break down the barriers, so it begs the question as to why there are not 6 or 7 seats set aside for flexible admissions. Many students do not have the time to go back and start with an Arts programme.

The final unique feature outlined to the session was the programme's off-site delivery in a location midway between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. This location has been of a great benefit for the programme; however it can at times cause some operational issues.

The programme has moved to the Memramcook Centre and at times carting equipment from St. Thomas can be a challenge. It has been discussed that having one session at St. Thomas or Dalhousie could give the students a taste of being on campus.

As discussed earlier, operational funds were not provided from INAC for the programme. Financial inputs to the programme come from First Nation Governments, NB First Nations Education Initiatives Inc., and NS Mi'kmaq Children and Family Services.

First Nation Governments provide 100% of the funding and support for students. Workers are granted education leave by employers, tuition payments are provided to the universities, and students are provided with travel, accommodation, meals and book allowances.

The NB First Nations Education Initiative, Inc. (FNEII) and Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Children and Family Services provide funding for central coordination. A fair amount of time and money is spent applying for funding every year. The funds go into a central fund to pay for coordination expenses of the MMBSW programme.

The programme outcomes will ensure, in the short-term, that First Nation individuals completing the BSW programme will earn an accredited BSW degree that will provide them with professional qualifications to work as licensed social workers. In the long-term, First Nation communities will benefit by the improvement in the delivery of Social programming by Mi'kmaq and Maliseet professionals. Furthermore, graduates will assume roles of influence and responsibility in their communities as mentors and role models.

In closing, Ms. Germain, shared a few testimonials from students in the programme:

“I enjoyed it because it gave me time to meet the people in the group, share our experiences, knowledge, and assignments to help one another.”

“They (the Coordinator and Student Support Worker) anticipate things needed before I need to. Very impressed with the quality of the care and support. Very proud and grateful to be a part of a circle that continues to grow in strength. WOW!”

“Exceptional! I don't know where you get them from. The professors have heart! Some of the teachings are from an Aboriginal perspective and we are all on that level.”

“It allows students to define how they learn best so that professors and students are on [the] same page.”

She concluded by noting that of the 29 students who started 26 have finished the programme. Within the second cohort there are 20 students, unfortunately there are not enough candidates who meet the minimum requirements to have more students. Ms. Germain wondered in closing: how can we get those individuals out there into the programme? Can we meet their needs rather than them meeting ours?

5.2 Questions

1. With regard to accessibility issues, what role does “prior learning experience” have on the admission of a student?
 - A. It is part of the discussion and Coordinator takes it to admissions. We don’t use prior learning but we do use the knowledge about this person.
2. Is there a role for prior learning in admission?
 - A. Yes – if universities would be willing to look at it. There is a disconnection between proponents of Prior Learning and those administering universities.

5.3 *Mi’kmaq College Institute – Cape Breton University* *Lindsay Marshall, Associate Dean*

Lindsay Marshall is currently the Associate Dean of the Mi’kmaq College Institute at Cape Breton University (CBU). Cape Breton University has the largest Mi’kmaq student population in eastern Canada and the highest number of Mi’kmaq graduates each year. He is a former chief of Chapel Island First Nation and is the author of *Clay Pots and Bones – Pka’wo’qq aq Waqntal* published by Solus Publishing in 1997. Mr. Marshall has been active in the establishment of Mi’kmaq research principles and protocols in part through his membership in the Mi’kmaq Ethics Watch Committee.

Mr. Marshall thanked the organizers for the session and mentioned that he had just returned from a conference on Aboriginal recruitment and retention in British Columbia sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada. He was the only voice from Atlantic Canada present there and he was glad to see a local conference here dealing with this issue.

By way of introduction Mr. Marshall explained that the Mi’kmaq College Institute’s name in Mi’kmaq, *Mi’kmaq Espi Kina’matno’kuom*, was translated by an Elder and means “House of Learning”. He noted that there are 267 Aboriginal students at CBU and that more are needed. He emphasized that “we need to indigenize the academy” from faculty to staff sweeping the floors. There is a need for Aboriginal students in business, arts and sciences and there is a need for the non-Aboriginal population to come on board. Mr. Marshall thanked Sandra Germain for the fine work she was doing with BSW Programme and he noted that some of his family members are involved in the program. He acknowledged the BSW Programme as a wonderful program helping communities and saving lives. Mr. Marshall also thanked Dr. Higgins for the initiatives that are being undertaken at St. Thomas University.

Mr. Marshall’s presentation titled: “*Cape Breton University: A Leader in Aboriginal Education*” provided an overview of the role and history of Cape Breton University in Aboriginal education. He described the University as a place of commitment, innovation, collaboration and hope. Since its inception, Cape Breton University has had a strong

connection with Aboriginal communities. Cape Breton has five Mi'kmaq communities living around the Brador Lakes. Long before such events were commonplace, Grand Chief Donald Marshall was invited to join the University's first president in 1976 to turn the sod for what was to become the College of Cape Breton. Shortly after the doors to the facility were opened, discussions began with the Mi'kmaq about making the University more accessible and open to its citizens.

The following sections outline his presentation:

Cape Breton University: A Place of Commitment

An educational setting can be a very lonely place when you are the only person from your culture. Many students will leave when there is no welcoming environment. Institutions need to take steps to attract First Nation students or run the risk that the communities will establish their own institutions. There is a need to work with the communities, such as what has happened with Chapel Island, wherein the community is embracing “two-eyes seeing” – both Aboriginal and Western world views.

In the early 1980's the first mature students entered the institution in very small numbers. These leaders truly carved the path for those students who would follow. Some of the earliest graduates went on to pursue graduate degrees and formed the core of the Mi'kmaq faculty and staff. The Mi'kmaq faculty have worked with elders, academics and members of the community to develop a relevant curriculum to educate a generation of teachers, lawyers, social workers and counsellors.

In 1990, Cape Breton University in collaboration with Aboriginal communities developed an innovative university bridge programme in response to the needs of mature students with family commitments (*Elmitek*). Within 3 years close to 100 students, aged 18-55, were studying full-time within the program offered in the communities and on campus.

