The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development
Integrated Research Program, AAEDIRP

*Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities - Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries*

April 2016

Report prepared by Dr. Sharon Taylor, David Perley and Diana Lewis
Within Atlantic Canada there is a relative lack of data and research on Aboriginal economic development, which provides a challenge to government, regional leadership and Aboriginal communities. In 2007, the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP) was formed to provide much needed baseline data and evidence-based research on Aboriginal economic development to support decision making in the region.

The AAEDIRP is a unique partnership between the 37 member communities of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APCFNC), the Inuit of Labrador, twelve Atlantic Canadian universities, and federal and provincial government funders. The main purpose of the AAEDIRP is to improve the knowledge base concerning Atlantic Aboriginal economic development in order to improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples in the region. To achieve this mandate, the AAEDIRP conducts research that is relevant to Atlantic Aboriginal communities and organizations by linking community needs with Atlantic university resources and by using community-based participatory research methods. The research projects approach community economic development from a broad, holistic perspective based on Aboriginal culture, languages and direction from Elders.

The AAEDIRP’s university partners include:

- Acadia University
- Cape Breton University
- Dalhousie University
- Memorial University
- Mount Allison University
- Mount Saint Vincent University
- Saint Mary’s University
- St. Francis Xavier University
- St. Thomas University
- Université de Moncton
- University of New Brunswick
- University of PEI

The AAEDIRP is administered by the APCFNC. The APCFNC is a non-profit organization that was formed in 1992, and incorporated in 1995. The APCFNC speaks with one voice on behalf of First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada. The mandate of the APCFNC is to research, analyze and develop alternatives to federal policies affecting Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, Innu and Passamaquoddy First Nations in the Atlantic region. Through research and analysis, the APCFNC also develops and tables policy alternatives on socio-economic issues affecting First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and Maine, USA.

The APCFNC leadership and communities have developed stronger relationships with the Atlantic region universities through the work of the AAEDIRP. This has benefited both the Aboriginal communities and the universities. Learning has taken place on both sides about each other’s cultures, processes, ways of knowing and teaching.
**Research Team**

The research team consists of Dr. Sharon Taylor, Taylor and Associates; PhD candidate David Perley; and PhD candidate Diana Lewis.

The research assistants were Victoria Balsom, Qalipu First Nation; and Kastina Inman, Tobique First Nation

**Advisory Committee**

An Advisory Committee was established by the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP) to guide the project and inform the research team. The members of the Advisory Committee are: Darrah Beaver, Director of Education, Tobique First Nation; Debbie Dykstra, Director of Economic Development, Pictou Landing; Sheila Francis, Director of Education, Pictou Landing; and Jodie Ashini, Director of Post-Secondary Education, Sheshatshiu.
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Priscella Drew, George Drew, Barb Pardy, Patricia Marlene Farrell, and Gwen Watts.

Tobique First Nation
I would like to convey my deep appreciation to the students, administrators and Elders who
were willing to participate in this case study. The knowledge and information they shared will
hopefully influence policies and programs that will improve retention and transition to work for
Aboriginal youth and young adults. Students shared their stories because they want to see
changes in the education system at all levels. Administrators shared their views because they
want to inform federal and provincial authorities about the frustrations they experience when
they propose changes.

I appreciate the Elder’s knowledge and wisdom in particular. I was touched by their concerns
for our community members and their commitment to take concrete action that will ultimately
lead to improvements in social, economic, cultural and political conditions. Our Elders have a
vision to share with those who are willing to listen. Let us take the time to listen to their
wisdom. Woliwon ’ciw Kchiwuwinuhticik! (Thank you for the Wisdom Keepers who maintain and
preserve cultural knowledge for present and future generations!)

David Perley, Tobique First Nation

Pictou Landing First Nation
Thanks to Sheila Francis, Director of Education, Pictou First Landing who worked beside me and
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Diana Lewis, Sipekne’katik First Nation

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Dr. Sharon Taylor, Qalipu First Nation
Miawkukek

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Dr. Sharon Taylor, Qalipu First Nation, and Victoria Balsom, Qalipu First Nation

Happy Valley Goose Bay Campus, College of the North Atlantic

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Dr. Sharon Taylor, Qalipu First Nation
List of Acronyms

- AAEDIRP – Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program
- ABE – Adult Basic Education
- ACCC – Association of Canadian Community Colleges
- ACER – Aboriginal Community Economic Research
- AFN – Assembly of First Nations
- AHHRI – Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative
- APCFNC – Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs
- CAAT – Canadian Adult Achievement Test
- CAN – College of the North Atlantic
- CANS – Construction Association of Nova Scotia
- CBU – Cape Breton University
- CDLI – Centre for Distance Learning
- CEGEP – General and Vocational College
- CMEC – Council of Ministers of Education
- CMM – Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq
- CNEDA – Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- EI – Employment Insurance
- FASD – Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- GE – General Electric
- HVGB – Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- IBA – Impact and Benefits Agreement
- INAC – Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
- IPP – Individual Program Plans
- LATP – Labrador Aboriginal Training Program
- LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, or Questioning
- LMI – Labour Market Information
- METS – Mi’kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat
- MK – Mi’kmaq Kina’matnewey
- MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
- MTIE – Mamu Tshishkutamashutau Innu Education
- MUN – Memorial University of Newfoundland
- NABE – Northern Adult Basic Education Program
- NAHO – National Aboriginal Health Organization
- NHS – National Household Survey
- NNEC – North Nova Education Centre
- NSCC – Nova Scotia Community College
- PLFN – Pictou Landing First Nation
- R.C.M.P. – Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- S&T – Science and Technology
- SIS – Sheshatshiu Innu School
- SVHS – Southern Victoria High School
- TFN – Tobique First Nation
- UNB – University of New Brunswick
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Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities - Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries

Executive Summary

Purpose
The Making Connections Project examined the barriers facing Aboriginal students residing in rural and remote regions of Atlantic Canada, attempting to move into and through college and enter the skilled labour force. Identifying the role that culture and Traditional Knowledge plays was central to this examination. Recommendations for promising practices and policies of strategic importance for strengthening success in secondary school, colleges and attachment to the labour force across Atlantic Canada were drawn from case studies and a literature review.

Background
In October 2014, the AAEDIRP held a research design workshop with the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HVGB), Labrador. This workshop explored the role of Elders in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students in college industry programs and in their transition into the workforce. It provided a number of recommendations including: research to examine the issues and challenges experienced by Aboriginal students as they seek to acquire the education necessary to pursue meaningful employment. This project “Making Connections” emerged from these recommendations.

Research Team
The research team consisted of Dr. Sharon Taylor and PhD candidates David Perley and Diana Lewis. The research assistants were Victoria Balsom, and Kastina Inman. Collectively, the team brought a wealth of knowledge, diverse perspectives, and familiarity with the needs of the selected communities.

Advisory Committee
An Advisory Committee was established by the AAEDIRP to guide the project and inform the research team. The members of the Advisory Committee are: Darrah Beaver, Director of Education, Tobique First Nation; Debbie Dykstra, Director of Economic Development, Pictou Landing; Sheila Francis, Director of Education, Pictou Landing; and Jodie Ashini, Director of Post-Secondary Education, Sheshatshiu.

Project Outline
Three communities were selected for the study: Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN), Tobique First Nation (TFN), and Sheshatshiu Innu Nation. Originally Natuashish Innu Nation had been included in the study. However, key informants were unavailable due to a community crisis during the data gathering period. Therefore, Sheshatshiu replaced Natuashish as a research community in the project. A fourth community, Miawpukek was selected for the promising practices case study because it was identified in a Pan Canadian study as being exemplary in high school completion and post-secondary participation for Aboriginal Youth.
The project used three approaches: In-depth qualitative interviews/focus groups in three case study communities including industry human resource personnel, high school and college career counsellors, economic development officers, employment and training officers, students, Elders and others. These interviews provided insights into the complex relationships contributing to barriers to successful college industry training and workforce entry. Workshops in each case study community examined the role of the culture and Traditional Knowledge and strategized required actions to improve student transitioning. The focus group for the fourth case study community explored promising practises and current challenges for high school completion and post-secondary participation.

In addition to the above qualitative approaches, the study also includes extensive literature reviews pertinent to transition planning as well as an analysis of employment trends and post-secondary participation rates of Aboriginal students in the identified communities. Community Band Councils were requested to complete community profiles to that end.

Research Methodology
The research model employed in the Making Connections project is guided by Aboriginal participatory research processes to assist communities and institutions in evaluating and building frameworks as conceptual structures that they can use in economic planning and development. As such, it followed a malleable methodology which emerges from the participants, sensitive to Aboriginal ways of knowing and respectful of Aboriginal cultures. It did not impose approaches but listened to the data as it emerged and followed the wishes of the participants while balancing ethical research practices.

Ethics Review
The Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch Committee, Cape Breton University (CBU), reviewed and approved the project on November 9, 2015. In addition, approval has been received from communities selected for the research.

Plans for Research Dissemination
Dissemination of the research project has begun including presentations to: The Steering Committee of AAEDIRP on Feb. 18, 2016; the Project Advisory Committee on Feb. 19, 2016; AAEDIRP and CNA, HVGB Workshop “Making Connections” March 9 - 10, 2016, and an APCFNC Elders’ Council Meeting, Fredericton, NB on March 18, 2016. Additional dissemination presentations are being planned.

Conclusion: Strengthening Promising Practices
Today, Aboriginal education issues are at the forefront of the national agenda and significant initiatives with national reach are under development. Given this readiness to act among mainstream policymakers and institutions, it is important to invest in policies with the greatest potential for progress. Both the literature and the community case studies illustrate the reality that education achievement and labour force attachment are intertwined. They also show that
post-secondary education success is dependent on a strong secondary school foundation. The challenge is to accelerate the rate of progress as broadly as possible in both secondary and post-secondary education.

The research from this project identifies a cluster of policy directions holding promise for greatest impact on Aboriginal student achievement in Atlantic Canada, and outlines a research agenda to deepen understandings and accelerate promising practices. However, coherent and Atlantic wide policy making is required to build capacity and bring isolated promising practices forward.

School and College Practices
Recommended policies of strategic importance for strengthening success in both secondary school and college Aboriginal education across Atlantic Canada include:

1. Establishing a pan-Atlantic collection system for a common set of performance indicators used to provide an annual report on secondary and college Aboriginal education with provincial breakdowns to be used for improvement planning purposes. This information will be instrumental in strengthening policy and programs. Atlantic Aboriginal governments must play a key role in the design, collection, interpretation, and access to this data;

2. Addressing persistent funding inequities in schools and colleges including the supply and development of Aboriginal teachers; infrastructure, governance and capacity issues; delivery of Aboriginal language instruction; delivery of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge in curricula at all levels of education; delivery of local Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs; delivery of in-community college programs;

3. Creating culturally safe environments with practices honoring the life experience of Aboriginal students by respectfully integrating traditional and western knowledge;

4. Creating culturally safe environments with practices of strengthening Aboriginal language programs in schools and colleges. Language conveys unique values and worldviews, ancestral teachings, Traditional Knowledge systems and philosophies;

5. Creating culturally safe environments with the practices of reinforcing the role of Elders in all aspects of school and college life including: teaching of Traditional Knowledge, knowledge systems and philosophies, Elder led traditional ceremonies, storytelling and so on. Schools and colleges should establish cultural spaces for Elders and students to work together and conduct ceremonies. These practices ensure cultural safety and cultural continuity. They contribute to building the cultural pride and self-confidence needed to counteract feelings of isolation, embarrassment and shame identified by many students in both secondary schools and colleges;
6. Creating culturally safe practices by increasing faculty, staff and administrators from local Aboriginal Communities;

7. Enhancing professional development for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, staff and administrators that includes Aboriginal teaching strategies and learning styles, connecting with Aboriginal communities, developing culturally-based curriculum, lesson plans and materials, and creating mentorship programs. This will also help non-Aboriginal teachers to deepen their understanding of Aboriginal cultures;

8. Creating culturally safe environments by providing sensitive Aboriginal histories, contributions, rights and cultural content to non-Aboriginal students;

9. Making reading, writing, language, and technological literacy a priority across all levels of education as the foundation of academic success;

10. Encouraging and supporting partnerships among multiple agencies to promote student success in both schools and colleges. Productively managed, such collaborations can harness additional resources and expertise to solve particular barriers to progress such as addictions, trauma, and mental illness.

11. Building opportunities and capacity for Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal communities to actively participate in supporting students’ success in schools and colleges;

12. Strengthening the capacity for consistent improvement of Aboriginal communities for community owned and Band operated schools and Aboriginal partnered colleges. This will require new governance and accountability structures and resources for infrastructure and training;

13. Taking all necessary steps to develop a sufficient supply of highly skilled Aboriginal teachers for all levels of Aboriginal Education;

**College Practices**

In addition to the above, the following policies for strengthening Aboriginal college education across Atlantic Canada are recommended:

1. Creating culturally safe environments begins with addressing persistent funding inequities for Aboriginal College Students from rural and remote communities to overcome financial barriers and providing financial support for basic needs such as family housing, travel, transportation, daycare, required equipment, computers, and so on.

2. Encouraging and supporting partnerships among multiple agencies to promote college student access to the labour market. Productively managed, such collaborations can
harness additional resources and expertise to solve particular barriers to the labour force.

3. Developing assessment strategies for admission with Elders and other representatives from all Aboriginal groups in order to develop holistic assessments which include culturally relevant materials. Assessments have to be flexible and include assessment of supports needed by Aboriginal applicants such as: English as a second language, bridging programs to strengthen oral, reading, writing, science, and computer skills.

4. Adhering to holistic cultural practices which consistently provide supports needed by Aboriginal students in college. Engage and develop all aspects of the individual (emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual) and maintain meaningful connections with students’ communities to ensure culturally relevant environment and curriculum which respect the intergenerational transfer of Traditional Knowledge.

5. Assessing and teaching practices have to be evaluated to measure success of support procedures including other practices such as effective intervention of racism in all aspects of the learning environment.

6. Working in partnership with Aboriginal communities, industry and government; colleges need to provide long term planning strategies to avoid long admission waiting lists. Strategies must meet industry and community current and future needs and provide colleges and Aboriginal students with guaranteed apprenticeships.

**Demonstration Project Models for Promising Practices**

The identification of a high-performing school and a college campus in rural and remote regions will provide valuable success models for study and replication of promising practices. To promote knowledge transfer, the school and college campus identified below should be designated as demonstration models and receive additional funding to document their practices and provide coaching to others interested in accelerating promising practices in rural and remote regions.

**ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL: MIAWPUKEK K-12 SCHOOL**

It is recommended that Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom school in Miawpukek be designated a demonstration model school and receive additional funding to document their practices and provide coaching to other schools and Band Councils in Atlantic Canada. Aboriginal communities from Atlantic Canada would benefit from documentation of the Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom school practices as a demonstration model. The school could also provide coaching on these practices to other Aboriginal community schools. This demonstration model project has to be community led and employ an Aboriginal research design.

**COLLEGE CAMPUS MODEL: COLLEGE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC HAPPY VALLEY GOOSE BAY CAMPUS**
It is recommended that the CNA HVGB campus be designated as a promising practice college serving diverse Aboriginal populations from rural and remote region in Atlantic Canada and be provided with funds to document their practices and provide coaching to other colleges. Colleges from Atlantic Canada would benefit from documentation of the HVGB campus practices as a demonstration model. The campus could also provide coaching on these practices to other campuses and colleges.

**Summary**
Promising practices includes recognition of the place of research to guide policy and program decisions. Focused research includes demonstration project models of promising practises which will inform the capacity building of youth for the labour market. A multipronged approach to secondary and post-secondary success can be expected to pay large dividends in improving educational performance and labour force outcomes for Aboriginal students in Atlantic Canada.
Final Report

My name is Gwen Bear. And I have been honoured with opening the circle this morning. In the center we have everything of creation, everything that the creator has made. We have in the east we have sweet grass, in the south – tobacco, and in the west – sage, and in the north – the cedar. Those are our sacred medicines, the sacred medicines that we use in our ceremonies. We also have earth (which is represented by the rock), we have water, we have air, and we have fire. Those are the four elements. Out of those four elements the creator made everything that exists. And I put those on the altar because for me it represents creativity and that is something that we are going to be doing today. We are creating something for the future. We are creating something because we are ancestors today of the ones that are coming so we are creating something for them so that’s why those are there. (Gwen Bear, August, 2010, Introductory Circle, Honouring Traditional Knowledge Gathering).

Introduction and Research Methodology

Beginnings

The AAEDIRP is a unique research program on Aboriginal economic development formed through partnerships among 37 member communities of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC), the Inuit of Labrador and 12 Atlantic Canadian Universities.

In August, 2010, the AAEDIRP brought together a group of 23 Atlantic Region Elders to participate in a project called “Honouring Traditional Knowledge”. The intention of this project was to bring together a group of Atlantic Region Elders to develop protocols, ethics, and guidelines to inform the integration of Traditional Knowledge and Aboriginal world views into community economic development research. The Elders’ Mawio’mi (which means gathering in Mi’kmaq) brought together Elders from four Aboriginal cultures of the Atlantic region –the Mi’kmaq, the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), the Innu, and the Inuit in Millbrook First Nation. Key outcomes of the Mawio’mi included eight recommendations concerning how Elders would like to be consulted when sharing Traditional Knowledge. This project “Making Connections” is an AAEDIRP response to the following recommendations made by Elders at the Mawio’mi in the All Chiefs Resolution #2011-14 ratified in 2011:

1. It needs to be recognized that Atlantic Aboriginal communities are losing their Elders, their languages and their cultural knowledge very rapidly. Therefore, Aboriginal communities and leadership need to recognize the urgency and importance of working alongside Elders and learning from their Traditional Knowledge immediately.

2. It is imperative that Elders be involved in all aspects of the territorial, cultural, linguistic, ecological, economic development and social affairs of Atlantic Aboriginal communities.
Elders are in a position to help prioritize what is most important because of their collective cultural knowledge.

3. Traditional Knowledge should be woven into all aspects of Aboriginal community life, including economic development, fisheries, health, social, law, environment and education etc.

4. Elders should be consulted in meaningful ways and have advisory roles for all Aboriginal community planning, development, implementation and evaluation taking place. Meaningful involvement would include being members of steering committees and advisory committees so that Elders have input into decision making.

5. Traditional Knowledge must be shared and passed on before it is lost. The ways in which Traditional Knowledge is passed on, needs to be directed by the Elders from each territory.

6. An Elders Council, appointed by Elders, that would advise on matters related to the sharing of Traditional Knowledge should be formed for the Atlantic region. The Council would advise on matters related to protocols and/or ethics and the best practices for the sharing of Traditional Knowledge as well as the best practices for working alongside Elders. This would include working alongside Elders in all areas of community life and development including research.

7. Elders should be involved in developing and approving educational curriculum related to Traditional Knowledge for Aboriginal community schools, provincial and post-secondary institutions in the Atlantic region.

8. Each Aboriginal community needs to encourage the use of traditional practices, which are products of Traditional Knowledge. This would encourage younger generations to learn about and respect traditional practices, such as traditional laws, cultural and spiritual practices, language learning and practices related to hunting and fishing, food gathering, medicine, ecology, science, arts and education (Taylor et al, 2013).

In response to the All Chiefs Resolution #2011-14 supporting these recommendations, the AAEDIRP held the research design workshop in October 2014, in HVGB, Labrador to explore the role of Elders in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students in college industry programs and in their transition into the workforce. The Role of Elders in Post-Secondary Education Gathering was the first collaboration between the AAEDIRP and a community college. The CNA, HVGB campus was selected for this Gathering because of its high numbers of Aboriginal students and its demonstrated commitment to inclusion of Elders and Traditional Knowledge. This workshop provided 16 recommendations. One recommendation was that research be undertaken to examine the issues and challenges experienced by Aboriginal students in rural and remote communities as they seek to acquire the education necessary to pursue meaningful employment (Taylor et al, 2014).
Purpose of the Research

This project takes up this recommendation and explores barriers to Aboriginal youth living in rural and remote communities for access to, retention in, completion of college education and successful transition to skilled work. It will also demonstrate that promising practices in Aboriginal education are connected with meaningful understanding of cultural practices emerging from the recommendations of Resolution 2011#14. It views the process of bringing Aboriginal perspectives into the teaching, research and service activities of post-secondary institutions identified by Resolution 2014#14 as mutual benefit to colleges and rural and remote Aboriginal communities.

This project uses the term Aboriginal as employed by Census Canada:
“The term 'Aboriginal identity' refers to whether the person reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or being a Registered or Treaty Indian, (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada) and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian Band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the Constitution Act, 1982, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.” (Ferguson, S. and Zhas, J., 2011). Aboriginal education is a key driver of Canada’s future prosperity, particularly in the areas of innovation, trade, human capital development and the labour market. This project also seeks to outline the benefits that Aboriginal education brings to Canada and presents recommendations for an Aboriginal education strategy that can align with federal and provincial policies related to prosperity and innovation, as well as complement provincial/Aboriginal governments policies. In a knowledge-driven economy, Canada needs to educate highly qualified and skilled Aboriginal citizens to take their place among the best and the brightest in the world. The enhancement of Aboriginal education and through partnerships and knowledge exchange of talent is of substantial importance to supporting Canada’s science and technology (S & T) and innovation agendas.

Aboriginal education allows current and future generations of Canadians to acquire diverse perspectives and in light of Canada’s own growing engagement in trade/investment and geopolitical affairs, providing Canadian colleges and students with diverse perspectives is of great strategic importance. The near-term economic impact is significant to Canada’s national and regional economies as strategically as student alumni and who return to their home communities advocate and provide role models for college education and who can assist in opening doors to education for others in their community. An Aboriginal college education strategy that is well aligned with labour market strategies can help Canada in addressing demographic and labour market issues. Finally, we must recognize benefits of Aboriginal education which span economic growth, social development and well-being for all Canadians.

Education is a powerful economic driver for rural and remote Aboriginal communities. It can give rise to real economic opportunities stimulating the Canadian economy to grow in new directions. Viewing education as an economic driver effects a fundamental shift in which the relationship between rural and remote Aboriginal communities and the economy is understood. The role of education as an economic driver in rural and remote Aboriginal
communities can be transformative. Rural and remote Aboriginal communities are becoming active partners capable of influencing and directing economic development.

**Objectives of the Project**

The objectives of this project include:

- Providing base-line evidence regarding barriers to post-secondary training and workforce entry in Atlantic Aboriginal communities.
- Identifying Aboriginal approaches to supporting Aboriginal students’ transition into, and through post-secondary training programs.
- Identifying Aboriginal approaches to supporting students’ transition from postsecondary training programs into career paths.
- Highlighting relationships between successful completion of post-secondary training, workforce entry and the economic well-being of Aboriginal communities across Atlantic Canada.
- Providing concrete recommendations to guide policy and programming aimed at addressing barriers to post-secondary training and workforce entry with a view to improving the economic wellbeing of Atlantic Aboriginal communities.
- Contributing to the knowledge on transition planning for Aboriginal students into, through and out of post-secondary training programs.

This project supports the goal of increasing enrolment and successful completion of post-secondary education specifically college education. Its main concern is to identify strategies to achieve this goal. It begins by examining the barriers to Aboriginal participation and success in college education, then identifies promising practices and strategies which make college education more accessible, relevant, manageable and empowering for Aboriginal youth from rural and remote communities to access the Canadian skilled labour force.
Literature Review

The AAEDIRP provided insightful background on the research project in their expression of interest (2015). The expression of interest acknowledged that governments invest a significant amount of capital into promoting growth in rural and remote Aboriginal communities, but in many cases with little success. Providing policymakers with guidance on how best to target their limited resources is of great importance. To do so, a clear understanding of factors contributing to economic growth and success in rural and remote regions is necessary. It is evident in the literature on economic development that the real driver of growth is the “human factor” (AAEDIRP, 2015). Bruce et al point out “Educational attainment is of significance as it relates to several goals of economic development, namely employability, innovation, health, and gender equality” (2013, p121). Research has consistently linked successful education and entry into industry to increased economic development in Atlantic Aboriginal communities (Bruce 2013; Orr et al, 2011). This literature review will identify the barriers and supports to Aboriginal students’ access to post-secondary education in Canada in order to provide a context for interpreting the community case studies presented here. There is a dearth of literature for post-secondary access for Aboriginal college students from rural and remote communities. This literature review will therefore draw on general Aboriginal post-secondary literature. This project intends to contribute to the literature on rural and remote barriers to Aboriginal students’ successful completion of college education and access to the labour force.

A variety of sources were consulted for the literature review including: Reports and bulletins released by government departments and agencies (such as Statistics Canada and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC); Reports from development, research and public policy organizations and institutes (such as the AAEDIRP, the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO), the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, the Canadian Council on Learning, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey (MK), the First Nations Education Initiative, Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and other relevant Aboriginal organizations); an Peer reviewed journal articles (such as the Canadian Journal of Native Education, The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Journal of Canadian Studies), Elders’ Stories and Canadian media (such as Maclean’s).

The literature review begins with a discussion of definitions of rural and remote and a brief background on colonization and its current impacts on secondary and post-secondary Aboriginal education. It goes on to explore current barriers for Aboriginal people to admission, retention and success to post-secondary education, in particular, college education and to the skilled labour force.

Rural and Remote

Definitions of what makes a location rural and remote are as varied as the landscape. There is no universally accepted methodology for determining whether a community is rural or remote, or for determining relative degrees of rurality between communities. This may be partly due to the differing needs for and uses of the definitions. The most common approach is that all
territory, not classified as urban, is classified as rural. Canadian academic literature has identified some characteristics common to communities located outside urban areas (Slack et al, 2003; DuPlessis et al, 2002). These include: their small size; physical isolation from urban centres; lack of economic diversification; a limited access to economic development opportunities; high production and servicing costs; a limited range of public and private services; a small/low density and often declining rural services hinterland; a harsh climate; and, in some regions, a large native population. DuPlessis et al (2002) identified six definitions employed by Statistics Canada. These definitions include parameters of population size, density and context, and also include consideration of the size of a territorial unit - local, community or regional. They suggest that rural be classified according to the nature and needs of a specific project with parameters of zones that allow for community zones but within proximity of towns of 1,000 or more (2002). They further recommend the “rural and small town” be used for as a definition of the population living in towns and municipalities outside the community zone of larger centers with populations of 10,000 or more. Statistics Canada has employed this definition to determine that 41 percent of NL, 48 percent of New Brunswick, 43 percent of Nova Scotia and 53 percent of Prince Edward Island population is rural (2013).

In an international symposium held in Winnipeg in 2013, participants shared their perceptions of characteristics common to rural and remote: “rural and remote can be a place where you can be independent and interdependent; you can be active; you may be more vulnerable; the basics are a luxury; there is poverty, yet you may see it as wealth; you are self-sufficient, capable and can do it yourself; you lack access to services and technology; you are geographically and socially isolated; you feel at rest and at peace and things are simple and beautiful” (Bell and Menec, 2013, p8). How rural and remote is defined is important in producing different statistics, classifying different communities as rural/remote, and identifying different characteristics of rural/remote populations. These differences of definitions affect decisions on policies, programs, funding and service planning.

It is also interesting to note that Canada’s next census will be held in May 2016. However, for residents living in remote regions, including several in our project, enumeration began in February 2016 (Statistic Canada, 2016) in rural and remote regions to allow for weather and travel delays.

**Colonization**

Education has long been identified as key in the historical pattern of colonial incursion in Aboriginal cultures in Canada (Battiste, 2000). Assimilation through forceful education practices included residential schools and day schools. Aboriginal children of all ages were punished for using First Languages, Spiritual and Cultural traditions in day and residential schools. Residential school differed from day schools in that they assumed full responsibility for all aspects of the lives of Aboriginal children. Parents and family members, who tried to maintain connections with their children and their educators, were treated with disrespect and as a hindrance in their children’s life (Innu Elder). Blackstock (2009, p27) cites Archbishop St. Boniface “they must be caught young to be saved on the whole the degenerating influence of their home
environment.” Battiste (2000) and others have identified these practices as having intergenerational consequences including loss of identity, poverty, stigmatization and discrimination. Significantly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) found that many of the problems encountered in Aboriginal communities today—violence, alcoholism, and loss of pride and spirituality—can be traced back to the sense of disconnect that Aboriginal children experienced as a result of being sent to both residential and day schools. The legacy of residential schools, the reserve systems, and the Indian Act still challenges many First Nations people. Some of the negative social consequences of historic and current colonization are a higher infant mortality, suicide, and dropout rates, lower education achievement, and more poverty, substance abuse, and imprisonment than the general population (Battiste and McLean, 2005). “Along with these significant challenges, the ignorance and indifference of Canadian society of the worldviews, histories and cultures of First Nations people, their contributions and potentials in Canada, constitutes a travesty that manifests itself in prejudice, racism, and illusions of superiority” (Battiste and McLean, 2005, p2). Colonization is thus experienced by many Aboriginal peoples in Canada as current in their everyday life.

Holmes (2006) noted that Aboriginal student perceptions of the assimilation nature of post-secondary education remains a significant issue to consider when developing an understanding of the barriers to increasing the success of Aboriginal peoples at post-secondary institutions. “Over the years, education has been associated with assimilation. For many years the Indian Act “enfranchised” Aboriginal people who had received a post-secondary education forcing them to give up their Indian status and absorbing them into mainstream white society” (Holmes, 2006, p9). Further to this, there are relatively few role models for current Aboriginal students since participation in post-secondary education is relatively recent (OUSA, 2011).

The integration of Traditional Knowledge in all levels of education is seen by Elders and Aboriginal scholars as essential to creating the cultural safety necessary for successful completion of college and transition to the workforce. The role of Elders is therefore paramount in creating and maintaining cultural safety (Taylor et al, 2013). The role of Elders in creating cultural safety for Aboriginal students is reflected in the following statement of Sam Nui, Innu Elder and residential school survivor: “Elders can support students by listening respectfully to their stories, to their problems. Students have to know Elders are behind them. They can support students by spending time with them and teaching them about culture. Elders should respect students and help with their problems. Elders can teach by telling their own stories. Everything Elders know was taught to them by their Grandfathers; and youth have to respect Elders if they wish to learn those teachings,” (Taylor et al, 2014, p7). Another Elder expands on this by including peer counselling and advocacy on behalf of students in the role of Elders, Elder Marlene Farrell, Qalipu Elder: “What we are doing here is the role of Elders. Bring Elders in here for circles. Elders can provide a sense of belonging and community. Elders could be here to welcome students when they arrive and provide counselling in traditional ways such as circles and ceremonies. Elders can be part of small and large cultural events. Elders can pass on teachings such as smudging, and eventually students can practice those teachings themselves. Elders can help students to tell and hear the students’ own stories. Elders can
advocate for students and help students advocate for themselves. Elders can provide advice, spirituality and community” (Taylor et al, 2014, p7).

**Aboriginal Secondary Education**

“Some Canadian children have more education rights than others.” (Maclean’s, August 8, 2012, p24). Richard and Scott (2009) conducted an extensive search on Aboriginal education and found no comprehensive national statistics on the Aboriginal share of the Canadian secondary (K to 12) student population. They use the Aboriginal share of the ages 5 to 14 cohort to make a rough approximation and point out that Aboriginals constitute 3.8 percent of the Canadian population in the 2006 Census and their share of the ages 5 to 14 cohort is 6.2 percent. They demonstrate that Aboriginal students are now a sizeable share of the Canadian student population. This is most obvious in the four western provinces: “The Aboriginal share of the school-age population (6.2 percent of the ages 5 to 14 cohort in the 2006 Census) is much higher than the Aboriginal share of the total Canadian population (3.8 percent). The Aboriginal share of the ages 0 to 4 cohort is higher yet (6.4 percent). In western Canada, one in eight of the ages 5 to 14 cohort is Aboriginal; in Manitoba and Saskatchewan this ratio exceeds one in four... Relative to non-Aboriginals, Aboriginal children suffer both socio-economic and cultural barriers to successful completion of high school. Student performance indicators reveal significant Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal gaps beginning in early primary grades, and these gaps widen at higher grades. The gaps typically stabilize in secondary school. The explanation for stabilization is often the high dropout rate among lower-performing Aboriginal students.” Richards J and Scott M. (2009, p 4). In Atlantic Canada in 2001, the total Aboriginal population with less than high school was 44 percent in Newfoundland, 42 percent in Prince Edward Island, 41 percent in Nova Scotia, and 43 percent in New Brunswick. For the total population of each of the provinces in Atlantic Canada, the percentage of adults without high school was between 2 and six percent less than for the Aboriginal population of each province (Mendelson, 2006, p18).

Limited funding for Aboriginal education is also seen as key to the high drop-out rate of Aboriginal children (Drummond in MacLean’s, 2012). The public education of all children except Aboriginal children is paid for by the Canadian provinces. By comparison, the federal government spends up to twenty-five per cent less for primary school children in First Nations Reserves than the provinces (Drummond, 2012). Drummond says his only explanation for why Aboriginal students get less “we don’t care enough.” (Drummond in MacLean’s, August 8, 2012). The impact of insufficient funding is particularly evident with special needs Aboriginal children within an already vulnerable population (Roche Collins, 2014).

Special needs refers to a range of challenges faced by some students, including: learning disabilities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, and behaviour disorders. These problems vary widely in severity, as do the additional costs imposed on a school in order to educate such students adequately. A higher prevalence of special needs students, especially in mild disability categories, is a characteristic of socially disadvantaged populations (Paquette and Smith, 2001). Not surprisingly, among Aboriginal
students across Canada, the prevalence of special needs is higher than among non-Aboriginal students. For example, a 2007 survey of 106 First Nations schools in British Columbia identified 30 percent of the on-reserve student population as having special needs (Auerbach, 2007), triple the 10 percent prevalence in British Columbia public schools in the same year (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2009b). In Québec, a study of seven First Nations communities found an exceptionally high 47.4 percent of the student population with special needs (Paquette and Smith, 2001). Philpott and Nesbitt (2004) also found exceptionally high learning needs among school aged Innu children in Labrador. Roche Collins (2014) put forth comprehensive recommendations for an urgent revitalization of schools in the Innu Nation. These recommendations will be discussed further in the Sheshatshiu Case study.

