

**Standards for Quality Education:
Towards a Framework for Affective and Effective
Schools in a First Nation Environment**



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March 29, 2004
*FINAL DRAFT***

Executive Summary

The goal of this research was to provide a framework regarding the standards for quality of education for *affective and effective* schools in a First Nation environment. This document will be utilized by the Chiefs of Ontario to assist in the creation of a First Nations Education Manifesto. The research methodology utilized for this project was a combination of data collection processes that included conventional ERIC search and searches of the Internet to collect data on standards for quality education in affective and effective First Nation school environments.

Education is a lifelong holistic process. First Nations have a right to *comprehensive* education programming which includes, but is not limited to, cultural and traditional daycare, pre-school, elementary, secondary, language, special education, post-secondary, upgrading, vocational, human resource development and adult education; that right is not *externally circumscribed*. The greatest concern of First Nations is that they are only *operating* their schools: *control* is still attached to the federal government.

Children are the First Nations most precious resource. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of the present generations, and the hope of the future. The education of our children is a fundamental tool in developing and strengthening self-government in First Nation communities. We require that our First Nation philosophical principles and world views be transformed into meaningful school programs, experiences and standards. Education shapes the behavior of our children. School programs are the extension of the informal education and cultural values that parents pass on to their children at home. First Nations education is holistic in that it incorporates the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual well being of the student.

Our vision for education embraces the goal of *well being*. Education must be an investment in our children, our culture(s), our language(s), our traditions, our families, and ultimately, our future generations as Nations and a people. First Nation education, therefore, must be a reflection of our beliefs, traditions and values. Elders and community members must be significant contributors to this effort. The school must be a safe place and the environment caring and nurturing. It is necessary to measure the various types of learning and each First Nation must define “quality” and “standards” based on their individual needs, values and beliefs. This includes the values and beliefs of parents, students, Elders and community members.

Formal schooling as a process can be seen as a continuation of the total learning experience of the student, a process that will be a life long one, from the cradle to the grave. Education is an instrument of socialization. The environment, the language that is spoken, the physical setting, and the curriculum are all instruments of socialization. The curriculum is the key component of this process and there is no curriculum that is “neutral.” What language is

taught in the school, how historical events are presented are just two examples of how curriculum can be used as a tool for socialization.

Allocation of education resources need to reflect *existing needs* and should focus on the student. There must also be consistency in the administration of funds nationally so there are no anomalies from region to region. Fiscal arrangements need to be negotiated at the First Nation level. This arrangement should be directly between First Nations and Treasury Board.

The non-First Nation public needs to be educated on the needs of First Nations in relation to education programming in order to increase cultural awareness and correcting popular misconceptions about our people. Innovation is required to come up with new ways of resourcing First Nations education. There needs to be a re-evaluation of government spending for First Nations education with established corresponding priorities for allocation of resources. Better uses of First Nation education monies are required so that there is cost effectiveness for the limited resources that exist.

The province must be required to deal directly with all our First Nations in tuition agreements or other financial agreements for First Nations education services. Post secondary funding needs to reflect the actual resource requirements of our students. The impacts of the reorganization of the education system in Ontario will have significant impacts long term on the ability of First Nation students to access postsecondary education space much less PSE resources.

The “status quo” is not good enough. Proper resources are required that are adequate to ensure that curriculum standards are at least equal to, if not higher than, *provincial standards* in Ontario. We expect high quality education and high academic achievement from our students.

The facilities in our communities must be comparable to, if not better than, those available in the province. Federal school space accommodation standards are inadequate in meeting the needs of our students and this needs to be addressed.

Our students are entitled to, and have a right, to school programs that:

- *Are intellectually demanding.*
- *Reflect a depth of knowledge and understanding.*
- *Are connected to their lives, culture and future beyond the classroom.*
- *Use technology to enhance learning.*
- *Providing opportunities for meaningful discussion, dialogue and conversation.*
- *Encourage risk-taking.*
- *Encourage different viewpoints.*

The recognition and reflection of our inherent right to be, and to remain, distinct First Nations and to exercise local self-determination over local education programs through self-government is at the heart of this effort. This is the basic framework at which we must move forward. Without doing so, the future of our children is at stake, and this is unacceptable.

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Introduction

The goal of this research was to provide a framework regarding the standards for quality of education for affective and effective schools in a First Nation environment. This document will be utilized by the Chiefs of Ontario to assist in the creation of a First Nations Education Manifesto.

Scope of Work

From a quality of education point of view five key areas will be addressed from the following perspectives:

1. What is the vision for the future for First Nations education – what kind of education system is envisaged, what are the key principles on which the education regime should be built and the qualities and outcomes of individuals who successfully pass through the system.
2. What currently exists in the First Nations education system – what structures, programs, services and human resources are currently in place, what are some of the best practices and how is a First Nations education system distinguished from a mainstream system.
3. What do First Nations need to realize their vision for a successful education system – in terms of gaps that exist, what programs/services and structures are required, what the barriers are to achieving a quality education system, and recommendations for change.
4. What are the costs to realize the vision for a successful First Nations education system.
5. What are the roles and obligations of the federal, provincial and First Nation governments in achieving the vision of a successful First Nation education system – what should the relationship between parties be to ensure success in First Nations education.

