A Review of Aboriginal Education Councils in Ontario

Final Report

March 2016

PREPARED BY:

Academica Group Inc.
London, ON

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

Environmental Scan 1

Selecting Aboriginal Education Councils 2

AEC interview Findings 3

Key Points 5

Promising practices 5

Considerations for government 8

Conclusion 10

1. INTRODUCTION 11

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN 13

New Zealand: Universities 13

New Zealand: Elementary / Secondary Education 15

Australia: Universities 16

Australia: Elementary / Secondary Education 19

British Columbia – Universities and Colleges 22

Saskatchewan – Universities and Colleges 26

Saskatchewan - Elementary / Secondary Education 28

Manitoba – Universities and Colleges 31

Manitoba - Elementary / Secondary Education 32

Summary 33

3. OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATING AECS 34

Methodology 34

Colleges 35

Universities 36

School Boards 37

4. AEC INTERVIEW FINDINGS 39

Membership 39
Onboarding 42
Agenda Setting 43
Resources 45
Strategic Planning 46
Institutional decision-making bodies 47
5. PROMISING PRACTICES 50
Formal Practices 51
Leadership Practices 57
6. CONSIDERATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT 60
8. CONCLUSION 64
BIBLIOGRAPHY 65
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS 69
APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION GUIDE 70

Acknowledgement

The Academica Group Project Team would like to express its greatest appreciation to the 57 key informants that gave so generously of their time to meet with us, inviting us into their homes, their places of work, to a local venue, or speaking with us on the phone to answer our questions. This report was made possible because of the active participation of Aboriginal Education Council members across the province who agreed to share their insights and their frank assessments. We are very thankful to them all. We also would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement from Ron Deganadus McLester (Mohawk College), Taunya Paquette (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities) and Shirley Carder (Ministry of Education) who informed and guided the project.

Rod Skinkle, Andrew Parkin, Yves Pelletier, Julie Peters

Executive Summary

In order to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (hereafter, the Ministry) requires the province's publicly-funded postsecondary institutions to establish Aboriginal Education Councils (AECs). The Councils serve to strengthen relations between the institutions and Indigenous communities and partners, and help to provide a greater voice for Indigenous peoples in institutional decision-making. The province's *2011 Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* describes an AEC as "a mandatory body established by each publicly assisted college or university to ensure that Aboriginal people are consistently and regularly engaged in decision making within the institution…The establishment of an AEC is required if a college or university is to be eligible to receive targeted Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL)" (Government of Ontario, 2011, 40).

Since the launch of the Province of Ontario's Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy in 1992, institutions have established AECs in order both to access targeted ministry funding for Indigenous education and to facilitate discussion and collaboration among Indigenous community members and senior institutional representatives. AECs currently take a broad range of forms, varying by size, membership, mandate, and outcomes. The goal of this research project was to document these differences, and to highlight promising practices that can be shared among AECs across the province and guide practice and policy development.

The project included three phases: an environmental scan of similar Indigenous committees or bodies in other jurisdictions (New Zealand, Australia, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba); key informant interviews with 57 members of AECs from seven colleges, eight universities and four school boards in Ontario; and analysis of the information collected in order to identify a list of promising practices. The research findings helped establish a set of 18 key points, made up of 13 promising practices and five considerations for government.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

To provide context for ongoing considerations about the role of AECs in Ontario, the research team first reviewed the available literature and information on the use of similar consultative bodies in other jurisdictions, namely Australia and New Zealand and, within Canada, the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The environmental scan suggests that in these jurisdictions, the use of Aboriginal education advisory committees is common but by no means uniform. While there are numerous prominent examples, there are also frequent cases where no committee can be found where one might be expected. In those cases where advisory committees are in place, the form and function of such committees varies considerably. While some committees are closely integrated within an institution's governance structures,

reporting to a senior executive and retaining accountability for the achievement of the institution's overall strategic goals, others are more distanced, focusing mostly on providing direct support in one area (such as to students, teachers or faculties). The scan also found that while governments frequently endorse and encourage the development of mechanisms to facilitate engagement with Aboriginal communities and the participation of Aboriginal representatives in institutional and systems governance, they are rarely prescriptive, leaving it to the discretion of the institutions as to whether and how to implement a general policy direction. This creates the potential for significant gaps between overarching policy frameworks and practice.

Finally, there is some debate about the extent to which the use of Aboriginal education advisory committees constitutes best practice. In those institutions where the indigenization process is more advanced, advisory committees may be counterproductive, serving to inhibit the comprehensive adoption of a "whole of institution" approach by compartmentalizing the responsibility for Aboriginal concerns. In those cases when indigenization is less advanced, however, the creation of advisory committees can serve as a means of bringing communities together for the first time and facilitating the development of mutual understanding and trust.

SELECTING ABORIGINAL EDUCATION COUNCILS

Academica invited AECs from 10 universities, eight colleges and five school boards to participate in this project. The target list was generated in the following manner:

- On the recommendation of the Ministry, Academica focused on institutions located within communities with the highest numbers of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. Academica also included postsecondary institutions located in regions near the largest on-reserve Indigenous communities. These two steps resulted in a list of 15 cities in Ontario. Academica then identified one postsecondary institution per community, ensuring a good geographic distribution of institutions and an equal mix of colleges and universities within major regions of the province and across the province as a whole.