Cape Breton University: A Place of Innovation

In 1998 Cape Breton University established the Mi'kmaq College Institute (MCI). Its goal is to assist Aboriginal students at Cape Breton University with their scholastic and personal needs, as well as to provide educators and researchers a knowledge centre to create and share curricula, research and wisdom between faculty and Aboriginal communities. In 2001, Cape Breton University was awarded a prestigious Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science and leads the country in Integrative Science encompassing both Aboriginal and western scientific world views. It is the first Aboriginal Science, or Integrated Science, degree in the world.

Cape Breton University: A Place of Collaboration

It should be no surprise that after 25 years of relationship building, program development, mutual commitment, collaboration and research have led to more than 400

Aboriginal graduates. There would have been more if there had been more funding resources available. Again the need to “indigenize the academy” is obvious. Graduation ceremonies have been held in the communities and have served to show the commitment and the need for partnership with the communities. Cape Breton University was the first university in Canada to host their graduation on Aboriginal territory in Wagmatcook and since then ceremonies have also been held in Membertou and Indian Brook First Nations.

Cape Breton University believes that the development of any learning initiatives with and for Aboriginal people must be created with ethical principles of research involving Aboriginal communities. The development of ethical research protocols came out of a concern that too much information was going out without any controls and that nothing was coming back to the communities. The communities are the intellectual custodians of Mi’kmaq information. Now under the Research Protocols, a researcher must apply for approval when doing research on the Mi’kmaq and must abide by the Protocols when doing that research. There were over 40 applications last year.

Cape Breton University: A Place of Hope

The presentation outlined that throughout the country, significant inroads have been made for Aboriginal people to assume roles in education, governance, law and the social sciences. Cape Breton University has the history, knowledge and partnerships to develop new programming to address old, and in many cases new, challenges facing Aboriginal people and their communities. There has been a trend of inter-generational graduates: grandparents, children, grandchildren all graduating within a few years of each other. The University is constantly in discussions with the communities to ensure good people are involved with the program. One of the major issues confronting the communities is language and the need for the language to survive.

As part of the University, the Mi’kmaq Resource Centre is a depository of documents related to Mi’kmaq history, culture and language. The Centre archives books, doctoral dissertations, articles, report, pamphlets and academic papers in addition to video and audio material.

Cape Breton University: A Place of Success

Mr. Marshall’s presentation summarized the successes within Aboriginal education at Cape Breton University. He outlined the following achievements:

- Creation of the Aboriginal Integrative Science Degree
- Only Tier 1 Chair in Integrative Science in Canada
- 400 Mi’kmaq and other Aboriginal graduates in 25 years
- 185 First Nations students currently enrolled at CBU
- Only educational institution east of Winnipeg to host the prestigious Canadian Aboriginal Science and Technology Society’s Conference (September 2005)
- Strong and innovative partnerships with diverse Aboriginal communities
- Recognized Bridging programs for Aboriginal students

- Mi'kmaq College Institute (MCI) is a knowledge centre for students, faculty and the community. MCI provides Aboriginal students options and opportunities within vibrant programming
- Strong partnerships with research bodies focusing on Aboriginal health such as CIHR, NSHRF, SSHRC, and NSERC.

Mr. Marshall added that the discussion is not just about universities but that community colleges need to be involved. Different communities want different things and institutions need to recognize the needs of each community. As to the need for bridging programs, a term Mr. Marshall does not particularly like, this goes back to the discussion on the need to “indigenize the academy” and make institutions a welcoming and supportive environment.

He discussed the importance of the Mi'kmaq College Institute as a voice for Aboriginal people and its role in ensuring that Cape Breton University's efforts and resources are utilized in a responsible and appropriate way. This approach has been the basis of Cape Breton University's New Aboriginal Strategy. MCI is more than a little unit at CBU and major changes are coming to MCI with a commitment for at least another 25 years of success. The hope is to have even more people involved in the university. There are many more opportunities for research and people are needed to help design the program to implement that research. The goal is for MCI to speak to people beyond Cape Breton and Nova Scotia.

The presentation concluded with an acknowledgment that 30 years ago one Aboriginal student came to CBU facing monumental challenges. Today, with more than 400 graduates and 267 students CBU has the strongest record in the Atlantic region of providing post-secondary education and research opportunities to Aboriginal students. Mr. Marshall reiterated that CBU will continue to forge ahead with Aboriginal communities on matters of education, research and development.

For example, CBU and St. Francis Xavier University have worked in partnership to successfully deliver a nursing program to hundreds of students. There is now a B.Sc. in Nursing at CBU. The University has the capacity and ingenuity to successfully deliver a first rate innovative nursing program. Cape Breton University believes, as the Aboriginal communities have taught them, that an interconnected approach to healthcare education is critical to the success or failure of Aboriginal health education in Canada.

In thanking the audience for their attention, Mr. Marshall emphasized that there will always be opportunities for future growth and that collaborative efforts equal positive results.

5.4 Questions

1. With regard to the number of native students, that STU does not count nor flag them specifically, how does CBU identify the students?

- A. We do not ask them to self-identify but we know who pays the bills. As an aside, tuition funding from government has been locked in place since about 1988, yet costs have gone up while funding has been frozen. If you have a person who is Aboriginal and who needs help they may just leave if you cannot identify them. Students may be flagged through student organizations, graduation banquets such as the Mi'kmaq School Association Annual Banquet.
- 2. From a national perspective what is the role of community colleges in partnerships?
- A. In Nova Scotia we have a good working relationship, i.e. transfer of credits, etc. The attitude is that if it benefits the students we do it. Not everyone wants to go to university and may want to go to community college. Nationally, at least out West, there is a much closer relationship between the communities, community colleges and the universities. This approach is coming here and the drivers are the communities themselves that are seeking diversity in their communities.

5.5 The Mawi Tan Etj Committee

The presentation was led by Doug Dolan and Dr. Lynda Doige along with two current students, Lisa Carrol and Amber Gillies from the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Institute at UNB.