Special needs is just one of many complex reasons why many Aboriginal youth have poor record attendance and ultimately stop attending school and colleges. Many Aboriginal students living in rural and remote Aboriginal communities do not receive the academic preparation required to succeed in post-secondary education programs (Duquette et al, 2010). Berger et al (2007) says that 46 percent of on-reserve First Nations peoples identified poor academic preparation as a barrier to success at post-secondary education. Duchaine (2012) notes that Aboriginal students are generally less well prepared than the general Canadian population in the fundamentals of English or French, and math and science. This may contribute to the low numbers of Aboriginal students completing high school. The Senate Standing Committee identified key barriers to completion of high school more than a decade ago, including: poverty, lack of preparedness, racism, limited parental involvement; resentment and embarrassment; feelings of isolation caused by being in environments that are not culturally sensitive. (2003, p4). The result is that Aboriginal students who choose to go on to the post-secondary level may need to take further preparatory courses including literacy or basic adult education before entering their chosen programs.

“Literacy means communication for participation. Literacy is a spectrum of ability encompassing the basic skills people need to achieve their goals, to function and thrive in the modern economy, and to develop their knowledge and potential - the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community. Literacy is the essential skill. It is the cornerstone of human capital development - the foundational competence upon which the acquisition of other skills depends” (Literacy BC, 2010, p3). “Aboriginal literacy” is a term employed by Antone et al (2004) and includes more than reading, numeracy, and writing to gain access into post-secondary education and mainstream employment and includes Traditional Knowledge and First Languages. Aboriginal literacy, “... is the beginning of a life-long process to affirm the worldviews held by Aboriginal peoples and thus empowers the spirit of Aboriginal peoples. It is a tool that begins the process of critical thinking and the need to regain their languages. It is the understanding that their language holds the key to maintaining their culture. Aboriginal literacy is a tool that begins the process of self-achievement and sense of purpose.”(Antone, et al., 2004, p26).

The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CNEDA) has identified literacy as an essential economic driver. It has developed the Northern Adult Basic Education Program (NABE)
(2011) for remote Northern communities. For NABE, literacy is included in adult basic education along with the education activities that assist adults in achieving sufficient levels of literacy, numeracy and other essential skills to obtain a job or benefit from occupational training. CNEDA (2011) says that NABE has been developed to address the unique challenges faced by Northerners, to ensure that they have improved access to training and are better prepared to participate in the labour market. It further states that the labour skills gap is more pronounced in remote territories than in the rest of the country and there are fewer educational opportunities for adults in the North. CNEDA (2011) points out that across the territories 17,000 working-age Northerners have not completed Grade 12. NABE is an indication that the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that Northerners, including Aboriginal people, enjoy the same education opportunities and ability to participate in the labour market as other Canadians. CNEDA works with partners to share successful approaches, so that they can be applied in other regions.

**Aboriginal Post- Secondary Education**

More Aboriginal students are enrolling in and graduating from Canadian post-secondary institutions (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). However, retention and success rates for Aboriginal students continues to be much lower than those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The Canadian Centre for the Study of Living Standards shows that Aboriginal people age 15 and over have a much lower educational attainment than non-Aboriginal counterparts with 43.7 per cent not holding any certificate, diploma or degree compared to 23.1 per cent of the Canadian population (Feb. 2010, p iv). The comparatively low levels of program enrollment and completion reported also demonstrates that the Aboriginal populations face considerable barriers in accessing education as reported throughout the literature. The concentration of many Aboriginal peoples in rural or remote areas of Canada contributes considerably to those barriers.

The General Electric (GE) Canada (2011) research for a remote community investment strategy identifies the need for Canadians to reduce the stigma in their thinking that remote community investment is a “subsidy” for poorer regions and instead recognize that remote communities are a vital piece of Canada’s future economic prosperity. It also points out that successful economic development of rural and remote communities demands successful completion of high school and ever-higher levels of formal education. The correlation between educational attainment and employment, economic well-being of individuals and Aboriginal community health and development has been well established. The low rate of post-secondary education in rural and remote communities will likely determine the overall state of their economic and social development and health for future generations “education is critical to improving the social and economic strength of First Nations individuals and communities to a level enjoyed by other Canadians” (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2004, p3). For member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), each additional year of full-time education is associated with an increase in output per capita of about 6 percent (Santiago, P. et al, 2008, p39).
Post-secondary education plays a key role in a community’s development. It impacts individuals and communities as a whole. Individuals are more employable if they have higher levels of education. Statistics Canada states that the employment rate for those who did not graduate from high school was 57 percent, while it was 83 percent for college and university graduates” (Statistics Canada and CMEC, 2010, p41). This is not a new trend: job opportunities for post-secondary education graduates have improved considerably over the last 20 years. From 1990 to 2010, the number of jobs for post-secondary education graduates more than doubled to 4.4 million. In contrast, for those with a high school diploma or less, the number of jobs declined by 1.2 million in the same time period (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2011, p32.) According to Statistics Canada (2011), the employment gap between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workforce has increased since the national economic downturn in 2008. Employment rates for full time Aboriginal workers aged 25 to 54 years old declined 2.8 percent in 2009 and another 4.9 percent in 2010. Non-Aboriginal workforce aged 25 to 54 years old had a 1.7 percent decline of full-time work in 2009 and a 0.8 percent rebound of full and part-time work in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

According to the Canadian Council on Learning, 67 percent of Canada’s post-secondary graduates considered themselves to be in “very good” or “excellent” health, compared with only 43 percent of those without a high school diploma. In addition, “those with at least some post-secondary education are twice as likely to vote as those with only a high school diploma, and are four times as likely to vote as those who did not finish high school” (Canadian Council on Learning, March 2010, p37). Moreover, on average, “individuals aged 40 to 59 with a university degree earned twice the income of those who had not finished high school, and 50 percent more than those with college diplomas “(ibid, p126)

Drummond et al (2012) emphasize the importance of post-secondary Education for Aboriginal youth for the overall economic well-being of Canada. Sharpe and Aresenault (2010) suggest that closing the education gap for Aboriginal peoples by 2026 could lead to a $36.5 billion increase in Canada’s gross domestic product and a $11.6 billion improvement on the Canadian government budget. These savings would come from correcting the “dismal conditions facing many Aboriginal communities” (Sharpe & Aresenault, 2010, p24). They argue that increased funding for Aboriginal students at all levels of education would greatly benefit Aboriginal people and Canada’s overall social and health indicators (Ibid, 2010).

Data from the National Household Survey (NHS) shows that 1,400,685 people identified as Aboriginal in 2011, representing 4.3 percent of the total Canadian population. Self-identified Aboriginal people accounted for 3.8 percent of the total Canadian population in 2006, 3.3 percent in 2001, and 2.8 percent in 1996. The Aboriginal population of Canada increased by 232,385 people, or 20.1 percent between 2006-2011 compared with 5.2 percent for the non-Aboriginal population of Canada. In 2011 the median age of the Aboriginal population was 28 years; this is 13 years younger than the median age of 41 for the non-Aboriginal population. “The median age is the age where exactly ½ the population is older and the other half is younger” (Statistics Canada NHS, 2011). The fastest growing population continues to be
significantly underrepresented in post-secondary institutions and consequently, in the labour market.

The Drummond Report (2012) declares Aboriginal peoples are facing significant labour market challenges where the “unemployment rate for Aboriginal youth was 20.8 percent in 2010, up from 19.8 percent in 2008” (p278). These statistics correspond with those already presented by Statistics Canada demonstrating and validating a marked difference in socio-economic status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. The Drummond Report identifies a need to develop “creative and innovative solutions at the heart of the higher education experience” (2012, p35). The report concludes that “improving educational attainment is critical to improving social and economic outcome for First Nations people” and that “this investment is long over-due” (2012, p210). There is, however, some indication that more Aboriginal students are seeking post-secondary and many are drawn to college education.

**Canada’s Growing College Sector**

Canada has a strong and growing college enrollment rate (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010, p36). The Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (2011) identifies the college system as “representing an important asset to the postsecondary education opportunity for Canadians and urges the Federal Government to emphasize expanding the community college system in its discussion with the provinces, including discussions on the Canada Social Transfer so as to better meet the demand for college programs.” (Ogilvie and Eggleton, 2011).

Census Canada (2011) reports nearly 671,450 adults aged 25 to 64 self-identified as Aboriginal on the NHS questionnaire, representing 3.7 percent of the population age 25 to 64. Almost one-half of (48.4) percent of Aboriginal people had a post-secondary qualification in 2011, including 14.4 percent with a trades certificate, 20.6 percent with a college diploma, 3.5 with a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 9.8 percent with a university degree. In comparison, almost two-thirds (64.7 percent) of the non-Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification in 2011. Of this group, 12.0 percent had a trade certificate, 21.3 percent had a college diploma, 4.9 percent had a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 26.5 percent had a university degree. The main difference between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in terms of postsecondary qualifications was with the proportion of university graduates.

There was also a difference in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with 'no certificate, diploma or degree'. Among Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64, 28.9 percent had 'no certificate, diploma or degree' while the proportion for non-Aboriginal people in the same age group was 12.1 percent. The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 with a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of educational attainment was 22.8 percent. In comparison, 23.2 percent of non-Aboriginal people in the same age group had a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest qualification (Census Canada, 2011).
The completion rate for Aboriginal peoples attending university has consistently been much lower than college. For instance, in his summary of Canadian universities and their programs aimed at Aboriginal people, Holmes noted that “...the record of Aboriginal success at universities has not been good. Not only is university participation low in relation to the overall age cohort in the general population, but Aboriginal students in general also seem to do poorly in terms of progression, retention and graduation rates...” (2006, p14). Only one quarter of Aboriginal students who begin university actually graduate (McCue, 2006, p16). Nationally there are more Aboriginal women (13 percent) than Aboriginal men (9 percent) who are 15 years and older with university level education (Mendelson, 2006, p33). This is supported by the Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq Health Research Group, (2007) study which found that women in the province are more than twice as likely as men to complete a university degree. Mi’kmaq men are more likely to pursue trades, technical and vocational education (Ibid, 2007). Further, a study by AFN shows that about half (52 percent) of Aboriginal adults had graduated from high school. Of those, 23 percent had gone on to obtain a diploma from a college, technical or vocational school and a very small minority had obtained a bachelor’s (4.5 percent), master’s, or doctorate (0.6 percent) degree (AFN, 2007, pp25-26).

The successful admission and retention of Aboriginal peoples has been steadily increasing. “In 2001, 28 percent of the total Canadian population and 21 percent of the Aboriginal population completed non-university post-secondary education (such as trade schools or community colleges)” (Mendelson, 2006, p10). Mendelson (2006) says that in the Atlantic Provinces the Aboriginal population is more likely than the general population to hold a non-university diploma (Mendelson, 2006). The HVGB campus of the CNA has consistently averaged at least 65 percent Aboriginal student population (Key Informant Interview, 2016). Promising practices at the HVGB campus are explored later.

Despite these growths, previous statistics demonstrate the longstanding differences in socio-economic status, labour force participation and education attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Changing low employment and educational attainment rates for Aboriginal peoples living in rural and remote communities continue to require the hurdling of some major barriers.

**Barriers to College Entry and Retention**

Assessment practices has emerged as key to Aboriginal peoples’ access to college education across Canada (IAHLA, 2011). The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learner Association (2011) reviewed the existing research and literature on initial assessment practices and Aboriginal education in Canada and reported that it is evident that assessment should be aligned with Aboriginal pedagogy and epistemology: “By following the ideology of the most recent Canadian research, a holistic lifelong learning framework would support the development of initial assessment tools and practices for Aboriginal adult learners to be shared throughout post-secondary institutes. These assessment tools and practices should engage and develop within the Aboriginal view of a learning framework. Assessment tools and practices should integrate the following components: “holistic, lifelong learning, learner-centered and experiential,
integrate Aboriginal and Western knowledge, rooted in Aboriginal languages and cultures, communal activity, respectful of Aboriginal Cultures and critically reflective and action-oriented” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010, p35).

Aboriginal students from rural and remote regions often struggle with assessment practices. Chief Eugene Hart of Sheshatshiu emphasized that present assessment practices disadvantaged most Innu youth because Innu is their First Language (Key Informant Interview, 2016). Miawpukek First Nation Elder, Priscilla Drew provides an Elder’s perspective on educational practices including assessments. She says “Elders are needed to provide the spiritual components and sacred teachings necessary to the traditional teachings which support a balanced life. Elders help students to succeed in all aspects of their education through sacred teachings which enhance connections to all aspects of their culture including ancestors, to their relations including animals, to their land and the waters surrounding it and so on. Elders are needed to provide students with hands on skills to connect their curriculum and educational experience with traditional teachings.” She emphasized the necessity of “...respecting the role of Elders and Traditional Knowledge in all aspects of college life and education”” (Taylor et al, 2014, p7-8).

In addition to assessments, Aboriginal students from rural and remote communities have to consider, high travel and rental costs and other concerns (Holmes, 2006; Bruce et al, 2010). Miriam Lyall, Inuit Elder, is especially aware of the role of Elders for those students who have moved away from rural and remote communities for education: “Elders have to be a support for all students especially those who are away from home and those students who do not have family to go to. Elders have to help students accept and enjoy challenges, enjoy life as well as study. If they never experienced enjoyment in childhood, they can be shown. Elders can be a friend when there are no friends. Elders teach students to live the best way they can: to know themselves, not to forget their people, and help students to feel grounded by connecting to the land” (Taylor et al, 2014, p10).

There are promising practices which acknowledge some of the challenges identified by Elder Miriam Lyall as confronting Aboriginal students from rural and remote communities emerging from some post-secondary institutions in Atlantic Canada. Bruce et al (2010) identifies several post-secondary institutions in the Atlantic region with promising practices that are serving to reduce the impact of long travel distances between post-secondary institutions and First Nations communities. They include, “CBU, located in Sydney, Nova Scotia is close to the large First Nations communities of Membertou and Eskasoni and has a large Aboriginal student population. CBU is home to the Unama’ki College (formerly the Mi’kmak College Institute) which provides a variety of Aboriginal services such as the Mi’kmak Resource Centre and Mi’kmak Student Support. CBU has the largest Mi’kmak student population in Eastern Canada and the highest number of Mi’kmak graduates each year (CBU, 2009). CBU, St. Francis Xavier University, and St. Thomas University and the University of New Brunswick (UNB), all offer targeted programming on reserve which enables First Nations students to remain connected with their home communities, and often to study part-time while working. In certain community colleges that are located near reserve communities there are also large Aboriginal
student populations. For example, at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Truro campus near Millbrook First Nation an estimated 10 percent of the student body is Aboriginal” (Bruce et al, 2010 p12). The HVGB campus of CNA, which has one of the highest Atlantic Aboriginal student populations per capita (sixty-five percent in 2016), has long recognized the importance of having satellite facilities in remote communities on Labrador’s Northern coast (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Another barrier to Aboriginal post-secondary education is the experience of being first generation students. First generation students are those whose parents or guardians did not attend post-secondary institutions (Duchaine et al, 2012). Current Aboriginal students are likely to be the first in their family to attend post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, Profile of Aboriginal Children, Youth and Adults, 2013). This is significant as parental education has been identified as the single greatest predictor of whether a student will attend post-secondary education. Parents who have attended post-secondary provide encouragement, motivation and important information to their children (Duchaine et al, 2012).

The most substantial issue facing Aboriginal education is the lack of adequate funding. According to the literature, financial challenges are the number one barrier to Aboriginal people accessing and completing post-secondary education (Bruce et al, 2010). There has been a funding freeze for all Bands in Atlantic Canada for post-secondary education since 1996. INAC continues to provide $11,725 per unit (per student) per year (Bruce et al, 2010). Typical costs for maintaining a post-secondary education student is approximately double this amount leaving most Aboriginal students living below the poverty line (Bruce et al, 2010). What is needed, now, according to the “Calls for Action” of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) is the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over education, at all levels, accompanied by sustained funding to allow an education with an emphasis on First Nations languages and cultural values. Many previous studies have identified that there are significant financial costs for Aboriginal people who attend post-secondary education institutions, including housing, daycare, and relocation costs in addition to tuition fees (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Auditor General of Canada, 2004; Assembly of First Nations, 2005; Mendelson, 2006; Holmes, 2006; Berger et al, 2007; Mayes, 2007; Bruce et al, 2010). These studies note that current approaches to providing financial assistance to Aboriginal students are inadequate because it is usually limited to tuition fees. Many post-secondary education Aboriginal students are also single parents and Aboriginal single mothers have the greatest challenges accessing education and finding employment (Bruce et al, 2010).

**Barriers to Labour Force Entry**

Increasing the number of post-secondary educated Aboriginal people has the potential to increase Atlantic Canada’s labour force; enhancing Aboriginal community economic development and strengthening self-determination and self-government. Atlantic Canada has positive evidence of the connections between completing post-secondary education and positive labour market outcomes among First Nations. Bruce (2010) provides an example of MK First Nations communities. They had an increase of almost 10 percent in completion of post-
secondary education from 1991-2001. Orr et al (2004) also reported an increase from 36 percent to 51 percent in the labour force participation rates among residents of MK First Nations communities contrasting with a 5 percent labour force of 1.5 percent among all Canadians in the same time frame. Clearly, in this Nova Scotia example, participation rate increase for all on-reserve registered (usually rural) Aboriginal populations and improved post-secondary education outcomes are positively related to a corresponding increase in labour market participation. Sharpe and others (2010) predict an increase in the Atlantic Canada Aboriginal workforce from 2001 to 2017 could be as high as 43 percent and for Canada as a whole, 54 percent. The percent change in the employment rate among Aboriginal people in Atlantic Canada may be as high as 72 percent and for Canada, 76 percent (Sharpe et al, 2010).

However, Services Canada (2014) has identified Aboriginal youth as having the lowest labour force participation and highest unemployment rates of all youth groups in Atlantic Canada. It is concerning that, according to Services Canada (2014) Aboriginal youth accounted for close to 5% of the Region’s overall youth population, and for almost one quarter of its Aboriginal population. Moreover, the number of Atlantic Aboriginal youth in the Region increased by 8,515 or by 62% between 2001 and 2011 (Services Canada, 2014). According to the 2011 Census, approximately 144,415, or 35%, of youth in Atlantic Canada were living in rural areas. By comparison, fewer than 16% of youth nationally were rural residents. The size of the rural population varies greatly from one province to another within Atlantic Canada. The share of rural youth was highest in NL at 44% and lowest in NS at 29%. In NB, the share was 35% and in PEI it was 39% (Services Canada, 2014). Services Canada also says, “Both in Atlantic Canada and nationally, levels of educational attainment are lowest for Aboriginal youth and highest for immigrant youth. In 2011, the share of the Region’s Aboriginal youth aged 20-29 with no certificate, diploma or degree was just over twice that of non-Aboriginal youth (20.2% versus 9.7%). Within the Region, NB had the highest percentage of Aboriginal youth without any educational certification while NS had the lowest (23% versus 17.5%). An estimated 20% of Aboriginal youth in NL had no certificate, diploma or degree. For PEI, the sample size was too small for estimates to be reliable. Between 2006 and 2011, the levels of educational attainment improved slightly with fewer individuals, whether Aboriginal or not, with no certificate, diploma or degree. In 2006, the share of the Region’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth with no formal educational certification was 25% and 12%, respectively,” (Services Canada, 2014, p15).

Consequently, “Aboriginal youth in Atlantic Canada are as less likely to be in the labour force as compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In 2011, 57.2% of Aboriginal youth in the Region participated in the labour market, just over 11 percentage points below the rate for non-Aboriginal youth (68.9%). Nationally, the gap between the labour force participation rates of Aboriginal (55%) and non-Aboriginal (69.3%) youth was wider at 14.3 percentage points at the time of the NHS,” (Statistics Canada, 2013b). There is also a concerning disparity in the unemployment rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Youth.” At approximately 26%, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal youth in the Region was significantly higher than the rate for their non-Aboriginal counterparts (17%), a nine percentage point difference. Unemployment is particularly high among the on-reserve population. In 2011, the
unemployment rate was almost 43% for Aboriginal youth living on reserves in Atlantic Canada” (Services Canada, 2014, p15).

For those who aspire to college education, there is substantial concern that Canada’s College System is not able to meet the demand for specialized training (Ogilvie et al, 2011). This may be contributing to the low numbers of Aboriginal students in college, also limiting their accessibility to the labour force. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) also points out that waiting lists are preventing students from timely registration for many college programs. Some community colleges have a two-year waiting list (ACCC, 2013). “The unavailability of places in some programs represents a barrier to access in itself.” (Ogilvie et al, 2011, p11).

Moreover, the limited number of Aboriginal supervisors makes apprenticeships less welcoming for Aboriginal students. Racism is evident in post-secondary education throughout Canada (Berger et al, 2007). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission stated that most Canadians are unaware of the history and effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples and the basis for this ignorance can be often found in the systems of education throughout the country. The Commission reinforces this statement in its calls for action for appropriate and effective teaching of Aboriginal histories, cultures and current colonialism which requires that educators are culturally competent and Aboriginal students feel culturally safe (TRC, 2015).

Cultural competence and safety are described as the degree to which teachers’ attitudes, knowledge and skills ensure that Aboriginal histories and cultures are respectfully represented in the curriculum and the degree to which Aboriginal students feel visible, respected and empowered (Shah and Reeves, 2015). Shah and Reeves (2010) assert that cultural competence and cultural safety benefit all students and prepare them for an inclusive, anti-oppressive and anti-racist participation in education and in the labour force.

Summary

Aboriginal students from rural and remote communities have a wide scope of unique life experiences that affects and informs their learning. Many of these students have had difficult and negative learning experiences in secondary schools. Promising practices for admission to, retention in and completion of college programs and transition to labour force must take into account where the learner is coming from, in order to support the learner through the process. Aboriginal education that includes these practices and strategies will allow for the Aboriginal student to achieve greater success in post-secondary education. Aboriginal people will be able to tap into a greater source of traditional and prior knowledge and use their experience to access college education and successfully enter Canada’s skilled labour force. Their success is heavily dependent on increased funding for all levels of education. Some of the calls for increased funding for Aboriginal students in primary, secondary, ABE and post-secondary education are listed below:
The AFN has stressed the urgency of increased funding for education for some time. The First Nations Education Action Plan (2005) and subsequent calls for action in education were largely ignored. Consequently, AFN prepared an Education funding human rights complaint pursuant to Section 5 of Canadian Human Rights Act. “The issue is that First Nations children and Youth living on reserve and attending on-reserve schools across Canada are denied access to the same standard of primary and secondary education programs and services available to children living off reserve” (AFN, 2013, p1).

The Calls to Action continue in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2015) and reflects the urgency outlined in this literature review:

“Education is a fundamental human and Aboriginal right, guaranteed in Treaties, in international law, and in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In particular, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contains a powerful statement on the right to education under community control. The Declaration states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.” (United Nations, 2012, Article 14:1). “The Commission believes that fulfilling the promise of the Declaration will be key to overcoming the legacy of the residential schools” (Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report 2015, p146). The following calls to action, only two of those submitted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its final report, are presented here:

- “We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.” (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p147).

- “We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.” (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p151-2).
Research Methodology

The Aboriginal Community Economic Research (ACER) model forms the theoretical framework of this research project. This model is based on the belief that all Aboriginal community members have an essential role to play in the development and management of their resources in order to achieve sustainable and healthy lifestyles through reasonable means. ACER takes the perspectives that the reality of everyday life is conveyed through social and political institutions which are made by people and can be remade by people. One of the objectives of ACER is to provide the community and institutions with a research framework to consciously define itself and analyse its values and norms (Taylor, 2011; Taylor et al, 2013).

The model is guided by Aboriginal participatory research processes to assist communities and institutions in evaluating and building frameworks as conceptual structures that they can use in economic planning and development. As such, it follows a malleable methodology which emerges from the participants, is sensitive to Aboriginal ways of knowing and is respectful of Aboriginal culture. It does not impose approaches but listens to the data as it emerges, follows the wishes of the participants while balancing ethical research practices. ACER provides the tools and framework for creating a creative environment to develop a research project that reflects the values, needs and concerns of the Aboriginal participants. The research project was generated by recommendations from a design workshop attended by Aboriginal students, Elders, community members and faculty and staff of the HVGB campus of the CNA and fits with the participatory nature of this model. The AAEDIRP held the research design workshop in October 2014, in HVGB, Labrador to explore the role of Elders in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students in college industry programs and in their transition into the workforce. The Role of Elders in Post-Secondary Education (Gathering) was the first collaboration between the AAEDIRP and a community college. The CNA, HVGB campus was selected for the Gathering because of its high numbers of Aboriginal students and its demonstrated commitment to inclusion of Elders and Traditional Knowledge. This workshop provided 16 recommendations. One recommendation was that research be undertaken to examine the issues and challenges experienced by Aboriginal students as they seek to acquire the education necessary to pursue meaningful employment.

The project followed a dual approach:

Collecting Quantitative Data

The researchers worked with the selected Aboriginal communities to identify the numbers of students attempting to transition to post-secondary institutions, in particular colleges. This included secondary education graduation/completion rates, support programs and career planning initiatives. It also involved requests to colleges and institutions in their regions to identify numbers, trends and issues of students, support programs, historical and emerging trends, which programs they are pursuing and completion rates (see Appendix A for
questionnaire). The intention was to establish a context for historical and emerging needs in the selected communities.

Lack of Reliable Quantitative Data

While one of the project’s main objectives was to identify practices and issues surrounding increasing retention and, especially, enrolment rates for Aboriginal people at the college level, existing data does not allow these issues to be quantified. When statistical information is included in the report, it should be seen as indicators of general observations. Statistical comparisons between college enrolment and completion rates could not be made as colleges were unable to provide data and gender analysis. While many of the initiatives were identified as having had positive impacts on improving Aboriginal education rates at college level, few had quantitative data of their success and failure rates. This data was collected either internally or from varying sources with different assumptions and methodologies. One methodological shortcoming is the lack of statistical data on Aboriginal ancestry by program. Many institutions have a limited ability to track Aboriginal enrolment or retention rates. This is also true for identifying numbers of Aboriginal students on waiting lists. The data that were available often depended on student self-identification, which could be based on varying definitions of what it means to be Aboriginal. As a result, numbers for enrolment or completion are often estimates.

Collecting Qualitative Data

The objective of this portion of the research is to obtain a deeper understanding of the barriers to post-secondary training and labour force entry experienced by Aboriginal youth. Three communities were selected for the study: PLFN, TFN, and Sheshatshiu Innu Nation. Originally Natuashish Innu Nation was included in the study. However, key informants were unavailable due a community crisis during the data gathering period. Therefore, Sheshatshiu replaced Natuashish as a research community in the project. These communities differ in their rural and/or remote location, level of economic development and, presumably, in the degree to which student successful entry and completion of college education is an issue. Miawpukek has been selected for the promising practises case study as it was identified in a Pan Canadian study (Philpott et al, 2004) as being exemplary in high school completion and post-secondary participation for Aboriginal Youth. Miawpukek is the traditional Mi’kmaw name and used in most documents produced by Miawpukek First Nation Government.

Documents produced elsewhere frequently use “Conne River”. Miawpukek became a permanent community around 1822 and was designated Samiajij Indian Reserve under the Indian Act in 1987. It is located on the south coast of the island of Newfoundland and is 224 km from the nearest service centre. The population is approximately 920. A letter of support for the research has been provided by Chief Mi’sel Joe (See Appendix B).

Sheshatshiu Innu Nation is located in the heart of Nitassinan, the Innu land as it is called by the Innu Nation. With a population of about 1300, it is one of the two Innu settlements in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The local institution that governs Sheshatshiu is the
Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation Band Council. A letter of support for the research has been provided by the Band Council Manager, Gregory Pastitshi (See Appendix B).

TFN is one of six Wolastoqey (Maliseet) Communities. It is the largest of the Wolastoqey communities with a population of approximately 2500. The community is located on the north side of the St. John River which is approximately 200 miles northwest of Fredericton. It was established in 1801 with nearly 20,000 acres of land. Over the years Tobique’s land was reduced to 6,000 acres. A letter of support for the research has been provided by Chief Ross Perley and Council of TFN (See Appendix B).

PLFN is a Mi’kmaq community on the Northumberland shore of Nova Scotia near the towns of New Glasgow and Pictou. The community experiences high unemployment, with limited full-time employment opportunities for community members. The Director of Education, Sheila Francis, has identified that understanding the challenges that students face around pursuing post-secondary college education is a priority for her and she welcomes the opportunity to participate in the study. PLFN has a total registered population of 651, with 477 on-reserve. Like most reserves approximately 30% are under the age of 25. A letter of support for the research has been provided by Sheila Francis, Director of Education (See Appendix B).

Interviews, focus groups and facilitated workshops helped the participants identify the required data. Participants in this phase of the research were identified by the Elders and community leaders and included: educators, economic development officers, career counsellors, employment counsellors and college recruitment staff, Band managers, parents, Elders, and other community leaders. It also included student support officers at identified post-secondary institutions.

In order to maintain consistency in questioning, interview guides to orient the interviews and group discussions were used (see Appendix A for questionnaires). However, in keeping with the research methodology, these questions were intended simply to open discussions to allow an in depth exploration of the topic. Interviews were recorded, when participants were comfortable, and transcribed, and analyzed using available qualitative data analysis software in order to identify common themes and particular insights. Field notes were also kept by the researchers and transcribed accordingly. Before all interviews, participants completed informed consent forms (see Appendix A for consent form).

Limitations of Research

A major challenge to this research is the lack of data on Aboriginal ancestry as well secondary and post-secondary participation rates. Another challenge was the late start of the research project due to delay in receipt of funding. This delayed application to the Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch. The Ethics Watch process took considerable time for approval. Therefore, the project start date was delayed until the winter season. This created additional barriers due to inclement weather and poor travel conditions to remote locations. The researchers were located across Atlantic Canada and used email and conference calls for collaboration. This
limited the depth of the collaborative process. The research scope of this project is limited by these as well as financial constraints.

**Scope of the Case Studies**

The following communities were selected because they represented a range of communities on the basis of rural and/or remote location, linguistic communities and differences in college admissions.

**COMMUNITY 1**
Rural First Nation Community, New Brunswick. Tobique First Nation. David Perley

**COMMUNITY 2**
Rural First Nation, Nova Scotia. Pictou Landing. Diana Lewis

**COMMUNITY 3**
Rural and Remote Community, Newfoundland and Labrador. Sheshatshiu. Dr. Sharon Taylor

**COMMUNITY 4**
Rural and Remote Community, Newfoundland and Labrador. Miawpukek. Dr. Sharon Taylor and Victoria Balsom

**Ethics Review**

The Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch Committee, CBU, reviewed and approved the project on November 9, 2015 (See Appendix C). In addition, approval has been received from communities selected for the research (See Appendix B).

An AAEDIRP advisory committee was established for the overall project. A signed agreement between the research team and APC further reflects and protects community interests. This agreement identifies joint ownership of the data and of the products of the research, as well as a joint decision making process and the role of the advisory committee to monitor, inform and communicate the project as it unfolds. The research team met with Chiefs and Band Council members both to explain the research in detail and to obtain their agreement to participate.

**Data Security and Disposition**

All members of the research team were involved in direct data collection and analysis. They were responsible for maintaining the security of the data collected, especially in order to protect against loss of the data or to prevent unauthorized access that would jeopardize the anonymity of respondents or the confidentiality of the information. As is customary in social science research, information such as interview notes, tape recordings and transcribed records were kept in one or more locked filing cabinets, while electronic data were stored in password-protected computers.
At the completion of this study, raw data of the kind described in the paragraph above will be destroyed unless the research team and the APCFNC jointly decide that it has archival value and should be retained. Under these circumstances, a storage location is identified and a protocol developed to protect the anonymity of respondents and the confidentiality of the data and all data is returned to the APCFNC for storage.

**Capacity Building**

A project such as this recognizes that knowledge resides in all corners and that interactions are mutually advantageous. The research team was enriched by the community-based knowledge and the participatory nature of the project. At the same time, the communities were assisted by the knowledge of the individual researchers, and the skills and perspectives they brought. Collectively, new relationships, practices, skills and communications will forge stronger connections between the AAEDIRP and the communities.

**Plans for Research Dissemination**

The first obligation with respect to research dissemination is to return to the four study communities to discuss the results of the research with interested persons including the leadership and to obtain their advice in framing the recommendations. Those communities, as well as the respective advisory committees, will help identify ways of disseminating the findings through methods including, but not limited to, community presentations, Aboriginal gatherings, and academic conferences. The final report will be published by APC, and made available on their website. Finally, members of the research team are familiar with relevant Canadian and international journals for publications of a more academic nature. Dissemination of the research project has begun including presentation to: The Steering Committee of AAEDIRP, Dartmouth, NS on Feb. 18, 2016; the Project Advisory Committee, Dartmouth, NS on Feb. 19, 2016; AAEDIRP and CNA, HVGB Workshop “Making Connections” March 9 - 10, 2016, and Elders’ Council Meeting, Fredericton, NB on March 18, 2016. Additional dissemination presentations are being planned.
Tobique First Nation: A Case Study of the Challenges and Supports for Accessing Post-Secondary Education

David Perley

Introduction to Tobique First Nation:
TFN is one of six Wolastoqey (Maliseet) communities in New Brunswick. It is the largest of the Wolastoqey communities with a population of approximately 2500. Of this amount, two-thirds are living within the community and the remaining members live outside (rural and urban areas). The local government structure includes a Chief and twelve Councillors. The Chief and Council has adopted a portfolio system whereby each Councillor is responsible for the development of policies as well as monitoring administrative adherence to policies and program guidelines developed by the local government.

The community is located at the point of the Tobique River and Wolastoq (now named St. John River), which is approximately 200 kilometers northwest of Fredericton, NB. It was established in 1801 with nearly 20,000 acres set-aside for community members and over the years Tobique’s land size was reduced to 6,000 acres due to non-Native squatters encroaching on Tobique’s land base. The Tobique Specific Land Claim is now addressing the loss of approximately 14,000 acres of land. The community will hold a referendum in the next few months to determine if it should accept the government’s compensation offer for loss of land.

Tobique has an elementary school (k-6) and the enrolment for the current school year is approximately 95 students. Children from the community also attend public schools located in Perth-Andover, which is a non-Native community located approximately 7 kilometers from Tobique. The total enrolment for the public schools is 285 for the current school year. Tobique expects to graduate 35 high school students in June 2016. In addition, Tobique is funding 75 students attending post-secondary institutions. They are enrolled mostly at UNB, St. Thomas University, New Brunswick Community Colleges and New Brunswick College of Crafts and Design.