- There were two exceptions to this method. First, in one community, Academica included three institutions: a university, a college and a school board. This is because this community has one of the highest numbers of Indigenous Peoples in the province and serves as a regional hub for a number of smaller Indigenous communities. Academica wished to interview AEC members from the university, college, and school board in this community to examine possible connections and common approaches among their respective AECs. The second exception was the decision to include an additional postsecondary institution because it appeared to have the most information-rich website relating to its AECs, including complete information on its terms of reference, its meeting schedule, and its meeting minutes.

- Finally, the selection of school boards followed a slightly different process. A Ministry of Education representative identified school boards that were perceived as provincial leaders in Indigenous

education as a result of previous pilot projects. Two of these school boards were added to the invitation list. Three other school boards were selected because they had information on Indigenous education readily available on their website, and because they represented different urban and rural regions of the province.

Following the creation of the target list of institutions, Academica issued an invitation to participate by contacting either the institutional chairs or co-chairs of the AECs, or, when a list of AEC members was not available on an institution's website, the office of Indigenous education at the institution. In response to this invitation, a very small number of institutions opted not to participate in the study or did not respond to email or phone messages. In the end, 19 AECs were included in the study, located at seven colleges, eight universities, and four school boards. Academica completed 57 interviews with AEC members at these 19 participating institutions.

AEC INTERVIEW FINDINGS

A total of 57 key informant interviews were completed with AEC members from 19 institutions, including seven colleges, eight universities and four school boards. A discussion guide was prepared to ensure the research team explored the same elements using a standardized list of questions (see Appendix B). The interviews aimed to learn more about the various AECs' structures and processes, including membership, onboarding, strategic planning, and links to institutional decision-making bodies.

The participating colleges tended to have AECs of similar size – roughly 14 members. University AECs, however, were often larger as their membership included more administrators, more faculty members, and members from the Senate. While some universities also had around 14 members, others had between 20 and 28 members, and one university had 40 members.

The members of the participating AECs comprised a variety of representatives, including:

- Indigenous community members, notably directors of education within Indigenous communities who support Indigenous learners on their postsecondary journey, and thus know the challenges they face; Indigenous organizations like the Métis Nation of Ontario, friendship centres and organizations supporting children and youth; and elders who support the community and the institution in traditional knowledge and culture;

- Indigenous members within the institution, notably students who come to share their experience and influence the development of new programs and services; Indigenous faculty members who teach within the institution and support Indigenous learners; and institutional resource members, who work with the institution's Indigenous programs and services; and

- Institutional non-Indigenous members, notably the president and other senior institutional leaders who participate actively in the AECs, as well as non-Indigenous faculty members who have an interest in Indigenous studies.

There is also a trend in reducing the number of non-Indigenous members on AECs to ensure that the discussions focus more on the community's needs, instead of continuing intra-institutional discussions at the AEC meetings.

Regarding the onboarding processes for new members on the AECs, only two institutions commented that their onboarding process was extensive and successful. New AEC members at other institutions sometimes receive the orientation binder prepared for that institution's new Board of Governors members. In other cases, there was no onboarding process, with this question having the unintended consequence of encouraging institutional members to develop an onboarding process in the upcoming months.

When asked about the frequency of meetings, the process to schedule meetings, their preferred meeting time and the process of setting the agenda, the AECs revealed that they met on average four times a year, with a few AECs meeting twice a year, and a few others meeting as frequently as eight times a year. AECs with more frequent meetings noted that discussions were often more operational, and less strategic. Attempts to meet more frequently also led to quorum difficulties. The institutional co-chair or an institutional representative often calls the meetings, with some AECs setting an annual schedule, and others setting their next meeting at the end of the current AEC meeting. All but one AEC reported that they meet during the day, with members starting or ending their meeting with a meal to converse informally before the meeting, and one AEC meets in the evening to ensure senior institutional representatives can attend without competing requests. Finally, the agendas for the various AEC meetings include a blend of information sharing from both institutional representatives and community members. In some, the meeting never extends beyond information sharing, but other meetings ensure significant discussion on current and emerging issues.

This study was also interested in learning about the AECs' access to both human and financial resources to carry out their work. While no AEC had their own employees at the institution, all AECs felt that their Council was well supported by key institutional employees, notably the senior lead for Indigenous education at the institution, employees within the Indigenous education support office, and through the administrative assistance of senior administrative officers. Key informants also noted that their Councils were all involved in the approval of the Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners, and some received updates on the use of those funds as a regular agenda item. Some key informants expressed concerns that this PEFAL funding was the only envelope within the institution to support Indigenous employees hired to support Indigenous learners, leaving some to question the overall level of support for Indigenous education.