The Methodology

The research methodology utilized for this project was a combination of data collection processes that included conventional ERIC search and searches of the Internet to collect data on standards for quality education in affective and effective First Nation school environments.

Based on these questions we undertook a literature review of many of the well known First Nations education research documents such as Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Gathering Strength, the

MacPhearson Report, the policy paper *Indian control of Indian Education* and the document *Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century*: to gain a First Nations perspective of what “quality of education for affective and effective schools” is.

Definitions

For the purposes of this paper the following definitions will apply:

Affective education implies the production of *an effect on or to influence* and to *stimulate* the learner. An example of an affective factor in education is illustrated by how students give up on school because they do not perceive their teachers as caring and they do not see what they are learning as relevant to their lives.

Effective education implies *the influencing of a result or outcome*. The *quality or state of being* is the operative in terms of *consequence and output* relating to the production of an *intended effect*. Effective schools are characterized as having *high expectations for student learning, good teaching practices and sound management*.

Quality is the degree of excellence and distinguishing nature or attribute of, in this case, education programming. *Quality can be measured in many ways*. In the school setting it involves sound approaches to school accountability and improvement over time through such practices as self evaluation, production of annual school reports, in-depth school reviews and systemic monitoring and reporting. Teachers and parents *play key roles in this process* by working together to focus their planning and decision making jointly. Education, therefore, is a partnership between parents, professional educators and students who participate in schools in various ways.

Standards in education is defined as *something that is set up as a rule for measuring or as a model to be followed*. In the case of First Nations education *that model or rule* has been established by INAC as the *equivalent to the provincial standard for the respective province* where First Nations education is being provided. In the case of Ontario *that standard* is the provincial curriculum as established by the province. That standard/model, however, does not totally meet all of the requirements and cultural characteristics of its population, which includes not only First Nations, but a melting pot of cultures characteristic to Ontario. For the purpose of this paper therefore *standards* in education will be discussed according to those of the province, as well as, those established by First Nations in their own right at the community, district and regional level. *Standards* are inclusive of such things as: graduation requirements, testing of students, individualized education planning, accreditation, language requirements, space and accommodation standards, etc.

Towards A Vision for Education

In a First Nation setting jurisdiction is an *essential element* to determining the quality, affect, effect, and general standards of, education that can be provided at the community level.

According to *Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century* (AFN 1996) “jurisdiction is generally defined through treaty and our inherent right to education.” Jurisdiction means

adequate resourcing and the recognition of the federal government of its fiduciary responsibility for First Nations education.

First Nations have an inherent aboriginal right to self-government. First Nations have never relinquished the right of self-government and have existed as sovereign and self-governing nations since long before the establishment of the Government of Canada. This position is consistent with that which was stated in *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future (AFN 1989)*.

Jurisdiction is “the right of each sovereign nation to exercise its authority, develop its policies, laws and control financial and other resources for the education of its citizens” (AFN 1996). Education jurisdiction must be recognized and implemented in the broadest sense. “It is the right of each sovereign nation to make decisions about its local education.”

Education is a lifelong holistic process. First Nations have a right to *comprehensive* education programming which includes, but is not limited to, cultural and traditional daycare, pre-school, elementary, secondary, language, special education, post-secondary, upgrading, vocational, human resource development and adult education; that right is not *externally circumscribed*.

First Nations have the right to set education policies and standards according to their defined needs. Currently, First Nations education is managed as a matter of *delegated authority*. Correspondingly, standards for First Nations education are reflective of provincial accreditation and graduation requirements because of the fact that First Nation schools in Ontario function as “feeders” to provincial school systems and as such must follow the requirements and academic standards of the province at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels. In doing so First Nation schools are required to ensure reciprocity of student outcomes from one system to another; somewhat in the form of a *seamless transfer* of credits and knowledge from one institution to the other. Failure to do so would result in negative outcomes particularly for First Nation students who might be desirous of pursuing education at the post-secondary level. The challenge for First Nations, therefore, is to integrate indigenous language, customs and culture into the standards of education envisioned for each First Nation school system. This is a significant challenge since INAC does not fund First Nations school in a manner that makes this totally possible. Consequently, for First Nations education systems to be truly successful they must be able to *exercise jurisdiction in the management of their schools* through the following activities:

1. Agreement on *accreditation and certification* at the First Nation level of education programming *with recognition at the provincial and federal level*.
2. *Governance* over facility resources, curriculum content and cultural aspects of First Nations education programs.
3. *Locally defined* policies and procedures at the local community level along with clear guidelines for education authorities and Chief and Council in terms of authority, responsibility and accountability.