5.5.1 NBCC Miramichi

Doug Dolan, Coordinator, NBCC Miramichi

Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour

Doug Dolan has received a B.A., B.Ed., and M.Ed. He has been involved with NBCC management for the past twenty-six years. His work with First Nation communities in the province has been grounded in a strong belief in community based socio-educational programming. Currently, Mr. Dolan is a Coordinator at the NBCC Miramichi, Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

The creation of *Mawi Tan Etj* (MTE) started as a conversation with Anita Boyle in Doug Dolan's office back in August. They had known each other from various educational projects dating back some 26 years. Anita Boyle, who was to give this presentation, was unfortunately not able to be at the session. She is one of the most sincere and focussed individuals you can meet. Anita Boyle was looking to meet with Marie-Paule Theriault the head of NBCC Miramichi. Mr. Dolan explained how he introduced the two and how within 15 to 20 minutes the combined energies of Ms. Boyle and Ms. Theriault created what would become MTE. It was the meeting of minds with two people coming together for a particular purpose.

Within a month or two, Ms. Boyle started calling people she knew and organized a meeting of 4 communities, members of the staff at NBCC Miramichi, School District 16 and the Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Institute at UNB. The First Nation community was reaching out to the institutions and not the other way around. The traditional paternalistic approach of the past was gone and this was a First Nation driven approach. The goal was to create a synergy between District 16, the NBCC Miramichi, MMI and we hope St. Thomas University.

The Committee was set up as a result of a conversation between two people talking to each other about common interests. From the NBCC Miramichi's position it was informative to hear from members who had been former students and to learn that they felt as if they were on the outside looking in during their time at the College. They did not feel welcome at the school. In the process, the Committee knew that they had some ideas but research was needed to know what others were doing in the field. Sandra Germain's project was mentioned and it was obvious that here was someone who had ownership. She created an excellent research document² with fantastic material and good sound research. Her study has provided a map.

The MTE has two objectives:

- 1) Look toward staffing a Community Liaison position for NBCC Miramichi. Woodstock and Moncton are looking into the same staffing requirement. The position has to be a focussed on recruitment and retention.
- 2) With regard to instruction, care needs to be taken as to when the plan is introduced to the instructors. There is a need to sensitize instructors to the needs of First Nation students. Inclusiveness is the key to avoid isolating the students.

NBCC Miramichi is open to discussions on how to make the campus more welcoming to the First Nation learner. Mr. Dolan felt that the plan will be successful and that governments and agencies are in synch. Ultimately they are going to make this process happen.

5.5.2 Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute, UNB Dr. Lynda A. Doige, Director

Lynda Doige is the Director of the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute at the University of New Brunswick. She obtained her B.A., M.A. and M.Ed. from the University of New Brunswick. Dr. Doige received her Ph.D. from the University of Nottingham, UK. She is an Associate Professor within the Faculty of Education. Her research interests include

² Germain, Sandra. *Report on Successful Community Based Efforts to Recruit and Retain Late-Entry Learners into Colleges and Universities*. Mawi Tan Etj Ad Hoc Committee, February 17, 2009. Located at: http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/adlkc/reports09/Germain_Feb17_2009_EN.pdf

decolonizing teacher education and teaching, curriculum development and early years literacy.

Lynda Doige began her presentation with a quick anecdote of an 11 year old girl who was chosen to be on a field trip to UNB. Upon walking out of the Student Union Building she caught the spirit of campus life, inclusion and collaboration. That same girl many years later would be invited to be part of MTE and has experienced collaboration, innovation and being drawn into something bigger than she is. Part of this experience has spilled over into MMI and the work emphasizes how important it is to continue negotiating and to take a look at our collective “whiteness” and our own “aboriginalness”.

Dr. Doige explained that how we view the world and how we make sense of it forms our perspective on issues. If individuals cannot talk around a table then how are they going to resolve land issues. She pointed out that she is very much a part in encouraging First Nation people to fulfill their potential. She wants to encourage collaboration, respect for one another and to teach with respect. Culturally appropriate pedagogy and respect for one another as human beings and the enrichment that comes with that is critical.

The Mi’kmaq/Maliseet Institute has been very enriching. Dr. Doige explained that MMI began in 1977 when she was a student at UNB. Only after having 4 children and upon returning to the Faculty of Education did she realize the impact of what she had witnessed earlier in 1977 - the Indian Students Education Program of which Bob Atwin was among the first graduates. That program’s second cohort began in 1980 and graduated in 1984. The Institute slowly gained a place of its own, along with a secretary, instructors and a student lounge. It is currently housed in the Faculty of Education only because its first imprint was in education.

It began, not so much as an idea floating in someone’s head, but because some of the First Nation leaders recognized that something had to be done. The leadership came and said they wished to negotiate and collaborate to help their graduates be able to teach in both First Nation and non-First Nation communities. At MMI nothing is done outside of the needs identified by the First Nation communities. The objective is to be part of the process and not just do something for the sake of doing it.

In 2000, UNB decided to make MMI into a full academic unit thus freeing the staff from constant fundraising projects. The University said to the world we believe in the Institute and want to be a part of it. There has been a high value in collaboration and negotiation. Dr. Doige continued with a powerpoint presentation to demonstrate how the partnership is working and hoped that it would continue to work provided the priorities continue to be right.

The presentation outlined how there are currently 92 students in community/campus based B.Ed. and 4 in the regular B.Ed. programs. There are 38 students in the community/campus based Business Certificate program with 12 in the campus only program. Within other undergraduate programs there are 5 in Business Administration, 5 in Nursing, 14 in Arts, 3 in Science and 2 in Kinesiology.

Dr. Doige indicated that because all the participants are First Nation students or teachers that the lesson plans produced are very good. The lesson plans are based on their experience and they are passing on what they know to the students. The curriculum written by First Nation people is innovative and rewarding. It is a process that thinks about people and not just traditions or social events. Although traditions and social events are part of the culture, it is the people in the program who are important.