Finally, key informants were asked questions regarding their efforts to set a strategic direction for their AEC and the different types of interactions between the AEC and the various decision-making bodies on campus. Roughly half of the AECs in our research sample have their own strategic plan that covers a three-year or five-year period. In the other cases, the AECs work with their institutions in their own strategic planning process, either as a key stakeholder group or as group invited to integrate its priorities within the

institutional plan. Regarding interactions with decision-making bodies, roughly half of the AECs had formal ties with the Board of Governors, while other key informants felt that the president or vice-president who attends AEC meetings was their representative to the Board of Governors. Among the universities in our sample, roughly 50% of AECs had a direct link with the Senate.

KEY POINTS

The research findings informed the development of 18 key points. These key points are made up of 13 promising practices for AECs and five considerations for government.

Promising practices

The research team identified as promising practices those that are more likely to foster one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Forms of consultation that are experienced by participants as genuine and based on mutual, open-ended dialogue;
2. Influence that is felt across the institution, potentially touching all of its areas of operation;
3. Influence on decision-making at levels senior enough to affect the overall direction of the institution;
4. The strengthening of relations between the institution and its external Indigenous constituencies;
5. The mobilization of AEC community members as partners and as resources who can make a contribution to the life and mission of the institution.

The promising practices are presented in two categories. The first have to do with formal practices that relate to the structure and operation of AECs, and the second relate to leadership practices.

Promising practices related to formal practices included the following:

1. Clear terms of reference. Among the most important elements of terms of reference is the clarification of the AEC's role and purview. In the absence of clarity on this issue, members can have different views on such fundamental questions as whether the AEC is a forum for information sharing, whether it has an advisory role, or whether it should have a formal role in decision-making. Absence of clarity on these questions can undermine efforts to build trust within the AEC and between it, the institution and the Indigenous community. The more successful Councils are those that clarify both that the AEC's main role is advisory and that its advice will reach senior decision makers by virtue of their direct involvement with the council.

2. Majority membership from community. The more successful AECs had a majority of members from the community. Councils with a majority of community members were more likely to serve as a forum to bring community needs and issues to the attention of the institution and to promote the strengthening of relations between the community and institutions. Conversely, AECs with a majority of institutional members suffered from a number of weaknesses, including the fact that they were more likely to focus on internal information sharing and less likely to focus on advising the institution's leadership on

strategic issues. AECs should have memberships that ensure genuine consultation and dialogue between the community and the institution. The need to promote more effective information sharing about Indigenous issues among staff at large institutions is best accomplished through internal committees separate from the AECs.

3. Complementary structures to the AEC. Several institutions have created complementary structures to support both the institution and by extension the AEC. One such example was an institutional steering committee, made up of mid-level institutional representatives who received the mandate to translate the direction from the AEC into concrete actions, and to report those actions back to the council. The advantages of these complementary structures are clear: they allow the AEC to remain focused on strategic issues without getting overwhelmed by operational ones; they allow the institutions to move work forward in important areas without over-taxing members of the AEC (particularly the community members); they allow the institution to directly involve more staff and faculty in projects relating to Indigenous issues without diluting the community membership of the AEC; and, perhaps most importantly, they help to ensure that an AEC serves as an anchor for an ever-expanding influence across the institution rather than as a mechanism that allows Aboriginal issues to be compartmentalized by confining them to one committee.

4. Integration within the institutional decision-making bodies. The most successful AECs were integrated within and across the layers of decision-making at the institution, providing advice and recommendations to the Board of Governors, the Senate, the executive team and other institutional leaders. This represents a sharing of responsibility for improvements in Indigenous education outcomes across the institution, resembling the "whole-of-institution" approach. By contrast, less influential AECs were structured more as stand-alone bodies with limited interaction with or connection to the rest of the institution—beyond the interactions between the institutional members on the AEC itself.

5. Aligning AEC and institutional strategic plans. Most AECs had developed or are in the process of developing a strategic plan to set their orientations and objectives. The most successful examples, however, are Councils whose strategic plan was also directly linked to or integrated with the institution's overall institutional plan. This is an important step in mitigating the risk of the compartmentalization of Indigenous issues within the institution, and helps to entrench a whole-of-institution approach. The linking of the AEC plan to the institutional plan raises the visibility and prestige of the Council within the institution but, more importantly, serves to make the whole of the institution's leadership – including boards and senior executives – responsible for the AEC's success.

6. Senior institutional leadership presence at AEC. Most successful AECs had one or more senior executive team members present in a sustained fashion over the years. The direct involvement of a senior executive, such as the president or vice-president, was welcomed by both institutional members and community members. For community members, the involvement of the institution's senior leaders was seen as a sign of respect and as a demonstration of the importance that the institution was attaching to the issue; it was a sign that the institution was serious about listening to what the Council had to say and

about acting on its advice. For institutional members, the leadership's involvement was similarly taken as a sign of the issue's importance.

7. Ensure Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners budget oversight, both in applying for and in reviewing the outcomes of funding requests. The more successful AECs had a leading role in shaping the institution's funding request through the Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL) – a role that went beyond simply signing off on it at the request of the institution. Many Councils used their strategic planning process or agenda-setting discussions at Council meetings to drive the formulation of their funding submission to the ministry. This is a key part of the promising practice. A number of key informants noted that while the institutions had previously seen their AECs mostly as a mechanism to help the institution access the funding, most had evolved to the point that this "sign off" function was now folded into a more genuine strategic advisory role. In other words, there had been an important evolution in institutional thinking to the point that the AECs were no longer seen by the institutions as being simply about accessing the money.