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4. *Exercise of First Nations governance* over quality of education, *standards of education and programming requirements*. This includes, and is not limited to, elementary, secondary, post-secondary, special education, literacy, adult education and vocational education.
5. *A locally developed* system based on First Nation traditions and laws which *incorporates our unique beliefs, vision and definition of education at the local level*.
6. *Locally defined* goals and objectives, mission statements and action plans for local education authorities.
7. Creation of *local education authorities* and school committees to manage the education program and the use of elders, parents and the community at large as resources for the development and implementation of jurisdiction, especially at the local level.
8. *Negotiated and fair* tuition rates with provincial school boards and reviews of school board profiles in terms of services rendered for the fees requested. First Nations have, and are now demanding, the right to quality services for their children from provincial school systems.
9. *Greater representation* on provincial school boards where First Nations children are a large proportion of the student population. This representation must be as governments and not as individuals so that the interests of First Nation students are properly represented (AFN 1989).
10. Financial policies that are sensitive to community level needs for resources. Currently DIAND's funding to "band-operated" schools is calculated according to a formula. The formula is essentially a per pupil amount times the number of pupils enrolled with an additional amount provided for school administration. This is inadequate.

The greatest concern of First Nations is that they are only *operating* their schools: *control which includes the development of First Nations standards* is still attached to the federal government. INAC still controls the funds for educational programming and *there is no legislation* to recognize the legal transfer of authority to First Nations. *For example*, in the United States there are laws and legislation that guarantee the rights of Native Americans to education and education access. These include HR1 Titles I-VII Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native Education and Titles VI-X. These laws include:

- Title 1* *Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged*
- Title II* *Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals*
- Title III* *Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient Teachers and Principals*
- Title IV* *21st Century Schools*
- Title V* *Promoting Parental Choice and Innovative Programs*
- Title VI* *Flexibility and Accountability*
- Title VII* *Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native Indian Education*
- Title VIII* *Impact Aid Program*
- Title IX* *General Provisions*
- Title X* *Repeals, Redesignations and Amendments to Other Statutes*

The result is that in essence First Nations have been given the right to control the *management of their education systems within parameters established and monitored by the federal government.*

Accordingly First Nations have three options (*Goddard*):

1. *Maintain the status quo.*
2. *Find access to the funding that is deemed necessary to run an education system, in all its aspects, that will ensure equity of services and access.*
3. *Establish closer links with the provincial system through various agreements and funding methodologies.*

The reality, therefore, is that very few First Nation schools have proper gymnasias, science laboratories for physics, chemistry or biology, comprehensive computer and library facilities, second and third language programs, special education programs, etc.

Over the past 20 years the number of First Nation students has risen and increases in federal spending by INAC for First Nations education has only increased at a rate of 2% per annum. Given this political and economic reality a framework for the characteristics of effective First Nation schools is offered within the context of the above foundational thoughts.

Key Principles of Quality Education

Children are the First Nations most precious resource. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of the present generations, and the hope of the future (*AFN 2003*). The education of our children is a fundamental tool in developing and strengthening self-government in First Nation communities.

Learning begins at birth. During the period from birth to the start of primary education a critical formative stage for the growth and development of a child takes place. The learning outcomes – norms and values, knowledge, skills – of primary education are stronger when learning occurs in the years preceding regular school. There is also evidence that early learning improves the child's chances of enjoying good health, finding work later in life, of inclusion and of being less likely to commit crime (*UNESCO 2002*).

Children cannot secure their right to education on their own. They must rely on their parents and their teachers. The right to education is established through Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which declared that “*elementary education shall be free and compulsory, and that higher levels will be equally available to all on the basis of merit.*” Education is indispensable as a means to unlock and protect other human rights. It provides the base necessary for the achievement of the rights to *good health, liberty, security, economic well being and participation in social and political activity.* Where the right to education is guaranteed, people's access to, and enjoyment of their rights, is enhanced and the imbalances of life chances and poverty are lessened (*McDonald/AFN 2003*).

The following ***First Nations Student Bill of Rights*** (AFN 1993) recognizes that every First Nation student is entitled to:

- *a cultural environment that respects and reinforces the history and traditions of all First Nations people;*
- *access to educational technologies, information systems and training in their effective use;*
- *access to a lifelong effective educational system to enable them to reach their full potential;*
- *a safe learning environment that challenges them to contribute to their communities; and*
- *the right to inherit a world free from hostilities that is environmentally sound. (Resolution No. 18/93 XIV Annual Chiefs Assembly AFN)*

This ***First Nations Student Bill of Rights*** is consistent with that of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

We require that our First Nation philosophical principles and world views be transformed into meaningful school programs and experiences. Education shapes the behavior of our children. School programs are the extension of the informal education and cultural values that parents pass on to their children at home (Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century, 1996). First Nations education is holistic in that it incorporates the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual well being of the student.

In the recent ***Throne Speech (2004)*** the Government of Canada states that *caring for our children means* that “*the future of our children is, quite literally, Canada’s future.*” The Government clearly states that although they are not parents, *they do have a role to play* in helping to make sure that families get the supports and tools that they need. The Throne Speech commits the Government to ensuring “*that every child gets the best possible start in life; that all of Canada’s children enter school ready to learn; that they protect their health, their happiness and their freedom to grow in mind and body without fear.*”

The government also states that it is their goal “*that Aboriginal children get a better start as a foundation for greater progress in acquiring the education and work-force skills to success*” and finally, that “*the Government will also focus on education and skills development, because this is a prerequisite to individual opportunity and full participation.*”

The 2000 ***Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons*** (Chapter 4) reiterates the importance of education in government policy in that it ranks with self-government, claim settlements and on-reserve living conditions as *major priorities* for the government and First Nations to address. The consequences of *inadequate or inappropriate education are well known*, states the Auditor General, in the context of national and community

socio-economic development and *sense of personal well being*. Thus, the government, along with First Nations, understands the necessity of ensuring that funds for appropriate education be viewed not only as an expenditure but also as an *investment in present and future human resource* development.