LANGUAGE:
Linguists have described our Wolastoqey language as an endangered language, which means that the majority of the community members are not fluent language speakers of our ancestral language. For endangered languages, Elders of the community are the only fluent speakers within the language group. In recent years, our younger generations have expressed a desire to learn their ancestral language and our Elders are willing to teach them basic language skills. As the table below shows, only 14.9% of Tobique’s population speaks Wolastoqey language at home. Of course, these would be our Elders.
### Languages characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Knowledge</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal language(s)</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only **</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French only **</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; French **</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Languages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Pop. with Aboriginal languages first learned (%) | 13.5 | 11.7 | 14.4 |
| Pop. with Aboriginal spoken at home (%)        | 14.9 | 13.6 | 16.3 |
| Pop. with knowledge of Aboriginal lang. (%)    | 25.5 | 25.2 | 26.0 |

Source: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Note: Census and NHS data are based on the total population enumerated within the Census Subdivision (communities) affiliated to this First Nation.

Our local school (Mahsos) has a Wolastoqey language program for its students. A full-time language teacher offers language in most grades. In addition, community-based language programs are available for local members to learn our Mother Tongue. These language sessions are usually offered during the evenings and some community members take advantage of the opportunity to learn their ancestral Wolastoqey language.

### Education:

The table below shows that in 2011, of the total number of community members enumerated, 255 did not have a degree, certificate or diploma. The table also shows that more of our members are pursuing trades/apprenticeships or other non-university certificates rather than university degrees. However, we should exercise caution in interpreting the data due to the low number of community members enumerated. For example, the table indicates that in 2011, 55 of our members have a university degree but I know for a fact that there are many more community members with a university degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education characteristics</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Degree or Certificate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 15 years and over</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No degree, certificate or diploma</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or equivalent only</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades/apprenticeship or other non-university certificate</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University certificate below bachelor level</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree (bachelor level or higher)</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Note: Census and NHS data are based on the total population enumerated within the Census Subdivision (communities) affiliated to this First Nation.
INCOME:
According to the table below, the average total income for TFN was $17,084 as of 2011. The average income was higher for males ($18,125) than it was for females ($16,116). For New Brunswick citizens, the average total income was $34,110 ($40,520 for males and 28,000 for females).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income characteristics</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons 15 years of age and over with income</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. total income (all persons with income ($))</td>
<td>17,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All persons with earnings (counts)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. earnings (all persons with earnings ($))</td>
<td>16,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition of total income (100%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings - % of income</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government transfer - % of income</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other money - % of income</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Note: Census and NHS data are based on the total population enumerated within the Census Subdivision (communities) affiliated to this First Nation.

WORKFORCE:
As of 2011, the unemployment rate for the community was 37.5%. It was higher for males (40.5%) than for the females (32.4%). This compares with the New Brunswick unemployment rate of 11.0% (12.8 for males and 9.0% for females). The participation rate for Tobique’s labour force was 50.3. For males, it was 55.2 while the female rate was 44.7. The participation rate for the NB labour force was 63.5% in 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workforce Characteristics</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour Force Indicators</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 15 years and over</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, resource based</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing, construction</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale, retail</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, real estate</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, education</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business services</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, warehousing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TFN is a vibrant, energetic community that has outstanding potential if everyone uses their gifts and talents for the betterment of the community. In our ancestral language, the concept “mawi wiksonultine” means we all work together to achieve a common community goal. Everyone pulls in the same direction and eventually succeeds in achieving accepted goals and objectives. In addition, our Elders recognize the power of post-secondary education in transforming society and improving social, economic, cultural and political conditions experienced by TFN. They also recognize the importance of culture in the education of our children. According to our Elders, this will ensure that our members will become professionals and also have a strong cultural foundation.

**About the Students:**

The following tables provide information about the students who participated in the interview process. The case study interviewed 6 former and current students.

**AGE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 - 24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30- 34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SEX:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STUDENT’S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education Completed</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or trades</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or trade certificate/diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Note: Census and NHS data are based on the total population enumerated within the Census Subdivision (communities) affiliated to this First Nation.
PARENT’S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent’s Educational Attainment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2</td>
<td>Some university</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Some high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 4</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 5</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Trade diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 6</td>
<td>Some university</td>
<td>Trade diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EMPLOYMENT STATUS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, not looking for work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Employed both full and part time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES:

Most students recall negative experiences at the high school (see table 1). According to the students, racism and discrimination was prevalent at the school. They did not feel welcomed at the school and two students had difficulties with certain teachers. The students believed that these teachers seemed to be targeting Tobique students in their classroom practices. The negative environment created by the school certainly impacted on attendance and caused students to feel unwanted, isolated and alienated.

Two students also recall that most Tobique students were placed in level three courses as a matter of practice. In fact, most students expected to be placed in levels 3 or 4 (self-paced) programs. These levels do not qualify students for university entrance. If they aspire to university education, they have to apply for a bridging year program or university preparation programs that may be available in New Brunswick post-secondary institutions or elsewhere. Bridging Year is a one-year program that requires the students to upgrade the courses required for admission and after successful completion of the program, it guarantees acceptance to the undergraduate degree program of choice.

Table 1: High School Experiences

- Level three courses; self-pace program
- Racism, discrimination
- Did not feel welcomed in public schools
- Did not like high school
- Difficulties with teachers
- Poor grades while in high school
WHY STUDENTS APPLIED TO UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE:
Two students decided to apply for entrance into university or community college because they wanted to “get out of Tobique” (see table 2). Lack of employment opportunities was the main reason they decided to leave Tobique and apply for university/college entrance. The remaining 4 students applied to university/college because of parental pressure. In addition to parental pressure, one student also shared that he applied because his friends were accepted at a university and he wanted to follow his friends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Why Students Applied to University/College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I wanted to get out of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mostly, I wanted to get out of Tobique, not a fun place to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I couldn’t find a job in Tobique so I thought it would probably be better to move to Fredericton and go to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My family kind of pushed me to do it; my grandmother would have killed me if I didn’t apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My parents told me to and everyone was going so I felt I had to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I had to because if I would have taken a year off they (Band office) might not have funded me to go to school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHY STUDENTS WITHDREW FROM UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE:
Students admitted that they were not adequately prepared for university or community colleges after they graduated from high school (see table 3). On the one hand, they were not prepared academically because they lacked study skills, discipline and appropriate writing skills. One student claimed that there was no guidance from university/college personnel and therefore felt abandoned by the system. On the other hand, they were not prepared for life in an urban center and this was compounded by the fact they were alone in an unfamiliar environment without parental guidance. Unfortunately, two students from the community focused on parties rather than academics and this had a major impact on their attendance and academic work. They eventually withdrew due to the pressures of submitting late assignments or failing midterms and tests. Two students realized after a few weeks at the university/college that the program they were enrolled no longer appealed to them and subsequently lost all motivation to complete their programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Main Reason for Not Completing University/College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Not ready and not committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Too many parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attendance problem and failing to submit assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did not like the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Realizing that the program was not for them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAIN REASONS FOR COMPLETING UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE:
For those who completed university/college, the majority identified support from community, family, friends and Elders as the main reason why they completed their program. This support was in the form of advice, encouragement and recognition of their accomplishments. Two students reported that their parents had the financial means to provide additional funds for students to pay rent, utilities and groceries. However, the remaining students did not have parents with the financial means to provide additional funding but they completed their programs because they were determined to achieve their educational/occupational goals and objectives. Others enjoyed their programs and therefore applied themselves in meeting academic requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Reasons for Completing University/College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Academic counsellor (university/community college)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motivation to complete the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from community, family, Elders and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal goals and objectives such as finding a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding university/college teachers and instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial support from different sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to overcome peer pressure to party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enjoying the program they were taking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS:
As the previous tables indicate, some students were able to overcome the barriers to successful completion of their programs while others were unable to do so. According to the students, the most difficult barrier to overcome was lack of finances (see table 5). They were forced to secure part-time employment, which had a major impact on their academic work. Attendance became an issue and this caused students to fall behind in their readings and submission of assignments. In the end, this situation was too much to bear and the decision to leave became a viable option for them.

Another factor that became an overwhelming barrier was lack of adequate preparation for university/college life and expectations. One student reflected on her time as a former student at a university/college and admitted that she was not prepared either academically or socially. She recalled having difficulties with her readings and assignments for most of her courses. She realizes now that she should have requested a tutor to assist her but at that time she did not know how this service was accessed. Based on her experiences, she suggested that post-secondary institutions develop and implement initiatives designed to assist first year students how to budget, develop study skills and how to manage your time.
Table 5: Barriers

- Balancing school and family life
- Being too far from family
- Life got in the way
- Lack of financial supports from INAC, administration and family
- Not being adequately prepared
- No support from community, Band and friends when needed
- Forced to find part-time employment while attending university/college

About the Administrators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Position</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 7</td>
<td>Director of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 8</td>
<td>Native Liaison (High School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 9</td>
<td>Manager of Post-Secondary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 10</td>
<td>Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 11</td>
<td>Financial/Employment Training Counselor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrators’ Views on Challenges and Barriers:
The majority of administrators identified funding as a major barrier faced by Tobique students (see table 6). One administrator acknowledged that lack of funding causes stress on students and therefore cannot focus on academics. Student requests to the administration office are usually about funding. Students may be experiencing difficulties in making payments for rent and utilities. They may also lack funds for groceries after they make their monthly payments. One student recalls her friend approaching the local food bank to obtain groceries to last her a few days. This student eventually obtained part-time employment to supplement her educational allowance.

Administrators further agreed that additional funding was required for students attending community colleges. Depending on the trade, some students may require funds for tools, equipment and other items required for the trade. In addition, administrators maintained that funding was required for specific positions such as a resource person at the high school who would assist Tobique students plan their educational path and transition into the university/college. Similar positions are also required at post-secondary institutions.

One administrator emphasized the need to address mental health issues experienced by some students. In addition to culture shock and feelings of marginalization/isolation, this administrator observed that a few students were dealing with mental health issues. In almost all cases, post-secondary institutions and health providers overlook this serious situation. The administrator maintains that this situation can no longer be ignored. It was proposed that post-secondary institutions in consultation with First Nation communities should develop holistic wellness initiatives aimed at addressing mental health issues, culture shock and feelings of isolation/alienation.
Table 6: Challenges and Barriers Faced by Students

- Indian Affairs department is a barrier due to outdated programs and lack of funding (living allowances not sufficient)
- Lack of finances cause stress on students
- First Nation not doing enough job preparation at the high school level
- Funding required to hire a resource person at the local high school to assist students plan and transition into university
- Lack of funding for trade schools
- Some students suffer from mental health issues
- Students do not know where they can turn to for help when they need it
- Some students coping with trauma and intergenerational impacts of residential schools and Indian Day schools
- Culture shock, feelings of marginalization and isolation
- Poverty

ADMINISTRATORS’ VIEWS ON REASONS FOR STUDENT WITHDRAWALS:
The main reason why most students withdraw from university/college is lack of funding (see table 7). There was consensus among administrators that INAC is making it difficult for students by providing insufficient funds. The pattern described by most administrators is that students are unable to meet the cost of living due to limited funding and therefore forced some students to seek part-time employment. As mentioned previously, part-time employment had a major impact on academic performance and for some it influenced their decision to withdraw from university/college.

Additional factors associated with withdrawals were culture shock, being away from home for the first time and excessive partying. First year students become homesick and return to the community at every opportunity. This may result in students missing classes because their weekends are extended a few days. Not surprisingly, they fall behind in their academic work and the assignments that are due increase over time. Students are overwhelmed in their efforts to complete the required academic work and eventually withdraw when they reflect on their situation and come to the conclusion that the most viable option is to return to Tobique.

Two administrators made the observation that the majority of parents of students do not have the financial means to support their son/daughter attending the university/college. These parents have limited income from the social assistance program that provides a bare minimum for survival. As indicated by INAC, the average annual income for Tobique residents was $17,084 in 2011. This translates to a weekly income of $328.54 per week. This amount is insufficient to meet daily costs especially if you have dependents.
Table 7: Views on Student Withdrawals

- Leaving the community for the first time; homesick or having “freedom” and partying too much and therefore avoid studies
- Unable to meet cost of living due to limited funding; forced to work part-time
- Community not preparing students to meet university/community college requirements
- Indian Affairs funding hold them (students) back
- Culture shock
- Financial duress
- Parents do not have financial means to support students

ADMINISTRATORS’ VIEWS ON LINKS BETWEEN POST-SECONDARY GRADUATION AND SOCIAL, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TOBIQUE:
Most administrators believe that there is a link between post-secondary graduation and social, economic development in Tobique (see table 8). They explained that graduates returning to Tobique would increase productivity for the community and therefore succeed in addressing the economic, social, cultural and political needs of Tobique. Furthermore, graduates who return to Tobique will become role models for students attending both Mahsos as well as public schools in Andover. As the number of graduates increase and as long as they are recruited into positions that become available, community members will develop a sense of hope for a better future. It is expected that graduates will help grow a sustainable, local economy.

Table 8: Administrators Views on Links

- Students depend on summer employment from the community and do not bother to look for employment outside of the community
- Local workforce does not have enough jobs for recent graduates therefore limits growth capacity
- Tobique has to grow its economy and bring our educated workforce back into the community
- Increase productivity for the community
- Graduates who return to Tobique will become role models for other students
- Addresses the needs of the community (health providers, teachers, etc.)
- Makes Tobique future more promising; moves the community forward and helps it to grow
- It would better the community
- Graduates can bring business into the community

ADMINISTRATORS’ VIEWS ON WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP TOBIQUE RESIDENTS FIND WORK:
Administrators emphasized the point that employment opportunities in Tobique are limited. The major sources of employment in Tobique are government programs in the areas of health, education and administration. There are a few entrepreneurs who have their own businesses. Administrators therefore convey concerns that graduates who return to Tobique will not find work within the community. This contributes to a local brain drain caused by a weak local
economy. Given the employment situation at TFN, graduates are forced to seek employment in urban centers.

To address the situation, administrators put forth ideas that they believe will help Tobique residents find work (see table 9). These include job fairs, job placements, mentorship programs and training programs that will directly lead to full-time employment. They recognize that the appropriate Tobique administrators need to establish a stronger relationship with universities, community colleges and employers. These relationships will enhance cooperation, mutual support and communication among external agencies and the Tobique administration. Administrators agree that they have to expand employment opportunities not just within the community but also outside of Tobique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: What Can Be Done to Help Tobique Residents Find Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• More mentorship programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job placements for high school students; connect students and employers (e.g. co-op programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job fairs in addition to university and college fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First Nation intervention workers need to establish a stronger relationship with universities and community colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training programs that will lead to employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Universities and colleges need to find partnerships that are willing to take on interns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Universities/colleges need to advertise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About the Elders:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Current/Former Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 12</td>
<td>Councilor (20 Years), electrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 13</td>
<td>Former Councilor (30 Years), currently retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 14</td>
<td>Former Director of Social Services, currently retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 15</td>
<td>Language translator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELDER’S VIEWS ON CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS:**
All Elders reported that the key barrier facing Tobique students is racism and discrimination (see table 10). They described an education system that reinforced misconceptions and stereotypes about First Nation people. The negative environments created in the public schools at Andover made students feel they are not welcome at the schools. They hear from the local youth stories about racism, discrimination and prejudice. It seems to be prevalent within the local public schools. Cultural supports and cross-cultural sessions designed to alleviate racism and discrimination are not available within these schools.

Wolastoqi Elders also acknowledge that lack of funding is a barrier that needs to be addressed by the INAC. Similar to the views of the students and administrators, funding causes stress among students especially for those whose parents do not have the financial means to help
their sons or daughters attending post-secondary institutions. Thus, students come to believe that they do not have any options to resolve their financial situation and ultimately decide to seek part-time employment or move back to Tobique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10: Challenges and Barriers Faced by Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Funding cuts for post-secondary education by INAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students do not fit in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discrimination and racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Misconceptions about First Nation people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tobique students are not accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most parents not in a position to help students financially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living away from home and not being able to adapt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELDER VIEWS ON REASONS FOR STUDENT WITHDRAWALS:**
Elders are in agreement with students and administrators that the major reason why students withdraw from post-secondary/college is related to the funding issues (see table 11). As one Elder explained, it is difficult for students to survive on limited income but the same student may not know how to budget his/her meager funds. Student allowances are insufficient to meet the cost of living expenses in an urban centre. The allowances cannot cover the monthly payments for rent, utilities, transportation and groceries. They know of students who withdrew because of financial difficulties.

In addition to funding issues, Elders also agreed with students and administrators that students experience academic difficulties within public schools and post-secondary institutions. They maintained that students who withdrew lacked appropriate study skills and did not receive the support they required from post-secondary institutions. Support could be in the form of counseling services, mentoring or tutoring. The Elders’ perspectives highlighted the failure of public schools and post-secondary institutions to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of Tobique students.
Table 11: Reasons for Student Withdrawals

- Being away from home, they are on their own and trying to survive in a world that’s not familiar
- First year students get homesick
- Not used to study habits
- Cannot afford to live in a city; funding inadequate
- They do not know how to budget on limited income
- Lack of counselling services
- Lack of support from school personnel

ELDERS’ VIEWS ON LINKS BETWEEN POST-SECONDARY GRADUATION AND SOCIAL, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TOBIQUE:
Elders made a definite link between post-secondary graduation and social, economic development in Tobique (see table 12). They encourage graduates to return to Tobique and contribute to the positive development of Tobique. They identified a need for educated leaders who will also serve as role models for Tobique’s youth. They perceive Tobique’s graduates as the new warriors for the protection of Wolastoqey rights, language, culture and traditions. They will help Tobique’s economy to grow and provide additional employment opportunities for future community members in general and graduates in particular. They will be at the front lines as Tobique deals with the INAC, other federal departments and provincial authorities.

Table 12: Elders’ Views on Links

- Graduates who return to Tobique will contribute to positive development of Tobique
- They (graduates) can help in reviving language and culture in the community
- They (graduates) will be our front-runners for business development
- They (graduates) will be our new role models; future educated leaders
- They will fight for us (e.g. fight DIAND, protect rights)
- Should make Tobique a better place to live
- With higher educated community members, better decisions will be made

Case Study Approach and Findings:
This project (Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities – Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries) explores “barriers to Aboriginal youth living in rural and remote communities for access to, retention in, completion of college education and successful transition to skilled work” (Proposal submitted to AAEDIRP). The objectives of this project include:

- Providing base-line evidence regarding barriers to post-secondary training and work force entry in Atlantic Aboriginal communities
- Identifying Aboriginal approaches to supporting Aboriginal students’ transition into, and through post-secondary training programs.
• Identifying Aboriginal approaches to supporting students’ transition from postsecondary training programs into career paths.
• Highlighting relationships between successful completion of post-secondary training, workforce entry and the economic well-being of Aboriginal communities across Atlantic Canada.
• Providing concrete recommendations to guide policy and programming aimed at addressing barriers to post-secondary training and workforce entry with a view to improving the economic wellbeing of Atlantic Aboriginal communities.
• Contributing to the knowledge on transition planning for Aboriginal students into, through and out of post-secondary training programs.

The case study approach was adopted to meet the purpose and objectives of the study. The Tobique sample (i.e. partners) consisted of 6 current and former students of post-secondary institutions, 5 administrators and 4 Elders. A fourth year Bachelor of Science student was recruited to conduct the interviews with students and administrators. The interviewer is a member of TFN. I organized Talking Circle sessions with the Elders and recorded their responses to the interview questions. The Talking Circles were designed to re-create storytelling sessions that were prevalent throughout the community until the late sixties. These Talking Circles were therefore informal, casual and encouraged a relaxed environment.

An unintended consequence of holding Talking Circles that focused on the project was the desire on the part of the Elders to continue the Circles even after the project has been completed. The Elders enjoyed meeting on a regular basis and sharing their thoughts on community development and discussing the topics highlighted in the interview schedule. In fact, they suggested that the Circle be expanded to include other Elders who may want to take part in the discussions relating to education and community development. They suggested a number of activities that would assist our students succeed in secondary and post-secondary institutions. These activities will be community driven and therefore organized and implemented by volunteers who are community-minded.

All of the interviews were transcribed and distributed to the students and administrators for their review and approval. For the Talking Circles, I recorded detailed notes of the sessions and subsequently shared them with our Elders. They reviewed the notes and confirmed the accuracy of the notes taken during the Circle session.

An analysis of data collected from the interviews and Talking Circles reveal a number of themes emerging from the raw data. These themes are organized in a Medicine Wheel framework, which is consistent with traditional Wolastoqey worldviews. This framework emphasizes the interconnectedness of themes within the Wolastoqey cultural framework. Instead of isolating each theme from other related themes, the framework provides a holistic perspective of the situation under study. It emphasizes an interconnected web of relationships among emerging themes. These interconnected web of relationships are depicted in figure 1 (page 19). The following sections will proceed with discussions based on the themes incorporated within the Medicine Wheel framework.
The theme for the eastern door of the Medicine Wheel is culture. Elders agree that language and culture are important components in the education of Tobique students. They maintain that students should take part in ceremonies, traditions and other cultural practices while they are attending secondary and post-secondary institutions. They further maintain that cultural education will help students to know who they are and where they came from as a people. They will therefore develop a strong Wolastoqey identity, which will serve as a source of strength as they deal with daily challenges and obstacles. These views are consistent with the literature on culturally-based education, which supports the position that cultural education will assist Aboriginal students to develop a positive self-esteem and consequently enhance academic performance.

*It is important to have culture and language in their education. Students should take part in ceremonies, traditions and other cultural practices because it will help them to know who they are and where they come from.*

(Elder 1)

Literature on Aboriginal education also reveals that Aboriginal students experience cultural conflict within secondary and post-secondary institutions. Conflict arises when the student’s value system, traditions and worldviews are not acknowledged within post-secondary institutions. These institutions devalue Aboriginal languages, worldviews, Traditional Knowledge systems and philosophies. The Aboriginal perspective is not incorporated into the curriculum. Wolastoqi students bring to post-secondary institutions their cultural package, which is not acknowledged by the universities or colleges in general, and the curriculum in particular. As one former student stated:

*There was no understanding of our culture and so that was very hard for us to relate. Wolastoqey language was not offered when I attended (public) school.*

(Student 1)

Lack of cultural programs at the middle and high schools in Perth-Andover does not provide opportunities for Wolastoqi students to develop a strong Wolastoqey identity and/or positive self-esteem. The curriculum of the school does not incorporate Wolastoqey content such as history, contributions, worldviews and traditions. Given the fact that identity and academic performance are associated, Wolastoqi students attending public schools are at a disadvantage academically because their identity is not reinforced within the public schools at Perth-Andover.

In fact, student 1 shared her story about her experience with a guidance counselor at the high school who made comments that impacted on her self-esteem. Before the meeting with the guidance counselor, this student identified a number of universities and colleges that appealed to her and intended to apply for admission. When she shared this information with the guidance counselor, the student recalled that he laughed about her choices and this reaction...
from the counselor made her angry. He discouraged her to apply at the universities/community colleges of her choice. This experience made her conclude that the guidance counselor was a “dream killer” and this caused her to develop a poor self-esteem. Two other students shared similar stories about the guidance counselor at the high school.

**SOCIAL/ACADEMIC:**
The southern door of the Medicine Wheel highlights the theme of social/academic spheres of the education system. This theme includes discrimination/racism, lack of academic preparation and lack of academic/social supports. With regards to discrimination/racism, all four Elders interviewed recalled experiencing racism and discrimination while they were attending Indian Day School, public schools and post-secondary institutions (see table 13). They would have been students in the 50’s and 60’s. During this period, Tobique students would first attend Indian Day School in Tobique followed by the middle/high school in Perth. In the mid-sixties, Perth-Andover schools were amalgamated and the Perth school accepted only middle level students while Southern Victoria High School (SVHS) located in Andover accepted high school students.
Elders recalled how painful it was to be targeted by the nuns in Indian Day Schools and later by public school teachers. They shared their experiences relating to punishments for speaking the Wolastoqey language. If Tobique students were caught speaking their language, the nuns would strap them. They also recall nuns, teachers and textbooks using derogatory terms such as savage, barbarians, heathens and wild animals. It was only in this context that the curriculum covered “Indians”. Finally, they do not remember teachers covering topics such as Wolastoqey traditions, contributions, worldviews and teachings.
Table 13: Elder Comments

- I remember there was so much racism in high school and I left when I was in grade 9
- The problem was racism in the schools; we were not accepted
- Teachers had low expectations (academically) of Tobique students
- There were a lot of misconceptions about us such as we do not have to work
- We felt we did not belong because of misconceptions
- Non-Natives think they are superior
- We were treated terribly in Indian Day School
- I saw education as punishment because of Indian Day School
- I felt I was being punished throughout my years in school
- I did not graduate from high school because of teachers

Former and current students interviewed just recently also expressed similar sentiments about their high school experiences. Like our Elders, they experienced racism and discrimination while they were attending middle and high schools in Perth-Andover. Table 14 provides the responses to the question “What was high school like for you?”

Table 14: Students Responses

- A lot of racism
- A lot of fighting at the school
- I was not active in any of the programs in the school because I never felt I had a belonging there in the school
- SV (Southern Victoria) sucks, I am not a fan of the school
- Shitty, but you know that’s the usual thing
- Nobody likes high school
- It was kind of like a roller-coaster ride

It is interesting to note that racism and discrimination is a common experience for our Elders and students who recently attended public schools in Perth-Andover. This covers a period of 66 years. This fact demonstrates how racism and discrimination is well entrenched in public schools at Perth-Andover. For Tobique students from the fifties to contemporary times, public schools have been a source of pain, anger, anxiety and resentment. It is true that Tobique students have graduated from the high school but this is an indication of their resiliency and determination to remove themselves from this negative environment.

All three groups of respondents (students, administrators and Elders) agreed that lack of academic preparation and academic support for our students was a barrier to graduation from high school and even if some students graduated, they were in level 3 and 4 programs thereby limiting their choices for post-secondary education. Level 3 and 4 high school programs do not lead to university entrance and in some cases for community colleges (depending on your choice for program of study). They include self-paced programs as well as individual education plans. A significant number of Tobique students are in level 3 or 4. Unfortunately, most
students who were in level 3 and 4 did not know that they would not be eligible for university/college entrance.

Student 1 recalls “in the self-paced program, it was rare that any teachers were actually teaching us; it was like here’s your outline, here’s your book, you do it on your own”. She further stated, “we were the first guinea pigs for SVHS to do this self-paced program”. She felt neglected and eventually came to believe that teachers did not care about students from Tobique. Elders believed this to be true as well. They pointed out that the lack of academic support for Tobique students suggests that teachers and administrators at the middle and high schools are not doing enough to help our students. Table 15 provides comments from students relating to lack of academic supports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15: Student Responses (Lack of Academic Supports)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I struggled with math; I failed math and therefore could not graduate with others; I needed a tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There should have been more counselling services for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The non-Native counsellor there was not very helpful, it was frustrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There’s not enough communication and there’s not enough guidance to prepare the students, why they’re in school, what they’re gonna prepare themselves to go on out of school and what it takes to go to university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We needed tutoring at the high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was no mentoring program when I was attending high school and college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I always found myself asking my teachers but they were kind of just too busy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the lack of academic supports at the high school level, students felt they were not academically prepared for successful completion of post-secondary institutions. For example, student 1 was accepted into the Bridging Year program at UNB. This one-year program is designed to help First Nation students who want to attend university but do not have the required high school courses to qualify for admission. Following successful completion of Bridging Year, students are guaranteed acceptance into any undergraduate UNB degree program. Student 1 shared with the interviewer that she struggled at the university and eventually withdrew from her classes before the end of the semester.

Students also identified lack of social supports in secondary and post-secondary institutions as barriers to success. Their comments and reflections seem to suggest that First Nations students are not integrated into the social systems of high schools, colleges and universities. Student 3 recalls observing First Nation students interacting only amongst themselves and inter-group interactions were at a minimum (see table 16). Our Elders also shared similar observations about First Nation students not being accepted within educational institutions. Elder 2 stated, “our students cannot fit in, they are not accepted”.

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Table 16: Responses Relating to Social Supports

- I was not involved in any committee or anything like that because I didn’t feel as though I had a voice there
- We never did any activities in the school
- They have to create groups, especially social support groups
- Working in circles consisting of Native and non-Native students because it will help them to meet new friends not from your community
- We need more support circles
- Majority of Native students stick together but collaborative projects will encourage Native and non-Natives to work together

Students also discussed social supports in the context of social activities such as bowling nights, movie nights and informal gatherings among First Nation students. They believe that these activities will help first year students overcome feelings of loneliness resulting from being away from home for the first time in their lives. These activities will also help them to realize that they are not alone at the institution and therefore can call upon friends for assistance or simply sharing their stories within informal settings such as the Talking Circles and other social activities organized by students and faculty. Students 1 and 3 agreed that institutions should establish support circles, which may include both academic and social supports.

ECONOMIC:
The western door of the Medicine Wheel identifies the theme of economics, which includes unemployment, poverty, and lack of funds. There was agreement among Elders, administrators and students that unemployment and poverty experienced by TFN is a factor to be considered when one examines high school success as well as university/college recruitment and retention (see table 17). Most parents are unemployed and they are therefore not in a position to assist their children in meeting the cost of living while they attend university or community college. This is true for students attending the high school in Andover. For example, some students cannot participate in sports because of the cost of equipment and/or fees to participate.

Table 17: Student Comments About Funding

- Funding was a problem and like having enough for materials was stressful when I got into metal cause like before they didn’t give me anything for materials
- I did not have enough financial support so I had to work 20 hours per week; I was constantly tired because of work
- I worked all throughout high school, so I basically supported myself
- As far as support from my community goes, I don’t really feel there’s enough financial support; I know that they do try, but I feel like they could be trying harder to support their students
- My biggest challenge was budgeting
- Band Councils should provide more financial support; right now the Band Council does not do much for education
- The Band Council’s priority should be to find more money and funds for education
- Federal and provincial governments should be supplying more funds for us; it’s not really ideal to go and work 20 hours a week when you’re in your various degree programs
- We definitely need more money; it’s financially impossible for some students to get through school with that cheque ($675/month)
- Universities/colleges need to help students learn how to budget that money
- Financial stresses are playing a toll on their learning
- Majority are leaving university or college because they financially can’t handle it
- Student loans will also help

It is clear that students cannot concentrate on academic work when they are faced with tough financial times. The focus is on basic survival rather than academic success. A single student receives $675 per month and this is supposed to cover the monthly cost for rent, electric, transportation and groceries. All students reported that by the time they covered the cost for monthly rent, electric and transportation, they had only a few dollars left for groceries. According to the students, lack of funds causes stress, which has a major impact on their academic performance at the university or community colleges. In addition, students were forced to work part-time in an attempt to meet their monthly costs. As indicated in table 6, part-time work caused poor academic performance because of the long hours required for attending classes, studying and working during the evenings.

Tobique administrators acknowledge that lack of funding from INAC is a crucial issue that needs to be resolved if improvements are to be made in post-secondary education. Additional funds are also required for secondary education. Students, Elders and administrators identified a need to develop and implement social, cultural and academic supports within the public schools in Andover. All three groups of respondents mentioned the need for funds to educate public school teachers at Andover about Wolastoqey history, traditions, worldviews and teachings. This will require additional funding from INAC. Table 18 provides the administrators comments on the funding issue.
Table 18: Administrators Comments About Funding

- Lack of funding has impacts on studying
- Students are forced to apply for student loans
- They cannot concentrate fully on school because they have to work
- Students are living on $675 per month therefore have to find part-time jobs and pursue their studies at the same time
- Lack of sufficient finances hold them back
- Improve the finances
- More financial support is required
- Students struggle because they don’t have the financial support they need
- The role of Band Councils is to advocate the government for proper funding levels

Our Elders made similar comments about the funding issue (see table 19). As parents and grandparents, they witness the hardship caused by lack of funding. Elder 2 observed that some parents are in a position to assist their children financially while others are barely surviving on income from the welfare program. In fact, student 1 shared with the interviewer that her single parent mother who is on welfare asked the student to provide a small amount of her education allowance to purchase groceries or to pay a utility bill. Thus, this student had to utilize her educational allowance to meet the cost of living in Fredericton as well as to help her mother and siblings survive the financial hardship back in Tobique.

Table 19: Elder Responses About Funding

- Lack of funding for our students is a barrier
- Councils should make sure funding is there for the students
- Some students are financially destitute
- Students need more funding for supplies; relocation grant required for those who find employment and have to leave the community
- Students need more finances

All three groups believe that increased funding from INAC and the provincial government will allow secondary and post-secondary institutions to develop and implement programs and services designed to meet academic, social and cultural needs of Tobique students. These include tutoring, mentoring, culturally-based counseling, social circles and cultural activities (see table 15). Students also emphasized the need for Wolastoqey language programs and more Wolastoqey content within the curriculum. Increased funding will also ease the financial burden faced by most students who are struggling to cover the costs of rent, electricity and groceries.
**TRANSITION TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE:**
The theme for the northern door focuses on transition into post-secondary institutions and the workforce. Students reflected on initiatives designed to assist students transition into post-secondary institutions as well as the workforce (see table 20). They do not recall any comprehensive transition initiatives at the high school level. Information about post-secondary institutions was scarce and usually not readily available. Student 2 claimed that there was no information about post-secondary institutions at the high school he attended and he was therefore forced to obtain the information on his own. This student also reported that he requested assistance from the Native Intervention Worker to find the information he needed. Students suggested that high schools organize career fairs and workshops designed to provide information on various careers, trades and professions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 20: Student Comments About Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There was no sensitivity that was happening towards the transition of First Nation students going into a non-Native school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When I was in grade 10, we kind of had a class which was focused on your post-secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was no information about post-secondary programs at the school; I had to go find it out on my own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was information about post-secondary programs but it was kind of like, packed away, a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communities should organize career fairs for all types of different paths; organize workshops for different trades such as electricity, plumbing and carpentry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tobique band Council should provide meaningful summer jobs for students and pay them well; Tobique has crappy student summer jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While students maintained that high schools do not organize career fairs, Tobique administrators reported that the high school organizes university and college fairs and these were considered to be career fairs (see table 21). They did acknowledge that the school does not have job fairs that would allow students to obtain information from potential employers. Administrators also agreed that students require additional guidance by the appropriate school staff relating to university and college choices and their entrance requirements. Guidance counselors need to be more supportive rather than making judgments on student choices.