8. Sharing of data and research: More successful AECs regularly shared information with Council members on the key indicators such as the number of incoming Indigenous students, the number of Indigenous students graduating from the institution, and the number of Indigenous faculty, as well as other forms of data such as results from student surveys and studies of student needs. The sharing of this information is useful as it keeps community members informed about the situation on campus, can prompt helpful feedback from the community, and can highlight problems that warrant the Council's attention. It can also reinforce trust by enhancing the institution's transparency and the recognition of its accountability to the community.

Promising practices related to leadership included the following:

9. Senior institutional leadership team engagement. As important as a senior leader's presence for an AEC is their degree of genuine engagement – something that goes beyond what can be mandated on paper. Active and sustained engagement by institutional leaders (i.e. presidents, vice-presidents), including participation in meaningful discussion, listening to concerns and following-up on them to demonstrate that they have been heard, and endeavouring to get to know Indigenous partners by engaging in dialogue throughout the year and not just quarterly during AEC meetings (for instance, by visiting communities and community organizations), are all crucial.

10. Indigenous leadership on AEC. It is not only the institution's senior leadership that matters. The Indigenous leadership on the AEC is also crucial to its success and impact at the institution. Many Indigenous leaders of AECs will meet with community members to ensure they are comfortable with the direction of the AEC as a means of ensuring their full and continued engagement on the Council. Other Indigenous leaders of AECs will organize a pre-meeting (described by some as an Indigenous huddle) where only community members are invited to share their views and prepare their thoughts through a consensus-building process before the formal meeting.

11. Meaningful agendas for community engagement. The most successful AECs develop their scheduling of meetings and the specific agenda for each meeting in a strategic way so as to provide sufficient opportunities for community members to fully engage and to make it worthwhile for community members to make time to attend. At the opposite end of the spectrum are AEC meetings that are mostly "show and tell" meetings where the institution provides updates on its activities without connecting these to any strategic discussions, or meetings that are dominated by institutional members lobbying for their own program or research interests.

12. Bridge building with communities. The more successful AECs are ones whose members feel that they are part of a larger relationship building and educational process that spills over beyond the AEC's sphere of operations narrowly defined. This tends to occur when the institution's leadership recognizes that the AEC and its members constitute an invaluable resource that can play a role in and have an impact on the institution beyond that which is achieved through the formal exercise of its mandate and within the confines of a Council meeting. The AEC can serve not only to advise the institution, but to bring the institution and the community closer together through the deepening or mutual understanding.

13. Funding for Indigenous Education. Many key informants mentioned that there was not enough funding available to address all of the priorities and projects identified by the AEC. One of the biggest concerns, however, was the practice of relying exclusively on PEFAL funding as the financial resource to support Indigenous education. The most successful postsecondary institutions, therefore, did not exclusively rely on PEFAL funding, reinforcing the perception among AEC community members that the institution was genuinely committed to improving Indigenous education outcomes.

Considerations for government

While the project did not include a review of government policies, a number of key informants offered comments that touched on what the provincial government could do, or should not do, to enhance the work of the AECs. In view of this, the research team included a summary of these, and added other reflections informed by the research for this project, for consideration by the Ministry.

14. Circulate this report to each of the AECs and encourage discussion: Most key informants asked the research team to ensure that they would have access to the project's findings so that they could benefit from the experiences of others. Accordingly, the first recommendation to government is to ensure that this report is made widely available, and in particular is distributed directly to the chairs and co-chairs of all AECs. To promote further learning across the sector, the Ministry should also consider developing a process to encourage cross-institutional discussion of the findings and to capture feedback.

15. Continue to support variations in practice: There was a concern among some key informants that the recommendations in this report would be used to inform a more prescriptive policy for AECs that would require them to conform to a standard model. Many AEC members felt that the practices they had developed responded to the particular needs of both their institution and their Indigenous partners, and they did not want to lose the flexibility to continue to evolve in the direction that best suited their own situation. In the view of the researchers, this reflects a view, particularly among some of the more

successful AECs, that their local practice was already going well beyond the minimum requirements of government policy, and that any move to make the policy more prescriptive might actually be counterproductive by forcing them to divert attention away from the successful practices they had built over many years in order to meet a set of one-size-fits-all ministry requirements. Government-mandated collaboration is a crucial first step in bringing partners together; yet once the partners begin to engage in genuine dialogue, it is not clear whether further direction from the government about how to carry out this dialogue can add value.