There is a 70-75% success rate out of the Bridging year. MMI is responsible for 204 First Nations students compared to only 70 students three years ago. UNB averages 13 First Nation graduates per year and there have been 103 First Nation graduates from UNB since 2002. The Graduate student profile included 2 Ph.D. candidates and 1 Master's student in each of Nursing, Science and Education.

Dr. Doige introduced two students. Lisa Carrol is in her last year of Education and has participated in the combined community/campus program. Amber Gillies is in her 4th year of a B.Sc. and had just returned from a National Dreamcatcher Conference. Dr. Doige asked them to discuss their experience with MMI and especially asked them to elaborate on what they would like to see improved for future students.

Lisa Carrol, B.Ed. Student

Ms. Carrol explained that it would not have been possible to get the education she obtained without MMI. Coming to Fredericton was the scariest thing she had ever experienced. She discussed the sense of disorientation, new surroundings and unknown people. She met with her advisor during the Bridging year. This advisor was a person she could approach who treated well and who made all the difference in the world in those early months. The advisor treated her like a person and more than just a number in an institution. She needed that personal connection. Ms. Carrol elaborated on how being able to talk directly to MMI faculty was critical in her emotional growth and maturation. She recalled that coming on to campus made her feel as if she was an outsider looking in. MMI was the supportive environment that made her feel comfortable. The mandatory schedule imposed on her to meet with her advisor grew almost into a counsellor role. The staff actually listened to her and took the time that was needed. This ability to talk to someone who understood where she was coming from made her think twice in those times when she was thinking of quitting and going home.

She recalls that the Public Speaking course was incredible and helped her connect with many other students. Being with other students like her in a similar environment made the process much easier to endure. Turning to suggestions for MMI, Ms. Carrol recommended that MMI should hire a counsellor on staff. The instructors end up unofficially doing this role and outside counsellors just did not understand the dynamics of her situation. She had many misconceptions about university, for example, she thought you had to be very smart to go to university or that university was only for certain types of individuals. She suggested that perhaps universities could create pamphlets or workshops/ meetings to discuss these issues with first year students. In the

end, Ms. Carrol advised that if institutions wanted to attract and retain First Nation students they would need something similar to MMI.

Amber Gillies, B.Sc. Student

Ms. Gillies shared many of Lisa Carrol's thoughts. She completed the Bridging year as well and found that the MMI staff helped build her self-confidence to a level where she thought and believed that she could succeed in university. She told the participants that MMI provides support and opportunities for students. Ms. Gillies is now a First Nation outreach person for Science and Engineering and she is completing her B.Sc.

In terms of difficulties encountered, she agreed with Ms. Carrol that an on-staff counsellor would be beneficial. She recalled that her own experience of dealing with a non-First Nation counsellor was not particularly helpful. She did not feel comfortable with them or their approach. MMI, she concluded, was always there to put need context to her educational experience.

5.5.3 Questions and Comments from Best Practices

1. Wade Wheaton, NBCC Moncton: We do not do enough to brag about our own accomplishments. We do not know what other campuses are doing. Community Colleges are going to the communities. When going into Aboriginal communities to teach, many instructors feel exactly as Ms. Carrol and Ms. Gillies felt about going to university for the first time. The teacher has to make the connection to the community to overcome any apprehension about being in the community.
2. Marie-Paule Theriault congratulated the speakers on their excellent presentations. She discussed the putting together of a committee to facilitate the discussion of Aboriginal challenges and successes. Too often we wait for answers to come from somewhere else, joining MTE is a way of taking ownership and to take it upon ourselves to find the solutions.
3. Larry Batt, St. Thomas University thanked Ms. Carrol and Ms. Gillies for their courageous presentations. He mentioned that over 25 years ago UNB and STU put on a course to introduce campus life to prospective students. There was an academic component and a skills component. It was advertised and obtained a substantial turn out. The program was called "survival skills" but unfortunately many students arrived prepared for a wilderness course. The question is that sometimes bridging programs put people aside. How do we make these types of programs work and not make them demeaning?
 - A. Lisa Carrol: I don't know if there is a right way since it is more of a process. It is about making a connection with the individual with whom

we are talking to at the time. We over complicate things all the time and the important thing is to keep it simple.

- A. Amber Gillies: I didn't find the expectations any lower for me than those imposed on any other student during the bridging year.

- A. Lynda Doige: The bridging program guarantees acceptance into a university program after successful completion of the year. It provides the grade 12 academic requirements for the program they want to get into in addition to university level courses. We at UNB see them as regular first year students who are not less qualified since they are doing the same work as everyone else. There is no looking down at students because there is no need to.

Lindsay Marshall commented that one of the things he had noticed was the fact that at the end of the day it is the university and community colleges that are graduating the teachers that will be creating the textbooks of the future. People that we are graduating need to be aware of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet history.

Doug Dolan noted that we have spokespersons that are not going to be tied to non-First Nation people. He emphasized again that Sandra Germain's report is well worth reading. It is a frightening notion that a student can go into an institution that does not welcome them and have instructors who do not respect them as individuals. We are aiming to change that.

6 Improving Access and Retention to Post-Secondary Education for First Nation Students: Networking and Discussion in Small Groups

The participants were divided into four groups and given the following questions as a guide for discussion:

- 1) In addition to the successful approaches presented during today's sessions, are there other successful practices that you are aware of?

- 2) How can these best practices be applied or adapted in our respective organizations?

- 3) How can we collaborate to increase access, retention and successful completion of post-secondary education for Aboriginal peoples?

- 4) What are some key next steps that need to be taken to increase Aboriginal access and retention in post-secondary education and who should be responsible for these?

The small groups met and then the group came back together in a plenary session to report back on the discussions.