Administrators further agreed that it is important to develop and implement programs that will lead them directly into employment. Their concern is that most training programs developed and implemented in the past few years do not lead to meaningful employment within the community. A few community members who completed specific training programs have left Tobique and found employment in urban centers. Unfortunately, not all members who left the community have found full-time jobs and therefore return to Tobique. For those who found employment, it is not necessarily the case that their jobs match the skills acquired in their training programs.
Table 21: Administrators’ Comments About Transition

- We do career fairs; visited universities and colleges
- Need funding to hire a resource person to help students plan and transition into university
- We do not have job fairs here at the school; we have university and college fairs
- I’ve taken kids from here (Tobique) to job fairs
- Deliver programs that create employment on-reserve
- Federal government has to invest into training programs that turn into work
- Develop a strategy that links training to direct employment
- Ensure that training programs will lead to employment
- We need more mentorship programs (job placements from schools)
- Help students meet more employees; need more job fairs
- Need job fairs at the high school; take students to job fairs
- We have a co-op program
- We have an arrangement with a college where students gain work experience and it is recognized as a credit when the student moves on to that college after graduation

Elders identified a need for job fairs and job search programs (see table 22). They are not convinced that current and past training programs have been successful in helping community members find employment either within the community or outside Tobique such as the urban centers in New Brunswick. If community members are fortunate enough to find employment outside the community, they recommend the federal government provide a relocation grant. This grant will provide the necessary funds required for moving and expenses for the first month of their employment. Apparently, this grant was available from the federal government back in the 70’s and 80’s but discontinued by INAC.

Table 22: Elders’ Comments About Transition

- Initiate programs such as job search; help them find where employment is and provide incentives
- In the past, we had Tobique Works; training programs made employment for some
- We have to leave Tobique First Nation to find jobs
- Relocation grant required
- We need better economic development officers and have someone there to seek out employment for TFN
- We need data base of resumes, interests, skills and experiences
- Provide employment information for outside of Tobique First Nation

It is clear from students, administrators and Elders that public schools in Andover need to develop and implement transition programs designed to prepare students for university/community college life and to be aware of academic requirements. All three groups suggested transition programs to address student movement from Mahsos to provincial school,
elementary to secondary, secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to work. Considering the cultural context from which the Tobique students are coming, Tobique students may require more individualized transition supports such as Elders, role models and mentors. It is important that students have a connection with a kind and caring adult not only within public schools but also the first year at the university and/or community college.

**Concluding Remarks:**

The analysis of data collected from the interviews and Talking Circles clearly indicate that the problems experienced by Tobique students relating to recruitment, retention and transition into post-secondary institutions and the workforce is an outcome of deficiencies in the public school system and post-secondary institutions. In the past, non-Native researchers would ask the question “what is wrong with First Nation students that they cannot graduate from public schools and universities?” The assumption is that First Nation students are not intellectually capable of handling academic and scholarly work.

Since the introduction of public school education in the early fifties, the provincial system has failed to meet the needs of First Nation students. This is also true for the post-secondary institutions. They expect First Nation students to change and adapt to the system if they are to be successful. I would argue that it is the public schools and post-secondary institutions that have to change. This is obvious when you consider the responses of the students, administrators and Elders in this case study. Both public schools and post-secondary institutions need to develop and implement social, cultural and academic supports for First Nation students.

All three groups also maintain that the provincial curriculum should incorporate Wolastoqey (and Mi’kmaq) content. They emphasize language, traditions, history, contributions, philosophies and worldviews. Universities and community colleges also have to include courses with First Nation content in general and Wolastoqey content in particular. Wolastoqey students have to see themselves in the curriculum and more importantly they have to see themselves in a positive light. If changes to the curriculum are made in public schools and post-secondary institutions, Wolastoqi students will graduate from these institutions having a strong cultural foundation.

While the public schools and post-secondary institutions have failed Tobique students, INAC has certainly played a role in student withdrawals/dropouts from public schools, universities and community colleges. The department has imposed cuts to post-secondary education, which had a major impact on the student’s ability to survive in an urban setting. Given the meager student allowance, students cannot make ends meet and this causes stress among students. According to the students, this situation had a major impact on their academic performance. In extreme cases, students were forced to obtain food supplies from the local food bank.

The issue of transition into post-secondary institutions and later into the workforce is a consequence of system failure at both levels. It seems that effective culturally-appropriate
transition programs from elementary to secondary, secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to the workforce are lacking. Students admitted they were not prepared academically, socially and emotionally as they moved from secondary to post-secondary. The lack of preparation eventually influenced some students to withdraw from the university or community college. Transition programs designed to assist graduates to move into the workforce were also lacking at the post-secondary level. Students identified a need for orientation sessions to help them prepare for job searches, job interviews and resume writing.

**Recommendations by Students:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What family can do to support students to complete post-secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Listening and always encouraging their children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remind their children not to give up, by pushing them (but not too hard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help in any way possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate pride in their achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep students happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide family stability to keep focus on schoolwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elder’s role in encouraging students to complete post-secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide knowledge and advice/wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing their personal experiences of life (e.g. education, employment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simply listening to the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remind students how important education id to individuals and the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What community can do to encourage students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Find more money for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop role model program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize community workshops for successful completion of post-secondary programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize information sessions on post-secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize a community event that honours achievers in areas of education, sports, careers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize community career/trade fairs; organize job fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide employment to people with diplomas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What schools (high and middle) can do to ensure successful completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Develop and implement culturally-based curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize cultural events at the schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help teachers to understand First Nation cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish a support system (academic, cultural, and social)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help students feel they are not alone in those schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In their final year, teach students about budgeting, how to live on your own, how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to apply to school
- Make information about universities and colleges readily available
- Guidance counsellor should start discussing post-secondary options with students at grade 10
- Find ways for students to like the schools in Andover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What post-secondary institutions can do to help students complete their programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Develop support programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop a tutoring/mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need Aboriginal counsellor positions at these institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide scholarships and bursaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reach out to communities and hold orientation or information sessions in their own communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organize university/college fairs within the communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What federal/provincial governments can do to help students complete post-secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Provide more financial resources for post-secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide scholarships and bursaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do more to advertise the scholarships and bursaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Living allowances for students have decreased but cost of living has increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difficult to concentrate on studies when students are experiencing financial hardships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendations by Administrators:

#### What’s needed for success

- Finances, lack of funding from Indian Affairs
- Concentrate on literacy and numeracy
- Develop and implement social, academic and cultural programs
- Being able to take care of yourself
- Support from home
- Scholarship programs
- INAC needs to provide increases to the program management side which will allow Tobique to improve service delivery to students
- Community needs to improve outreach and support that will link students back to their community; this will demonstrate that the community cares and it supports their students
- Universities/colleges need to recruit First Nation professors as role models

#### What can be done to help Aboriginal people find work

- More mentorship programs
- Job placements for high school students; connect students and employers (e.g. co-op programs)
- Job fairs in addition to university and college fairs
- First Nation intervention workers need to establish a stronger relationship with universities and community colleges
- Training programs that will lead to employment
- Universities and colleges need to find partnerships that are willing to take on interns
- Universities/colleges need to advertise positions created by the private and public sectors
- INAC should provide additional funds to allow Tobique hire additional employees who will support students and assist them in their employment efforts after graduation

#### Programs/resources to help Tobique students graduate or find employment after they graduate

- Develop and implement youth employment strategy (summer employment) to build-up their skills inventory
- Tobique Employment and Training helps students to find employment within the community as well as outside Tobique
- Native Liaison worker at high school helps students to complete applications for scholarships
- Organize university/college fairs
- Scholarship programs available from various sources
### Recommendations by Elders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Need coordinator at the high school and university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One-on-one services needed (e.g. tutoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Families should assist students financially, personally and spiritually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initiate programs such as job search; help them find where employment is; provide incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide incentive for them to come back to Tobique and bring back their skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students and Elders should get together; Elders facilitate supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Council meet with Elders and develop policies and have community members part of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize community gatherings to recognize achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide counselling for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Council should meet with students and identify needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Council should help students and make sure funding is available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students need tutoring at the college level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More supports at high school required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Families should provide more support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide employment information for community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize an education committee to help our students (consisting of Elders, educators, parents and Chief and Council)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


Pictou Landing, First Nation: A Case Study of the Challenges and Supports for Accessing Post-Secondary Education
Diana Lewis

Pictou Landing First Nation
Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) is a Mi’kmaq community situated on the northern coast of Nova Scotia, along the Northumberland Strait, close to the towns of Pictou and New Glasgow. With a registered population of 648, approximately 470 individuals live on reserve (INAC, 2015). According to the 2011 Census, the population of PLFN grew by 9.4% in the five years since 2006, compared to a growth rate of 0.3% for the rest of the province. In year 2011 there were 9 births, 8 in 2012, 5 in 2013, 8 in 2014, 4 in 2015, and 2 so far in 2016. This includes for both on- and off-reserve. Approximately 42% of the on-reserve population is under the age of 20 years, compared to 22% of the general population (INAC, 2015). The average income on-reserve was $16,923 compared to $35,478 off-reserve, and government transfers account for 35% of the income source (as compared to 15% for off-reserve) (INAC, 2015). 40% of the on-reserve population aged 15 years and over has no degree, certificate or diploma, compared to 22% of off-reserve. 34% hold a trades/apprenticeship or other non-university certificate compared to 32% off-reserve. However, only 3% hold a university degree (Bachelor or higher) compared to 19% of the general population (INAC, 2015).

Historical Education in Pictou Landing
Until 1996, there was no school in PLFN and historically students from Grades Primary to 12 were bussed to New Glasgow under the banner of the Pictou District School Board. In the mid-70’s, students were transferred to schools in the Sutherland’s River area, along the Trans-Canada Highway. When a K-4 to Grade 6 School was built by the community in 1996, only students from Grades 7 to 12 continued to be schooled off-reserve to attend the provincial schools.

Contemporary Education in Pictou Landing
ELEMENTARY
Today, PLFN has funding to provide for an elementary school for students from Grades 1 through 6, and offers a child care program and early childhood education program for ages 3-4 years. This funding is provided through MK. Services provided through MK include early literacy support, physical education, and the support of a speech language pathologist (PLFN Education Department, 2014). PLFN is slated to receive a new MK school which will offer grades K-4 to 8 tentatively starting in 2021.

MK is a Mi’kmaq self-governing Education Authority providing educational services and supports on-reserve to grades primary to twelve. The schools provide language immersion courses, culturally appropriate teaching pedagogy and culturally appropriate initiatives to promote student success rates. The 2014-15 MK Annual Report states that MK has achieved a high school graduation rate of around 80% for the previous five years (MK, n.d.). See Table 1 -
**Pictou Landing First Nation School Enrollment by Grade/Gender (2011-2016)** for enrollment figures.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**
Students above grade 6 currently are in the public school system and are provided all the regular services through the Nova Scotia Department of Education in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. See Table 1 - Pictou Landing First Nation School Enrollment by Grade/Gender (2011-2016) for enrollment figures.

**HIGH SCHOOL**
Students in grades 10 to 12 attend North Nova Education Centre (NNEC), which opened in 2003 in the town of New Glasgow. There are 54 teachers and over 900 students. NNEC has a School Advisory Council. Charlotte Brooks is the First Nations representative as well as the Student Support Worker, and she is paid by the Band to support students attending NNEC from PLFN. Students have indicated that having the Student Support Worker available is helpful and feel that she is there to support them.

NNEC offers a Resource Centre that provides support to students identified as experiencing difficulties in regular subject areas who may need extra assistance from time to time, or may need to be provided with an alternate setting in which to write tests or exams or complete assignments. NNEC can adapt a student’s program in order to accommodate learning needs. Individual Program Plans (IPP) structured by NNEC are designed to assist students who have had a psycho educational assessment completed, and it has been determined that the student requires a structured program to achieve academic success. However, curriculum outcomes for IPP students are different from regular outcomes, as it is considered part of the Special Education Program. Students who require an IPP are incorporated into the regular classroom but are provided additional supports to be successful. Parents are provided an opportunity to have input into the IPP.

Students entering grade 10 are required to select courses that align with their post high school goals. Students are encouraged to meet with guidance counsellors if they are uncertain about their selections at this stage. Students are expected to be prepared to make the necessary choices to meet graduation requirements. NNEC offers Advanced Placement Courses for students with an exceptional degree of academic ability, Academic Courses for students intending to pursue post-secondary education, Open Courses which are not designed to meet post-secondary entrance requirements but may in specific instances, and Graduation courses for students who intend to enter the workforce upon graduation.

Students in NNEC are required to take one Canadian history course in Grade 11 and can select from three courses, one of which is Mi’kmaw Studies. The course description states that Mi’kmaw Studies 11 is a course that serves not only to highlight the Mi’kmaw experience, but also to provide opportunities for learners to gain an understanding how they are connected to the history and culture of the First Peoples of the Maritimes. The course incorporates an inquiry-based approach and examines broad concepts such as governance, culture, justice,
spirituality, and education. Students will analyze historical and contemporary Mi’kmaw issues, which enables them to achieve a greater understanding of, and respect for, both Mi’kmaw society and Mi’kmaw contributions to Canadian society.

NNEC also provides a Career Exploration Program which is intended for students who desire an alternative to secondary school. The program provides some academic coursework combined with occupational skills training or on-the-job work experience in the fields of auto systems/mechanic, building systems maintenance/technology, food preparation, service and technology, and retail sales and merchandising.

The Guidance Councillor Office has pamphlets and booklets available to students that assist them in making their future choices and are willing to talk to students at any time. University and College recruiters visit NNEC during Career Fair. (Source: North Nova Education Centre. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://nnec.ccrsb.ca). See Table 1 - Pictou Landing First Nation School Enrollment by Grade/Gender (2011-2016) for enrollment figures.

| Table 1 - Pictou Landing First Nation School Enrollment By Grade/Gender 2011-2016 |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Grade Primary                       |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 2       | 6       | 5       | 5       | 3       |
| Female                              | 6       | 1       | 5       | 6       | 7       |
| Grade 1                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 4       | 2       | 6       | 5       | 4       |
| Female                              | 4       | 6       | 1       | 5       | 4       |
| Grade 2                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 4       | 3       | 2       | 6       | 5       |
| Female                              | 0       | 4       | 6       | 2       | 6       |
| Grade 3                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 5       | 3       | 4       | 2       | 6       |
| Female                              | 7       | 0       | 4       | 6       | 1       |
| Grade 4                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 7       | 6       | 4       | 4       | 3       |
| Female                              | 6       | 7       | 1       | 4       | 6       |
| Grade 5                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 9       | 6       | 5       | 4       | 3       |
| Female                              | 2       | 6       | 7       | 1       | 5       |
| Grade 6                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 5       | 9       | 7       | 5       | 4       |
| Female                              | 9       | 2       | 7       | 7       | 0       |
| Grade 7                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 2       | 5       | 9       | 7       | 5       |
| Female                              | 5       | 8       | 2       | 7       | 7       |
| Grade 8                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 6       | 1       | 5       | 10      | 7       |
| Female                              | 5       | 6       | 9       | 3       | 7       |
| Grade 9                             |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 5       | 6       | 1       | 3       | 10      |
| Female                              | 4       | 5       | 5       | 9       | 2       |
| Grade 10                            |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 6       | 4       | 8       | 2       | 6       |
| Female                              | 6       | 5       | 5       | 4       | 9       |
| Grade 11                            |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 8       | 6       | 5       | 7       | 3       |
| Female                              | 2       | 5       | 5       | 5       | 7       |
| Grade 12                            |         |         |         |         |         |
| Male                                | 6       | 4       | 5       | 8       | 6       |
| Female                              | 5       | 2       | 3       | 6       | 4       |
| Totals                              | 130     | 118     | 126     | 133     | 130     |

Student Supports in Pictou Landing – Community/ Student Perspectives

Students in PLFN are provided with school supplies while attending elementary, junior high, high school, and college. As incentives, students are given allowances based on attendance and marks. When a student graduates from Grade 12 they are provided a subsidy for the costs to
purchase their school ring, pictures, and any graduation fees, and they receive a small monetary graduation award. PLFN pays application fees and confirmation fees for all students who plan to attend post-secondary school. Once in college, students are provided with paid tuition, funding for textbooks, and a given a living allowance.

The Education Advisor, Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq (CMM) Tribal Council, will provide advice to students if requested on the application process to post-secondary school. The PLFN Director of Education hosts a post-secondary education funding information session, and invites staff of Mi’kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat (METS) to demonstrate to students how to fill out funding applications. Students are also informed about how to investigate various schools before they commit, and the staff are able to answer any questions the students might have. Parents are also invited to these information sessions with their students.

PLFN supports the Career Exploratory Program, created in partnership with Mi’kmaq Project for Innovation and Collaboration through CMM’s Economic Development Program. The pilot aims to assist students explore their career options and successfully guide them towards their career. The project also provides workshops on personal development, math and literacy skills, social accountability, and communication skills for students. PLFN has found that these career fairs are useful for the educators as well. The PLFN Education Department also encourage students to attend a Trades Fair sponsored by MK. Over 80 students from across Nova Scotia are supported annually to attend the Annual Youth Trades Fair in Halifax, and are provided with an opportunity to become certified in First Aid training and explore the trades through the support of the Construction Sector Council (MK, n.d.). The Band supports students who want to make university visits. For students enrolled in NSCC, MK makes money available to the college to fund tutoring supports.

**Post-Secondary College Education**

Post-secondary education funding support to PLFN students is provided through the CMM, a Tribal Council established in 1986 representing seven of the thirteen Mi’kmaq communities in Nova Scotia (CMM, 2014). Funding for this program flows to CMM through INAC’s Post-Secondary Student Support Program which provides financial assistance to First Nations or their representative organizations to support First Nation students who are enrolled in eligible post-secondary programs. The program is available to all registered Indian students enrolled in, or accepted to, post-secondary programs at both the college and university level (Government of Canada, 2016). Those of Aboriginal identity have the lowest post-secondary attainment in the province (59%) compared to Nova Scotians as a whole (64%) (Nova Scotia, 2016).

**NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

PLFN is located near both the Pictou and Truro campuses of the NSCC. Student Services such as accessibility, information/counselling/advising services, personal and academic counselling and support, financial assistance, and career planning services are available to all students. MK provides funding support to the NSCC to support the Career in Gear Program. College recruiters
are available to go to First Nation communities and they set up information booths at the MK Annual General Assembly meetings and at the annual Mawio’mi on the NSCC campus.

NSCC holds the “Get Started Program” in May every year. This is an invite sent to all students who are accepted into programs to come to their NSCC campus and meet with faculty and staff who are available answer all student questions before students enter their programs in the fall. Questions cover issues such as how to have a security check completed (required for child and youth care programs, law enforcement), what equipment will be needed (carpentry, practical nursing), access to day care, and so on. (See Table 2 - Pictou Landing First Nation School Enrollment by College/Gender 2006-2016).

TRURO CAMPUS
The Truro campus offers a full range of programs (full-time and part-time), and has an approximately 700 full-time student enrollment. The Truro campus provides a continuing education/online program offering over 70 courses, an on-campus residence, a daycare and a pre-school program (40 spaces). For those students who are unsure about their future direction or interests, the Truro campus offers a Program Test Drive upon request, an online program that allows a student to explore programs to see what is the right fit for what they want to do (NSCC, 2016). NSCC provides designated seats in programs for those who self-identify as First Nation members. A First Nations Students Services Coordinator provides support to Mi’kmaq and other Aboriginal students.

PICTOU CAMPUS
The Pictou Campus is a smaller campus (approximately 600 full-time students) that offers daycare services. Services of the First Nations Students Services Coordinator are extended to the Pictou campus from Truro. The Pictou Campus employs a Student Retention and Employment Coordinator who supports all students at-risk of not completing programs. The Coordinator works closely with faculty, students, and the First Nations Students Services Coordinator, and maintains a visible presence on campus. There is an annual orientation luncheon for students and an opportunity for all students to be introduced to NSCC staff.

Opportunities Influencing Student Advancement to College Education – Community and Student Perspectives

Students who are successful in PLFN are coming from supportive family environments, and are then succeeding in going on to post-secondary school, although they still have uncertainty about career choices. Students who come from supportive family environments know they can turn to their parents for emotional or financial support. Having parents that are role models and support post-secondary education is an important factor in student success. Students who also have older siblings or peers who have already gone on to post-secondary education, find that this makes a difference, as the student may have already navigated the emotional experience of living away from home through the older brothers, sisters, or friends. Students who are succeeding feel that support is available through the Guidance Councillor Office and during Career Fair, but that students need to take advantage of the services and
need to attend the sessions. Those who do not care about school typically do not take advantage of the services available. Students have told us that you have to be prepared to “put the work in” because high school is stressful, especially if you are a high achiever.

Once graduated, students are seeing that education makes them more marketable, but then they are confronted with the limited job opportunities in their community.

**Obstacles and Challenges Influencing Student Advancement to College**

**Education – Community/Student/College Perspectives**

**STUDENT SUPPORTS**

Students need to have access to healthy foods to keep their brains alert and be taught the importance of staying hydrated. Perhaps a Youth Centre that provides healthy snacks, water/juices to hydrate, and provides computer and printer access for students to do homework. High school requires that students complete projects and some students may not be able to study at home, may not have access to computers and printers, or may not have internet access.

Students need to be supported to learn time management skills, which, as students shared, leads to more independence. Life skills lessons need to be provided, with students disclosing that they need to know what the expectations will be once they enter post-secondary college programs, or needing to learn how to cook or keep a budget. Students would like to see the community celebrate their accomplishments more.

Students were clear that PLFN needs to develop and implement a career role model/mentoring program, especially for those students who do not have parents to model after. When parents are not educated, there is a gap – parents do not know how to help. So students need to find peers or other kinship to help them. Native Counselling Units work well for this. Suggestions included expanding the Bring Your Kid to Work Program to allow people to bring beyond their own children to include other children. Students mentioned that families need to be taught the value of education, and how they can support their students to be successful. Students also mentioned that they need support to be taken on campus visits so they can see if they are comfortable with the size of schools, as often the culture shock of going from a rural community to an urban school environment can be overwhelming for them, and has led to some students returning to the community. Finally, students need support to know how to navigate the online tools on the NSCC website, such as course calendars and assignment management modules, something that is often taken for granted that a student should know.
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Information is provided on student enrollment in university programs for information purposes only. (See Table 3 - Pictou Landing First Nation School Enrollment by University/Gender 2011-2015).
ADVISORY SUPPORTS
It was suggested that there has to be more career counsellors available to students when they are making decisions about their post-secondary careers. With increasing pressures on limited funding, students really need to have more support in selecting programs of study that align with their proficiencies, their interests, and their longer-term goals. Perhaps training educators at NNEC to understand the resources and supports that are available to aspiring First Nation post-secondary college students, which they could then share with students more readily and on an ongoing basis. This might encourage more PLFN students to take up the information available. The Student Support Worker who works for PLFN should connect with First Nations Students Services Coordinator at NSCC on an ongoing basis, as an opportunity to share information, learn about programming at the college level, and be the conduit between graduating students and the college, to provide some continuity of support for the student.

ISSUES WITH THE MI’KMAW STUDIES CLASSES
The Mi’kmaw Studies classes are not being taught by teachers who are necessarily knowledgeable or culturally sensitive. Mi’kmag students are embarrassed when teachers focus on the negative aspects of reserve life such as poor health and housing conditions. The sense is that the Nova Scotia Department of Education is not adequately training or resourcing Mi’kmaw Studies, and subsequently, rather than making students feel included, is actually alienating students.

ISSUES WITH NNEC AND IPPS
Students are coming out of high school off of IPPs without having had the appropriate psycho-educational assessments to put them into these programs in the first place. It was suggested that some students use the IPPs as a way to get out of work, without being adequately advised on the long-term implications of the IPP on their educational career. This was mentioned by students and NSCC advisors alike. NSCC then gets students who have never had to study, do homework, or do tests. This creates issues for the students, but also creates issues for NSCC. Without a psycho-educational assessment, NSCC cannot substantiate that accommodations are required for the student, and then must submit the student at this point to an assessment, which can often take into the second term to have one completed. At this point, the student loses a large percentage of their first year.

NSCC CONCERNS
Students are coming to college not having taken the appropriate courses in high school and are faced with upgrading. This substantiates the need for more advisory supports for students. Students not being adequately prepared is seen as a huge barrier to success. Students are not aware of how important marks are for getting into specific programs.

POLICY ISSUES – POST-SECONDARY FUNDING
Costs for tuition, textbooks and the cost of living have risen, but funding to support post-secondary students has not. Most students are having to take student loans or work part-time to supplement the support they get through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program administered through CMM on behalf of INAC. Students need to be educated on student loans,
grants, and bursaries. Students find the funding and application sessions provided by CMM overwhelming.

The policy for post-secondary funding support provides that if a student is placed on academic probation, and then they fail, they cannot access funding through CMM for 2 years. Considering that we are aware that students are already at a disadvantage going into post-secondary education, this needs to be explored further. Funding support should be flexible if students require supports in the first few years. Since students may not know exactly what they want to do (since many have not have the role models to be aware of opportunities), there has to be some accommodation built into the process. Students are left with the impression that the plan they commit at the beginning of their program cannot be changed once they start college. Policies have to take into consideration that Mi’kmaq students already face so many barriers and challenges, that adding more barriers into the system compounds the problem.

Funding levels are capped at rates set decades ago, and students who have no other means of financial support are, what they call, one crisis away from disaster. Funds often run out between monthly cheques, and most students do not have families that can help subsidize their expenses. This situation often becomes overwhelming to handle.

**FAMILY ISSUES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
Mi’kmaq students often have complicated family issues and responsibilities yet do not have the supportive home environments that other students would typically have. Struggle to balance school and family life can be seen as a huge barrier to success. Students may be dealing with sick children, and without support systems in place, often have to miss classes. Family responsibilities can get in the way as there is often no back up for parental responsibilities. Moreover, for those who are close to their family, being away from them adds to their stress. Students who are under stressful daily lives have low self-esteem and adopt an attitude of not caring. Students need support to teach them not to let outside issues distract them from focusing on their studies, because they often get drawn into family and community issues that they cannot control.

Transportation issues are huge for students, especially those who are in rural areas who often cannot afford a car, yet have no access to transportation systems that get them to school. **There were some very unusual issues discussed. These are very important to consider in this report, as they add a level of complexity that non-native students would not face.** There are occasions where families treat student as the breadwinner for the family. They are not in school as a means to achieve goals but as a way to bring income into a household who has no other way to earn income, and so the student is expected to use their education allowance to help family and friends, and may be alienated if they do not share their money. Community members also may begrudge the students success.

**MISCONCEPTIONS THAT STUDENTS HAVE**
Students need to be aware of the risk of taking time off from college studies, thinking they will go back at a later date. It is very hard to do this once life gets in the way. Students need to be
aware that online courses require more self-discipline because students usually proceed at their own pace, whereas a classroom environment is more structured.

**MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT STUDENTS**

Educators often misunderstand a lack of confidence as a lack of discipline. Poverty issues can be overwhelming and affect self-esteem. Students are shy and often will not reach out for help so they will just go home. Many students are parents and have many demands on their time and may not be available for classes. Loss in the community usually impacts Mi’kmaq differently due to extended kinship ties, and family connections often include those beyond the immediate family, so if there is a death, it can impact students much more than in a non-Indigenous community.

**ELDERS**

Using Elders can be helpful to have someone to listen to students and talk to them, but sometimes it depends on the level of education of the Elder as well. There is a generational gap between the Elders and the students in PLFN – they are neither familiar nor comfortable with each other. As well, students notice the undesirable behaviors that some of the Elders themselves exhibit (for example, addiction problems), and are therefore disinclined to approach many elders for support and guidance. Elders are not held in traditional esteem by many students.

**Employment and Training**

**MI’KMAQ EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SECRETARIAT (METS)**

METS provides training and employment supports to First Nation workers in Nova Scotia by providing programs and services to assist First Nation people prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment through skills development and academic upgrading (METS, n.d.). METS gets funded through Service Canada which pays for training, mobility and equipment needs. Programs administered through METS includes the Skills Development Program which provides funding for courses which upgrade skills, and includes apprenticeship training (METS, 2016). The Apprenticeship Program is designed to assist those who are interested in working towards journeyman certification. Mobility funding supports employees to attend interviews which are not local to the employee or to relocate to a new position. METS makes determinations for support based on Labour Market Information (LMI) and the demand for employees in various fields.

**OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES INFLUENCING STUDENT ADVANCEMENT THROUGH METS**

If a student fails after being provided support through METS, the student is unable to access funding supports for another 5 years.

**LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION**

METS uses the Nova Scotia LMI for planning purposes. The unemployment rate in the province as of February, 2016 was 9.1%, and has been stagnant for several years. Aboriginal peoples experience the highest unemployment rates of 15% of the overall on and off-reserve populations, and 27.6% for on-reserve. Unemployment in 2014 is highest in the forestry,
fishing, mining, quarrying and oil and gas industry (22.8%), compared to construction (12.8%). Significant growth was in the transportation and warehousing fields which experienced a 6.6% growth between 2013 and 2014. The labour force participation rate in Nova Scotia was the second lowest of the ten Canadian provinces in 2014, coming in at 62.8% after Newfoundland and Labrador at 61%. Labour force participation rates for Aboriginal on and off-reserve populations is below the provincial average but is most pronounced for those living on-reserve. (Source: Labour Market Information (LMI) – Retrieved at https://careers.novascotia.ca/labourmarketinformation)

APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING PROGRAMMING THROUGH NSCC
Training for apprenticeship is for those who are interested in working in a skilled trade. Apprenticeships can take 2-4 years to complete, but can be combined through in-class/online theoretical learning and hands-on experience gained on-the-job. Journeymen pass on knowledge and skills to trainees (apprentices). Skills enhancement is provided to become a professional tradesperson. A registered apprentice may be eligible to receive Employment Insurance (EI) benefits or other financial assistance to assist with costs of training and coursework. Nova Scotia operates an Apprenticeship START program to encourage employers (not for profits, small business) to hire skilled labour. (Source: Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.novascotia.ca/employmentnovascotia/programs/start.asp)

Typical pre-employment course credit from NSCC can be presented in a number of ways:

• Find employer in your desired trade and complete an apprenticeship agreement together.
• Certificate or Diploma pre-employment course, 1-2 levels credited with 1000-2000 hours of a 6000-8000 hour total in a given trade of apprenticeship.
• 1 course – could equal between 30-40 hours of individual credit when course transcript provided in lieu of certificate or diploma of a recognized pre-employment program from NSCC.
• Subsidized training courses in the remaining levels of trade training. These theory courses coupled with hands on experience are to facilitate the writing of the interprovincial exam. Successfully writing the interprovincial exam will result in issuing a certificate of qualification, otherwise referred to in the industry as the ‘ticket’ or ‘papers’.
• Eligibility to write the inter-provincial exam entails an exam fee, meeting trade eligibility for completed hours, completion of all theory training with company skills signed off by on-site journeyperson.

PROVINCIAL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRESSION & COMPLETION AWARDS
These awards are taxable cash grants available to registered apprentices who successfully complete level 3 (and 4, in trades with 5 levels) of technical training in Red Seal and non-Red Seal trades, as well as to those who receive a Certificate of Apprenticeship in non-Red Seal trades.
CANADA APPRENTICE LOAN
In January 2015, the Canada Apprentice Loan - an initiative of the Government of Canada - was launched to help individuals complete their apprenticeship in a designated Red Seal trade. Individuals can apply for up to $4,000 in interest-free loans per period of technical training. Visit the Government of Canada site for details:
www.esdc.gc.ca/en/support_apprentices/loans.page

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS
Students may be entitled to EI benefits (through Service Canada) while participating in apprenticeship technical training in Nova Scotia. Visit the following site for details - https://nsapprenticeship.ca/about/financial-assistance/ei-benefits

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR APPRENTICES ATTENDING NSCC
The construction industry has created a number of scholarships in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS). Many of these are available to apprentices participating in construction and related occupations to offset their NSCC expenses.

Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will provide field representatives to present details of the Apprenticeship program to each Aboriginal community by contacting 1-902-424-5651

SKILLS CANADA
Skills Canada provides career fairs for students ages fourteen and older. This program provides modular booths where students are provided with opportunities, in an interactive environment, to operate equipment such as excavators, build scaffolding, and so on.

Political Issues
There are many Mi’kmaq organizations who are competing for the same funding, employers, employees and authority. This makes relationship building very confusing for industry. There has to be more coordination among the organizations because it is to the detriment of the employee to have this situation confuse an already limited market. The list of organizations in Nova Scotia purporting to represent the same clientele includes the Mi’kmaq Rights Initiative, APCFNC, Mi’kmaq Economics Benefits Office, METS, and MemSki Projects, Inc.

Industry Within Vicinity
Pictou County is in a period of industrial decline. What was once a thriving coal mining and iron and steel production center, is a region now heavily dependent on a few large employers and small business (Ivany Report, 2014).

MICHELIN TIRE
Michelin Tire employs 3500 in Nova Scotia, 50 of those employed at the Canadian support operations in Pictou. Michelin does not have an apprenticeship requirement as it has its own internal training process due to the proprietary nature of the work. Employees start at Repair Technician Level 1, an internal journeyperson initials off experience acquired (electrical,
pneumatic, etc.). NSCC can recognize Michelin’s training and grant certification. No PLFN members are employed at Michelin.

NORTHERN PULP
Located in Pictou County, Northern pulp manufactures Kraft pulp for export. There are over 300 employed at Northern Pulp (Northern Pulp, 2016). Currently, two employees are from PLFN (security, treatment facility worker). Northern Pulp employs engineers, millwrights, industrial electricians (non-compulsory trade), construction electricians (compulsory trade), machinists, welders, etc.

There has been a strained relationship between PLFN and Northern Pulp since the company has been dumping 25 million gallons of effluent a day onto the shores of the PLFN community for almost 50 years.

HERITAGE GAS
Heritage Gas is a Nova Scotia company that operates a natural gas distribution system in the province (Heritage Gas, 2014). Heritage Gas sub-contracts out for industrial electrician (non-compulsory trade), construction electricians (compulsory trade), Instrumentation Control Technicians, etc.