16. Reinforce transparency: The above point does not mean that the government needs to adopt a completely "hands off" approach. One of the central findings of this study is the importance of transparency. It is possible for the Ministry to reinforce transparency without unduly interfering with the internal operations of institutions or AECs. A third consideration for government is to reinforce the need for transparency and information sharing by, for instance: making it clearer what type of information about each AEC must be available on the institution's website, and where; by requiring institutions to post, alongside the information on the AECs, a copy of their Multi-Year Aboriginal Action Plan for Postsecondary Education (MYAAPP); and by committing to publishing a series of annual key indicators in Indigenous postsecondary education within three years as part of its reporting on the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework. How each AEC would consider and respond to this information should be left to the discretion of each AEC itself; the Ministry's role should be in ensuring that AECs have the information required to track both the institution's priorities for Indigenous education, and the progress it is making over time in ensuring Indigenous student success.

17. Knowledge and capacity building: While the success of AECs depends to a significant degree on the leadership abilities of those in key positions, it is possible for governments to support leadership development. This can be particularly important in this area of policy, since many institutional executives find themselves involved with an AEC automatically by virtue of their position rather than because of pre-existing interest or expertise in Indigenous issues. In terms of Indigenous education, the provincial government could provide training opportunities specifically for AEC members (for both institutional and community members) in the different regions of the province, focusing both on the deepening of intercultural competency and the sharing of promising practices relating to AEC operations.

18. Continuing study: In view of the support for and interest in this study among the key informants, and the absence of other publicly available information about different AEC structures and practices across the province, the Ministry may wish to build upon this study. One important consideration is that a majority of AECs were not included in this study and therefore, a good deal of learning may have been missed. The ministry might consider a research model that on an annual basis would involve 20, 25 or 33 percent of public institutions in the province on a rotating basis, so that each institution would be included in the study every five, four or three years. Regardless of which and how many institutions participate, additional studies similar to the one undertaken here, if repeated regularly, would help the Ministry, institutions, and Indigenous communities to track progress, to ensure that momentum has not halted, and to continue to shine the light promising practices to the benefit of all concerned.

CONCLUSION

This project has been able to take stock of the situation relating to AECs, describing both the features they have in common and notable innovations across 19 universities, colleges and school boards in the province. This process has enabled the research team to provide an overview of how AECs are operating and, more importantly, to identify a number of promising practices which increase the likelihood that AECs can be effective agents of change within each institution and across the sector as a whole. These promising practices are not intended to create a one-size-fits all model for each and every institution to follow, but to appear as recurring themes that can guide institutions that wish to move forward in their efforts to work with the Indigenous community to improve experiences and outcomes for Indigenous students. While some of these promising practices can be implemented through changes to formal structures, through instruments such as Terms of Reference, others are more dependent on the approach of a particular AEC, and what its members, co-chairs or chairs, and associated leaders personally bring to the table in terms of their engagement, commitment and integrity. The researchers hope that, in presenting these themes to the Ministry, the postsecondary sector, and Indigenous communities, this report can make a positive contribution to advancing the efforts that are already underway across the province to build more inclusive and responsive postsecondary institutions.

1. Introduction

In order to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (hereafter, the Ministry) requires the province's publicly-funded postsecondary institutions to establish Aboriginal Education Councils (AECs). The Councils serve to strengthen relations between the institutions and Indigenous communities and partners, and help to provide a greater voice for Indigenous peoples in institutional decision-making. The province's *2011 Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* describes an AEC as "a mandatory body established by each publicly assisted college or university to ensure that Aboriginal people are consistently and regularly engaged in decision making within the institution. Institutions must ensure that representatives from Aboriginal communities/organizations have direct access to the board of governors and the senate (e.g., by reserving a seat on the board for an Aboriginal representative or by having the president serve as a member of the Aboriginal Education Council). The establishment of an AEC is required for a college or university is to be eligible to receive targeted Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL)" (Government of Ontario, 2011, 40).

It has been nearly 25 years since the Ministry launched of the Province of Ontario's Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS). Between 1992 and 2009, the AETS was the "mechanism that provided funding to colleges, universities, and Aboriginal institutes and organizations for the development of programs and services supporting the following three goals:

- to increase the number of Aboriginal students participating in post- secondary education;
- to increase the sensitivity of mainstream universities and colleges to Aboriginal cultures, issues, and realities; and
- to increase the participation of Aboriginal peoples in decisions affecting Aboriginal postsecondary education" (Government of Ontario, 2011, 34).

Many AECs were founded shortly after the launch of the Ministry's AETS in 1992. That being said, a few colleges and universities had independently established consultative bodies on Indigenous education prior to launch of the AETS, as they recognized the benefits of fostering stronger ties with Indigenous communities for the benefit of Indigenous learners.

Following the consolidation of targeted Aboriginal postsecondary education funding in 2009-2010, the Ontario government "now requires all postsecondary education institutions to report annually on their investments in Aboriginal education in a Multi-Year Aboriginal Action Plan for Postsecondary Education (MYAAPP)" (Government of Ontario, 2011, 21). Colleges and universities use these action plans to request funding for targeted initiatives on their campuses that respond to the needs of their Indigenous learners and the Indigenous communities that they serve. The Ministry requires that these plans be approved by the institution's AEC. Institutions without AECs were required to establish one in order to access ministry funding.

AECs at Ontario's postsecondary institutions currently take many different forms, varying by size, membership, mandate, and outcomes. The goal of this research project is to document these differences, and to highlight promising practices that can be shared among AECs across the province and guide practice and policy development.