Educational achievement is essential for the survival of our cultures, our Nations, and ultimately, our future generations. Economic self-sufficiency, implementation of inherent rights and the autonomy of our Nations are at stake. Education is the key to our overall well being. There are many stakeholders who have a vested interest in First Nations education. They include First Nation governments, the Government of Canada, educators, provincial education authorities, parents of students, students themselves and First Nation organizations and institutions or learning.

Social assistance and support programs for First Nations are approximately \$1 billion annually, about the same cost of elementary and secondary education (2000). Although factors other than education can affect the demand for social assistance, it has been demonstrated that education, or lack of it, is directly related to jobs, income levels and the potential for well being.

Our vision for education, therefore, must embrace the goal of well being. Education must be an investment in our children, our culture(s), our language(s), our traditions, our families, and ultimately, our future generations as Nations and a people. First Nation education, therefore, must be a reflection of our beliefs, traditions and values. Elders and community members must be significant contributors to this effort. The school must be a safe place and the environment caring and nurturing. It is necessary to measure the various types of learning and each First Nation must define “quality” based on their individual needs, values and beliefs. This includes the values and beliefs of parents, students, Elders and community members.

What Currently Exists

The Crown is responsible for providing education under various treaties, as well as, through the *Indian Act* and *Constitution Act*. Other legal instruments which involve the articulation of Government responsibilities and obligations for First Nations education include tuition agreements with provincial authorities, funding arrangements with First Nations, comprehensive land claim settlement agreements and education policies.

The *First Nations Elementary/Secondary Education Program* is funded by INAC for First Nations Councils and Education Authorities in order to support

- (1) instructional services on reserve,
- (2) the reimbursement of costs of on-reserve students attending provincial schools, and
- (3) the funding of student support services such as transportation, counseling, accommodation and financial assistance.

Elementary secondary education expenditures have increased from \$703 million in 1992-93 to \$1 billion in 2000-01. Since 1991-92 the enrollment of First Nation children in elementary and secondary schools has increased from 96,594 to more than 117,000 in 2000. There are presently 485 schools funded by INAC on reserve.

The following table illustrates the total enrollment of First Nation children in school by age group for the province. It is notable that in the 14-18 age group the enrollment figures indicate a drop of nearly half that of the age 7-13 age group suggesting nearly a *50% drop in enrollment* for each year between 1994-2000 respectively. Currently the graduation rate for First Nation students enrolled in Grade 12 and 13 on reserve is 22.1 percent indicating a drop out rate of nearly 77.9% (INAC 2001).

Table 1
Total Enrollment of First Nation Students by Age Group in Ontario

School Year	Total	Age 4-6	Age 7-13	Age 14-18	19+
1993-94	18,959	4,185	8,483	4,811	1,480
1994-95	19,777	4,234	8,799	4,902	1,842
1995-96	20,573	3,969	9,045	5,247	2,312
1996-97	21,138	4,055	9,225	5,454	2,404
1997-98	22,355	4,272	9,646	5,588	2,849
1998-99	22,882	4,281	9,760	5,670	3,171
1999-00	22,871	4,265	9,926	5,654	3,026

Data Source: DIAND Information Management Branch 2001

Table 2
Total Number of Graduate by Age Group in Ontario by School Year

School Year	Total	16-18	19-21	22+
1993-94	453	131	258	74
1994-95	379	68	247	64
1995-96	473	98	291	84
1996-97	539	94	342	1203
1997-98	562	110	331	121
1998-99	560	134	318	108

Data Source: DIAND Information Management Branch 2001

Funding for elementary secondary education in First Nation schools is provided based on a funding formula. Existing funding arrangements focus on government accountability and not on local community needs. This must be changed to accountability *at the local community level*.

Section 114 of the *Indian Act* authorizes the Government of Canada to enter into agreements with provincial governments for the education of First Nations children. Arrangements are made with the provincial and territorial education authorities to integrate First Nations students into existing school systems. The federal government reimburses provincial and territorial school boards by paying tuition on a per capita basis for elementary and secondary education of First Nations students.

According to the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes Canada Report 1996 published by the INAC Research and Analysis Directorate, it is clear educational progress over the past decade by First Nation students, particularly in terms of high school completion and post secondary participation continues to be *less significant* than others. “The pattern of delayed or incomplete success at the post secondary level suggests that there may be weaknesses in Aboriginal students’ basic education and/or difficulties in the students social and economic environment which tends to limit their success in post-secondary programs.....The challenge of the upcoming years is to consolidate and strengthen the gains which have been made in post-secondary education, perhaps by focusing on the early preparation of Aboriginal students and on the social and economic context within which education takes place.” As noted in the tables below graduation rates are less than 28% of the total number funded annually in the province.