Recommendations for the Future
- Knowledge about career choices - students need to be provided with role models in traditional employment roles, but also, in new roles that they may not be readily exposed to in the community.
- Parents and students have to be taught about the long-term implications of being on an IPP. Conversely, teachers and school advisors have a responsibility to apply the IPP under appropriate circumstances and to ensure that assessments are conducted prior to any IPP being implemented.
- Families need to play an active role in a student’s college life, going to visit college’s with the student, reaching out to them while at school, visiting them if they are away from home, encouraging them, checking in to make sure they are on the right track, pointing them in the right direction.
- Community to support Career Cruising Program so students know what options are.
- Workshops in personal and academic development can be provided by the community (or the high school). Such topics could be time management, financial budget management, study skills, writing tests and exams, even soft skills like paying bills, making meals, shopping on a budget. However, there must be a way to encourage students to attend these workshops.
- Encourage First Nation Support Workers at the college to “check in” with students at least once or twice in the course of the academic year. Some students may be struggling but their comfort level to approach assistance is not there. It will also demonstrate to the student that someone does care if they succeed or not, especially if they come from non-supportive families.
• Advocate the federal government to increase the funding amounts provided per student. Current rates are capped from over 30 years ago and are not adequate in today’s environment.
• Create opportunities for community celebration of student successes.
• Provincial schools should provide meaningful opportunities for students to display and practice their culture proudly.

Summary

Several issues need to be addressed in PLFN, starting from high school through to college admissions and graduation. High school students identified issues of feeling embarrassed by the content presented in Mi’kmaq Studies classes, which often focuses on the negative aspects of reserve life, and can impact the self-esteem of students who already are feeling marginalized. More alarming, the issue of students from PLFN who are put on IPP in high school was raised by students, parents, and educators and college administrators alike. The long-term consequences of IPPs on educational success may not be fully understood, especially for those students who should not be put on these plans in the first place, and a more rigorous assessment process should be implemented. PLFN has students who are starting to enter non-traditional fields of study, however, more effort has to be made to expose students to other career choice options that are available. Once in college, cultural supports are needed to ensure that students feel a more welcoming presence reflected in the institutions. This need for cultural support extends to the work place with employers signifying a willingness to start the discussion on what this might require on their part. As 42% of the on-reserve population is under the age of 20 years, with 40% of the on-reserve population aged 15 years and over having no degree, certificate or diploma, and only 3% holding a university degree, urgent work is needed to improve the successes.
References


Sheshatshiu, Innu Nation: A Case Study of the Challenges and Supports for Accessing Post-Secondary Education in
Dr. Sharon Taylor

Introduction
Sheshatshiu, Innu Nation is a federally recognized reserve. This case study will begin with the history of the community; and then outline the story of their secondary education system. Next, it will explore student supports and barriers to post-secondary education and to the skilled labour market. Finally, it will outline recommendations for overcoming these barriers and for enhancing support for secondary and post-secondary education.

Selection Factors for Case Study

RURAL AND REMOTE LOCATION
Sheshatshiu is one of the two communities forming the Innu Nation, the organization that formally represents the Innu of Labrador. Some Innu also live in other communities within Labrador and on the Island part of the province. Sheshatshiu, is located where Grand Lake (Kakatshu-utshishtun) meets Lake Melville (Atatshuinipeku). It is located 40 km southwest of HVGB. Statistics Canada has identified Sheshatshiu as a remote community for its 2016 Census. It will be conducting an early census in Sheshatshiu due to its remote location. Residents of the community consider Sheshatshiu a remote community due to the hazardous winter conditions of the road connecting Sheshatshiu to Goose Bay.

Sheshatshiu was selected for this project because of its rural and remote location and because it has one of the fastest growing population in a rural and remote community in the province. In addition, Elders from Sheshatshiu have led the focus on education from the beginning of this process at the Honouring Traditional Knowledge Gathering, (Taylor et al, 2013).

Methodology

The methodology for this case study draws on data from two workshops at the Aboriginal Centre of the CNA HVGB, Labrador as well as fifteen key informant interviews.

WORKSHOPS
Workshop 1, “The Roles of Elders in Supporting Aboriginal Participation in Colleges”, was a Design Workshop for this project organized by APCFNC and CNA (Taylor et al, 2014). Workshop 1 was held at the Aboriginal Resource Centre, CNA HVGB, Labrador on Oct 23-24th, 2014. The purpose of this Gathering arose from the need to better understand how to support Aboriginal students as they move through post-secondary education and into the workforce. The specific focus on how Elders can support Aboriginal students emerged from the APCFNC Elders Project: Honouring Traditional Knowledge in 2010 (Taylor, 2013).

Workshop 2, “Overcoming Challenges in Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education and Employment,” was also held at the Aboriginal Resource Centre, CNA HVGB, Labrador March 9th
-10th, 2016. As part of the research and our commitment to meaningful collaboration, we set up workshop 2 to meet again with the CNA, communities and industries in Labrador to share the research findings and to strategize the required actions to improve students transitioning to college and careers.

INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS
In addition to the workshops, fifteen individual interviews were conducted throughout the research process. These interviews were intended to confirm and expand information gathered during the workshops. Interview participants included key informants such as the Chief, students, Band staff and CNA staff.

QUANTITATIVE DATA
Quantitative data, such as graduation rates, were provided by the Band Council in answer to the project questionnaire. CNA did not respond to the questionnaire. General population statistics were retrieved from the Statistics Canada 2011 Census.

Population Profile:

POPULATION SIZE
According to Statistics Canada 2011 Census and NHS, the on reserve population of Sheshatshiu is 1,314 members with 665 males and 650 females. The population has had a 24.7% increase between 2006 and 2011. The average number of persons per dwelling in the community is 4.5. The NHS noted there were 125 lone parent families in 2011. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

AGE
As of 2011, the median age for residents of Sheshatshiu is 21.8 years, pointing to a significantly younger population than the provincial population median age of 44 years.

LANGUAGE
According to the 2011 Census, 1,135 of the residents of Sheshatshiu listed Innu (Innueimun) as their primary language; 160 people speak English as their primary language and none speak French as their primary language. 15 people list English and Innu (Innueimun) both as their primary languages. Significantly, 1,055 people listed Innu (Innueimun) as the language most spoken in their home.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION
The median total income of persons aged 15 and above in Sheshatshiu in 2010 was $17,562 compared to the provincial median of $25,279; while the median household income on reserve was $51,983 compared to the provincial median total household income of $65,094.

The Labour force participation in Sheshatshiu in 2011 is 53.6 % with an employment rate of 39.2% and an unemployment rate of 27.0%; compared to the provincial labour force participation rate of 59.4% with an employment rate of 50.7% and an unemployment rate of 14.6%.

EDUCATION
The NHS Community Profile include statistics on education levels of Sheshatshiu community members. In 2011, out of a population of 1,314 members, 520 were between the ages of 25-64. Of these 520 members, 265 are male and 255 are female. Of these 520 members, 350 people (67%) have not completed high school or equivalent (170 males; 180 females). 55 people (10%) have completed high school or equivalent (25 males; 30 females) but have not completed post-secondary studies. 110 people (21%) have achieved one or more certificates, diplomas or degrees (65 males, 50 females). Of these people: 45 people have an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma (35 males; 10 females); 45 people have a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (25 males; 25 females); 10 people have a University certificate or diploma below bachelor level (0 males, 10 females), 10 people have a bachelor’s degree (0 males; 10 females). No one is listed as having a post-graduate certificate, diplomas and/or degrees. Note that some of the data provided by Statistics Canada appears to be conflicting since the total number of male and female students does not always match the total population number in that category. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Statistics provide by the Sheshatshiu Band Council, Department of Education show that in 2015, the School achieved a 100% graduation rate of their seventeen student grade 12 class. The school principle reports there has been an increased number of graduates over the last 10 years from 2 graduates to 17 graduates. Due to limited resources, records are incomplete at the school, and no other statistics could be provided.

During the 2014-15 academic year, 32 Band members attended post-secondary studies distributed over 14 institutions. Many of these students attended the CNA at various campuses (12 students), Eastern Quebec College (3), Academy Canada (4 students), and MUN (2 students), with the remainder spread out over institutions across Atlantic Canada and the country.

**History of Sheshatshiu**

While the Innu were one of the first North American peoples to encounter European explorers, they had less sustained contact than other Aboriginal groups in Canada. Tanner (1999) says this is partly because the Innu lived as nomadic hunters for most of the year with infrequent visits to trading posts. They were one of the last Canadian Aboriginal groups to settle into permanent villages in the 1960s (Tanner, 1999). Sheshatshiu was one of these communities. Provincial government officials delegated administration of the community affairs of Sheshatshiu to the Roman Catholic Church, mainly Christian missionaries. In lieu of extending the Indian Act, federal officials agreed to pay money to the Newfoundland and Labrador government for the delivery of education, health, and other services in Aboriginal communities such as Sheshatshiu. The province used some of these funds to build houses and schools in the 1960s. They also made it mandatory for Innu children to attend school and threatened to stop welfare and family allowance payments to families whose children did not attend class. This regulation separated children from families, preventing children from experiencing their culture on the land, and threatened their knowledge of Innu language. Many families chose to stay close to Sheshatshiu because of this regulation thus making hunting and trapping difficult. This resulted
in increased dependence on government services. Additionally, the decrease in hunting had an impact on the many ceremonies and meanings hunting brought to their everyday life and culture (Henriksen, 2009).

The restriction to the vicinity of the villages had other consequences. The Innu families became partially removed from a way of life dependent on the land and separate from ancient teachings (Henriksen, 2009). They sought to hold on to spirituality, culture and language while living in and near Sheshatshiu. They experienced many losses as a consequence of this colonization process. The impact of colonization, including residential and day schools, is well documented in the proceeding literature review.

In spite of historical and ongoing colonization and resulting intergenerational impacts, Elders have continued to provide powerful spiritual, cultural and political leadership. This leadership is evident in many act of resistance against federal and provincial governments as well as against national and multinational corporations. These acts of resistance included Innu led protests about post-Confederation development in forestry, mining, and other industrial developments that occurred on Innu land, but without Innu permission (Tanner, 1999).

Most dramatic among these was the Upper Churchill Falls hydroelectric project, which flooded thousands of kilometers of land in Labrador, including valuable caribou habitat and Innu burial grounds. Although the Innu people used and depended on much of this area for centuries, the provincial government did not consult them before damming the Churchill River. As Tanner (1999) says, from the Innu perspective, this settlement into villages seemed to be part of a concerted attempt to separate the Innu from their land, which was at the time becoming transformed for industrial purposes. The flooding of traditional Innu hunting grounds by the Churchill Falls dam in 1969 caused many hunters to lose all their trapping and hunting equipment. After 1980 the increasing use of airspace for low-level military training, placed further strains on relations between the Innu, the government and their non-Innu neighbours (Tanner, 1999).

The growing social problems of settlement life led to the formation of the Innu political organization, the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association in Labrador (later to become the Innu Nation) in the early 1970s (Tanner, 1999). These organizations improved conditions in the Innu communities, making it possible for some people to return to hunting and trapping.

In 2002, the Innu Nation and two Band Councils (Natuashish and Sheshatshiu) succeeded in having the federal government register the Labrador Innu as status Indians, giving them access to various federal programs and services for First Nations people in Canada. The federal government also recognized the communities of Natuashish and Sheshatshiu as reserve lands in 2003 and 2006, respectively (Higgens, 2009). The land consisted of 804.022 hectares of land which constitute the existing community land base of Sheshatshiu First Nation (Higgens, 2009).

The Innu Nation, the provincial government and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro agreed to include the Innu Nation in the development of the Lower Churchill Falls; the three have negotiated a deal that gives the Innu Nation a minority ownership of the hydroelectric project. In addition, Canadian mining company Inco Ltd. is paying the Innu Nation royalties for its work
at Voisey's Bay. As of 2007, the Innu Nation has received $4 million in mining revenues. The province also developed a Forest Process Agreement with the Innu Nation in 2001 to allow for full Innu participation in forest planning within central Labrador (Higgens, 2009).

History of Education in Sheshatshiu

Colonization efforts have been evident in education as in other aspects of Innu life. As indicated elsewhere, the provincial government denied having any “Indians” in either Newfoundland or Labrador in its terms of agreement for Confederation. Consequently, when Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949 federal jurisdiction was withheld from the indigenous people of the province. One result of this is that the Innu on the Labrador side of the border did not have access to all the same federal programs available to other Canadian Native people. This was true for all level of education (Tanner, 1999).

Sheshatshiu Band members, including students, made presentations to both federal and provincial governments after their 2007 boycott of their inadequate education system and school with mold and asbestos. Consequently, a $14-million facility was jointly funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the provincial government. The new school, called Sheshatshiu Innu School (SIS), had 383 students from kindergarten to Grade 12 and was equipped with 110 laptop computers; digital chalkboards; and a gym floor is identical to the one played on by the Toronto Raptors (Innu Nation Website, 2016).

In 2009, the Innu also formed their own school board called the Mamu Tshishkutamashutau Innu Education (MTIE). The board added more Innu cultural content to the curriculum, reintegrating traditional ways into school life. Since 2009, when the Innu took over operation of their schools, funding has been provided through INAC (Roche Collins, 2014, p18).

Contemporary Education in Sheshatshiu

The MTIE schools follow the provincial guidelines for primary, elementary, and secondary education and the federal government, through INAC, provides funding (Roche Collins, 2014). Roche Collins, at the request of MTIE, completed a report which thoroughly examines the special education service currently being offered in MTIE’s schools, and compares that to the level and type of service offered in provincial schools. Roche Collins made recommendations on how MTIE can bring their special education service in line with provincial standards. Their comprehensive study provides a stark and revealing portrait of contemporary education in Sheshatshiu and the Innu Nation. Rather than dilute this analysis, direct statements from the report are included here:

“In the province’s schools, approximately 85% of enrolled students are following the provincially prescribed curriculum in the regular classroom without any special intervention. The other 15% of the students have been provided with comprehensive formal assessments, have been determined to have exceptionality, and have qualified to receive special education support. Some of that 15% continue to complete the prescribed curriculum in the regular classroom with supports in place; others get modified courses and still others get alternate support.”
courses or alternate curriculum. Modified and alternate programming is only available to those students who have exceptionalities and are unable to complete the prescribed programming. In MTIE’s schools, 100% of the students are receiving modified or alternate programming in some or all of their courses. In other words, all students are receiving special education programming by provincial standards. Formal special education support, in this context, is being provided primarily, but not exclusively, in the form of alternate reading programming to approximately 27% of the students. Further to that, teacher reports indicate that up to 73% of the enrolled students need further modifications to, or support with, classroom programming” (Roche Collins, 2014, p15).

Roche Collins further reported that at the SIS, “All teachers from Grades 1-9 reported that they anticipate covering, on average, from 65 to 75 percent of the core provincial curriculum in Language Arts in their classes for the school year. The teachers also reported that of 271 students enrolled in these classes, only 199 attended frequently enough that they could be reasonably expected to pass the courses. The fact that all SIS students are placed on ‘modified prescribed’ and/or ‘alternate’ programming in the regular classroom essentially means that all SIS students are on programs that would only be made available in provincial schools to students who have identified exceptionalities. Stated another way, all SIS students are receiving special education programming in the regular classroom” (2014, p14).

Roche Collins questions the difference between student performance in provincial schools and student performance in MTIE schools. They include issues previously discussed in the Making Connections Literature Review: “such as inter-generational trauma, lack of sufficient funding, English not being the first language of most Innu children, poor attendance, alcohol and drug abuse in the communities, children having FASD, and children being in the custody of CYFS would all come under review along with a host of other problems” (2014, p17).

They take note of two particular current issues: school attendance and language. “School attendance is an issue: There is a huge drop-off in attendance in both schools as students finish up junior high school (grade 9) and get ready to enter high school (Level I). Teachers in both MINS and SIS report that only 23% of enrolled grade 9 students are regular attenders. Many of those students simply don’t have the basic academic skills needed to successfully complete high school, so they fall by the wayside” (2014, p21).

Roche Collins (2014) strongly warn against misinterpretation of their analysis: “Given the extent to which MTIE curriculum is modified (or watered-down) and given that a large majority of MTIE students are struggling with this curriculum, it is the opinion of this writer that if MTIE students were to transfer to a provincial school a large majority of them would be assessed, would be labeled as having an identified exceptionality, and would be provided with support from instructional resource teachers (i.e. they would officially be given special education programming). This is a strong statement and can easily be misinterpreted. It does not mean that all MTIE students have learning disabilities or disorders. Far from that. The number of students actually having disorders or disabilities (i.e. exceptionalities), in the true sense of those terms, would probably be in the order of the provincial percentage (14.7%)” (2014, p16).
Roche Collins (2014) made 24 recommendations to MTIE and they are available at the MTIE website. In summary, they note, “If MTIE is to have schools operating at the provincial standard, there will have to be a long, arduous, and costly upgrading process” (2014, p18). Finally, Chief Eugene Hart, Elders and others have identified that their current school building (SIS) is operating at overcapacity levels. As indicated earlier, Sheshatshiu has one of the highest birth rates in the province. Chief Eugene Hart said 65 babies were born in the last year. Consequently there are 2 classes of most grades K-9. The high school classes are expected to double in the next few years. Key informants have identified a new school as critical for SIS to operate at the provincial standard.

Student Supports in Sheshatshiu

Key informants identified many sources of support for students living in Sheshatshiu including: family, Elders, Chief, Band Council and staff, Industry Canada, Industry and others.

1. SUPPORT: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF SCHOOL
The community of Sheshatshiu assumed ownership of their school seven years ago. The student numbers have grown due to population increases, as have the number of high school graduates. Elder Elizabeth Penashue also says “there are more and more people bringing their children to school than ever before.” This may indicate more parental support for children’s education since the community assumed ownership of the school.

Key informants for this project say that the Sheshatshiu school has a strong Innu focus since the education system has been governed by the Innu nation. They say that students and community are more actively involved in this school. Elders are also playing a stronger role in the curriculum in new and creative ways such as week-long walk and camp-out on traditional Innu land. One informant said “This feels more like an Innu School.’

2. SUPPORT: ELDERS
A key informant said that Elders have a strong commitment to education in Sheshatshiu. This is reflected in the statement by Elder Sam Nui in workshop 1, “it is very important for young people to be educated so that we can build a better community for the future.”

3. SUPPORT: FAMILY AND FRIENDS
Key informants identified the importance of the support of family and friends for students in post-secondary education. Students say their families help with daycare and provide emotional support. They also say that family and friends provide support in any way they can to encourage students to stay in programs especially when students are going through difficult times living outside of their community.

4. SUPPORT: CHIEF, BAND COUNCIL AND STAFF
Key informants say the Chief, Band Council and staff give students “a lot of time and information” if they express interest in post-secondary education. One informant said that the
Community and Band gave her financial and moral support which helped her through a very difficult education experience.

5. SUPPORT: ROLE MODELS
Key informants say there are role models for students throughout the Innu nation. They identified Elders as role models, such as Elizabeth Penashue, who often advocates on behalf of youth and includes them in her annual walks across the country. Other identified role models include: writers, Band staff, entrepreneurs, athletes, teachers, hunters, archeologists and chefs. Historical role models were also identified because they held on to their traditions and language against all odds. SIS and CNA have photos of role models from the community posted throughout Labrador. Key informants also spoke of community leadership and a history of, as one informant said, “standing up for ourselves against government to protect the land and our people.”

6. SUPPORT: IN-COMMUNITY TRAINING
Band Council staff have worked with Industry Canada and others to develop and implement in-community training programs such as carpentry. Key informants see this model as successful because it has a very high number of graduates and almost all graduates are working at the time of the interviews. Students also have opportunities to have Elders included in their in-community training programs. One key informant says the style of teaching in in-community programs is visual and hands on training which appears to be consistent with Elders’ teaching styles.

7. SUPPORT: CULTURAL STRENGTH
Key informants spoke proudly of their historical and current culture, their ability to live on the land and involve children in hunting, fishing, gathering, storytelling and so on. They say past and current Elders and their teachings continue to be respected in the community. Most importantly, informants say they have managed to keep their language and as an Elder in workshop 1 said, “Our language is who we are and our way of life. If we have our language, we have everything.”

Barriers to Post-Secondary Education
The literature review in chapter 2 demonstrates the relative disparities resulting from the unique challenges of Aboriginal peoples in terms of enrollment and retention rates in post-secondary education. This section will outline barriers that have been identified by workshop 1 and workshop 2 as well as by individual interviews with key informants. The enrolment and completion barriers are not isolated problems but are components of a complex pattern of inter-related conditions. Many of the barriers to access and success that Aboriginals face in the postsecondary system stem from the Aboriginal community’s troubled and complex position within Canadian society. Thus, these barriers are difficult to isolate. For the purposes of this report the barriers are delineated under the following headings:
1. BARRIER: FINANCIAL BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS
Chief Mi’sel Joe (workshop 2) and Chief Eugene Hart (workshop 2) both identified inadequate funding as a central barrier to student success in education. They point out that funding for both secondary and post-secondary education has been frozen for thirty years. As their community profiles indicate, the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing in Canada. However, current funding does not reflect this increase in population nor the increased costs of education. Key informants also identified inadequate or lack of funding as a key concern. One informant said, “There is a huge issue with lack of funding and the students wanting to continue on after high school but cannot because there is no funding.” Another informant indicated that she needed, “more financial support. It is difficult worrying about finances all the time when I have so much more to worry about.” An Informant also said that “it was not unusual for students to withdraw from post-secondary programs because they did not have enough money to make it work.” A student noted that “you don’t know how expensive everything is when you are living at home. It was very expensive for basic things and there was just not enough money.” This student did not finish her program.

2. BARRIER: LACK OF PREPAREDNESS FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
The earlier section on contemporary secondary education sets the scene for the lack of preparedness for post-secondary education. Informants say that students who were accepted to post-secondary institutions reported feeling anxious about meeting the necessary requirements to stay in the program. One student reported feeling “frustration” with math and physics and while she did extra homework, she never felt she was keeping up with the class. Key informants say that many students are struggling with English as a second language and this limits their understanding of and ability to communicate in most post-secondary subjects. One student said, “I was frustrated because I couldn’t do English. It would have been good to have help in English.” Another informant said “we have had 6 or 7 students in first year university drop out, and lose their funding when they fail or leave in the first year. But I believe they aren’t prepared enough to succeed and they are set up to fail. Once they lose their funding, that’s it.” Another informant said, “We had 12 graduates from the school but they didn’t do well in post-secondary. We should spend more money on preparing people rather than sending them to fail and money wasted.” The students who did a transition year at college to bring up marks and then attended 1st year university appear to do better said a key informant.

One informant attended high school in Northwest River because it has an academic stream. Sheshatshiu school offers a general stream for education which prepares students for many college programs. However, students wishing to enter the academic stream must go elsewhere (Northwest River, Goose Bay, St. John’s) for high school in order to meet the requirements for university.

Key informants identified that a new school is urgently needed. It is unrealistic to expect students to perform at provincial standards without necessary infrastructure and resources in the school. The accelerating birth rate in Sheshatshiu means that many classes are already doubled from K-9 and soon will be doubled in high school as well.
Another informant said that professors tried to help him and gave him a lot of tutorials, but after a year he was still not meeting the requirements and “came back to the community and told people I had taken a semester off. I was too ashamed to say I had failed. I never went back. I still feel really bad about it.” This burden of shame and humiliation continues to have an impact on people’s feelings about education long after the initial event. This may also contribute to a reluctance to become involved in the formal education of their children.

3. BARRIER: HIGH COST OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
ABE had been previously taught by CNA. During that period, students were provided with supports such as Learner Services and information on college programs. In addition, students built relationships with teachers and staff of CNA which assisted transition from ABE to college. Academy Canada was given the provincial contract for ABE in 2013. Key informants say this was done without consultation or an evaluation plan. While the quality of teaching has not changed, say informants, the price of tuition has increased dramatically which limits the number of students enrolled. This tuition increase was an important issue at workshop 2. Chief Eugene Hart says ABE was taken away from Sheshatshiu a few years ago and “I believe that bringing ABE back would be an asset to the community; we have the facility but no funding to run the program. There are many people wanting to do ABE but due to the high price of tuition it isn't possible to offer it.”

Other key informants indicated a high demand in Sheshatshiu for access to ABE as a step to apply for the training programs offered by industry Canada within the community. The high cost of ABE limits the advancement of people for further training. Census Canada statistics show that 67% of the community’s population aged 25-64 did not complete high school which underlines the importance for ABE programming in Sheshatshiu.

4. BARRIER: LACK OF AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE DAYCARE
Informants state there is need for increased access to daycare. Current daycare space is limited in numbers of children they will accept. Those that have access to the child care are limited to a few hours a day. As one student said, “Daycare only accepts a few children and closes early.” Lack of affordable and accessible daycare was an issue raised at workshop 1. Elders say they are often expected to provide child care at short notice and while they do not feel well enough to look after young children, they do not like to say no. This seems to be a concern for some Elders in Sheshatshiu. Informants made the following comments regarding daycare: “It is so hard to do anything when you don’t have daycare”; “There needs to be more options for single families, especially daycare”; and “There is a need for daycare so people of all ages can do ABE.” Informants say lack of daycare is an issue for ABE, training programs, post-secondary education, completion of hours for apprenticeships and employment.

5. BARRIER: TRANSPORTATION
Informants identified transportation as a serious barrier as few students have cars and there is no public transport from Sheshatshiu to HVGB, “A lot of my friends could not go to school because of lack of transportation.” Several professionals pointed out that attendance in
programs supplying transportation was close to 100%. These were usually industry programs that bussed students to and from Sheshatshiu daily to participate in training.

Workshop participants and informants spoke highly of in-community training programs in Sheshatshiu. In-community training programs avoid transportation problems. Professionals in Sheshatshiu said the benefits included: increased enrollment in programs, more regular attendance during training, increased successful completion of programs, and support for students who live with their families during training.

6. BARRIER: RACISM
Workshop 2 and key informants spoke of racism experienced by students in post-secondary education. One participant spoke of being called “Skemo” at university. Another participant shared his experience of connecting with other Aboriginal students at university for mutual support. Aboriginal students also spoke of their experiences educating non-Aboriginal students and professors about the effects of racism. Participants also provided examples of oppressive practices in classroom situations such as the expectation by professors that Aboriginal students were experts on Aboriginal peoples generally and all related issues. Informants shared other experiences such as anger from other students because Aboriginal students were perceived as having well-funded and free education. They were also discouraged and put down by other students and teachers. One student spoke of “being bullied and beaten.”

7. BARRIER: CURRENT AVAILABILITY OF HIGHLY PAID EMPLOYMENT AS LABOURERS
During workshop 2, Elder Elizabeth Penashue spoke of the high numbers of young people from Sheshatshiu who are employed in big projects such as Muskrat Falls as “toilet cleaners and cooks.” She says very few people from her community have skilled positions in these projects. She requested opportunities for training for the Innu youth currently in unskilled positions in projects, so they could move forward in their careers. Key informants say that young high school graduates are being paid from $30 to $40 an hour for labour work. This may be contributing to the lower numbers of graduates applying for post-secondary program. However, several key informants expressed concern that this current availability of unskilled employment appears to be temporary, and is not sustainable.

8. BARRIER: TRANSITIONING TO UNIVERSITY FROM COLLEGE
Key informants identified the importance of the transition year at CNA. Informants said people complete the transition year to prepare for university and learn to “handle the workload at the College of the North Atlantic, while still close to home.” However, several informants said the transition year did not bring them up to the standard required for university and they failed university in the first year. The numbers for students admitted to and numbers completing the transition year are not available from CNA.

9. BARRIER: INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA
A student in Workshop 2 spoke of the added pressure of attending college while coping with intergenerational issues such as violence. A key informant also spoke of needing help with addictions and how “people tried to help me but I was too angry to listen.” Another key
informant said that many Aboriginal students have little insight into the impact of intergenerational trauma which can contribute to vulnerability to high-risk situations in unfamiliar urban environments.

10. BARRIER: ASSESSMENTS
Chief Eugene Hart spoke of the current Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) test entrance requirement for CNA during workshop 2. He said CAAT discourages people from applying to college, “It is a difficult test and it's only offered in English.” He would prefer, “a process put in place for Aboriginal students where a panel would interview the student instead of having them write a test. This panel could then decide if the student would be a good fit for the program. This would be a very successful process because not only would they identify more students ready for their programs, they would also identify what supports each individual student would need.” Amanda Coady, CNA Campus director, principle of HVGB campus indicated in workshop 2 that “Aboriginal people will no longer be required to write the CAAT test and there will be another process put in place.”

Key informants also spoke of a need for appropriate assessments for their students applying to post-secondary institutions, “University loves to take our money, but doesn’t really look at the needs of each student.” Another key informant said, “We try to accommodate everyone who wants to apply to post-secondary, we want to accommodate everyone who applies for funding but we should look more carefully at the skill level. Rather than push students into post-secondary before they are ready, each student should be assessed to see if they are ready and what their needs are.” Another key informant said they would, “rather see the Band Council support people who are ready.”

11. BARRIER: LONELINESS & HOMESICKNESS
Key informants spoke of homesickness when they moved away from home. One said she “stayed in residence in CNA college and had a hard time getting used to living away from my family.” Key informants said students did not like to leave their families and many students have young children who they miss. While there is space available for single people in CNA residence, their family space is limited. Students prefer to commute daily from Sheshatshiu rather than live in residence without their families. Key informants stated the students who stay in residence will often drop out because they miss their families so much.

12. BARRIER: APPRENTICESHIP ISSUES
Apprentices have to be supervised by Red Seal certified instructors in order to get their hours logged for their certification. Key informants say there are not enough red seal supervisors in the community to ensure students are having their hours logged and therefore cannot obtain their red seal. Some students who complete their program don’t have their certification due to a lack of apprenticeship opportunities, but continue to do contract work in the community without it.

13. BARRIER: INADEQUATE CULTURAL SAFETY
Workshop 2 participants noted the HVGB campus provides an inviting environment for all Aboriginal groups. The campus has displays of Aboriginal lifestyles including art work and
photos of role models. Chief Mi’isel Joe said he would like to see other CNA and MUN campuses follow suite. Key informants and students in workshop 1 say there continues to be a lack of Aboriginal content in programs, and few visits from Elders at the HVGB campus. A workshop 2 participant said there was, “no connection with her culture, no cultural events and no contact with Elders from her community” when she was a student at MUN. A key informant said “There is no cultural support in the university program either here or in St. John’s for our students.”

Informants say cultural safety includes taking time to hear each student’s story with the understanding that each story is different and needs validation. A student who shared her story at workshop 2 spoke of the importance of being heard and understood. She says an important part of understanding the barriers Aboriginal people face in post-secondary education is understanding their story.

14. BARRIER: FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS
A first generation student is a student whose parents or guardians do not have post-secondary education experience (Duchaine, 2012). Duchaine points to parental experience with post-secondary education as the single greatest predictor of a child’s likelihood of attending post-secondary education. As the Census data indicates, many students in Sheshatshiu have parents who did not complete high school.

Graduation numbers have increased over the past few years however fewer graduates are applying for post-secondary education. A recent high school graduate indicated that he and his friends see the high failure rates for previous students at post-secondary institutions as a deterrent and they do not want to follow the same path. He did not want to see the Band’s money wasted.

15. BARRIER: ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY
Key informants have expressed concern that many students are intimidated by the technology necessary for college education. CNA expect students will have the skills and equipment to access online information from the first day of entry into their college programs. However, college staff and other key informants have indicated that some students are unprepared for the technological skill level required. This also points to barriers in creating online post-secondary studies within the community as suggested by other reports.

Recommendations for the Future
Sheshatshiu has one of the fastest growing populations in the province with potential for sustainable economic development. In order to realize this potential, the people of Sheshatshiu must have equitable access to Canada’s skilled labour market. Consequently, there has to be a long term and sustained commitment to support students’ access to and retention in post-secondary education. The following recommendations will provide supports enabling students to succeed in post-secondary education and in the skilled labour market. These community-based recommendations have evolved from key informant interviews, workshops 1 and 2 as well as from literature and reports relevant to Sheshatshiu.
1. **RECOMMENDATION: INCREASED FUNDING FOR SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**
Increase funding from federal and provincial governments is urgently needed for secondary and post-secondary education funding in Sheshatshiu. For SIS students to succeed in post-secondary education and the skilled labour market, a much broader intervention is required. Simply trying to develop better bridging programs to post-secondary education is not sufficient. Secondary programming and post-secondary access must be improved simultaneously. Roche Collins (2014) has provided comprehensive recommendations to upgrade SIS students to provincial standard.

Just as importantly, Key informants identified an urgent need for a new school building to meet with the provincial standards and accommodate the accelerating population growth.

2. **RECOMMENDATION: FUNDING FOR DAYCARE, TRAVEL AND HOUSING**
Sheshatshiu students face unique pressures related to living in a rural and remote community and having young families with three or more children. Current funding assumes students have no dependents. Additional funding is required to assist students with families for accommodation, transportation and daycare. All students need additional funding for travel and accommodation as these costs have increased dramatically over the past few years.

3. **RECOMMENDATION: FUNDING FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMS**
Funding must be devoted to early outreach programs aimed at helping Sheshatshiu youth to create familiarity and increased comfort levels with post-secondary institutions. Outreach programs would bring Sheshatshiu secondary students on orientation trips to post-secondary institutions.

4. **RECOMMENDATION: FUNDING TECHNOLOGY ENABLED LEARNING**
Funding is needed to enhance the technological skills of Sheshatshiu students for post-secondary education and online learning.

5. **RECOMMENDATION: FUNDING FOR BRIDGING PROGRAMS**
Funding is also needed for the CNA to work with the unique needs of Sheshatshiu and other Aboriginal communities in their region, to build capacity for in-community bridging programs to post-secondary education. Sheshatshiu secondary graduates would complete programs in their community which would bring them up to post-secondary entry standards.

6. **RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHEN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMING**
Evaluation of the change in the provision of ABE from CNA to Academy Canada is needed. This will determine the most effective and least expensive service provider to increase availability of ABE to the Aboriginal population. Sheshatshiu has an urgent demand for ABE from people who are anxious to access training programs for current and emerging projects in their region.

7. **RECOMMENDATION: FLEXIBLE AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENTS**
In consultation with the Innu Nation and other Aboriginal groups, the CNA should develop assessments which address the issues about the CAAT entrance test raised by Chief Eugene Hart in workshop 2. These assessments should address language and cultural barriers.
8. RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHENING CULTURAL SAFETY
In consultation with Sheshatshiu and other Aboriginal communities, CNA should work towards creating a robust definition of cultural safety for all of its campuses. CNA should model the practices of the HVGB campus in creating an environment that reflects the diversity and realities of Aboriginal students in all campuses and programs.

9. RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHENING CULTURAL CONTENT IN COLLEGE PROGRAMS
In consultation with Sheshatshiu and other Aboriginal communities, CNA should work towards integrating Traditional Knowledge, values and traditional teaching and learning pedagogies into their programs. In addition, representatives from Sheshatshiu and other Aboriginal communities should serve on an advisory committee to support this integration process. This will also require incorporating critiques of colonial history in order to contextualize the contemporary reality of Sheshatshiu and all Aboriginal communities in the region.

10. RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF ELDERS
The role of Elders in post-secondary education must be strengthened to address loneliness, homesickness, intergenerational trauma, and first generation student issues. As well, Elders have set forth a set of recommendations for Elder involved teaching and learning in post-secondary education in workshop 1 in 2014 listed on page 129 of this document.

11. RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF ELDERS
The Sheshatshiu Band Council and the provincial government should work together to provide financial and other supports to attract red seal supervisors to oversee student apprentices so they can complete their programs.

12. RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS
Partnerships need to be strengthened among Band Council, Band members, Elders, parents, youth, Innu Nation, federal and provincial governments, industry, and post-secondary institutions to develop community based strategies for student success.

Summary
This case study has evolved from a critical need identified by Elders for equity of access to post-secondary education and skilled labour market for their youth. Elders, in particular Elizabeth Penashue of Sheshatshiu, insist that their young people need to have the skills and abilities to meet the needs of their people, their communities and their industries in all areas of the skilled labour market. As the Elders have stated, it is necessary to continue the work of redressing the effects of colonization through the development of Aboriginal post-secondary education and commitment to equitable access to the skilled labour market. Sheshatshiu urgently requires funding to follow through on the recommendations for overcoming barriers to secondary and post-secondary education. It also faces the challenging but necessary task of strengthening partnerships in order to follow through on these recommendations.
References


Innu Nation Website (2016), www.innu.ca/index.php


Miawpukek Mi’kmawey Mawio’mi Conne River, First Nation: A Case Study of Promising Practices for Access to Post-Secondary Education

Dr. Sharon Taylor and Victoria Balsom

Introduction

Miawpukek First Nation (Conne River) is a federally recognized reserve, but it has been less than 30 years since it was officially recognized under the Indian Act. The story of the community’s long struggle to achieve political recognition, develop independence and subsequent economic success is significant. The story parallels that of the community’s struggle for independence, and development of their education system. This case study will describe and analyze this development of education in Miawpukek over time. It will begin with the historical context of the community; highlighting the history of education in the community prior to and after Confederation; and then outline their successful story of education. Next, it will explore the student supports within the community as identified by students and community members. Then, it will describe barriers to post-secondary education as identified by the community. Finally, it will highlight promising practices and recommendations for secondary and post-secondary education.

Selection Factors for Promising Practices

WELL RECOGNIZED ROLE MODEL
The selection of Miawpukek First Nation as the community for study of promising practices is based on the community’s recognition as a role model for other First Nations across the Atlantic region (Orr et al, 2011; Wade, 2006). The community’s school, Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom, was nominated by both federal and provincial government officials to the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education as a school that has prospered under excellent local leadership. It has overcome significant difficulties to become an institution that is effectively readying its youth for the future. Additionally, 60% of the community’s population of working age (25-64 years) has successfully completed post-secondary training (Statistics Canada Census, 2011).

RURAL AND REMOTE LOCATION
Miawpukek is located on the South Coast, Bay D’Espoir, Newfoundland and is approximately 2 hours south of Grand Falls-Windsor. Its land base is currently 548 hectares and the current on-reserve population is approximately 900 people with a non-status population of 100 included in this number (Drew, 2014). The road connecting Miawpukek to the Trans-Canada Highway is often treacherous in winter and spring, making access difficult if not impossible at times.
Methodology

The data for this case study was collected through the facilitation of two focus groups on site of the community, as well as individual interviews conducted in person, on the phone and through email communication. Quantitative data was provided by the Band Council.

FOCUS GROUP 1 – STUDENTS
A focus group was held in the morning of February 26, 2016 at the Se’t A’newey community school in Miawpukek. Seven students participated, including six females and one male, representing grades ranging from 7-11. The students were supervised by the School Principal, Audrey Benoit.

FOCUS GROUP 2 – KEY INFORMANTS
A focus group was held in the afternoon of February 26, 2016 at the Band Council office in Miawpukek. Eleven key informants participated in this group including the Chief and two Elders.

INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS
In addition to the two focus groups, several individual interviews were conducted throughout the research process. These interviews were intended to confirm and expand information gathered during the focus groups. Interview participants included key informants such as the Chief and Elders.

QUANTITATIVE DATA
Quantitative data, such as graduation rates, were provided by the Band Council and School in answer to the project questionnaire. General population statistics were retrieved from the Statistics Canada 2011 Census.

Population Profile:

POPULATION SIZE
According to Statistics Canada 2011 Census and NHS, the on reserve population of Miawpukek is 920 members with 475 males and 450 females. The population has had a 6.1% increase between 2006 and 2011. The average number of persons per dwelling in the community is 2.9. The NHS noted there were 35 lone parent families in 2011. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

AGE
As of 2011, the median age for residents of Miawpukek is 34.9 years, pointing to a significantly younger population than the provincial population median age of 44 years.

LANGUAGE
According to the 2011 Census, 920 of the residents of Miawpukek listed English as their mother tongue; 5 people are listed as speaking French and 5 people speak another non-official language. Whereas, some informants of this project noted that in addition to English, they speak Mi’kmaq daily. Some indicated that when speaking to their grandchildren they will only use the Mi’kmaq language (Key Informant Interview, 2016).
EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION
The median total income of persons aged 15 and above in Miawpukek in 2010 was $16,915 compared to the provincial median of $25,279; while the median household income on reserve was $41,711, compared to the provincial median total household income of $65,094.

The Labour force participation in Miawpukek in 2011 is 83.3% with an employment rate of 53.5% and an unemployment rate of 35%; compared to the provincial labour force participation rate of 59.4% with an employment rate of 50.7% and an unemployment rate of 14.6%.

EDUCATION
The NHS Community Profile includes statistics on education levels of Miawpukek community members. In 2011, out of a population of 920 members, 540 were between the ages of 25-64. Of these 540 members, 275 are listed as male and 270 are listed as female. Of these 540 members, 135 people (25%) have not completed high school or equivalent (75 males; 60 females). 80 people (15%) have completed high school or equivalent (25 males; 55 females) but have not completed post-secondary studies. 330 people (60%) have achieved one or more certificates, diplomas or degrees. Of these 330 people: 140 people have an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma (95 males; 45 females); 140 people have a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (60 males; 75 females); 30 people have a bachelor’s degree (10 males; 25 females); with an additional 15 people with post-graduate certificate, diplomas and/or degrees. Note that some of the data provided by Statistics Canada appears to be conflicting since the total number of male and female students does not always match the total population number in that category. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Statistics provided by The Miawpukek Band Council, Department of Education show that in 2015, the School achieved a 100% graduation rate of their ten student grade 12 class. Overall, in the last 10 years, they have had an average graduation rate of 81.5% (range 66% - 100%) of their grade 12 classes. During the 2013-14 academic year, 100 Band members attended post-secondary studies distributed over 28 institutions. Many of these students attended MUN (37 students), the CNA (18 students), and Keyin College (7 students) within the province, with the remainder spread out over institutions across Atlantic Canada and the country.

History of Miawpukek
“According to the oral history of ancestors, Miawpukek became a permanent settlement around the early 1800’s. Prior to this, Miawpukek was a semi-camping site used by the Mi’kmak who were at the time, still nomadic and traveling around. During this time, Miawpukek practiced our own form of Government. Through research, it is noted that land was set aside as an Indian Settlement in 1870” (Miawpukek First Nation, 2016).

Historically, throughout the interior of Newfoundland, the Mi’kmak of the Miawpukek area lived off the land as they hunted, fished, trapped for food, shelter, clothing and traded furs and skins as a means of subsistence. “The country life was essential during the 1950’s and 1960’s
against the backdrop of poverty and unemployment. Each family needed food. Employment was scarce even during the time of the emerging pulpwood industry in the area where the Mi’kmaq were chosen last to be hired” (Jackson, 1993). Newfoundland's Mi’kmaq received no federal benefits during this period because the Mi’kmaq were not recognized as "status" Indians when Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949 (Pastore, 1998). Drew (2014) points out that during Confederation in 1949, the Aboriginal communities of Newfoundland were intentionally “penciled out” of the Terms of Union.

The people of Miawpukek continued to attempt to live from the land and ocean to sustain their families’ lifestyle while roads were constructed interrupting the migration of animals. In the 1960’s the Newfoundland government hydro project flooded much of their traditional lands that supported hunting and trapping (Key Informant Interview, 2016). As Chief Mi’sel Joe said, "When I left in the 1960's there was no such dream of economic prosperity. In the 60's hydro came in and flooded our lands. They came in and did a survey to see if there were any issues down here as far as Mi'kmaq people are concerned and they reported back that there are no issues down here. They flooded our grandfathers' trap lines. It was part of our livelihood." (Key Informant Interview, 2016). Consequently, in the 1950s and 1960s the living standard of Miawpukek appears to have fallen below that of their neighbours (Jackson, 1993). At this time in the community’s history "only 30 per cent [of Miawpukek's people] were functionally literate" (Jackson, 1993, p168). In the 1960s and 1970s, Newfoundland Mi’kmaq joined a general movement by Aboriginal peoples throughout North America to reclaim their rights as First Nations as they were experiencing some of the same difficulties encountered by Native people elsewhere (Pastore, 1998). The people of Miawpukek elected a Chief and Band Council in 1972; a year later Mi’kmaq from the entire province came together in an organization called The Federation of Newfoundland Indians. After many years of working towards recognition by the state, in 1973 Miawpukek succeeded in having the Band included under the Canada/Newfoundland Native Peoples agreement (Drew, 2014). This became a major step towards federal recognition.

One of the Band’s first economic efforts began shortly after this agreement. This sawmill and woods operation was the beginning of other economic development efforts for the community. These developments were assisted by road construction. A 13 km dirt road connecting Miawpukek to the Bay D’Espoir Highway was constructed in the in 1960s which remained unpaved until 1997 (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

In 1984 the Miawpukek community achieved federal status under the Indian Act. However, the quest for federal recognition for Mi’kmaq outside Miawpukek continues (Ralph Pastore, 1998). Prior to 1984, official government policy was that there were no Indians living in Newfoundland or Labrador (Pastore, 1998). The most devastating consequence of the provincial government’s assimilationist policies was loss of the Mi’kmaq language among most people of Miawpukek. With only a few remaining elders who speak the language fluently, the only opportunity for the younger generation to learn Mi’kmaq is through formalized school curriculum.
In the early 1980s, the Band and the provincial government encountered funding conflicts which led Band members to travel from Miawpukek to St. John’s to assert their rights as Aboriginal people. The provincial government had disputed the Miawpukek First Nations expenditures and placed a freeze on funding (Key Informant Interview, 2016). After 13 months without funding, Saqamaw Mi’sel Joe and eight other community members protested with a hunger strike in the offices of the provincial government in St. John’s. On the 7th day of the hunger strike, the NL government agreed to honour the terms of their agreement and released the funds in the amount of $850 000 without additional conditions (Drew, 2014).

The Band continued their efforts toward federal recognition under the Indian act. Chief Mi’sel Joe stated during an Annual Assembly in 1984, their goal would be “to get into the Indian Act so that one day we can get out.” (Drew, 2014, p7). In 1987, Miawpukek First Nation was officially recognized as an Indian Act Reserve through an Order-in-Council. Shortly after receiving federal recognition, the Band began to work on developing its Human Resources, investing in post-secondary education, and encouraging Band members to enter into training. Resource people from outside the community were contracted until a Band member received education and training and was ready to take on that role. In this way the community was able to develop their economy and their community by developing the skills of their own members (Orr et al, 2011).

The Miawpukek First Nation gives first consideration for jobs to resident Band members who meet the job requirements. Job creation programs guarantee underemployed Band members a minimum of 14 – 24 weeks of work which qualifies them for federal EI. Today, Miawpukek has one of the highest seasonal seasonal employment rates in the region. An annual pow wow highlights the success of the Miawpukek First Nation (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Since 1987, the Miawpukek First Nations has changed from a small, isolated community with a 90% unemployment rate, to one of the fastest growing communities in the region. The community is often highlighted by INAC as a model community. (Miawpukek First Nation, 2016). Community members define their continuing goal as working towards a Self-Government Model. “We want our Mi’kmaq community to be healthy and successful BY OUR DEFINITION.” (Drew 2014, p.8).

History of Education in Miawpukek

“They have a small school open since the 17th of January last. It is a wooden structure, about 12 by 15, by no means new, with a small stove and two little windows. The teacher is a woman of partly Micmac origin....” (McGregor, 1908). Elders say a new one room school house was built later, operated by the Catholic Church and staffed almost completely by non-native teachers. Elders remember the Church administrators excluded Mi’kmaq language and content from the curriculum with harsh measures. In 1965/66, a new school, also operated by the Catholic Church, was built in Miawpukek, boasting electricity, running water and oil furnace heating and included a principal’s office, a small library and four classrooms. This new school continued the policy of excluding language and cultural content from the curriculum. Elders tell
stories of being beaten when they spoke their First Language or took time from school to engage in cultural activities with their families. Their spiritual beliefs and even language were seen as evil by the Catholic priests who administered the school. By 1968, all students from Grade 7 up had to attend school in St. Albans, which meant leaving their community from Sunday to Friday living with strangers and returning home for the weekend. This changed in the mid-seventies when parents demanded that the province provide high school education for their children in their own community. This demand for the right to education in their own community was an indication of their determination to fight for their rights. A new high school extension was built in 1977 and students returned home. In 1979, Miawpukek held its first high school graduation for 10 students. Their success in this early challenge of the provincial government may have strengthened their later demand for complete control of their education system. Rod Jeddore, Director of Education, stated that the community starting fighting for school ownership even before fighting for federal recognition because of the value of education within the community. “We understood education played a vital role in the demise of our language and culture. If Education was such a powerful tool for demise, then we knew we could use education for promoting culture and language” (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

In 1985 the community became a federally recognized First Nation Reserve. The Band Council’s demand to take control of the education of their children was one of their first acts. The school was transferred from the province and Catholic Church administration in 1985 to that of community management. The transfer of control of the school from the Catholic Church to the community was a significant event as the Catholic Church and other dominations continued to control the remainder of the provincial education system. Chief Mi’sel Joe recalls the diocese priest predicted the community would fail in its endeavor to run the school: “[He] asked what we would do with the money we get for the school, would we buy alcohol or cigarettes? and what would happen to our children? I replied, whatever we do with it, we could do better than you have done so far” (AAEDIRP workshop, HVGB, March 2016). Since 1986 the school has maintained an average of 80% successful completion rate of its high school students (Drew, 2014).

The community was committed to restoring language and reclaiming culture through indigenizing the curriculum of their school. Elder Priscilla’s story speaks to the dedication of individuals to achieving this goal: “My father [Peter Jeddore] was fluent in our language. I learned some from him. I was working in a craft store and I was asked if I would be satisfied to go to Eskasoni every year, every summer for three years. I went to the University of Cape Breton. I began teaching at the school in 1987... I was teaching Mi’kmaq and there has been a local person teaching Mi’kmaq ever since. I was teaching up to grade 9 and then from kindergarten to grade six. Roddy Jeddore was teaching Mi’kmaq in high school. I used to teach Mi’kmaq to adult classes too, until I retired in 2005.” Elder Priscilla Drew (Key Informant Interview, March 2016).
Contemporary Education in Miawpukek

Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom, the community school, serves also as a community centre. It is open most evenings for educational and recreational activities for adults including ABE, adult upgrading, computer courses, badminton, volleyball, basketball and floor hockey and aerobics.

There are currently 21 teachers at the school, teaching 186 children ranging from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12. ABE is also part of the Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom program, with more than 72 adults graduating from this program in recent years. The school’s resources, includes a learning centre and resource room in the primary/elementary school (K-6). The high school addition includes an industrial arts shop, kitchen, gymnasium, computer lab, and Atiko (the talking room) for listening and counseling. There are many extracurricular activities including a Mi’kmaq youth group, suicide intervention committee, encounters group, drummers, dancers, youth centre, presentations by the Band Council and Elders including Elders from Eskasoni, Nova Scotia. The school works with community agencies such as the Youth Centre and Health and Social Services to provide supportive activities such as the young women and young men cultural groups which meet separately for special “lunches and learns” and cover topics requested by students. There has been a request to start a LGBTQ alliance group and the school is seeking assistance with this request. (Key Informant Interview, March 2016).

Se’t A’newey has a relatively high proportion of students with identified special needs, most of which are related to reading difficulties. For example, from 2001 to 2006, 21% of the 37 Grade 12 students have had varying degrees of learning difficulties (Wade, 2006).

“The school tries to accommodate students with challenges or disabilities to help insure graduation – different hours for schooling, tutoring, or if they leave school they can later return to complete night school, which can then lead to college or university. Accommodations for students who have extreme anxiety or difficulty focusing include home school and after school tutoring is also an option. All students can be supported through tutoring programs. There is tutoring offered every day after school for the Grade 7-12 students, there is a homework club four days a week for the Grade 4-6 students and if there is a need, tutoring can be offered to students in Grade 1-3” (Audrey Benoit, Key Informant Interview, March 2016).

Se’t A’newey has developed its own Mi’kmaq studies program, including second language training in Mi’kmaq for K – 9 and a Mi’kmaq Studies course in Grade 10. The Mi’kmaq studies program uses the medicine wheel as a framework for social science, history, fine arts, Mi’kmaq language, and language arts. This includes Mi’kmaq legends, stories, poetry, Mi’kmaq material culture, food, medicines, crafts, and sports. In addition, all teachers are encouraged to add Mi’kmaq cultural teachings to further enhance the children’s knowledge and understanding of their heritage. While cultural knowledge is still relatively strong in the community, the school is seen as essential to providing leadership in strengthening Mi’kmaq culture and recovering the language (Elder, Key Informant Interview, March 2016).
Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom utilizes the outcome-based Newfoundland and Labrador curriculum designed to achieve the “Essential Graduation Learnings,” which includes: skills of aesthetic expression, citizenship, communication, personal development, problem-solving, and technological competence. Starting in Grade 10, students are separated into academic and basic level “streams.” At the Grade 12 level, there are separate classes for each stream (Key Informant Interview, 2016). There is an additional stream for senior high students utilizing online offerings of the Centre for Distance Learning (CDLI) to meet the increasing demand for technology and science-based education (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Students Perspectives of School and Community Supports

The students in Focus Group 1 had much to share regarding school and community supports. Students identified the Director of Education, Rod Jeddore as the person who was in charge of the school. There were some general complaints about the physical condition of the school. This comes as no surprise as the community has been requesting a new school for some time; a request which has recently been granted and which will be discussed later in this report. Students also felt some kids seemed ‘too cool for school’ and were not actively participating in school activities. Focus group 1 participants stated they liked their school programs and spoke highly of their teachers including afterschool tutors. They particularly enjoy the Mi’kmaq language class, which is in curriculum K-9, and they wish it would continue in high school. They expressed concerned that they will forget the language without regular practice in school.

Students spoke with appreciation of Mi’kmaq studies course in the grade 10 curriculum, and particularly like crafts and hands on learning such camping rather than videos and lectures. They said they wished they could continue Mi’kmaq studies throughout grades 11 and 12. The students stated they are visited and supported by the Chief, Elders and the Band Council and wished they came more frequently. They mentioned that the Band Council provided information and assistance for post-secondary funding. The focus group identified a wide variety of school activities including: drumming and dancing groups and sports teams. The school has a choir, with an international reputation and they are very proud that it includes traditional Mi’kmaq songs, such as the honour song, in their repertoire.

Students stated they have benefitted from travel throughout Canada through participation in their various school activities and groups. Additionally, there are the Easter Encounters travel groups to other countries such as New York, London, Ireland, Paris, and Tokyo. The current group travelled to Costa Rica during the Easter break in 2016. In the focus group, students identified that travel within the province and internationally is fun and exciting; provides an opportunity to adapt to new experiences; and makes them more comfortable with connecting to the world outside of their community.

Students spoke proudly of the many murals painted of Mi’kmaq cultural images by students as contributing to a personalized and cheerful environment at the school. They also spoke of the advantage of living in a community where “everyone knows everyone”. This helps with building confidence and feeling comfortable. However, they also described the difficulties of living in a
small community. They felt that gossip was more damaging and the feeling of isolation more pronounced for those who are “in some way different” than their peers. They spoke with understanding and awareness about issues with diversity in the community. They also identified some limitations of their school including a lack of science labs. However, students said that while there are more advantages and opportunities for students living in larger areas such as St. John’s, they believe there is more one on one attention for students in their on-reserve school.

**Student Perspectives on Supports for Transition from School to Post-Secondary**

The students in focus group 1 identified their school’s Guidance Counsellor as providing counselling as well as individual career planning. The Career Cruising program is used to assist students in building a plan connecting their school work to post-secondary education and career planning. Students also attend career fairs within the school and at post-secondary institutions. As well, there are presentations from recruitment officers from various institutions, including, MUN, CNA and CBU. Additionally, students travel to St. John’s for a week of orientation to the post-secondary institutions in St. John’s as well as the city itself. Students in the focus group pointed to career development as being part of their high school curriculum. Key informant Audrey Benoit (Primary/Elementary Principal/Special Needs Coordinator) identified how past students gravitated to University programs after graduation whereas current students are more attracted to college programs. She stated this is due to the perception of high pay after a short time in college with more opportunities of immediate employment in trades.

The student focus group identified a number of ongoing supports which assisted them when considering post-secondary education. These included an abundance of role models. The students are surrounded by local graduates who are currently employed by their own band council in all departments as well as local graduates employed by provincial and federal governments. In addition, they have highly paid trades people who work outside their community but have their families living on-reserve. These role models include current post-secondary students who present in their classes when they return home. They spoke of Nick Jeddore, a student at the Medical School of MUN as an example of a role model.

Students also say that the community provides help for students who struggle at school. They know role models, including students who have failed high school or needed to improve their grades, who went on to bridging programs at the CNA before going on to post-secondary education. Students also spoke of role models from the past and mentioned that these students had to complete their last 2 years of high school at St. Alban’s living away from home to do so. They felt while this was very hard, their parents and others had graduated high school in spite of this barrier. They spoke of these role models with inspiration.

Students also feel supported by the Band Council and its departments. For example, there are frequent presentations in career development about accessing post-secondary funding. Students spoke with awareness about the benefits and limitations of funding for post-
secondary education. They discussed the process of applying for post-secondary funding from the Band Council, and how it appears easier for students living on reserve to get approval for post-secondary funding, than for Band members living off-reserve. Students also noted that students who complete grade 12 within the community have a much higher chance of being funded for post-secondary training than Band members who leave the community to finish high school.

Barriers to Post-Secondary Education
The literature review from the Making Connections Project demonstrates the relative disparities resulting from the unique challenges of Aboriginal peoples in terms of enrollment and retention rates in post-secondary education. This section will outline barriers that have been identified by focus group 1 (students) and focus group 2 (key informants) as well as by individual interviews with key informants. The focus groups and individual interviews used in this community study report provide information of varying levels of detail on a host of barriers. This section attempts to provide a summary of the barriers to student retention and success in post-secondary education from the perspectives of Miawpukek which has consistently maintained promising practices in education since assuming community ownership of their school. In order to understand these promising practices, it is necessary to have an understanding of education barriers continuing to challenge their students. As the literature review demonstrates, enrolment and completion barriers are not isolated problems but are components of a complex pattern of inter-related conditions. Many of the barriers to access and success that Aboriginal students face in the postsecondary system stem from the Aboriginal community’s troubled and complex position within Canadian society. The barriers are thus difficult to isolate; therefore, this is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis. For the purposes of this report the barriers identified here are those emerging from the lived experience of group and interview participants. This lived experience provides unique and valuable perspectives which can help to ensure that post-secondary education has an Aboriginal-centred approach to better serve Aboriginal students.

1. BARRIER: FINANCIAL BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS
Focus group 1 (students) participants identified funding as a major concern for their post-secondary education. Students are aware that funding for current students continuing their studies in post-secondary institutions depletes the limited community funds for new post-secondary students. Focus group 2 (key Informants) participants agreed that an important barrier to post-secondary education includes difficulty with funding students using a budget that has not increased in 30 years. Both groups are concerned about the high cost of living in the urban centres where the post-secondary institutions are located, citing the examples of “food, high rent, cell phones, daycare and other expenses in high cost living areas”.

2. BARRIER: LIMITED PREPARATION FOR SCIENCES
Focus group 1 (students) are concerned that they are not prepared for the post-secondary programs that require sciences as they do not have modern chemistry labs and other science labs and equipment.
3. BARRIER: LIMITED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
Focus group 1 (students) are concerned that students living with mental illness may have less support while participating in post-secondary education than they have had in their community school. Students with mental illness, such as anxiety, may have to overcome greater barriers than other students because the necessary supports may not be there. One student provided an example of a sibling who recently left post-secondary education and returned home due to mental health issues. Both focus groups 1 and 2 expressed concern about the level of anxiety for high school and post-secondary students. One key informant said that anxiety as a mental illness seems to be becoming an “epidemic”. Another participant saw anxiety as a larger societal issue giving the statistic that 50% of post-secondary withdrawals are resultant from mental health and anxiety. Other sources of anxiety included: increasing demands and expectations for student achievement; less outdoor activity; increase use of technology; overstimulation from screen time; emotional pressure of social networking, texting and sexting; limited life skills; and unrealistic expectations about student lifestyles. As one participant noted, “Students can’t do laundry or cooking. They expect to maintain the same lifestyle they had at home. It’s unrealistic and this also adds to their anxiety”.

4. BARRIER: TRANSITIONING FROM COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO INDEPENDENT LIVING
Focus group 2 (key informants) identified transitioning into independent living as a key barrier to student success. Informants described the current culture’s common “helicopter parenting” style as contributing to transitions difficulties. As one parent said, “Overprotection leads to setting up youth to be vulnerable.” A number of parents said they take too much responsibility for their children which they felt contributed to some of the anxiety students experienced upon leaving home. There was general agreement that the children had strong support from the school and community programs which contributes to the success of students in the community. However, this strength also become a barrier, “They don’t learn to ask for help because their needs are anticipated and we rush in to put supports in place before they really have a chance to think about it.” Others agreed that sometimes too many supports in the community can become a barrier to post-secondary success as the students have difficulty transitioning to independence because they take the supports they have for granted. A student group participant said she felt prepared to leave the community because her mother gave her a sense of independence by “letting me do for myself, and make my own choices, instead of doing things for me”. In focus group 2, a key informant disclosed that he had a teaching from the Chief about learning “to do for myself and not have my mom do for me.”

The participants of focus group 2 identified a need for earlier training in independent living skills such as budgeting and cooking to better prepare students for post-secondary education. One focus group 2 participant told a story of a mentorship program where they facilitated a budgeting activity for students which was difficult for them to complete. There was further discussion about promoting maturity to assist adaptation to city and independent living. Additional barriers include access to family units and on-site daycare in universities and colleges. Within their community the students are used to having support for child care from extended families. Without this, students often find child care and education demands overwhelming.
5. BARRIER: UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS
Expectations and pressure to achieve in post-secondary was another barrier identified by focus group 2. Participants discussed the difficulties for students who leave or fail post-secondary programs. Focus group 2 said that “students who return to the Band after failing can often be supported well, but those that don’t return home fall through the cracks. It is hard to reach out to them”. Some students may not return because they feel as though they failed their family and Band. As one informant said, “They know there is not a lot of money so they may feel they wasted the money and don’t want to come home to face everyone.”

Focus group 2 participants discussed the bias of how parents often place higher value on university versus college education. One of the key informants acknowledged that he often told his young child that they would be attending university. He says he had been unaware he had this bias, placing this expectation on his child and would be more aware of this in the future.

Focus group 2 participants also asked “What is realistic for student expectations? How can we help them to become realistic?” They expressed concern about finding a balance between helping students to be realistic about their abilities to succeed in post-secondary education and, at the same time being careful not to set “the bar too low”. They indicated that postsecondary education is highly valued in the Band and all efforts have been made to ensure students had every support to graduate from high school with the necessary preparedness to succeed in post-secondary education.

6. BARRIER: INADEQUATE CULTURAL SAFETY
Focus group 2 participants identified the limited Aboriginal content, Traditional Knowledge and relevant knowledge in the curriculums of colleges and universities. They feel more effort has to be made to strengthen cultural safety for students. Several participants noted there is a tendency to lump all Aboriginal cultures as one, which another participant described as a Eurocentric orientation common to society in general. They identified a need for representation of each provincial Aboriginal group in post-secondary education services and curriculum. Additionally, they felt that Aboriginal groups have to be included in the decision making process for curriculum and programs. Focus group 2 participants agreed that very little of what many Aboriginal students bring to the classroom, in the way of cultural knowledge, traditions, and core values, is recognized or respected in the postsecondary system. Participants felt post-secondary programs would benefit from First Nations perspectives, knowledge and skills; noting, “Elders are knowledge keepers and should be included as professors in all aspects of post-secondary education”.

During focus group 2, Chief Mi'sel Joe highlighted racism as a continuous monumental barrier for students. Participants shared experiences of racism challenging students in post-secondary institutions. For example, Aboriginal students can be targeted by other students, “who think they have a lot of Band money and are expected to pay for more than their share and treated disrespectfully”. Another informant spoke of his reluctance to identify himself as from
Miwapukek when he was a student because he had been ridiculed on the occasions when he had.

7. BARRIER: LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS FROM POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ON FUTURE INDUSTRY TRAINING
Focus group 2 participants identified a need for post-secondary institutions to provide training relevant to current industry trends. They agreed that post-secondary institutions should be able to answer the question “where is industry headed?” for the Band and for students. Participants identified a need for post-secondary institutions to work with secondary schools so that students are prepared for entry into emerging programs.

SUMMARY OF BARRIERS
The barriers identified by focus groups 1 and 2 and informant interviews reflect, for the most part, those found in the literature search. They also reflect an ability to identify “local” as well as post-secondary concerns and responsibilities.

Promising Practises
The acknowledgment of shared responsibilities of the Band, families and students, as well as those of post-secondary institutions is an indication of the source of their promising practices in education. Their promising practices are informed by the realities surrounding students and an appreciation of community history. The promising practices described below are not exhaustive but provide a glimpse into sources of success for Miawpukek students’ post-secondary education and transition to the labour force.

1. PROMISING PRACTICE: SELF-DETERMINATION AND STRONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP
Chief Mi’isel Joe states leadership has many meanings in Mi’kmaq cultures: “Mi’kmaq leaders are expected to lead by example. They are also expected to express the thoughts of their people when speaking publically. Leadership is used to take care of specific needs identified by the Band. Leadership is not authority to command others. People can choose freely to make decisions affecting the community as the Assemblies show. People might be persuaded but they will not take orders and that is not expected. Leaders are elected annually. Spiritual leaders are identified by the Band for life and they have a different role than elected leaders.” (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Miwapukek has a long history of strong leadership. The Director of Education explains the role of Band members involved in the hunger strike which gave community control of education. The hunger strike which is memorialized in the hallway of the School continues to shape community identity and commitment to self-determination “We had nine individuals that put their life on the line for our community. It's a tremendous statement of community and one that we put up on our hallway like a memorial to the people that did that. It will be there forever (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Chief and Council formulated a clear vision for the Band’s future from the beginning along with well-articulated goals and strategies, which are underpinned by recognition that sustainable
development takes time. One of these goals was to have its own Band members in key positions in the community. Education became an important strategy to build strong local leadership with well-educated people in key positions. The strategy has provided the Band with strong, knowledgeable and confident leaders in all fields of endeavor (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

In addition, the Band has had strong individual leaders such as Chief Mi’sel Joe who has built successful relationships with provincial and federal funders. Another example is their retired Director of Education, Edwina Wetzel, who shaped and directed the development of the School under community ownership. Much of the school programming described in this case study was developed under her leadership (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

2. PROMISING PRACTICE: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF SCHOOL

“Education is the highest priority that we have. The school is the focal point of our survival as a community” (Chief Mi’sel Joe, Focus Group 2, Feb. 2016). After the people of Miawpukek took control of their school in 1986 they created the following mission statement:

Se’t A’neway Kina’matino’kuom is Indian owned and operated by Miawpukek Mi’kmawey Mawio’mi of Conne River. Its role is to provide education to all its members – Pre-Kindergarten to Elders. It will be staffed by personnel who are dedicated not only to academic excellence and life skills, but also the spiritual and cultural teachings of the Mi’kmaq people.