The project was conducted in three separate phases.

- In Phase 1, Academica reviewed the available information and literature on the use of similar governing bodies to support Indigenous education in other jurisdictions (British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Zealand and Australia). Experiences in both postsecondary and elementary/secondary education were examined. This environmental scan focused specifically on the use of advisory committees to incorporate the viewpoints of Indigenous peoples in school and university/college decision-making.

- In Phase 2, Academica interviewed 57 AEC members in Ontario to gain an in-depth understanding of the work of 19 different AECs in the province – seven at colleges, eight at universities and four within school boards. The goal of these interviews was to document the focus, the strategies, the structure and the impact of the AECs in supporting Indigenous learners within these postsecondary institutions and school boards. On average, three interviews were conducted for each of these AECs, with the number of interviews varying between one and five, depending on the availability of AEC members.

- In Phase 3, Academica synthesized and analyzed the results of these interviews and completed this report that highlights the overall strengths and weaknesses of AECs across the province and documents promising practices.

The report's structure follows these three phases, starting with the environmental scan of similar Indigenous committees or bodies in other jurisdictions. This is followed by: a general overview of AECs within colleges, universities and school boards; a summary of findings from key informant interviews; a list of promising practices; considerations for government; and a conclusion. There are also two appendices: the first provides the names of the 19 participating institutions and the second provides a copy of the discussion guide used when interviewing key informants.

2. Environmental Scan

In order to inform the consideration of the role of AECs in Ontario, the research team first undertook a review of the available literature on the use of similar consultative bodies in other jurisdictions. The jurisdictions examined are Australia and New Zealand and, within Canada, the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba [1]. Experiences in both higher education and elementary/secondary education were examined. The environmental scan focuses narrowly on the use of advisory committees to facilitate the incorporation of the viewpoints of Indigenous communities into school and university/college decision-making. The establishment of Indigenous advisory committees is typically only one component among many that together form more comprehensive strategies to reform education institutions to better serve Indigenous students and communities. The environmental scan, however, does not consider the full range of practices that such indigenization strategies might include.

NEW ZEALAND: UNIVERSITIES

New Zealand is generally recognized as the most advanced jurisdiction in terms of the development and implementation of governance practices for educational institutions that serve to recognize, respect and respond to the needs and interests of Indigenous peoples.

There are eight public universities in New Zealand (these are distinct from the three separate higher education institutions, called wānangas, with a specific mission to advance the well-being of Māori as a people and support Māori ways of teaching and learning).[2] The eight universities are each governed by councils which are responsible for "ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development."[3]

New Zealand has taken steps to ensure that these councils take into account the distinct interests and needs of the Māori population. For instance, a ministerial statement outlining the government's expectations of council members includes a clause encouraging council members to "ensure that the institution works with iwi Māori [Māori peoples or nations (ed.)] and Māori communities to achieve Māori educational

[1] New Zealand and Australia were selected because of their historical and cultural similarities to Canada and their significant Indigenous populations. Among all provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have the greatest proportion of Aboriginal peoples within their population, and for that reason, they can be expected to have addressed issues relating to the need to develop mechanisms to foster consultation with Aboriginal peoples in the area of education. British Columbia was selected because, in the absence of treaties covering as much of its land as other provinces, it has sometimes charted a distinct path in terms of its relations with First Nations, including in the area of consultation, that could potentially offer interesting lessons.

[2] Information collected from the website of the Tertiary Education Commission at http://www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Types-of-TEOs/.

[3] Information collected from the website of the Tertiary Education Commission at http://www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Governance/.

development aspirations and provides an environment in which Māori students are encouraged and supported to succeed."[4] More recently, by virtue of a 2015 amendment to the Education Act, universities and wānanga in New Zealand are now required to ensure that a least one member of their council is Māori.[5]

Most of the eight New Zealand universities also include a senior executive responsible for Māori issues in the structure of their management team, usually at the level of assistant or pro-vice chancellor.[6] At the University of Canterbury, for instance, the role of the AVC Māori is "to help the University in general and in particular in supporting a learning environment which recognises and promotes New Zealand's unique bicultural society." The AVC Māori has responsibility for managing a development team, for implementing the university Māori strategy, for overseeing Māori research at the university, and for the university's profile and relationship with Māori organizations and the wider Māori community. Importantly, the AVC's office and Māori development office contains a staff of 14 individuals, including staff responsible for matters affecting teaching and research at the university, and student advisors.[7]

In New Zealand, the senior executives responsible for Māori issues, as well as the university's vice-chancellors and councils, are typically assisted by an advisory committee on Māori issues.[8] At the University of Aukland, for instance, this committee is called the Rūnanga, which is a Māori term denoting a governing assembly. The Rūnanga's role is to advise Council on policies affecting "the University's aspirations to partner with Māori and support Māori development"; to advise Council on the progress and achievements of the University towards its strategic objectives for Māori; to advise management on operational matters relevant to the delivery on strategic objectives for Māori; to consider and advise on academic matters that have direct relevance to Māori curriculum content, delivery and research; and to provide Council and senior management any other advice as required.[9] Similarly, the Auckland University of Technology relies on a Māori Advancement Advisory Committee (MAAC) that "advises the Pro Vice Chancellor Māori Advancement and assists the University to further its strategic objectives for Māori Advancement and related achievement." The committee "has representation from senior academic and management staff and Māori students, for all faculties and relevant allied divisions."[10]

These senior-level advisory committees by no means constitute the only or even the main ways of providing guidance to the universities' leadership on Māori issues. New Zealand's universities may also have area- or

---

[4] Ministerial statement access on the website of the Tertiary Education Commission at http://www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Governance/Ministerial-expectations/.