6.1 Group One: Blue

The group had a free ranging discussion. The underlying theme was around trying to ensure that there is a community connection for students in post-secondary institutions. This connection is very important for the students. The group discussed the development of support systems, e.g. the practical nurses program. The importance of a support person who assists students and members of staff and faculty was discussed. The group reviewed experiences from the 1990s that were successful such as students in sciences getting involved with summer camps. It is important to build around successful partnerships and utilize instructors with knowledge and experience. Creativity and the ability to be creative must be emphasized. New instructors can be as beneficial as older ones. In terms of the discussion about identifying what the needs are, the group focussed on math and sciences as important. The program at St. Francis Xavier University that is built around community needs was noted. A fair amount of discussion revolved around on how to look at community involvement and how to keep communities connected as the students move into post-secondary education. The group discussed whether it would be more effective to have community involvement prior to the first year, during first year or a combination of both.

6.2 Group Two: Yellow

Question 1: The group mostly focussed on NBCC Woodstock and the best practice model of having a First Nation mentor from the community come into the institution to provide the students with a friendly face and a contact person. The position is paid for by the Woodstock First Nation. The role might encompass more of a coordinator function and may become part of the NBCC budget. The position could expand to a more personal type of counselling position that provides a link between the community and the institution. The role of friendly mentors is important. The environment plays a role in welcoming students to an institution.

This would be a great model to emulate elsewhere, i.e. “indigenize the institution.” Consultation with the community is the key and it needs to be sensitive to community needs. The community has to have a free flow of information going back and forth. Cultural safety must be ensured and people have to be made aware that their culture is valued. A good example is the NSCC that has posters of successful students and promotion of this success in the communities.

Question 2: Programs have to be flexible and adaptable to meet the students and community needs. Communities are in need of all professionals and there is a shortage in all of them. Resources should be set aside proportional to the population and a continuity of government supportive policy would be beneficial. Perhaps the creation of a Mi’kmaq/Maliseet Advisory Board to provide insight through two-way communication to institutions to provide a clear mandate was suggested by the group.

Question 3: The group suggested that forums such as this one wherein information and knowledge could be shared would be beneficial.

Question 4: See question 2.

6.3 Group Three: Red

The Red group reported spending a large amount of time on networking and general productive discussion. They found questions 2 and 4 to be similar and put the discussion together for those questions. In terms of successful practices that are out there the discussion with regard to on-site vs. off-site post-secondary education training depends on the situation and how it works for the institution and the community. The Indian Institute of Technology was discussed explaining how it goes to the community. The group also discussed how the BSW program at St. Thomas and Dalhousie works well off-site. The off-site location allows students to get away from family and they can focus on work and avoid other distractions. There was a discussion of programs in Saskatchewan and the need to focus on the basic educational needs of individuals.

The group also discussed the need for on-going support such as job coaching after job training for students. Group members mentioned that the first 6 weeks are very important as to whether a student will stay or not in a new institution. The institution needs to capture the student's attention and make them want to stay. There is a need to know who is Aboriginal within the institution. Through identification, be it implied or self-identification, the institution can provide a better support system.

The group pondered the question of how they could increase access and retention. Discussions ensued about flexible admission with a more involved role in recruitment and career fairs. Again an example from Saskatchewan was cited where Aboriginal art is displayed throughout the institution, to illustrate a simple yet effective way of making a classroom more welcoming for Aboriginal students.

The group canvassed the issue of hiring First Nation individuals in various positions. There was a consensus that it has to be the right person and that the key is to make a concerted effort by interviewing the person with care and to check on what they have done in the past. The general report was that effective hiring involves taking the time to find the right person.

The group advised that as institutions move forward in being more inclusive they need to get the support of First Nation leadership. It can be very important to simply address the Chiefs and bring forward a Band Council Resolution and get formal support for a project. On a final note, the group discussed the recognition of prior learning as a significant way to welcome individuals into programs. The identification of life experience can be very useful.

6.4 Group Four: Purple

The groups report began with a commentary on the day's session wishing that there had been a more traditional opening prayer, smudging ceremony and introduction of participants to introduce more participants to Aboriginal culture from the start of the proceedings. As a corollary the group discussed how university and colleges need to learn about the culture of the students they are serving. The institutions have to be ready to make that connection.

The group discussed the role of the student advisor and how this person can make the transition of the Aboriginal adult learner to the institution much easier. Examples were brought up such as an early intervention before school starts where the advisor sends a mail out with photos, contact information, goals for the year and important news for new and returning students. Furthermore, it has been effective to have a welcoming lunch where students can meet the advisor and meet each other thus beginning an internal support group. It was noted that in many institutions that have student advisors that the lack of resources and infrastructure limits the level of services that can be delivered.

The group reported that there needs to be an advocate dedicated to change the culture of the institution to guarantee success especially when considering the transition from college to university. The culture shock of going from the community to a large university can be terrifying. For many the transition is easier from the community to a community college. This is an area for collaboration between the community colleges and the universities. Collaboration could ease the transition between community to community college to university. The advantages of fewer students and smaller classes can be a benefit for the students in reducing the apprehension of the transfer to a large institution. On a related subject, the group discussed the role of recruitment in the process. The group suggested that perhaps information could be distributed with a version of the "book-mobile" that would go to the communities and advise prospective students as to what might be best for their individual situations. In essence the idea is to create a one-stop shop for information on both community college and university programs.

Another issue the group discussed was the notion that recruitment strategies should target students in grade 9 and not just grade 12. There should be more long-term planning in terms of post-secondary education.

As for next steps the group stated that in the building of relationships and partnership both institutions and communities are responsible. Emphasis must be focussed on how the relationship starts. There is a need to find appropriate role models and an increase in Aboriginal professors. This, of course, requires a stronger commitment to graduate level education for First Nation students. The long-term strategy is for the creation of a group of instructors wherein the students can see themselves reflected and see success. Overall institutions and communities need to allow themselves to think outside the box when tackling these issues.