Se’t A’neway Kina’matino’kuom is a community school which has a well-established principle of seeking a balance between education and culture. Besides its regular programming, it provides facilities and programs for adults including ABE. Community members are welcome to use the facilities, for both academic and recreational purposes. Various community organizations and agencies, such as the Health and Wellness Centre, R.C.M.P., the Justice Committee, the Natural Resources Division, and the Native Drug and Alcohol Department use the school facilities for community events. These agencies also provide support to the school through special presentations and activities. Band Council members often present on careers and post-secondary opportunities. As well, the school receives support from the community and Band Council for events such as sports, performances, Cultural Day and the Mini Pow Wow. The community also generously supports fundraising activities, particularly for the award-winning school choir that competes in the Kiwanis Music Festival each year and has competed internationally (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

The Education Director, the Department of Education staff, and the school administration and staff have an annual strategic planning process. This planning process is highly inclusive with participation of students and parents. The Education Director guides visioning sessions to identify priorities in both primary-elementary and high schools. The visioning sessions with input from teachers, staff and parents form the basis of the performance plans for teachers and administrators and strategic plans and goals for the year. The Education Director presents annually these plans and reports on the progress towards achieving the outlined goals. The Education Director, two Principals, the Band Manager, and Director of Finance propose an
annual school budget to the Band Council for approval. The budget is given final approval by the community at the annual general assembly. The Education Director produces a newsletter from his office at the end of every semester, and the school website posts information such as performance plans and newsletters on a semi-annual basis (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

3. PROMISING PRACTISE: CULTURAL SAFETY AND INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The elements identified by Abraham and Joyce (2008) as critical to the development of cultural safety are evident throughout the programming, curriculum, pedagogy and environment in Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuum. Administrators, teachers, staff, students and Band members deliberately work to create a warm, accepting, and supportive learning environment for students. Their flexible assessment process demonstrates a commitment to student success that includes the belief that each student can learn. The Band Council, Department of Education, School Administration and staff adapt and experiment to find optimal educational programs and methods for each student. There is also a strong commitment to performance-based education and willingness to use appropriate assessment tools to ensure students are prepared for post-secondary education. The Band Council, their Department of Education and School Administration have consistently worked together for planning with an attitude of solving problems, balancing inclusion of local knowledge and culture with western curriculum (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Most importantly there has been, since the school’s inception, a commitment to involving parents and community in meaningful partnerships. This contributes to the strong sense of community ownership of the school. Despite the building’s age of 51 years old, the school shows evidence of this pride of ownership. It is clean, bright, filled with evidence of many years of accomplishments including Kiwanis Festival awards, Sports Awards, Performance awards and student art. There is no evidence of vandalism. Informant interviews and focus groups say that the priority of all partners involved in the school is building students’ self-esteem, coping skills, and resiliency. The focus group 2 spoke of their experiences with racism outside of their community and how they want to provide the children with skills for dealing with those situations constructively. Individual informants spoke of racism within their own community, saying “self-hatred is denying part of yourself and your Aboriginal heritage and this community has turned this around” (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

Many people see the school as central to this turn around. They provided many examples including, “Brenda is the school music and choir teacher. Students and the whole community have gained such pride because of the accomplishments of the choir. They traveled to Japan to perform and highlighted their culture as positive.” Another personal story illustrates this: “now we’re proud of who we are. It took the younger generation to bring this about. This pride and strong sense of self is in part because of cultural and language studies in the school and the focus on Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge”. Another comment from the focus group 2 noted that knowledge of and pride in their culture and language has become stronger in the school and in the community over the years. There are many sources of community pride and cultural activities, such as the Pow Wow and Salli’te, which strengthens this work in the school. Chief Mi’sel Joe describes the significance of these events: “The Powwow is a social gathering at
which we express cultures, pride and identity of our people. It is a unifying ritual of the young and old; a recollection of the past and a celebration of the future. We come as a nation to share cultures and embrace the differences that exist between us. It is a time to heal, a time to share and a time to celebrate. Salli’tė is a community auction which generates funds for the family who has lost a loved one. It is the coming together as a community to help with the healing process. We celebrate the life of our loved one by hosting the auction. Community members donate items that are cleaned, sorted and tagged for the auction. The proceeds from the auction go directly to the grieving family. The auction takes place directly following the burial. We share the burden of grief with the family which helps the process. We grieve together as a community.” (Chief Mi’isel Joe, Key Informant Interview, 2016). This connection to their culture contributes to the self-esteem and confidence evident in the students of Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom.

Orr (2009) cites Chief Mi’isel Joe: "When we took over education in 1985 there were no Mi’kmaq programs. All our kids going to school prior to that were basically learning about Canadian history, certainly nothing about our own people. One of the school committees raised this issue that we have to use the curriculum that is accepted by the province and universities. I said we know that but it doesn't mean that we can't add on things pertaining to our own history and culture." Director of Education, Rod Jeddore says, "It was an initiative that the Band took to get its own Band members in key positions in the community. I was told that if we put you through school for four years you have to come back and work for us for four years. If we are going to put money into training people, then we want something in return. Contrary to the past when those tools were used against us to take away our culture and our language and our history and traditions, we now instill culture using those same tools. That's all we do. We realize that education has a tremendous part [to play] in restoring our language, our culture and our traditions. It is caring, sharing and respect. We take every course and incorporate Mi’kmaq culture and tradition throughout it. So when you walk into this school you know it is a Mi’kmaq school.” (Key Informant Interview, 2016). The Chief noted, "Education is the engine that drives everything today” (Orr, 2008).

4. PROMISING PRACTICE: ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AND LITERACY
The Band Council runs a daycare for children ages two to four through the Brighter Futures program. The Early Childhood Education, which also includes language and culture components, is supervised by one of the school’s primary teachers, who is shared between the school and daycare. These two programs identify children with learning difficulties. Strategies are developed by the school in response to these assessments. The school employs First Steps and Write Traits programs to monitor children’s development. The special education unit uses a number of different reading series promoting high interest and low level reading material to encourage literacy at all levels. As well, from ages 5 – 18 years, the school’s special needs unit continues assessments, and Individualized Student Support Plans. A home reading program supports students who need challenges with higher reading leveled materials. A coordinator has been appointed to oversee and streamline literacy and special needs program delivery in the school. Every Grade 3 to 12 student who has been referred has been assessed, a process that will continue this year with K – 3, so that all students who have been referred have been
screened for learning difficulties. Supports for these students include student aides, adaptation of programs and additional resources (computers, work stations etc.). The special needs coordinator also makes presentations to the larger student body to increase their understanding of special needs education (Key Informant Interview, 2016). As a key informant from education pointed out, “students do better in school when their teachers give them work appropriate to their level. At the same time students need to be encouraged and that makes it possible for them to reach higher levels.” (Key Informant Interview, 2016).

5. PROMISING PRACTICE: ACCESSIBLE LITERACY PROGRAMMING
Community literacy is a long term goal of the Band Council. A strategic partnership between the school and the Health and Social Services Division has been formed to achieve this goal. For families with children under 2 years, an at-home outreach program is delivered which includes educational games and activities to be undertaken with families. For those over 18, an Adult Education Program leading to a high school diploma is coordinated by one of the high school teachers (Key Informant Interview, 2016). This local management of ABE is less expensive, accessible, and offers a comfortable and non-threatening learning environment.

6. PROMISING PRACTICE: BUILDING A LABOUR FORCE THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY
The Band Council has developed partnerships with industries such as New Found Resources and Rough Riders International. Rough Riders, for example, has an office in Miawpukek and hires people from the community for work in Alberta (Key Informant Interview, 2016). The Band places apprentices in positions across the province often paying part of their salaries to ensure apprentices complete their required hours for successful completion of their programs. The CNA also provides in-community training which allows more students to take advantage of training opportunities.

Orr (2006) conducted a case study of the social impacts of Economic Development in Miawpukek and highlighted the community practice of educating and training for local labour development. One of the first goals of the Band administrators, after federal recognition of the reserve, was to develop the Human Resource pool in the community, “by investing heavily in training and post-secondary education and encouraging people to move forward and get training and skills. When we had to engage outside resource people we always did it on a term contract as a Band member would eventually fill that role. We created an environment where that was attainable that you could get that training and fulfill that role. In the 1980s there was a high level of attendance and post-secondary. From 1984 until the mid-1990s we were still building our community governance infrastructure and administrative capacity. The people that filled those positions were the children of the 1970s people that went to university, trade schools and colleges and got the skills and training." (Justice and Fisheries Interview, October 27, 2009; Orr, 2006).
7. PROMISING PRACTICE: ROLE MODELS (CURRENT AND HISTORIC)
As indicated earlier, role models are a part of the everyday life of Miawpukek students. Focus group 2 stated women in the community are seen as having successful careers in diverse areas which can affect female students’ outlook on their future. Elders and community leaders provide role models. Focus group 1 spoke with appreciation of the hard work and contribution of Elders who maintained culture and language under harsh conditions. Focus group 2 also spoke of the sacrifices made by Elders and others during times of economic hardship to ensure their children were educated. The struggle for recognition as a band including the protests and fasts at provincial government buildings are a strong component of the Band story which provides role models of resistance and struggle for students. Photographs of Elders are displayed throughout the school providing constant reminders of current and historic role models. Focus group 2 also told stories of individuals overcoming barriers including one person’s story of failing post-secondary and returning to complete university and become a part of the Band administration. This group also pointed out that the school is staffed by almost 100% Band members.

8. PROMISING PRACTICE: CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND OTHER AGENCIES WITHIN COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE VARIETY OF PROGRAMMING IN A SMALL COMMUNITY WITH LIMITED RESOURCES
Key informants pointed out that school and community partnerships often benefit schools in many ways that are hard to explain such diverse resources becoming available to the School and community. These relationships are often informal and daily contact in a small community can make communicating and planning more productive.

There are a wide variety of programs within the school and youth centre including music, dance, sports, tutoring, computer classes, games and cultural activities with Elders, cooking and fun nights. The after school program is offered 3-5pm and most evenings at the youth centre. The children are picked up after school and walked by facilitators to the youth centre. Thirty to forty children attend daily.

One participant talked about the support system provided by the Band Council which, “helps us to better work together as a team without being blocked by red tape – and can therefore reach students better.” This support system also assists the community, local departments and school work together to provide support for lone mothers in overcoming barriers to education.

9. PROMISING PRACTICE: FLEXIBILITY IN CHANGING SITUATIONS
The Band Council is responsive to changing situations. Students who leave post-secondary education and return to the community are provided formal and informal supports to continue their education. Many return to post-secondary education after 2 or 3 years and complete their education successfully.

The Band Council has recently created a new policy in place to allow students a gap year before applying for post-secondary education. Previously, students were required to attend college the year immediately following grade 12 completion in order to obtain funding from the Band Council. Now, they are implementing a year off policy as one participant said, “to give students
a chance to figure out what they plan to do and gain added maturity before leaving for post-secondary education.

Another example of flexibility is, “The employment rate in Miawpukek is very high with employment programs available for unskilled labour, but not until a person reaches 20 years of age, which encourages them to pursue the funded training opportunities after high school. 90% of high school graduates pursue post-secondary because of this set up.”

As well, the Band Council decided to provide more funding to encourage more online education. The Band Council, school and local departments work hard to address any issues brought to their attention, and one participant said, “they strategize with the entire community to deal with it, for example concrete coping strategies for anxiety. Most recently they are discussing possible anxiety workshops for children to teach emotions management and skill building.”

10. PROMISING PRACTICE: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION
Key informants identified the high level of parental involvement in the school as key to their success. Focus group 2 participants noted the high value community members place on education in general as well as academic achievement. Participants stated that parents were involved in school activities, extra-curricular groups, helping with homework, and even participated in the input of the school’s planning strategies. The parental involvement in education within Miawpukek appears to create a culture which expects academic participation and achievement of their children.

Moving Forward: Future Plans and Challenges
Miawpukek continues to meet challenges and create new goals to build on their current success. Focus groups 1 and 2 were excited about plans for the new K-12 school which will be built soon on Pow Wow grounds. Focus group 2 talked briefly about new components planned for this new school including up-to-date science labs, daycare centre, dental office as well as a floating classroom: a recommissioned vessel which will provide marine programs for high school students. These cutting edge components highlight the communities continued innovative commitment to education. Some of the continued goals for improvement identified by Focus group 2 include:

1. CONTINUED GOAL: PROACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS
The Chief, Band Council and local government departments actively seek relationships with post-secondary institutions in order to ensure students have the resources they need. Group 2 discussed the usefulness of their current partnerships such as Memorandum of Understandings (MOU’s) with local colleges and Universities. They noted these MOU’s provide designated seats for community members, but the partnerships provide little else. Participants noted the institutions often take many promotional pictures with the Chief to signify diversity and partnership with Aboriginal communities. The community would like to expand the MOU’s
outreach to institutions more interested in developing partnership with increased benefits to
the community.

2. CONTINUED GOAL: IMPROVE CULTURAL SAFETY IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
The Band Council provides funding for high school students to visit institutions and attend
workshops as part of career development curriculum. However, as the Chief pointed out, it is
difficult for the community to help students with the current racism and prejudices in post-
secondary institutions. This can be a monumental barrier for students. Focus group 2 spoke of
stereotypes students encounter providing example of how “Eastern Health employees
automatically assumes it is because of alcoholism and diabetes when an Aboriginal person has a
health problem. It’s a stereotype that can prevent people from getting the health care they
need.” (Focus group 2, 2016).

Participants identified a need for supports that help students with feelings of homesickness and
isolation. They noted that this would have to be post-secondary outreach programs as students
are not likely to ask for help. They acknowledge that most students leaving the community
want the freedom of independent living, but they are often experiencing conflicted feelings
associated with loss of their community they didn’t expect to have. This leaves them more
vulnerable and more likely to fall into greater problems.

There was also some discussion about the current cultural centre for Aboriginal students at
MUN. It appears there was no input from Aboriginal community advisors or Aboriginal students
in its development. To this date the MUN Aboriginal Centre has never contacted the
Miawpukek community for advice or outreach. Miawpukek students are advised by their
community educators of the existence of the Aboriginal Centre at MUN and are encouraged to
seek it out as a possible source of support. However, the MUN Aboriginal Centre does not
appear to seek out Aboriginal communities, and does not attempt to contact enrolled students
who self-identify as Aboriginal. Since they have had no connection with the MUN Aboriginal
Centre, Miawpukek students entering MUN tend to gravitate more to the Native Friendship
Centre, even though it is quite a distance from campus. One of the employees of the Native
Friendship Centre, from Miawpukek, provides a personal connection which allows the students
to approach the agency when moving to the city. Participants of Focus group 2 would like to
encourage post-secondary to develop more supports, in consultation with Aboriginal
communities, for Aboriginal students entering post-secondary programs. Participants identified
the Aboriginal Navigator program developed by Eastern Health, as an example of supports that
promote cultural safety.

3. CONTINUED GOAL: INCREASED FUNDING IS REQUIRED
Participants identified an urgent need to increase support from federal and provincial
governments to fund their post-secondary students as this budget has not increased in 30
years.

4. CONTINUED GOAL: REUTILIZATION OF THE OLD SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE
When the new school has been completed, the Band has been directed the provincial
government to destroy the old school building. Rather than waste this resource, the community
would like to see the space considered for additional training programs such as a Husky student trainee summer placement and a youth skills program. The community plans to work towards keeping the building and use it for in-community post-secondary training which has been highly successful in the past.

**Summary**

As the literature shows, Aboriginal Students face complex barriers in their quest for post-secondary education and transition to Canada’s skilled labour force. It is hoped that this case study provides a promising example of one band’s practices which are assisting their students to overcome many of these barriers. This Band is demonstrating leadership in Canada’s challenge to build youth capacity and participation in the country’s skilled labour force through post-secondary education. Recommendations related to this case study can be found in the Conclusion: Strengthening Promising Practises section of this report.
References


Miawpukek First Nation Web Page (2016) www.mfngov.ca


Promising Practices and Recommendations Emerging from CNA and AAEDIRP Workshop: Overcoming Challenges in Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education and Employment

Aboriginal Resource Centre, College of the North Atlantic (CNA)
Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador
March 9th -10th, 2016

Purpose

This workshop was designed to identify promising practices and recommendations emerging from the research project: “Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities - Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries”. The research project was developed from a design workshop held in October 2014, also in HVGB, Labrador. The intent of the research project was to examine the barriers and facilitators facing Aboriginal students residing in rural and remote regions as they move into and through post-secondary education and join the workforce; including the role of culture and Traditional Knowledge in this process. In addition, this workshop addresses a priority of the CMEC Education Plan (2015-2017): “Ministers of Education recognize that greater educational success will enable First Nations, Metis and Inuit to be active participants in their communities, strengthen their attachment to the labour force and enable them to be better prepared for an increasingly knowledge based economy.” The Education Action Plan identifies work in four specific areas including a central purpose of this workshop: “Sharing resources and promising practices in education.”

In keeping with this directive and as part of the research teams’ commitment to meaningful collaboration with college, industry and community partners, this workshop shared research with participants.

Background

In 2010, an AAEDIRP research project brought together Elders from four Aboriginal cultures of the Atlantic region for an Elder’s Mawi’om. At this gathering, the Elders made eight recommendations on Elders’ roles in teaching Traditional Knowledge in all areas of Aboriginal development in the Atlantic Region. The Chiefs of APCFNC reviewed the recommendations at their 16th Annual General meeting and supported the recommendations through an All Chiefs resolution #2011-14. The HVGB design workshop emerged from the recommendations on education from this resolution.

The HVGB design workshop took place on October 23rd and 24th, 2014 and included Elders, students, government, industry and college representatives. They identified roles of Elders in recruitment and retention of Aboriginal Students in colleges, and transitioning to the labour market. The recommendations emerging from the initial workshop guided the research project.
Promising Practices:
The following summary of the workshop highlights areas where the recommendations of the Elders from both the Atlantic Mawio’mi and the HVGB Design workshop have been practiced. The term “Promising Practice” has been used to highlight practice consistent with Elders’ recommendations because it suggests moving along a path and acknowledges progress without implying that the practice is transferable or only one approach will be used. Archibald says promising practices are those based on Aboriginal experience and “encourages learning, information sharing, innovations and adaption to other settings” (2006, p7).

Summary of Discussions: Day 1

1. PROMISING PRACTICE: INCLUDING DIVERSE ABORIGINAL SPIRITUAL CEREMONIES AS RECOMMENDED BY ELDERS THROUGHOUT RESEARCH PROCESS INCLUDING WORKSHOPS.
The workshop began with Craig Baker, Aboriginal Support Coordinator with CNA welcoming everyone on behalf of the province. Chief Mi’sel Joe of Miawpukek led a Smudging Ceremony for the circle of participants. Nunatsiavut Elder Miriam Lyall said the opening prayer in English and Inuktitut. The welcome ceremony continued with greetings from partners such as Amanda Coady for CNA, Chief Mi’sel Joe for the APCFNC and Margaret Donahue for the AAEDIRP. Each participant was invited to introduce themselves and share any part of their story to strengthen the circle. In addition, participants ate one meal together each day. The meals were prepared and served by Aboriginal students in CNA programs. The dining room was also nicely prepared by students. Elders were served first as is tradition. All agreed the food and serving was excellent. As well, Elders noted the importance of sharing food and social time with students and others was essential to building trust and sharing in the circle. The workshop was held in the Aboriginal Resource Centre which had been carefully prepared by CNA staff. The room, which is used daily by Aboriginal students for working with other students, has comfortable chairs and couches and many examples of Aboriginal art. One Elder mentioned that the space felt sacred because so many different ceremonies had been experienced there by both students and Elders over time. She said that contributed to the healing energy in the room which permeated the workshop.

2. PROMISING PRACTICE: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO OVERCOME SHARED BARRIERS TO POST-SECONDARY AND SKILLED LABOUR MARKET FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH.
Amanda Coady, CNA Campus director explained the collaboration between AAEDIRP and CNA is raising awareness of issues facing Aboriginal communities and find strategic ways to remove barriers to education. 65% of the student population on campus this year are Aboriginal students. HVGB campus hosts the largest Aboriginal population of any campus with CNA and across Atlantic Canada. CNA has a history of including Elders, leaders and role models in campus activities. Amanda says the college is looking for ways to increase the presence of Elders, leaders and role models who can assist students. CNA strives to work together with organizations such as the AAEDIRP, Aboriginal communities, federal and provincial government departments, industry partners and local funding agencies on a daily basis to find ways to better meet the needs of Aboriginal students.
3. PROMISING PRACTICE: CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT
In the upcoming months CNA will be replacing the CAAT with a new indigenous student intake policy that will bridge the current barrier for students whose native language is not English. This new assessment method will allow all Aboriginal students to apply to all campus with CNA under the new policy.

4. PROMISING PRACTICE: CNA HVGB CAMPUS SUPPORTS FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS
Craig Baker gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Aboriginal Initiatives at the CNA “Aboriginal Initiatives at The College of the North Atlantic, Happy Valley – Goose Bay Campus,” highlighting many of the initiatives ongoing at the college:

CNA Aboriginal Education Policy: “The purpose of this policy is to increase access and opportunity for Aboriginal learners to post-secondary education and training in such a way that cultural values and traditions are respected and maintained. This will be assisted by developing close links with Aboriginal communities through partnerships and by being a fully engaged member of the local community”

There are four positions at the HVGB campus solely dedicated to the success of our Aboriginal students:

Aboriginal Support Coordinator:
- Liaison between the college and all Aboriginal learners at the campus
- Liaison between students and their funding agency
- Meet students regarding issues identified by instructors
- residence issues, personal issues and issues involved with their funding agencies
- Make referrals for the student to other campus staff when appropriate
- Lead role in the Aboriginal Initiatives Team and all Aboriginal Initiatives on campus
- Assist in all student services activities and initiatives

Aboriginal Resource Specialist:
- Focus on Aboriginal Services
- Plan and coordinate the development and organization of Aboriginal events and activities on campus
- Promote Aboriginal visibility in physical environments of campus- artwork, cultural items, displays, etc.
- Revise and update content in Cultural Diversity Awareness Workshops and assist in delivery
- Research and analyze current trends and developments in Aboriginal education
- Work with leaders and Elders to bring more Aboriginal presence on campus
- Develop proposals for alternative funding sources to support Aboriginal programs/course development
- Have an active presence in the Aboriginal Resource Centre (ARC)
• Ensure the Aboriginal Resource Centre is manned throughout the day either by themselves or an assistant
• Plan and supervise events in the ARC
• Maintain the ARC webpage and other social media such as Twitter account, the campus Facebook page of Aboriginal events and activities

Aboriginal Resource Facilitator:
• To coordinate the activities and resources of the Aboriginal Resource Centre.
• Consult with members of the three Aboriginal groups to plan and coordinate Aboriginal activities at the Aboriginal Resource Centre to increase on site Aboriginal presence.
• Market the Center: Coordinate the activities of the center. Work in partnership with the Aboriginal Initiatives Team to host cultural activities. Set up weekly schedule for events happening through the center.
• Responsible for Aboriginal information around the campus. Aboriginal Information Bulletin Board, putting up posters, promoting/marketing Aboriginal scholarships, events and programs, etc.
• Liaise with students and staff
• Assist student with word processing and printing. Research and provide information on various resources for students. Provide editing and writing support for research papers, essays, etc.
• Maintain the ARC webpage and other social media such as Twitter account and the campus Facebook page of Aboriginal events and activities
• Research Aboriginal scholarships and assist CNA students in applying for them

Inuit Education Coordinator
• Plan, coordinate and direct the delivery of programs and activities in Labrador North Coast Communities
• Prepare customized training proposals including the preparation and monitoring of budgets and cost analysis;
• Prepare and deliver presentations
• Provide assistance to staff and students of the Learning Centers
• To maintain a positive working relationship with the Aboriginal Groups and business and industry within the communities served, and other duties as assigned

Other Student Services Staff on Campus
• Counsellor
• Student Development Officer
• Coordinator of Disability Services
• Resource Facilitator

Aboriginal Resource Centre
The centre is a place where students can avail of College resources and supports, as well as a place to gather and gain support from each other as Aboriginal students of the College.
Student Residences:
Two buildings with family residence; one with daycare

AHHRI (Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative)-CNA Initiatives Aboriginal Bridging Program
- Offered at the HVGB campus in September, 2009
- Program designed to help Aboriginal students “bridge the educational gap” so they can succeed in subsequent college Programs
- The focus of the program is on both academic and personal skill development

Positions in the Aboriginal Resource Centre
- Tutors
- Health Care Promoter
- Aboriginal Resource Centre Facilitator

Partnerships with Labrador Aboriginal Training Program (LATP) to offer programs specifically for Aboriginal Students
- Rebar
- Doka Formwork
- Construction Craft Worker
- Sector Skills
- Tower Steel Assembler
- Portable Sawmill
- Innu Carpenter Apprentice
- Food Safety
- Scaffolding
- Safety Training
- Concrete Form
- Powerline Technician
- Basics of Homecare
- Hotel Operations

Partnerships with MUN and the Nunatsiavut Government to offer programs
- INAP - Integrated Nursing Access Program
- IBED – Inuit Bachelor of Education Program
- First Year Social Work program

Cultural Activities on Campus
- Multicultural Day
- Winter Carnival Day
- Aboriginal Awareness Day
- Other Activities in the Aboriginal Resource Centre
Aboriginal Student Association

- This group provides student leadership, advocacy and representation in an advisory capacity
- This association is run in partnership with the student council and campus staff

Other Aboriginal Initiatives at this Campus

- Inuit Liaison for some program offerings
- Innu Liaison for some program offerings
- Community presentations for our students
- Aboriginal Leadership Program

5. PROMISING PRACTICE: STUDENT STORYTELLING HIGHLIGHTING THEIR STRENGTH, RESILIENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS

The following is a summary of their stories:

Student Story: She enrolled at the college to do her transfer year after graduating high school, which is the best thing she ever did but she learned quickly post-secondary is very different from high school. The workload and the travelling were some of the hardest parts, and the support system is very different. She then went to MUN which was a huge culture shock. She was lucky to have her parents teach her English in her household. Transportation and money was always a big problem for her. She was lucky enough to have scholarships and worked in high school tutoring to help with the funds she needed but she still had to go to food banks because there wasn’t enough money. She was determined to finish her schooling. There are more support systems at the college now than when she attended.

Student Story: She thinks an important part of understanding the barriers people face is understanding their story. At a young age she lost her mother and father to a murder suicide and was sent away from her family to foster care in where she was sexually abused for years. She left high school; she had no support and was going through so much on her own. She moved when she was 16 and eventually enrolled at CNA to get her ABE. She got pregnant and quit because she found it too hard. After the birth of her daughter she enrolled back into school and got her ABE. She dealt with a lot of mental health issues and had no support. She got herself through it and is currently enrolled in a program at CNA. The student services team helped her with funding which was a huge relief but even with the funding she struggles financially. Her daughter gives her the motivation to better herself.

Student Story: She is a single parent and decided she needed to do something; she didn’t want to just sit home. She started with the Aboriginal Bridging Program. She is loving her classes and her son is enjoying daycare. She is happy she could start somewhere a little easier and basic before going on into regular college courses.
Another student wanted to say thank you to Craig and Frank for all their help. They made her education possible.

Elder Marlene Farrell told the students that were too shy to speak that their presence alone at the workshop speaks volumes and gives her a voice.

The session finished with Elder Miriam Lyall, who told her personal story of having to relocate to go to school in St. Anthony. The tradition was to stay home and help the family when she was 16, but she wanted to finish her education and her mother wanted her to as well. She struggled with going against her father and grandparents with her decision to go to school. After she went away to school and came back she felt like she didn't know her parents. She felt better than them because she went away to a big place, she wouldn't speak to them in her language, and she would only speak English. She felt ashamed of her parents. She took clerk typing at the college when she was older. Traditions were very strong at the time she was growing up and that made her who she is today, she feels like she is still learning.

6. PROMISING PRACTICE: INCLUSION OF ELDERS VOICES: ELDERS’ ROLE IN EDUCATION AND STRATEGIES

Elder Miriam Lyall feels that Elders in Labrador are not recognized as they should be. They learn by experience, they use all their sense to learn and teach. Elders should be used more in the community to teach the students. Elders have a huge value and the information they have should be passed on to the students. Specific recommendations from the Elders’ Gathering “Role of Elders” at the Aboriginal Centre, CNA are included here:

The following is a list of recommendations from the Elders gathering held at in October 2014 titled The Role of Elders in Supporting Aboriginal Participation in Colleges. Reading and acknowledging this list of recommendations should not be considered a form of consultations with Atlantic Aboriginal communities.

1. Include Elders in student orientations;
2. The APCFNC should support a paid position for an “Elder in Residence” at postsecondary institutions;
3. The Aboriginal Resource Centre should stay open and expand to include more Elders and more Students;
4. Elders need to be involved in curriculum development, including the inclusion of more Traditional Knowledge and culturally appropriate material. These materials should be reviewed and discussed by Elders and students together;
5. Cultural sessions should be included in every trade and cultural awareness should be reinforced in every class. Everyone has to understand that Labrador has a diversity of cultures, and cultural sessions should be mandatory for faculty, staff, and students. Students from diverse cultures are living in residence and need to deepen their understanding of other cultures;
6. The 8th recommendation on the APCFNC Elders Project recommendation fact sheet: “Each Aboriginal community needs to encourage the use of traditional practices, which are products of Traditional Knowledge. This would encourage younger generations to
learn about and respect traditional practices, such as traditional laws, cultural and spiritual practices, language learning and practices related to hunting and fishing, food gathering, medicine, ecology, science, arts and education” is very important to address. As holders of Traditional Knowledge, Elders need to be provided opportunities to teach and support students in obtaining a deeper understanding of their cultural and spiritual ways;

7. The presence of Elders is calming and healing and has a focusing effect. The college should have an Elder in the room whenever possible while teaching all subjects. Having Elders in the room adds legitimacy to what is being done and helps students concentrate;

8. Elders may be able to do online podcasts of legends and stories for students;

9. Traditional medicines are part of Traditional Knowledge and have to be included in teachings;

10. Teachings have to include language teaching sessions for students with Elders;

11. There should be an Aboriginal Resource Centre in every college in the province;

12. APCFNC should support post-secondary institutions to assist diverse Aboriginal groups to learn about each other;

13. The college and industry should come together to fund an “Elder in Residence” program with a rotation of Elders from different Aboriginal groups;

14. Elders should be informed they can call in to the college and ask if they are needed. Elders can be advocates such as with the recently cancelled ABE program which was successfully helping students to complete their high school education at their own pace;

15. Barriers to students’ successful completion of their programs need to be further examined. There are drug and alcohol issues and sometimes the environment at the college or dorm contributes to a relapse. The students experience a disconnect with the land and their cultures which may contribute to relapse. Elders can support students and help them to reconnect with their land and culture;

16. Elders should train staff to help take students out on the land.

7. PROMISING PRACTICE: SHARING COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH ABOUT COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

The afternoon talking circle was titled: Making Connections - Key economic drivers in Aboriginal rural and remote communities. The panel was facilitated by Dr. Sharon Taylor. The presenters were David Perley, Chief Mi’sel Joe, Chief Eugene Hart and Diana Lewis.

Chief Mi’sel Joe started the discussions by giving a little background on his community, Miawpukek. He hated education and what it represented when he went to school, but loves it for what it offers the kids today. These young people are the people that are going to continue to build the community in the future. Without education the community wouldn't be near as far as they are as a community. He is seeing more and more of young people from his community being part of community government and others’ contributing in the bigger world.

Chief Mi’sel Joe said the community took their school away from the church in 1987. They were not allowed to teach their own language and culture up to that point. Since 1987 they are
producing 10-15 graduates every year that are going on to higher education. All of the staff and faculty are from the community. His community is currently building a new school; the old school is being torn down with hopes of saving parts to do a different kind of education with the students. Students are periodically taken on trips to different communities and abroad to educate them about the bigger world. They offer different kinds of funding to students depending on the person’s level of education. Not everyone wants to go to university. Some people want to do a trade or other programs. The Band requires that students who get their education to work away for a period of time to gain knowledge before coming back to the community to work. The young women who were removed from school in the 60's when the church still ran the school were given the opportunity to get their education. The education program they have set up now is equal to any in the province.

The Band provides support for youth in the community, sending them into the bush for weeks at a time to help with their drug and alcohol problems. They have to learn to do everything there all on their own.

The Band takes it upon themselves to work with colleges and universities to make sure that things get done the way they want. The outside world needs to understand, where we came from - our history, where we are and where we want to go. Chief Mi’sel Joe said, “We do not want to be better than people, we want to be equal.”

Chief Eugene Hart's community of Sheshatshiu took over their school privately seven years ago. They now own their school and can run it how they want to run it. Since they took over they school their numbers have grown, as did the number of graduates. They have a huge issue with lack of funding and the students wanting to continue on after high school but cannot because there is no funding. ABE was taken away a few years ago because it became too expensive. Chief Eugene Hart believes that bringing back ABE would be an asset to the community; they have the facility but no funding to run the program. There are many people wanting to do ABE but due to the high price of tuition it isn't possible to offer it.

Chief Eugene Hart also raised concern that they have only three certified Innu teachers at their school, they need more native teachers.

Chief Eugene Hart says that the CAAT test discourages people from applying to college. It is a difficult test and it's only offered in English. He says a process should be put in place for Aboriginal students where a panel could interview the student instead of having them write a test. They would then access whether the student would be successful in the program or not. This would be a very successful process because they have could help students move forward in their programs and determine the extra supports the student would need. The people doing the assessment would have an idea of the issues students would be dealing with. Aboriginal people will no longer be required to write the CAAT test, there will be another process in place.
Chief Eugene Hart also said that the community was starting a culture program for youth. This program is linked to income support and consists of taking youth out into the country. They will bring meat back to the community for the Elders and the community.

Elder Elizabeth Penashue asked that we don't just look at the Innu People, look at the non-Innu people as well when looking at curriculum to prevent racism. She says in her community there are more and more people bringing their children to school than ever before.

Sharon mentioned the Canadian Government says that we need more young people trained. Canada has an aging population so we need to train more young people in relevant industries.

Diana Lewis mentioned seeing a pattern that when the high school is on the reserve there seems to be a higher success rate - 90% among the students. Students that are taught a culturally appropriate curriculum along with the provincial curriculum, students who get the culture and language support have a higher success rate.

Chief Mi’sel Joe mentioned that one of their biggest challenges is losing contact with the youth that go away to university; this is why it is very important to work with the universities.

Diana Lewis has been working with, PLFN for six years. Diana is finding that many problems seem to be starting in high school. PLFN does not have their own school so the students attend school off the reserve and the biggest issue seems to be the curriculum. They do have a Mi’kmaw studies class but it looks at all the negative aspects of Mi’kmaq life and the students are embarrassed. The teachers are quick to label the students as needing special support and students are often put into more basic programs and are then behind as they enter college. She is also finding high school students need more support when selecting careers. She said students also mentioned not having support and role models. More emphasis needs to be put on educating students on the possibilities they have and the courses they need to take. There are many students who have are a lot of self-doubt and low self-esteem and many issues at home. There is not enough support financially for college students and that leads to many other issues. She is also finding that colleges assume the students know how to access the information on their websites and use online tools. Many students do not know how to access college webpages and are not aware of certain costs and other relevant information.

David Perley is from the largest Maliseet community in Atlantic Canada, Tobique First Nation. He gave a brief background on his own education where he went to Indian day school in his own community. It was within his community but they still followed the same rules as residential schools. They couldn't speak their language or practice their traditions, culture was considered unimportant. This was a very negative experience for him. After Indian day school he had to leave the community and enter the public school system which was also a negative experience. They couldn't speak their language, and was segregated in the classroom and cafeteria; they were punished on a daily basis. He wanted to quit school but his mother wouldn't let him stay home and do nothing - He tried going to work with his brothers but he didn't enjoy it. He decided to go back to school and graduate and eventually went on to
university and completed his BA then his masters. He wasn’t satisfied with his master’s degree so he went on to work on his PhD. He believes it is important to help influence the changes in colleges and universities and help the students stay strong in their culture.