[5] Information collected from the website of the Tertiary Education Commission at http://www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Governance/. See also the guidelines to the amendments available at: http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Forms%20Templates%20and%20Guides/2015-Changes-to-university-and-wananga-governance-guidance-notes.pdf

[6] An exception appears to be Lincoln University, which is the country's smallest. New Zealand universities are led by vice-chancellors and typically have one or two deputy vice chancellors (DVCs). Assistant or pro-vice chancellors are below the DVCs in rank but part of the university's senior management team.

[7] Information collected from the website of the University of Canterbury at http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/vco/avc_maori/.

[8] Lincoln University again appears to be an exception.

[9] Information collected from the website of the University of Aukland at https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/maori-at-the-university/ma-runanga.html .

[10] Information collected from the website of AUT at http://www.aut.ac.nz/community/maori/maac.

issue-specific advisory groups focused on such things as Māori student well-being and success, Māori language on campus, Māori contributions to research, or outreach to Māori elders. The University of Victoria, for instance, has in place, among other things, the Māori Advisory Committee, a subcommittee that advises the university's council on relations with Māori communities, the Victoria University Treaty of Waitangi Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the deputy vice-chancellor (Māori) and reports to the vice-chancellor, and the Toihuarewa, which is a subcommittee of the academic board that provides a Māori voice on academic issues at the university.[11] This is an example of how the consideration of Māori issues within New Zealand universities is not confined to one specific area of the governance structure but interwoven throughout the different dimensions of the university's operations.

NEW ZEALAND: ELEMENTARY / SECONDARY EDUCATION

New Zealand does not rely on school boards to oversee the operation of schools; rather, each school is governed by its own board of trustees which is composed of elected parent representatives as well as representatives from the school's staff and students (in the case of secondary schools) and other appointed community members (two or more schools can also seek permission to combine their boards of trustees).[12]

The government's expectations of the trustees are outlined in the National Administrative Guidelines, which "set out statements of desirable principles of conduct or administration for specified personnel or bodies." According to guideline 1(e), "each board, through the principal and staff, is required to, in consultation with the school's Māori community, develop and make known to the school's community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students."[13] The mechanism through which this consultation and communication should take place is not prescribed; however, the government suggests a variety of mechanisms including the appointment of Māori representatives to the board of trustees, the establishment of a board subcommittee focused on Māori student success, employing Māori staff members as part of the school's leadership teams, hiring Māori community members to facilitate liaison, and direct outreach to Māori students, parents, families and communities (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013, 15).

Interestingly, the government notes that while "it is quite common for boards to have at least one trustee of Māori descent…evidence shows that having a single Māori representative on the board will not necessarily lead to effective engagement with Māori and the effective incorporation of Māori views into planning for the success of Māori students." Furthermore, this approach "does not remove the need for the rest of the board to engage with Māori families and the Māori community" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013, 14). There is a need, therefore, for a comprehensive "school wide" approach to engagement; advisory committees on Māori issues may be one component of this approach, but other mechanisms may be

[11] Information collected from the website of the University of Victoria at http://www.victoria.ac.nz/.
[12] Information collected from the website of the Ministry of Education at http://www.education.govt.nz/school/running-a-school/school-structures-and-governance/ and of the New Zealand School Trustees Association at http://www.nzsta.org.nz/representation/board-of-trustees.
[13] National Administrative Guidelines, available at http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/legislation/nags/.

employed as well. In fact, a government review of school engagement practices found that "schools that had maintained high levels of engagement…had implemented a variety of initiatives," including regular feedback and communication processes and, in one case, "a Treaty of Waitangi subcommittee that was responsible for monitoring and improving Māori engagement" (Education Review Office, 2010, 17-18).

The government's current emphasis on engagement, according to one review, marks an evolution in thinking about the nature of the relationships between schools and Māori families and communities. According to Mutch and Collins (2012, 172), "traditionally, information sharing between schools and parents and whanau [extended families and communities (ed.)] has been a one-way flow from schools as they report on student progress, school business, or changes to policy and curriculum. In more recent times, there has been recognition of the importance of reciprocal two-way communication to enhance the understanding of student backgrounds and learning needs; to consult with parents, whānau, and communities on school priorities; and to engage in collaborative goal setting."