7 Closing Comments

Dr. Kathleen Flanagan³ closed the session by acknowledging and thanking the Maliseet people for the use of the territory for the day's session. The next steps, she emphasized, are up to the institutions and those leaders present at the session. The role of the AdLKC was to assist with the dialogue and bring individuals together. Dr. Flanagan noted that with the winding down of the AdLKC that this session is the last event prior to the final National Symposium on July 8th. The information gathered at this session will be posted on the website that will continue to exist for at least the next 10 months. She reiterated that there is a need to reinforce the notion that small changes can make a huge difference. What ever changes can be introduced when presented from a position of sincere respect have a significant impact. Dr. Flanagan concluded by noting that it is going to take a large dose of generosity to take us to a position of reconciliation and that this session provided a large dose today.

Upon thanking the speakers, participants and organizers, Dr. Flanagan declared the session closed for the day. She wished everyone all the best of luck with the continuation of this important work.

³ Dr. Flanagan presented the keynote speakers with two posters titled: "Learning is a Human Right" as gifts. Copies of the posters are available online at www.ccl-cca.ca for free download. They were created to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. The posters are designed as an enduring art piece to celebrate learning as a human right.

**APPENDIX A
PROGRAM**

AdLKC Roundtable on Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in NB and NS* May 12, 2009 Alumni Memorial Lounge, University of New Brunswick Fredericton	
8.30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Registration; Coffee and Tea
9:00 am – 9:20 am	Opening and Welcome; Overview of Roundtable Purpose – Dr. Kathleen Flanagan, Coordinator, Adult Knowledge Learning Center
9:20 am – 10: 15 am	Context of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bob Atwin, Executive Director, First Nation Education Initiative - Dr. Michael Higgins, President, St. Thomas University - Q & As
10:15 am – 10: 35 am	<i>Nutrition Break</i>
10:35 am - Noon	Sample Best Practices – challenges in recruitment and retention; solutions; learnings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sandra Germain, Coordinator, Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Social Work Program, St. Thomas University & Dalhousie University - Lindsay Marshall, Associate Dean, Mi'kmaq College Institute, Cape Breton University - Mawi Tan Ej Committee - Doug Dolan, NBCC Miramichi; Anita Boyle, Metepenigiag First Nation; Lynda Doige, Mi'kmaq Maliseet Institute, UNB - Q & As
Noon – 1:00 pm	<i>Lunch - Provided</i>
1:00 – 1:45 pm	Sample Best Practices continued
1:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Improving Access and Retention to PSE for First Nation students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Networking and discussion in small groups
3:00 pm – 3:20 pm	<i>Nutrition Break</i>
3:20 pm – 4: 30 pm	Plenary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reporting back from small group discussions - Plenary discussions and Q & As - Next steps - Closing Remarks - Evaluations

* Program is subject to change

APPENDIX B
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH
INITIATIVE

SUMMARY

ADULT LEARNING KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

CENTRE DU SAVOIR SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE CHEZ LES ADULTES

SUMMARY

COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVE ABORIGINAL

2008

SUMMARY

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

The Aboriginal Community Outreach Initiative's objectives are to discuss Aboriginal adult learning needs and related issues within Atlantic Canada. Han Martin Associates, a private Aboriginal majority-owned consulting firm was awarded the contract to organize a series of five community-based knowledge exchange meetings to discuss adult learning needs and issues of Aboriginal people in Atlantic Canada.

Although adult learning applies to all sectors such as citizenship, arts, culture, and natural resource management, the primary focus for these sessions was on literacy, post-secondary education and employment.

The Aboriginal Reference Group has identified a number of challenges and issues relating to adult learning. The overall and unifying theme underlying most of these issues is the importance of Aboriginal language and culture as it impacts adult learning for Aboriginal people and communities.

The major issues identified by the participants are as follows:

- Participants in all sessions noted that funding is an ongoing and critical issue. There were several major areas of concern expressed.
 - Funding levels for many programs have either been frozen for over a decade or they have been steadily decreasing since 2000.
 - Funding programs tend to focus on employment and economic development and not on adult learning issues.
 - Funding criteria are restrictive and do not allow for any accommodation in learning styles or program.
 - There is a need to clarify criteria for INAC's Post-Secondary Education program as it is unclear which types of education and training programs would be supported.
 - Existing criteria made it easier for Aboriginal people on EI to receive financial support and services for adult learning than those on social assistance who may require this help more for transportation, tuition and child care.
- There is a trend to shift funding away from front-line service provision.
- The increase in student loan is a concern, especially in light of inadequate funding to communities who then cannot support their post-secondary education efforts.
- Literacy initiatives are not common within Aboriginal communities where the focus has been more on individuals receiving their GED.
- Although younger Aboriginal adults have more access to the outside world than previous generations, their motivation to learn is not as strong as older Aboriginal

adults. Instilling the desire to learn among younger Aboriginal adult learners is a challenge and there is a need to find out why this lack of motivation exists. The leadership in First Nations communities or agencies should recognize that they are often doing youth a disservice by making the process of being accepted into adult learning programs too easy, as well as by providing financial rewards just to attend.

- Many Aboriginal students graduating from high school find they are behind their non-Aboriginal counterparts. They are graduating with a weakness in math and science, making it difficult to participate and succeed in regular college or university programs, especially to pursue studies in health, the sciences or technology. Poor self-esteem and identity affect their ability to participate effectively in learning.
- In a majority of the sessions participants identified lack of transportation as a major impediment for adult learners to access or continue learning. In order to access services, individuals are forced to move away from their communities. The result is the loss of language and culture as individuals become assimilated into mainstream (mostly English Canadian) society.
- Access to child-care services is an issue for many Aboriginal adult learners. Day cares on reserves do not suit the schedules of Aboriginal adult learners going to training programs in or outside the community.
- Peer and family support is very important and the adult learner experiences a tremendous sense of isolation when that is lost.

APPENDIX C

ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) undertook an Aboriginal Outreach initiative in 2008. The purpose was to provide a discussion forum for participants on the adult learning needs and issues of Aboriginal Peoples in Atlantic Canada. Five community sessions were undertaken in Atlantic Canada. The recommendations of the discussions are to be represented in AdLKC's activities and priorities for 2008-2009 and are to be of assistance in the AdLKC's mission of developing a culture of adult learning. One of the many recommendations arising from the Aboriginal Outreach initiative is the basis for this current forum.