David says that one of the biggest barriers to the students is the curriculum itself. They need to see themselves in the curriculum at every level. At UNB he has convinced the Faculty of Education that every student has to take at least one course with Mi’kmaq content. Faculty members need to be emerged in the culture. They have implemented a circle of understanding program at UNB. This program takes the faculty members for one week and they are emerged in the nation’s culture and experience their lives-participate in ceremonies, teach the language, and talk with Elders. Students respect and connect with their teachers more for taking the time to learn their culture and language. There will be a sweat lodge built at UNB for all students and faculty to use. Another initiative he has organized is a pow wow at the university; they invite the general public and the schools so they can educate people on their culture.

David identified a need for an initiative to have in-service training for all teachers where they would be given information on the learning styles of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students are hands on, visual, global learners, they are often not verbal learners.

David pointed out that funding continues to be a barrier for students wishing to enter post-secondary.

Elder Miriam Lyall says that Elders in Labrador are not recognized as they should be. They learn by experience, they use all their sense to learn and teach. Elders should be used more in the college to teach the students. Elders are valuable and the information they have should be passed on to the students. It is the responsibility of the education system to acknowledge the role of Elders in education.

Sharon thanked everyone for attending today and Elizabeth Penashue said the closing prayer.

**Summary of Discussions: Day 2**

8. PROMISING PRACTICE: ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS WITH POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS AND WITHIN INDUSTRY TO FACILITATE STUDENTS’ TRANSITION INTO THE WORKFORCE: EXPLORING STRATEGIES

Day two of the workshop began with Miriam Lyall performing the Kudlik Lighting ceremony and prayer. Miriam said that women are the guardians and carriers of the Kudlik and the Kudlik providing heat and light was the centre of the home. Men made the Kudlik for their wives and daughters. Her husband made hers. She said that we have to be a flame for our young people and to each other and make sure our traditional lifestyle is passed on.

The talking panel was facilitated by Frank William, Student Counsellor, CNA. The presenters were Sandi Kershaw, Matthew Pike and Roy Byrne. Each panel member gave a brief introduction to their organization and its role in supporting college education.
Sandy Kershaw is the Aboriginal Liaison and Human Resource Specialist for Serco Canada. Her position is a brand new position and was created to help hire Aboriginal youth in an aging workforce where the population is mostly Aboriginal. Her job is to promote hiring, training and retention of Aboriginal people. One of the new aspects to the contract at 5-Wing Goose Bay is an Aboriginal Benefits Component. The Government’s new policy says that any contract with the base must have an Aboriginal Benefits Component which means the contractors have to have a plan in place for Aboriginal people.

Matthew Pike, Manager of External Relations for Astaldi Canada. Astaldi is one of the biggest contractors on the Muskrat Falls Project. Matthew says that a big part of his job is Aboriginal relations across Canada. He is bringing two aspects to the discussions today. One from a construction perspective and one from the perspective of Nunatsiavut Inuit Aboriginal getting his education.

Roy Byrne is the Innu Training Coordinator for Nalcor and his job came about years ago when Innu Nation wanted a representative on site to be a contact person for Innu people to go to regarding getting a job and be a liaison for people while they are working. There are challenges, a big one being the contact information is often out of date on resumes. Another challenge is retaining the workers. They get home sick and the long days are hard for people, especially seeing this is the first job for many. 60% of the Innu population is 30 and younger and partnerships with LATP are helping them get the training the need to get jobs on site.

Sharon Taylor said she had heard from many Elders regarding young people with little or no training getting hired on the Muskrat Falls and other projects. The young people are making large amounts of money for the first time in their lives on a construction project that will eventually end. Elders are worried that they will not know how to handle their finances. Roy said that he would like to see life skills training and financial planning for young workers to prepare for their future.

Elders Ken Mesher, Ron Lyall, Jean Crane, and Elizabeth Penashue stated that they have concerns with the Muskrat Falls Project with regards to safety and pollution.

Elder Elizabeth also expressed concerns regarding racism and Aboriginals being treated unfairly on site as well as only holding the janitorial/cooking positions. Matthew stated that as long as there are Aboriginals on site he will be there to make sure they are being looked after and treated fairly.

A recommendation was made that Elders could go to the site and check out the construction of the dam. Roy mentioned that Elders did take a visit to the site once before so he is sure that could be arranged once again.

Frank asked the panel about cultural safety initiatives they have in place and people feeling their culture is not respected in the workforce. It was identified as a challenge for students in
terms of their transition into the workforce. He asked if there were any cultural safety initiatives in place.

Matthew went on to tell everyone that he gives a presentation as a part of the orientation for all employees at the Muskrat Falls site. He tells them about the important relationships they have with Aboriginal Governments and that he is a proud Nunatsiavut Inuit and tells the employees if you are Aboriginal be proud of it as well. He makes a point to educate people about the importance of IBAs (Impact and Benefit Agreements). People often don’t understand the importance of the IBAs and the fact that the project would not have gone ahead with the Innu. When he finds someone who is racist on site, they are removed from the site and sent home. Racism is not tolerated.

Elder Elizabeth Penashue talked about the Muskrat Falls Project and the damage being done to the Churchill River and the memories she had living on the Churchill River.

Sandy said she thinks the hardest thing as an Aboriginal person is that they are caught between two worlds — “Who we are as Aboriginal people, our values, land, and traditions; And knowing we are living in a world we have to fight for it every day in the modern world.”

Elder Miriam Lyall thanked Elizabeth for her words and commented on the importance of what Elizabeth does to pass her knowledge and traditions on. She went on to tell the students she didn’t go through some of the things they have gone through but they have a great support system at the college and told the students to listen to the Elders. Elder Miriam says “There will be challenges but use your culture and who you are as an Aboriginal to help you through.” She wished them great success and told them to remember the Elders are here to help and teach.

Elder Jean Crane spoke of a camping retreat that she and other Elders attended with students years before. She was so thankful to be a part of the retreat and educate the youth with stories of the sacred land. She respects what CNA is doing for the students and is honored to be part of it.

**Recommendations and Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to College Admission and Retention and for Transitioning to College**

9. **PROMISING PRACTICE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES FROM ELDERS, STUDENTS, LEADERS, EDUCATION DIRECTORS, COLLEGE STAFF AND FACULTY, INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES AND OTHERS**
   1. Increased funding for secondary and post-secondary education. Chief Mi’sel Joe, Chief Eugene Hart and others say that increased funding is essential for the rest of the recommendations and strategies to be effective;
   2. Strengthen Aboriginal content of curricula at all levels of education in the province;
   3. Provide an Aboriginal culturally appropriate assessment process for entry to college programs. Elders could be part of a panel interviewing students to assist in determining supports to enhance successful retention;
4. Increase Aboriginal cultural content and support for Aboriginal students at other CNA campuses and the university. They need to look at the progress being made at the CNA HVGB campus. Chief Mi'isel Joe said the work being done here at this campus with Aboriginal students is incredible and has to be made available to all Aboriginal students across the province. Elders and others could travel to other campuses to promote the work being done at HVGB campus;
5. Continue strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal communities, governments, industry and colleges. Industry can provide mentoring for college students. Elder Elizabeth Panashue recommended that industry and the college work together to develop training programs for young people working as labourers in Labrador projects so they could advance to skilled positions within present and future projects;
6. Increase funding for travel and child care. Students often have young children and need more daycare spaces in their communities and in the college to prevent absenteeism;
7. Continue to identify students who have graduated and use them as role models for other students. The current college role model posters are very helpful in the communities and in the college;
8. Continue to educate more people on the struggles Aboriginal people face in order to reduce racism and promoting cultural safety in college and universities. Chief Mi'isel Joe says that reducing racism is key to increasing retention and graduation in college;
9. Increase involvement of Elders in all aspects of college programming, student support and curriculum development;
10. Increase support for regular student council within college to promote sustained contact with Elders (examples included on land camps, visiting industry workplace sites, storytelling);
11. Assess access to ABE for Aboriginal people living in rural and remote communities. ABE has to be part of the provincial education program. Many Aboriginal people cannot gain entry to college because of the increased cost of ABE in the past few years. One example provided of costs for one student to complete ABE in a remote and rural community was $80,000;
12. Increase financial counseling for students to teach them to budget and to manage their salary upon graduation;
13. Increase technological education for high school and college students to permit access to online courses, information and online education opportunities;
14. Increase numbers of Aboriginal teachers at all levels of education;
15. Increase in-service training in Aboriginal cultures for teachers at all levels of education to promote cultural safety in all classrooms and to promote teacher awareness of Aboriginal learning styles;
16. Chief Mi’isel Joe recommended submitting a request to get the face of an Aboriginal woman on a $100 bill;
17. Elder Elizabeth Panashue mentioned she is writing a book that will be available this year. This could be used to educate people.
Summary
Margaret Donahue on behalf of APCFNC and the AAEDIRP thanked the Elders, the Chiefs, the students and all other participants for sharing their knowledge and insight. She thanked Sharon and her research team for their work and the CNA staff for putting the workshop together. Frank thanked Margaret and the AAEDIRP for the opportunity to be part of the workshop and mentioned the Aboriginal Initiatives Team at CNA will be taking into consideration the recommendations made at the workshop as well. The Elders reaffirmed once again that they are available to continue to work with students in the college and would like to be doing more to help.

The event concluded with the students and Elders joining in a group picture followed by Elder Jean Crane’s closing prayer.
Conclusion: Strengthening Promising Practices

Today, Aboriginal education issues are at the forefront of the national agenda and significant initiatives with national reach are under development. Given this readiness among mainstream policymakers and institutions to act, it is important to invest in policies with the greatest potential for progress. There is widespread and historical support in the literature for the role of education in closing the gap for social and economic growth for Aboriginal individuals and, consequently, Aboriginal communities. Education policy informed by community-based Aboriginal designed research has been demonstrated to be most effective for increasing student achievement and attachment to the labour market. Both the literature and the community case studies illustrate the reality that education achievement and labour force attachment are intertwined. They also show that post-secondary education success is dependent on a strong secondary foundation. The report, “Moving Forward in Aboriginal Education” states, “One of the criteria for judging the quality of an education system or institution is the ease with which students can move from one institution or level to another” (Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2005, p18).

Given all the evidence in the literature review on the importance of transition, the challenge is to accelerate the rate of progress as broadly as possible in both secondary and post-secondary education.

The overlap in promising practices for student success in school and college is evident in the literature review and case studies. This final section undertakes an analysis of lessons for policy and practice that can be drawn from the literature review, community case studies and workshops. It identifies a cluster of policy directions holding promise for greatest impact on Aboriginal student achievement in Atlantic Canada, and outlines research to deepen understandings and accelerate promising practices. There are promising practices as this project demonstrates. However, coherent and Atlantic wide policy making is required to build capacity and bring isolated promising practices forward.

School and College Practices

Recommended policies of strategic importance for strengthening success in **both secondary school and college** Aboriginal education across Atlantic Canada include:

1. Establishing a pan-Atlantic collection system for a common set of performance indicators used to provide an annual report on secondary and college Aboriginal education with provincial breakdowns to be used for improvement planning purposes. This information will be instrumental in strengthening policy and programs. Atlantic Aboriginal governments must play a key role in the design, collection, interpretation, and access to this data;

2. Addressing persistent funding inequities in schools and colleges including the supply and development of Aboriginal teachers; infrastructure, governance and capacity issues;
delivery of Aboriginal language instruction; delivery of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge in curricula at all levels of education; delivery of local ABE programs; delivery of in-community college programs;

3. Creating culturally safe environments with practices honoring the life experience of Aboriginal students by respectfully integrating traditional and western knowledge;

4. Creating culturally safe environments with practices of strengthening Aboriginal language programs in schools and colleges. Language conveys unique values and worldviews, ancestral teachings, Traditional Knowledge systems and philosophies;

5. Creating culturally safe environments with the practices of reinforcing the role of Elders in all aspects of school and college life including: teaching of Traditional Knowledge, knowledge systems and philosophies, Elder led traditional ceremonies, storytelling and so on. Schools and colleges should establish cultural spaces for Elders and students to work together and conduct ceremonies. These practices ensure cultural safety and cultural continuity. They contribute to building the cultural pride and self-confidence needed to counteract feelings of isolation, embarrassment and shame identified by many students in both secondary schools and colleges;

6. Creating culturally safe practices by increasing faculty, staff and administrators from local Aboriginal communities;

7. Enhancing professional development for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, staff and administrators that includes Aboriginal teaching strategies and learning styles, connecting with Aboriginal communities, developing culturally-based curriculum, lesson plans and materials, and creating mentorship programs. This will also help non-Aboriginal teachers to deepen their understanding of Aboriginal cultures;

8. Creating culturally safe environments by providing sensitive Aboriginal histories, contributions, rights and cultural content to non-Aboriginal students;

9. Making reading, writing, language, and technological literacy a priority across all levels of education as the foundation of academic success;

10. Encouraging and supporting partnerships among multiple agencies to promote student success in both schools and colleges. Productively managed, such collaborations can harness additional resources and expertise to solve particular barriers to progress such as addictions, trauma, and mental illness.

11. Building opportunities and capacity for Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal communities to actively participate in supporting students’ success in schools and colleges;
12. Strengthening the capacity for consistent improvement of Aboriginal communities for community owned and Band operated schools and Aboriginal partnered colleges. This will require new governance and accountability structures and resources for infrastructure and training;

13. Taking all necessary steps to develop a sufficient supply of highly skilled Aboriginal teachers for all levels of Aboriginal Education;

College Practices

The issues faced by Aboriginal students from rural and remote communities as they attempt to move forward into post-secondary education extend beyond academic qualifications. If Aboriginal students are not approached with sensitivity towards culture, language and traditional teachings, the students may not be able to connect with the material and succeed. The report on “Common Assessment in the Native Literacy Field”, states: “When Native people are expected to stop being round pegs so they can fit into square holes, it stirs some very old emotions and sharply conflicts with Aboriginal ways” (Literacy Ontario, 2000, p19). In addition to the above, the following policies for strengthening Aboriginal college education across Atlantic Canada are recommended:

1. Creating culturally safe environments begins with addressing persistent funding inequities for Aboriginal College Students from rural and remote communities to overcome financial barriers and providing financial support for basic needs such as family housing, travel, transportation, daycare, required equipment, computers and so on.

2. Encouraging and supporting partnerships among multiple agencies to promote college student access to the labour market. Productively managed, such collaborations can harness additional resources and expertise to solve particular barriers to the labour force.

3. Developing assessment strategies for admission with Elders and other representatives from all Aboriginal groups in order to develop holistic assessments which include culturally relevant materials. Assessments have to be flexible and include assessment of supports needed by Aboriginal applicants such as: English as a second language, bridging programs to strengthen oral, reading, writing, science, and computer skills.

4. Adhering to holistic cultural practices which consistently provide supports needed by Aboriginal students in college. Engage and develop all aspects of the individual (emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual) and maintain meaningful connections with students’ communities to ensure culturally relevant environment and curriculum which respect the intergenerational transfer of Traditional Knowledge.
5. Assessing and teaching practices have to be evaluated to measure success of support procedures including other practices such as effective intervention of racism in all aspects of the learning environment.

6. Working in partnership with Aboriginal communities, industry and government; colleges need to provide long term planning strategies to avoid long admission waiting lists. Strategies must meet industry and community current and future needs and provide colleges and Aboriginal students with guaranteed apprenticeships.

Demonstration Project Models for Promising Practices

The identification of a high-performing school and a college campus in rural and remote regions will provide valuable success models for study and replication of promising practices. To promote knowledge transfer, the school and college campus identified below should be designated as demonstration models and receive additional funding to document their practices and provide coaching to others interested in accelerating promising practices in rural and remote regions.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL: MIAWPUKEK SE’T A’NEWEY KINA’MATINO’KUOM K-12 SCHOOL

It is not always the case that promising practices in one community or college translates directly to another. In interpreting and applying promising practices from the rural and remote communities used here, Miawpukek is closest to an Aboriginal community with promising practices in a rural and remote context. Like many rural and remote Aboriginal communities, Miawpukek has had a long history of oppression and colonialization. The early history was also one of sustainable land and river based activities such as trapping and fishing which required extensive traditional knowledge and skill. Similar to the other Aboriginal communities in the case studies, Miawpukek has retained Traditional Knowledge related to the ocean, land and river but has struggled to reclaim traditional spiritual knowledge in everyday life. It has also struggled for visibility within the Atlantic Aboriginal context while challenging provincial and federal government for recognition. Despite these challenges, Miawpukek has become one of the most stable and economically viable Aboriginal communities in Atlantic Canada: “Miawpukek has 100 percent seasonal employment… and a comparatively low crime rate. Its Band operated school system is considered of high quality for both its role in academic preparation for further studies and its attention to cultural and language identity reclamation work” (Orr, 2011, p142). The Band Council operates like a self-government within provincial and federal systems with autonomy over secondary education for thirty years. The community practices for delivering education, including ABE, have resulted in a considerably higher number of graduates succeeding in post-secondary education and attachment to the labour force. Miawpukek has had community ownership of its school for one of the longest periods in Atlantic Canada. It has one of the highest level of high school graduates per capita in both secondary and post-secondary education, successfully translating to the labour market. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have much to learn from Miawpukek education practices and their substantive base in the community. The identification of Miawpukek as a high performing school provides valuable promising practices for analysis. It is recommended
that Se’t A’newey Kina’matino’kuom school in Miawpukek be designated a demonstration model school and receive additional funding to document their practices and provide coaching to other schools and Band Councils in Atlantic Canada. This demonstration model project has to be community led and employ an Aboriginal research design.

**COLLEGE CAMPUS MODEL: COLLEGE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC HAPPY VALLEY GOOSE BAY CAMPUS (CNA HVGB)**
The CNA HVGB Campus has struggled under funding cuts in recent years despite its geographic location in Labrador serving diverse Aboriginal communities in rural and remote locations. At this stage of its evolution, many of the campus staff and faculty have worked in these rural and remote locations and individually, have a depth of understanding of the challenges experienced by their students. Consequently, many of these staff and faculty provide undocumented and valuable supports for students. These informal support systems are augmented by the formal structures outlined by Craig Baker in the section on the CNA HVGB campus in this report. The campus would greatly benefit from becoming a demonstration model to document their formal and informal practices. This would help to inform its future development. Colleges from Atlantic Canada would benefit from documentation of the HVGB campus practices. The campus could also provide coaching on these practices to other campuses and colleges. Results from this demonstration model can inform policy positions at the provincial as well as national levels. HVGB campus has similarity to colleges in the Canadian context because it has to address the needs of a number of Indigenous groups as well as the needs of major industry in the region. CNA HVGB campus should be designated as a promising practice college serving a rural and remote region in Atlantic Canada and be provided with funds to document their practices and provide coaching to other campuses.

**Summary**
Promising practices includes recognition of the place of research to guide policy and program decisions. Focused research includes demonstration project models of promising practises which will inform the capacity building of youth for the labour market. A multipronged approach to secondary and post-secondary success can be expected to pay large dividends in improving educational performance and labour force outcomes for Aboriginal students in Atlantic Canada.
References


Miawpuk First Nation (2016) http://www.mfngov.ca


Philpott, D.F., Nesbit, W., Cahill, M., & Jeffery, G. (2004). *Recommendations for the development of a culturally defined model of inclusive schools for Innu youth*. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Memorial University of Newfoundland & Labrador, St. John’s, NL.


Appendix A: Research Tools
A-1 Community Profiles

Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities - Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industry

Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat have funded an Atlantic wide research project “Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities - Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industry”. In order to understand the challenges and successes of Aboriginal students participating in post-secondary education we need to more fully understand your community. We especially need to understand the experience of school for these students, the number of students you have, the programs you offer, and the attendance and graduation rates. Aboriginal communities have a higher birthrate, their schools have a growing number of students, and their language and cultural needs mean that they need more localized programs. Being able to fully present these needs to government is really important.

As part of this project we request the following information. Some of this is available from government websites but there are often differences between what governments say and what communities know. We do not need any identifying information other than the numbers of students and their genders in each of the following areas:

Population base:
1. What was the number of children (by gender) born each year 2005 -2015?
2. Can you provide your school enrollment by grade and gender 2005-2015?
3. Can you outline the number of high school graduates 2005 -2015?
   - Status of their graduation (school completion, basic certificate, academic standing)
   - Number of graduates who were eligible to enroll in: a university; a community college/trades program; a college preparation/transition program.
   - Number of graduates relying on distance learning courses to graduate

Support programs
4. Does your junior or senior high school offer career planning programs? If so, please describe.
5. Does your junior or senior high school offer transition planning programs? If so, please describe.
6. Does your junior or senior high school offer drop-out prevention programs? If so, please describe.
7. Does your community have an adult basic education program? If so, what is the enrollment and graduation rate (by gender) for each year 2005 -2015?

Post-secondary entrance
8. How many young adults, by gender, enrolled in a university for each year 2005 -2015?
   - Which university?
   - Which programs?
9. How many young adults, by gender, enrolled in a college preparation or transition program for each year 2005 -2015?
   • Which colleges?

10. How many young adults, by gender, enrolled in a community college program for each year 2005 -2015?
    • Which colleges?
    • Which programs?

11. How many young adults, by gender, enrolled in a trades program other than a community college program for each year 2005 -2015?
    • Which programs?

**Post-secondary graduation**

12. In each year between 2005 – 2015, how many graduates did your community have in each four groups listed above (university, college preparation/transition, community college, trades program) how many graduated (specifying gender)?
   • Which schools and which programs?
   • How many of these graduates returned to work in your community?
Appendix A: Research Tools
A-2 Interview Guide for Aboriginal Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee number:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs has commissioned a study of key economic drivers in Aboriginal rural and remote communities, Aboriginal youth, colleges and industries. The goal of this interview is to gather information about the experiences, challenges, barriers and opportunities you had during your post-secondary education and on the job training, job search and employment. The interview will last approximately 50 minutes. It is voluntary and confidential. You will not be identified by name and all interview notes will be stored in a secure box. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Sharon Taylor at 709 437 2325. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Mi’kmaq Ethics Watch. Thank you for your time.

Part 1 – Your Story

1. Where do you live now?

_________________________________________________________________________________

2. Where did you grow up? Where did you graduate from high school?

_________________________________________________________________________________

3. What college did you attend?

_________________________________________________________________________________

4. What is level of education did your parents completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some trades or college</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade or college diploma</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some university</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What was high school like for you?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

6. Who or what were your supports in high school?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

7. Did you receive support in considering & exploring college? If so what were they?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

8. Was there information about colleges at your junior high school or high school? If so was it helpful?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

9. How difficult was it to attain the marks to meet college entrance requirements?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

10. What could have helped you meet the requirements?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

Part 2 – Your College Experiences

11. What led you to apply to college?
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.
_________________________________________________________________________________.

154
12. Your college programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of program</th>
<th>Program 1</th>
<th>Program 2</th>
<th>Program 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part time or full time student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year started</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year graduated OR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year last attended</td>
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</table>

13. Describe your experiences as a college student.

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

(Probe for: positive experiences and negative experiences)

14. Did you complete your college program?

Yes [ ]
In progress [ ]
No [ ]

If you answered “no” for any of your programs, go to Part 4. If you answered “yes” for some, complete Part 5 as well. If you answered “in progress”, that’s great! We wish you luck with your current studies but we are only interested in programs you are no longer in.
Part 4 – If You Did Not Complete Your Studies

15. One scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not a barrier at all and 5 is a huge barrier what were the challenges and barriers that prevented you from completing your studies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 not a barrier</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 a huge barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Too expensive/could not obtain funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Discrimination by other students</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Discrimination by teachers and staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Insensitive staff or faculty to my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Not adequately prepared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A struggle to balance school and family life</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Lack of support from teachers when needed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Lack of support from friends when needed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lack of support from family when needed</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lack of support from my home community or Band when needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Too far from my family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I got a job so I didn’t need to complete my studies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I took a break and intended to return but life got in the way</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Other (please describe):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. What was the main reason you did not complete your studies?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

17. What could have helped you succeed?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

18. What did you do after you stopped your studies?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

19. Were you able to find a job? What was your experience like? (Probe: In your chosen field, in the community where you wanted to live, etc.?)
Please answer Part 5 is you also graduated from other programs. If not, go to Part 6.

**Part 5– If You Graduated**

20. On a scale of 1 to 5 how helpful were the following things in completing your studies:

| 1. Financial assistance from my Band Council | 1 Not helpful at all | 2 Not helpful | 3 Neutral | 4 Helpful | 5 Very helpful |
| 2. Financial assistance from elsewhere         |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 3. Parents/family                             |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 4. Elders                                     |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 5. A part time job                            |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 6. My community                              |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 7. My friends                                |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 8. PSE Teachers                               |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 9. PSE Academic counsellor                   |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 10. My high school experience                |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 11. My goal of wanting to find a good job    |                       |               |           |           |               |
| 12. Other (please describe):                 |                       |               |           |           |               |

21. What was the main success factor that helped you to complete your studies?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

22. What was your experience in finding a job after graduation? (Prompt: In your chosen field, in the community you wanted to live, etc.?)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Part 6 – Suggestions for the Future

23. Thinking about your own experiences and thinking about other young people from your community who may want to go on to College or who should think about College, what would you like to see each of the following do to assist them in being successful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To support / encourage going to PSE</th>
<th>To support / encourage completing PSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal and Provincial Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 7 – Demographics (The information collected will not be used to identify participants.)

24. What is your age?
   - 19 to 24 years [ ]
   - 25 to 29 years [ ]
   - 30 to 34 years [ ]
   - 35 to 39 years [ ]
   - 40 to 44 years [ ]
   - 45 to 49 years [ ]
   - 50 to 54 years [ ]
   - 55 to 59 years [ ]
   - 60 to 64 years [ ]
   - 65 to 69 years [ ]
   - 70 to 74 years [ ]
   - 75 years and older [ ]

25. What is your gender?
   - Male [ ]
   - Female [ ]
   - Other [ ] ________________________________

26. What is your highest level of education completed?
   - Some high school [ ]
   - High school diploma [ ]
   - Some college or trades [ ]
   - College or trade certificate/diploma [ ]
   - Some university [ ]
   - Undergraduate degree [ ]
   - Master’s degree [ ]
   - PhD degree [ ]

27. What is your employment status?
   - Employed full time [ ]
   - Employed part time [ ]
Unemployed, currently looking for work [ ]
Unemployed, not looking for work [ ]
Other: [ ]

28. Current Occupation:
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

29. What occupation you are trained for and/or wish to have, if different from above:

a) Trained for
_________________________________________________________________________________

b) Wish to be employed as
_________________________________________________________________________________

Other comments:
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time!
Appendix A: Research Tools
Appendix A-3 Key Informant Interview Guide

Date:

Interviewee number:

Interviewer:

The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFN) has commissioned a study of Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal rural and remote communities, Aboriginal youth, colleges and industries. You have been selected for an interview because of your knowledge about the topic. The goal of this interview is to gather information about the challenges and barriers of college education and employment for Aboriginal as well as the implications and connections to socio-economic development in Aboriginal communities. The interview will last approximately 50 minutes. It is voluntary and confidential. You will not be identified by name and all interview notes will be stored in a secure box. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Sharon Taylor 709 437 2325. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch. Thank you for your time.

Part 1 – General Questions (for all key informants)

1. What is your title and where do you work?
2. What has your experience been with Aboriginal college education?
3. What challenges and barriers exist for Aboriginal students wishing to attend college?
4. Studies have shown that Aboriginal students have a much lower rate of college completion than non-Aboriginal students. Why have many Aboriginal students traditionally not fared well in college?
5. What needs to be improved for a greater success/graduation rate?
6. What can be done to help more Aboriginal people find work?
7. What do you feel are the linkages between college completion and social and economic development in Aboriginal communities?

Part 2 – Specific Questions (answer only those that apply to you)

School administrators (school principals, college presidents, teachers, field program supervisors etc.)

1. What programs and/or resources does your institution offer to help Aboriginal students graduate?
2. What programs or resources do you have to help recruit Aboriginal people to your school?
3. If you do not offer any supports, why is that?
4. When does your school begin career planning for post-secondary studies?
5. What types of supports do you have for students planning to attend post-secondary studies?
6. How effective are these supports?
7. What types of programs might help strengthen career planning?
8. What policies do you think need to be developed to assist your current and perspective Aboriginal students?

Academic and employment counsellors (including entrepreneurship development officers and directors of educations)

1. What kinds of programs and/or resources do you offer to help Aboriginal students graduate and/or find employment?
2. Are these Aboriginal focused programs or are they for everyone?
3. What policies do you think need to be developed to help you help Aboriginal students in their academic and career planning?

First Nations Chiefs/Elders

1. What do you think is the role of First Nation Band Councils/Elders in ensuring Aboriginal student success at the college level?
2. What policies do you think need to be implemented to help Aboriginal students at the college level?
3. If more of your youth had college diplomas, how would it affect your community?

Economic development officers (and business development)

1. Have you seen any impacts of college completion among Aboriginal people in Aboriginal communities? Please provide examples?
2. Does college have any impacts on economic development? Please explain.
3. If more Aboriginal youth had college diplomas, how would it affect Aboriginal community economic development?

Government department – education

1. What is the Department of Educations’ role in helping more Aboriginal students obtain and complete college programs?
2. What policies, programs or practices do you have that support students with career planning?
3. What policies, programs, and practices do you have that support students with transition planning to post-secondary schools?
4. Are there any changes planned for the future in policies, programs or practices?
5. What policies need to be in place?
Appendix A: Research Tools
Appendix A-4 Consent to Participate in an Interview

I am a researcher with the research project entitled *Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities - Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries*. I am inviting you to participate in this important study about the barriers to admission and successful completion of post-secondary education that confronts Aboriginal youth in Atlantic Canada. The purpose of the study is to understand the education and employment training experiences of Aboriginal people, to identify the barriers and the challenges they face, and to provide recommendations for action which may lead to an increased rate of post-secondary education completion.

This study involves a series of interviews with Aboriginal people, from Atlantic Canada who are currently students in, or have graduated from, post-secondary institutions (colleges, trades schools) as well as Aboriginal Elders, teachers, administrators in colleges and trades schools and industry professionals. The work will be completed between October 2016 to February 2016. The final report is being prepared for the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC) and they will be responsible for any actions they choose to take based on the findings. The interviews are strictly confidential and anonymous and will last no more than 45 minutes. Your name will not be used.

Results of this study will be presented as a group and no individual participants will be identified through the results. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to participate or not. You may choose to answer some or all of the questions without penalty and you have the right to withdraw at any point. All interview notes will be stored in a secure box.

For additional information on this study you can contact Dr. Sharon Taylor at: (709) 437-2325.

Your agreement to participate in an interview is your consent to allow me to identify you as an interviewee, in the manner in which you check below:

I, ___________________________ (please print your name)

- may review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation;
- may /may not (please circle one) be quoted directly;
- if quoted directly, I hereby grant copyright permission to the researcher to use my statements without including my name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant's signature</th>
<th>Researcher's signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.
November 18, 2015

Taylor & Associates
Dr. Sharon Taylor
Box 21366
RPO MacDonald Dr
St. John’s, NL
A1A 2H0

Sharon:

On behalf of Miawpukuk First Nation, I am inviting you and your Making Connection Project to our community of Conne River. I understand you will be working with our Director of Education, Mr. Rod Jeddore.

We look forward to your visit.

Wela’lin.

[Signature]

Saqamaw Misel Joe
November 14, 2015

Dr. Sharon Taylor
PO Box 21366
RPO MacDonald Drive
St. John’s, NL A1A 2H0

Dear Dr. Taylor:

This letter is to express my support for “Making the Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities – Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industry”, a research project that is intended to help us determine what barriers are being faced by our students as they enter into post-secondary training programs and again as they enter the workforce.

Understanding the factors that play into students not being accepted into programs, or being accepted into programs but not completing them, is critical to developing the appropriate supports for our students both from the community perspective and from the institutional perspective. Similarly, being able to understand the needs of students as they transition from training to employment is essential if we are to grow our workforce, and understanding employment trends helps us to plan for that transition.

Please call me at 902-755-9954, or email me at sheilaf@pictoulandingschool.ca. If any further information is needed.

We'la’lin.

[Signature]

Sheila Francis
Director of Education
Pictou Landing First Nation
RR#2, Box 55, Site 6
Trenton, NS B0K 1X0
January 4, 2016

Re: Letter of support for research proposal; "Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities, Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries"

Dr. Sharon Taylor,

The Chief and Council of Tobique First Nation recognize the value of research for policy and program development. We support research projects that adhere to the OCAP (Ownership, Control, Accountability, and Possession) principles. We also support research projects that will lead to improvements in our local social, economic, educational and cultural conditions.

The Chief and Council of Tobique First Nation support and give permission to Taylor and Associates to conduct the study at Tobique First Nation in accordance with the research proposal titled "Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities, Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries".

In good governance,

Chief Ross Perley

Councillor Richard Moulton

Councillor Kim Perley

Councillor Tina Martin

Councillor Leonard Nicholas

Councillor Vaughn Nicholas

Councillor Edwin Bernard

Councillor Lindsay Paul

Councillor Lara Sappier

Councillor Brad Perley

Councillor Lyndon Sappier

Councillor Melanie Perley

Councillor Gary Sappier
November 23 / 2015

Taylor and Associates
Dr. Sharon Taylor
P.O. Box 21366
RPO Macdonald Drive
St. John’s, NL
A1A 2H0

Dear Ms. Taylor,

On behalf of Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, I am inviting you and your Making Connection Project to our community of Sheshatshiu. I understand that you will be working our Director of Education, Ms. Andrew.

We look forward to your visit.

Nini
Gregory Petitsho
Band Manager
Appendix C: Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch Approval

November 9, 2015

Taylor and Associates
Dr. Sharon Taylor, Principal Investigator
P.O. Box 21366
RPO MacDonald Drive
St. John’s, NL
A1A 2H0

Dear Dr. Taylor:

I wish to inform you that the Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch committee has reviewed and approved “Making Connections: Key Economic Drivers in Aboriginal Rural and Remote Communities, Aboriginal Youth, Colleges and Industries.”

As your project moves forward with the approval of the Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch, I must note that individual communities have their own perspective on research projects and it is your responsibility to consult them to ensure that you meet any further ethical requirements. Governments, universities, granting agencies, and the like also have ethical processes to which you might have to conform.

When your project is completed, the Mi’kmaq Resource Centre at Unama’ki College would be pleased to accept the results in a form that could be made available to students and other researchers (if it is appropriate to disseminate them). Our common goal is to foster a better understanding of the Indigenous knowledges.

If you have any questions concerning the Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch review of your project please do not hesitate to contact me and I will forward them to the committee members.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Augustine,
Dean
Unama'ki College and Aboriginal Learning
Cape Breton University

SJA/dme