Table 3
Total Post Secondary Enrollment of First Nation Students by Age Group in Ontario

School Year	Total	Up to 24	25-29	30+	Total Funded
1993-94	4,736	1,790	831	2,115	6,631
1994-95	5,749	2,228	1,073	2,388	6,236
1995-96	6,765	2,471	1,301	2,993	7,524
1996-97	5,700	2,398	1,009	2,293	7,332
1997-98	6,287	2,739	1,153	2,395	7,668
1998-99	6,307	2,686	1,137	2,484	8,314
1999-00	6,343	2,346	1,236	2,761	-

Data Source: DIAND Information Management Branch 2001

Table 4
Total Number of Post Secondary Graduates by Age Group in Ontario by School Year

School Year	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Total	956	1,085	1,194	1,029	1,316	1,361
Non-University	663	738	819	683	825	782
Undergraduate	267	329	340	306	423	457
Graduate	26	18	33	40	41	54
Not seeking a qualification	0	0	2	0	27	58

Data Source: DIAND Information Management Branch

The health of a community and a Nation is evidenced by the social conditions and environment of its inhabitants. The following matrix indicates the risk factors that can be equated with assessing community health, need and resiliency particularly as it relates to the future of our children. According to the *Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario* students are *at risk* if they face barriers such as:

- lack foundational knowledge and skills
- lack motivation, interest or direction
- personal, social or family issues
- belief that school is not relevant to their interests or needs

- lack of appropriate instruction targeted to their learning needs
- lack of appropriate programs designed for their intended pathway or career choice
- a cultural or first language background that is not prevalent in their school
(Ontario 2003)

In the case of First Nation students in Ontario, and nationally, many of these barriers unfortunately exist. In two separate AFN documents released in 2002 and 2003 one on early childhood development, and one as an First Nations Education tool kit, fifty percent of First Nation children living on or off-reserve are living in poverty. Only 54% of houses have adequate water supplies and 47% have adequate sewage disposal. Thirty-two percent live in lone parent households and are at elevated risk of poverty.

Table 5
Characteristics of Risk to First Nations Children

Risk Factor Category	Characteristics of Risk
Community Environment	Poverty, high unemployment, inadequate housing, cultural devaluation, culture and language barriers, low educational levels, low achievement expectations from society
Family Environment	Financial strain; large, overcrowded family; unemployed or underemployed parents; parents with little education; single female parent without family/other support; family violence or conflict; frequent family moves; low parent/child contact
Vulnerability of the child	Child of an alcohol, tobacco or drug abuser; birth defects and physical disabilities; physical or mental health problems
Early behavior problems	Learning disabilities, emotional problems, inability to cope with stress, low self-esteem, aggressiveness
Adolescent Problems	School failure and drop out; at risk of dropping out; violent acts; drug use and abuse; teenage pregnancy/teen parenthood; unemployed/under-employed; suicidal

First Nations children in Canada are at risk from conception right through their early to their later years of life. This is the result of crushing poverty conditions that we know plagues nearly every First Nation community to one degree or another. Without our children we will have no one to carry on our traditions, our languages and our legacies. Without our children *we will have no future.*

Federal colonial policy over the years has been detrimental to the survival of our communities. According to the operational update *The Healing Has Begun* (May 2002) the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established on March 31, 1998 in order to fund projects which address the legacy, *including intergenerational impacts*, of sexual and physical abuse suffered by Aboriginal people in Canada's Indian residential school system. The Indian residential school system was a "conscious, deliberate and often brutal attempt to force Aboriginal people to assimilate" now "for the first time in over 100 years, many families are experiencing a generation of children who live with their parents until their teens."

There are approximately 93,000 former students alive today based on Statistics Canada's 1991 Aboriginal People's Survey. The residential school introduced features to Aboriginal communities which have been passed on from generation to generation. The consequences

of the policy of forced assimilation are very much alive in Aboriginal communities today (2002). This system of forced assimilation has had consequences which are with many First Nation people today. Many of those who went through residential schools were denied an opportunity to develop parenting skills. They struggled with the destruction of their identities as First Nation people, and with the destruction of their cultures and languages. Generations of First Nation people today still recall the memories of trauma, neglect, shame and poverty (2002). The most *at risk* target groups impacted by the residential school era according to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation are:

- Children
- Youth
- Women
- Men
- Elders
- The intergenerationally impacted

Education, culture, spirituality, recreation, communication, teaching, and family are the elements of healing that are required in our communities. This process is ongoing and will have impacts for generations. It is the role, therefore, of First Nations education programs to integrate essential components of these healing activities in the education of our youth who have been inter-generationally impacted by the residential school phenomenon; but more importantly education opportunities for their parents and the adults and Elders at the community level will do more to change the future of our communities. Parenting skills, self-esteem, feelings of self worth and pride come with knowledge of who we are as a people, nation and culture.

Gaps and Barriers to Success

Federal colonial policy, as we have just described, has resulted in the generation of a general and systemic individual, family and community dependency that has taken the place of historical self-sufficiency amongst our people - in terms of traditional lifestyles and lifeways. The result, therefore, has been high rates of social and personal dysfunction in our communities. As well, federal policy did much to undermine and weaken both our cultures and the various structures that we had historically developed to deal with the social and safety needs of our people. This cycle has been broken and it is our task to educate and nurture new generations of healthy well balanced individuals.