AdLKC needs to start working with top administrators at post-secondary institutions to ensure policies and environments are inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal students. It is important to reach senior decision-makers who are in a position to influence and make concrete changes in institutions.

Demographic Profile of the Aboriginal Population in Atlantic Canada

The 2006 Census¹ indicates that the Aboriginal population in Atlantic Canada (67,010 people) consists of 3.0% of the population in this region and comprises 5.71% of the total Canadian Aboriginal identity population². In the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the Aboriginal identity population respectively represents 14.9% and 15.5% of the population. In Canada the Aboriginal Identity population has seen a growth of 45% in the last 10 years. This growth is six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population. During the same time the North American Indian or First Nations population has grown by 29%. The greatest increases in Aboriginal

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population. Available: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>

²Refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.

In 1991 and previous censuses, the Aboriginal population was defined using the ethnic origin question (ancestry). The 1996 Census included a question on the individual's perception of his/her Aboriginal identity.

The question used in the 2006 and 2001 censuses is the same as the one used in 1996.

Available: <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/reference/dictionary/pop001.cfm>

population between 1996 and 2006 have been seen in the Atlantic Provinces. Nova Scotia has seen an 85% increase; New Brunswick a 67% increase and in Newfoundland and Labrador there has been a 65% increase.

Children and youth aged between 0 and 24 years represent 48% of the Aboriginal population compared to 31% for the non-Aboriginal population. The youngest Aboriginal populations are seen in the Prairie Provinces and Nunavut. At 27 years, the median age of the Aboriginal population in Canada is 13 years younger than for the non-Aboriginal population (40 years). Statistics Canada reports that over the next 20 years Aboriginal peoples in their 20's will grow at a rate four times more than the non-Aboriginal population. This has significant bearing on the potential recruitment pool for both post-secondary institutions as well as the labour market itself. The move to self governance in First Nation communities means that there is a pressing need for professional skills among the Aboriginal population to fill positions in health, administrative, educational and other technical fields of government.

The following table summarizes the dilemma and the crux of the problem. While the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the follow-up survey done in Canada show that there are significant challenges with the overall literacy levels of the Canadian population in general. The data on educational achievement levels for Aboriginal persons indicates an even wider disparity. The disparity is especially crucial at the level of persons with university degrees and for persons with less than high school diploma. The gap is well over 10 % in both categories.

Highest Level of Education (%) - Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada and the Atlantic Provinces 2006 Census³						
	Canadian Population	Aboriginal Canada Population	PEI	NB	NS	NL
University	22.6	8.6	12.8	9.1	12.7	8.7
College	17.3	14.5	19.9	16.1	16.1	17.6
Trades	10.9	11.4	11.1	14.6	13.5	12.7
High School	25.5	21.8	24.3	21	21.3	18.9
Less than high school	23.8	43.7	31.9	39.2	36.4	42

³ Statistics Canada. 2008. *Aboriginal Identity (8), Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (14), Major Field of Study – Classification of Instructional Programs, 2000 (14), Area of Residence (6), Age Groups (10A) and Sex (3) for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2006 Census – 20% Sample Data (table)*. Topic-based tabulation. 2006 Census of Population. Statistics Canada catalogue no. 97-560-XCB2006028. Ottawa. Released March 4, 2008.

The Challenges⁴

The following is not an exhaustive list by any means of the challenges and barriers that result in Aboriginal persons either not being able to access our post-secondary institutions or being able to stay once gaining entry. They are however among the key hurdles to be overcome.

- **Funding:** The unemployment rate among registered Indians in the 15 to 24 age group is especially high at 41 %. In some communities the rate exceeds 75%. Social assistance and seasonal jobs are the main source of income. The majority of Aboriginal students must rely on other sources of funding to attend college or university. Limited allocation of educational funding has resulted in denial of access to this assistance to many potential Aboriginal students.
- **Historical Barriers:** Many Aboriginal people have gained their education but at a price. An 1876 amendment to the Indian Act forced them to relinquish their Indian status if they attended and became a professional by way of higher education⁵. This was repealed after World War II but replaced by the residential school system. The results of this are still reverberating in Aboriginal communities where violence, despair and loss of pride and spirituality can be traced back to this experience. Previous education policies have been aimed at assimilation. This has left a taste of distrust and fear of education institutions in the minds of Aboriginal communities.
- **Transportation:** The economic reality for most Aboriginal persons that affect their ability to pay for tuition also results in their not having personal transportation. Most Aboriginal communities are remote and rural and not near to major post-secondary institutions. The implication is obvious and immediate. The lack of a car, public transit, or community bus makes it extremely difficult to attend institutions off reserve.
- **Childcare:** There is a higher percentage of Aboriginal students who are female and they are more likely to have dependants than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The lack of childcare may not only be a barrier to education but in many cases it becomes an absolute bar to their participation. Students may be willing and able to attend classes but soon drop out if childcare becomes a burden.
- **Family and Community Support:** Adult learning success is not achieved in a vacuum; but rather it is often the result of individuals having access to supportive families and communities. Many Aboriginal people dropped out of the formal education system early on as their parents were unable or did not help them to overcome the challenges they were facing.

⁴ Canadian Council on Learning: Adult Learning Knowledge Centre. *Aboriginal Community Outreach Report*. July 2008. Available:

<http://www.ccl-ca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AdultLearning/OurWork/CommunityOutreach/Aboriginal.htm>

⁵ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. *Aboriginal Peoples and Post Secondary Education: What We Have Learned*.

Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, January 2001, p. 11.

Available: http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/aboriginal_en.pdf

Successes and Best Practices

There is some light in the current situation. There have been initiatives undertaken that have resulted in successful outcomes for Aboriginal students. It is hoped that they will become a springboard for addressing the challenges we have briefly described. These are a few examples of these best practices.