We had become isolated in our own country. The de-colonization of our minds will ensure the future of our children and their children (*AFN 1996*). This means holistic learning which incorporates language, cultural beliefs and traditions. Without these our children will be disadvantaged where ever they will be. Elders need to be involved in our schools to reconnect us with who we are. We need to overcome our oppressive history. Our students need to have their own identity and idea about their heritage. We have collective rights to control our future (1996).

We have in our hands the future of our nations. Of all the people in our society it is our teachers and our education systems who must be most valued. Deep in our cultural traditions we have always valued the teachers in our communities – because they were the keepers of our knowledge. Our Elders are also our teachers. They teach us our language, culture and history. It is our Elders we turn to not only for worldly knowledge but for spiritual knowledge. As individuals we need to feel holistic, healthy and happy.

What greater gift can one give as a teacher, but to know that every day your students were lifted that day and every other day. Transmitting of knowledge *is the easy* part, we are all born with the ability to think. What the challenge is, *is to touch the spirit of our children*. Our young people are in pain and our communities are in crisis. We suffer great losses every day due to suicide, alcohol and poverty. Poverty, and other social pains, affect our children and everyday they go to school with those pains. We need to address these requirements each day in some way, and by doing so, ultimately our children will have the skills and self esteem to become our future generations of parents, educators and leaders. (AFN 1996)

Our youth need a sense of community and to be told daily that someone cares for them. They need a safe place to belong. For too long we have been de-valued as a people. This was taught in the school systems of the past. Suppression, acculturation and assimilation were the policies of the past. We have a big responsibility to teach and empower our children and to become the educators of the future parents, community members, Elders and leaders of our nations.

According to UNESCO 2002, expanding access to education will only have a beneficial impact on individuals in a society ***if the education is good quality***. To be good quality a program must encompass how learning is organized and managed, what the content of learning is, what level of learning is achieved, what it leads to in terms of outcomes and what goes on in the learning environment.

If parents do not believe that what their children is relevant to life, they will not send their children to school even if the opportunity exists. Where the modes of learning are inappropriate or de-motivating or where educators are untrained or poorly trained, it is unlikely learners will avail themselves of the educational opportunity (2002)

Quality education programs are required that:

- Recognize the role of First Nation Elders in the education process.
- Recognize the role of children and the encouraging of pride and “magic” in their learning.
- Is based on the First Nation values, beliefs and philosophy which are incorporated in the education program.
- Is characteristic of every person paying attention to every part of the school system.
- Means obeying the laws of the natural world and the approach to education is holistic.
- Has qualified and caring teachers, administrators and staff.
- Ensures that feeling good about being a First Nation person is okay.

- Ensures there is a sense of growth through our culture and our language and that we are all unique individuals with a unique identity.
- There is quality and vision of programming that is community based with meaningful parental participation in the education of their children at all levels.
- Ensures language and culture are essential elements of the education process.
- There is pride and recognition of effort in terms by honoring achievement.

In order to create a quality education environment for our children we must ensure that they feel okay, that their families are valuable and their communities viable. Our culture, language, history and traditions are all part of us. This adds to our sense of worth and personal community strength. We have to ensure our children have a sense of what they want for themselves and integrate culture and history into their contemporary world. There is incredible potential in our children. Our children are special and they have the potential of becoming whatever they want to be. It is our job to make sure that happens.

Indicators of Success for Effective Schools

This table is based on actions that were undertaken at the *Wallaceburg District Secondary School (1996)* and according to our research are some proven indicators of success for effective First Nation schools. Actions are correlated with **indicators of success** that impact the student, the family, the community and the leadership. It is hoped that these ideas will be shared as a sample of best practices for other First Nation schools within our province.

Action:	Indicator of Success:
Offering financial incentives for good attendance	Improved attendance
Paying for school supplies, lunches, books & special class fees	Improved participation in school
Recognizing successful students	Improved self concept
Instructional help to teachers of First Nation students	Improved understanding of First Nation student needs
Planning field trips, recruiting guest speakers reviewing readings & textbooks	Increase in interest in school
Organizing teens sports, cultural clubs and social activities	Improved feeling of self worth
Good communication between the secondary school & the First Nation	Improved partnership for the school & first nation

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Action	Indicator of Success
Personal counseling for students	Reduction in drop outs
Teaching study skills & proper classroom behavior	Increased # of graduates
Sound career guidance and role modeling	Clear career aspirations
Stringent truancy and class absence policies with teacher & parent intervention tactics	Less truancy & class absence
Police, community and parental support of the importance of attending school	Less truancy
Making education a top priority at the Chief and Council level through policies and, for example, community education proclamations	Increased value for receiving an education
Cultural activities in the school to celebrate cultural awareness	Improved self-concept & pride in oneself
Supplying clothes for school and other necessities	Staying in school
Helping students with homework or providing tutoring	Staying in school
Bridging cultural gaps by doing cultural exchanges between the First Nation community and provincial school staff or non-native staff – eg. professional development days, visits to the reserve by staff etc.	Improved understanding of the community, its needs and those of the students
Making parents and visitors feel welcome in the school – parent teacher conferences	Improved relations with parents & the school
Respecting Native student potential and treating students sensitively, plus adjusting teaching methods to Native student’s special cultural characteristics	Improved student performance
Individualized instruction and more hands-on learning with flexible deadlines	Less threatening for students – improved performance

Standards for Quality Education: Towards a Framework for Affective and Effective Schools in a First Nation Environment

Action	Indicator of Success
Career fairs, workshops, mentoring	Clear career goals
Special assemblies in the school to hear guest speakers from the reserve or school luncheons and mini-powwows	Improved intercultural understanding
Big Brother or Big Sister programs to provide friendships & role models	Stable adult friendships
Peer or adult tutors to help with academic needs	Improved school success
Increased enrollment of first nation students in advanced level versus basic and general level courses	Increased preparedness for university
Focus on First Nation student characteristics such as behavioral norms and the cultural richness preconceptions they embody	Awareness of one's improved attitude toward students
Activities that bring teachers and parents together through special bussing or innovative meeting sites	Strengthened relations between the school & parents
Creating a common purpose between teachers & parents	Increased value on education by students
Longitudinal tracking through data base of students academically and how these behaviors change over time	Reliable data to track students for change
Curriculum that is culturally relevant and from a First Nation perspective	Increased interest in the curriculum
Incorporation of First Nation values, beliefs and traditions in the curriculum	Increased cultural awareness
Increased use of computerized, videodisc-based, multimedia of local First Nation culture and history	Increased cultural and computer skills & awareness
Traditional teaching styles including story telling symbolism, etc. along with play	Increased knowledge of traditional values

*This table was adapted from the research article **Children and the Future: Indian Education at Wallaceburg District Secondary School** by E.J. Danziger.*

There is a need for positive role models in our education systems and it is necessary that incentives are provided to encourage First Nation students to training in para-professional and professional teaching positions. High turn over rates among teaching staff is often the result of too high student-teacher ratios, clerical overloads, poor staff salaries, benefits and job security. We must recognize that the quality of teaching staff has a **direct impact** on First Nation students' educational achievements. Teachers who teach First Nation students must have adequate training and access to ongoing in-service professional development as integral parts of long-range educational planning. The following are samples of research that indicate what teachers must be cognizant of in an *affective* learning environment. Therefore, teachers must know their own cultural biases, personal training, teaching styles and the impacts of these in the classroom. In order to ensure student success teachers of First Nations students should:

1. Discuss learning style and why students do what they do in learning situations.
2. Be aware of student background knowledge and experiences.
3. Be aware of appropriate pacing.
4. Be aware of the discourse patterns and discussion style of native students.
5. Avoid singling students out.
6. Use multi-sensory instruction.
7. Provide time for practice before expecting performance.
8. Be aware of proximity and other non-verbal preferences.
9. Become part of the community: observe and ask questions so that genuine caring and concern is communicated.

The following is a shorthand reference for creating more *effective successful classrooms* for First Nation students. Generally successful instructors of First Nation students tend to:

- Share classroom control and responsibility;
- Reduce formal lecturing
- Avoid spotlighting – singling students out for praise, criticism or response
- Allow students to retain control over their learning
- Allow students to privately rehearse a skill before demonstrating competency publicly
- Accommodate visual learning preferences, especially for new and difficult material
- Use more student-directed small groups

- De-emphasize academic competition
- Assist students to integrate and synthesize new material with prior knowledge and experience
- Favor essay tests over objective exams
- Emphasize cooperative and collaborative learning
- Allow students to discuss information in a non-competitive atmosphere
- Use more global, holistic instructional approaches
- Utilize warmer and personal teaching styles
- Establish close personal relationships with students
- Actively demand while remaining personally warm
- Be sensitive to nonverbal clues
- Accept silence
- Allow longer pauses after asking questions
- Establish a pace and flow consistent with that of the students
- Use smooth, less abrupt transitions between lessons
- Utilize slower, more personal helping modes
- Avoid excessive verbalization
- Listen as well as talk
- Utilize minimal teacher direction
- Negotiate a “culture of the classroom”
- Become part of the community
- Use experiential learning techniques
- Discuss learning styles with students
- Be sensitive to student backgrounds and experiences
- Be aware of discourse patterns and discussion styles of students
- Use multimodal instruction
- Be aware of proximity and other nonverbal preferences
- Emphasize development of self-esteem, confidence, empowerment and capacity to affect change
- Help students understand the need to “de-contextualize” thought in writing and provide the skills to do it
- Emphasize dialogue based on mutual respect
- Use whole language, integrated approach that emphasizes the words and experiences of the students
- Recognize potential conflicts between student language/cultural backgrounds and school-based expectations and discuss these formal expectations with students
- Emphasize a writing process approach rather than a grammar based sub-skills method to writing instruction
- Provide appropriate, effective and adequate counseling and support services
- Build life skills into programs
- Avoid stereotyping

It must be noted that the province of Ontario has done extensive work in this area and produced several worthy documents that reinforce what has been described herein. For example, there is the *Ontario Report of the Task Force on Effective Schools* published June 2001 and the *Ontario Report of the Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education* (1996). Finally, there is the *Ontario Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario* (2003) all of which give excellent overviews of what the province is doing in relation to ensuring the efficiency of schools and education.