- The Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island has provided the support of a tutor to three clients who live on reserve and who were attending university. This support was very successful and it also provided part-time employment for the tutor.
- The First Nation Education Initiative in New Brunswick and the community college system have designed a model that is more client centred and recruits individuals already interested in a particular field of training, e.g., Licensed Practical Nurses. Funding for participants allowances/wages, tuition, childcare, books and other costs are provided through a cost sharing arrangement between the First Nation and the province. In addition, the wage subsidy enables participants to be EI eligible and participants are able to receive an allowance that is higher than the \$675 provided through the Post-Secondary Education program. This model has resulted in very high success rates with students.
- In Miramichi, a proactive approach by the community college and First Nations in the region is laying the groundwork for success.
- Mi'kmaw Kinamatneway, the umbrella organization responsible for First Nation education in Nova Scotia, is working with the leadership in the 13 First Nations to develop a clearer and more coherent approach to adult learning and funding implications in these communities.
- The Adult Learning Program (ALP) in Nova Scotia is a foundation program for students who have left school and goes from Levels 1 - 4. Level 4 is the equivalent to grades 11 and 12 through which the adult learner obtains a high school reading certificate and can move on to core programming in different fields. The ALP is willing to develop a curriculum which includes Mi'kmaq history and language.
- Academic and personal support programs such as University of British Columbia's First Nation House of Learners.
- Support for Aboriginal control whether at program, curricular or institutional level.
- Early access programs in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta aim at preparing Aboriginal students for the transition from communities to living in a post-secondary environment.

The Compelling Reasons

There are many arguments and business cases one can make to spur us into action.

- The rational business approach which identifies Aboriginal persons as our future pool of workers to fuel our economy.

- The potential untapped market of new students to recruit into our post-secondary institutions.
- The argument for social justice in righting past imbalances and the effects of discrimination.
- The pride and recognition in being leaders and role models in achieving excellence and solutions.

In the end however we must realize that none of us go ahead when some of us are left behind. We use the term holistic often in describing the cultural approach and worldview of Aboriginal peoples but it is also a stunning and beautifully simplistic truth. We are all inter-linked and none of us advance into actualizing our highest potential when we leave parts of ourselves behind. We have much to gain from the re-integration of that part of ourselves. It gives us all the opportunity to grow and actualize a better society. It is not only a benefit to the Aboriginal peoples and communities, or on the other hand a benefit to our institutions either in economic or academic status, but an opportunity to create something new in the learning from each other.

Next Steps

While testifying before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in 2006, Gilbert Whiteduck of Quebec's First Nations Education Council noted that the 2002 Minister's National Working Group on Education concluded that there were 6,000 reports on First Nations education in Canada.

He stated:

It is now time to stop studying the issue and take action, by developing specific programs.... [W]e should really be thinking of the young people who no longer have any hope, and yet would like to make a positive contribution to Canadian society in their own culture.⁶

One step toward achieving this goal is to ensure that Aboriginal students are effectively recruited and retained within the post-secondary education system.

⁶ Canada. House of Commons. Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. *Report 6: No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. (February 2007) 39th Parliament, 1st Session, 2006-2007. Ottawa: Communications Canada-Publishing, 2007, p. 8.
Available: <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=2683969&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1>

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT LIST

Last Name	First Name	Title	Institution Name	City	Province
Atwin	Bob	Executive Director	First Nations Education Initiative Inc.	Fredericton	NB
Batt	Larry	Dean of Students & Registrar Services	St. Thomas University	Fredericton	NB
Boyle	Anita	Eastern Education & Research Manager	Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO)	Metepenigiag First Nation	NB
Cleave	Shirley	Associate Vice President Academic	University of New Brunswick	Fredericton	NB
De Méo	Dr. Patricia	Professor	Dalhousie University	Halifax	NS
Dixon	Paul	Associate Vice President	Saint Mary's University	Halifax	NS
Doige	Dr. Lynda	Director	Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute	Fredericton	NB
Dolan	Doug	Coordinator	NBCC Miramichi Campus Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour	Miramichi	NB
Forrestall	Anne	Executive Director Student Affairs and Services	University of New Brunswick	Fredericton	NB
Fox	Justin	Director, Recruitment & Admissions	St. Francis Xavier University	Antigonish	NS
Gilliland	Nancy	Program Manager	NBCC Fredericton Campus	Fredericton	NB

Last Name	First Name	Title	Institution Name	City	Province
Gunn	Tom	Principal	NSCC Strait Area Campus	Port Hawkesbury	NS
Hanscomb	Krista	Aboriginal Student Advisor	St. Francis Xavier University	Antigonish	NS
Hatcher	Dr. Annemarie	Research Consultant	NSCC Marconi Campus	Sydney	NS
Higgins	Dr. Michael	President & Vice Chancellor	St. Thomas University	Fredericton	NB
Jerome Paul	John	Director of Program Services	Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey	Membertou	NS
Kelloway	Mike	Manager Business Development	NSCC Strait Area Campus	Port Hawkesbury	NS
Malcolmson	Patrick	Vice-President Academic	St. Thomas University	Fredericton	NB
Marshall	Lindsay	Associate Dean	Cape Breton University Mi'kmaq College Institute	Sydney	NS
Marshall	Tim	Principal	NBCC Woodstock Campus	Woodstock	NB
McCavour	Brenda	Director	Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour	Fredericton	NB
McCormack	Donald	Principal	NSCC Cumberland Campus	Springhill	NS

Last Name	First Name	Title	Institution Name	City	Province
Meuse	Chasity	Student Services	NBCC Truro Campus	Truro	NS
Rose	Darren	Department Head	NBCC Moncton Campus	Moncton	NB
Sanford	James	Senior Director of Student Affairs	Acadia University	Wolfville	NS
Sanford	Susan	Academic Chair	NBCC Kingstec Campus	Kentville	NS
Sheridon-Jonah	Matthew	Associate Registrar Admissions and Recruitment	Mount Allison University	Sackville	NB
Sullivan	Margaret	Instructor	NBCC Miramichi Campus	Miramichi	NB
Therault	Marie-Paule	Principal	NBCC Miramichi Campus	Miramichi	NB
Wheaton	Wade	Instructor	NBCC Moncton Campus	Moncton	NB