One final document that is recommended is the Regional Educational Laboratory *Effective Schooling Practices Synthesis 1995 Update* available at www.nwel.org/scpd/esp/esp95.html

Status Quo: the Cost

Formal schooling as a process can be seen as a continuation of the total learning experience of the student, a process that will be a life long one, from the cradle to the grave. Education is an instrument of socialization. The environment, the language that is spoken, the physical setting, and the curriculum are all instruments of socialization. The curriculum is the key component of this process and there is no curriculum that is “neutral.” What language is taught in the school, how historical events are presented are just two examples of how curriculum can be used as a tool for socialization.

On a world scale many cultures have been enormously successful in transmitting their cultures through the formal system of schooling. Education can be used as a tool: it can destroy and build cultures. In the development of every nation, there is a need for an evaluation of the education system. Part of this process should be a critical examination of the philosophy on which the school is based (*Inherent Right to Education in the 21st Century*). It is critically important that all stakeholders be involved: students, teachers, parents and community members. Strategic planning based on the identification of goals and objectives can play a part in building any effective system (1996).

It has been our experience that the present formulas used by the federal government to resource our communities have not resulted favorably on First Nations. Formula funding has not met the treaty obligations of the federal government to provide quality education. Database management and nominal roll systems suffer from inaccuracies and are cost intensive. Given these challenges it is important that we identify mechanisms which will satisfactorily meet our locally assessed needs through new fiscal arrangements between First Nations and the federal government.

There has been a lot of frustration on the part of First Nations because resources for quality education programming are inadequate. Tuition paid to provincial jurisdictions is often twice that which First Nations receive to operate on-reserve schools. Formula funding is inadequate and provisions for special programming are inadequate, or non-existent.

Allocation of education resources need to reflect existing needs and should focus on the student. There must also be consistency in the administration of funds nationally so there are no anomalies from region to region. Fiscal arrangements need to be negotiated at the First

Nation level and not by national or regional leadership. This arrangement should be directly between First Nations and Treasury Board.

The non-First Nation public needs to be educated on the needs of First Nations in relation to education programming in order to increase cultural awareness and correcting popular misconceptions about our people. Innovation is required to come up with new ways of resourcing First Nations education. There needs to be a re-evaluation of government spending for First Nations education with established corresponding priorities for allocation of resources. Better uses of First Nation education monies are required so that there is cost effectiveness for the limited resources that exist.

The province must be required to deal directly with all our First Nations in tuition agreements or other financial agreements for First Nations education services. Post secondary funding needs to reflect the actual resource requirements of our students. The impacts of the reorganization of the education system in Ontario will have significant impacts long term on the ability of First Nation students to access postsecondary education space much less PSE resources.

Resourcing must address social problems “collectively” in First Nation communities and partnerships are required between First Nation schools and social agencies to maximize efforts. Communication is essential between Chief and Council, education authorities and our communities. We must work together to affect change in our communities and our nation.

Quality of First Nations education is a holistic approach that actively involves community and parents. It includes adult, vocational, and life skills education; special education and talented education; pre-school, primary and secondary education; and undergraduate and graduate level university education.

The “status quo” is not good enough. Proper resources are required that are adequate to ensure that curriculum standards are at least equal to, if not higher than, provincial standards in Ontario. We expect high quality education and high academic achievement from our students.

Teachers must be well-qualified and trained. More First Nation people are required to train as teachers and administrators at all academic levels. Elders have an important role in cultural and language development in all our school systems at all academic levels. They are entitled, therefore, to proper professional status and appropriate compensation.

The facilities in our communities must be comparable to, if not better than, those available in the province. Federal school space accommodation standards are inadequate in meeting the needs of our students and this needs to be addressed.

Our students are entitled to, and have a right, to school programs that:

- Are intellectually demanding.
- Reflect a depth of knowledge and understanding.

- Are connected to their lives, culture and future beyond the classroom.
- Use technology to enhance learning.
- Providing opportunities for meaningful discussion, dialogue and conversation.
- Encourage risk-taking.
- Encourage different viewpoints (*Ontario 2003*).

As we stated in 1989 in *Tradition and Education*, the quality of First Nations education is based on traditional values which retain and incorporate the principles of wholeness, order, balance and respect for the spiritual and natural world. These values are contained in the definition of high quality First Nations education. Quality of education services can be improved by the active involvement of parents, Elders, local political leaders, educators and other concerned community members. Long range planning at all levels of First Nations education must incorporate economic, social, political and cultural aspects of our communities. Education contributes to the development of First Nations self-sufficiency. Our schools are an extension and integral part of our communities, combining the services of Elders and community members through traditional values and practices.

The recognition and reflection of our inherent right to be, and to remain, distinct First Nations and to exercise local self-determination over local education programs through self-government is at the heart of this effort. This is the basic framework at which we must move forward. Without doing so, the future of our children is at stake, and this is unacceptable.

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