Despite this evolution, however, the government's Education Review Office has found that there remains room for improvement. In 2010, the Office noted that "most secondary and primary schools in this investigation had made some progress with student and whānau engagement" and that "many schools had put in place specific initiatives to improve Māori engagement." It further noted that "although schools' engagement with the Māori community has improved overall, in a sizeable minority of schools' consultation with Māori parents and whānau is limited, and Māori parents' engagement in their children's education is not valued." In some cases, "initiatives to engage students were frequently aimed at all students rather than being targeted specifically at Māori" (Education Review Office, 2010, 1-3).

AUSTRALIA: UNIVERSITIES

As is the case in New Zealand, the experience of Indigenous peoples in higher education is a significant issue for both governments and higher education institutions in Australia. Considerable attention has been paid to all aspects of the issue, including the participation and success of Indigenous learners in higher education, the recruitment and advancement of Indigenous faculty and institutional leaders, respect for Indigenous perspectives on research and the valuing of Indigenous knowledge, and engagement between institutions and local Indigenous communities. Recent discussions among higher education leaders have focused on the objective of advancing the "indigenization" of universities, the development of "Indigenous cultural competency" within universities, and the implementation of "whole of university" approaches to improving outcomes for Indigenous students (see, for example, Universities Australia (2011) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council (2015)).

In this context, a number of Australian universities have established committees on Indigenous education to advise the university leadership on the issue. For example:

1. At University of Sydney, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy and Services Committee is mandated to "develop strategies, policies and procedures and coordinate activity across the University to implement, monitor and refine the integrated Indigenous Participation, Engagement,

Education and Research Strategy." The committee is chaired by the university's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services), is formed by heads of administrative departments, academic deans, and student representatives, and reports to the university's senior executive group which oversees the implementation of the university's overall strategic plan.[14]

2. At Charles Darwin University, the Vice-Chancellor's Indigenous Advisory Council is an advisory committee reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor. The Council provides "high-level advice to the Vice-Chancellor and the University in relation to Indigenous matters" and assists the university's Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership "by providing additional advice to the Vice-Chancellor on the development, implementation and review of the University's strategic goals for Indigenous education." The Council is formed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership (or nominee), a senior Indigenous academic, the director of the Indigenous knowledge and education centre, up to five Indigenous persons external to the university selected on the basis of their expertise in Indigenous education (one of whom is selected as the Council's chair), and one Indigenous student representative.[15]

What is notable about these two examples – which come from one of the country's largest and one of its smallest universities – is not only that the advisory committee has been established, but that the committees are integrated into the institutions' governance structures. In both cases, the committee supports a senior executive who is responsible for Indigenous education, reports directly to the university's senior leadership, and is tasked with helping the university achieve its strategic objectives relating to Indigenous education and to the institution as a whole.

Not all of the country's universities have Indigenous education advisory committees of this nature. In fact, a review of the governance structures of the country's 10 largest universities (measured in terms of the total number of domestic students) conducted as part of this environmental scan shows that such committees are in place at only six. This does not mean that the other institutions have no mechanisms in place for outreach on Indigenous issues. On the contrary, institutions often have advisory committees in place focussed on Indigenous issues as they relate to specific administrative or academic areas (such as student well-being or research ethics). Only six of the ten universities reviewed, however, have cross-cutting committees that are part of the institution's formal governance structure.

A review of the published literature similarly suggests that Indigenous advisory committees are in use at a number of Australian universities, but certainly not all. Moreover, the manner in which these committees are structured and operate appears to vary across those institutions that have established them. Speaking generally about measures to deepen the "Indigenous cultural competency" of Australian universities, Universities Australia (2011, 7) observes that "there is a wide variation between institutions in both their progress towards culturally competent operations and in the way they include competent practices in their

[14] Information retrieved from the University's website; see: http://sydney.edu.au/senior_executive_group/committees/indigenous_strategy_services/about.shtml
[15] Information retrieved from the University's website; see: http://www.cdu.edu.au/governance/termsofreference/vicechancellorsindigenousadvisorycounciltor.pdf

operations…It is clear at this time that some institutions are more advanced than others" (although it further notes that "the number of practices is growing all the time"). Universities Australia (2011, 190) also observes that "the available evidence demonstrates that Australian universities are lagging behind universities in countries such as New Zealand where Māori peoples and culture are a highly visible, celebrated and valued aspect of the life and governance of all universities."

According to others, the practices in Australian universities are not just uneven; they are inadequate and ineffective. Moreton-Robinson *et al.* (2011, 17) contend that Indigenous advisory committees "appear to have little impact on university culture and policies and no involvement in the allocation of resources to areas requiring additional monies." This "lack of power, authority and status" means that they are not really part of "university core business." Similarly, Gunstone (2013, 1) argues that "Australian universities have demonstrably failed to develop strategies, processes and policies that recognise, support and address the engagement of Indigenous people in leadership and governance in universities." Gunstones' survey of 12 institutions finds that "there were often several levels of bureaucracy between the Indigenous centres and Indigenous advisory committees and senior university management…Further, only half of the twelve university websites referred to the existence of an Indigenous advisory committee" (2013, 7).

While acknowledging these issues, Universities Australia believes that the situation is improving. Their review of institutional practices found "a significant move toward meaningful and sustainable engagement with Indigenous communities and organisations across the sector with the majority of institutions demonstrating elements of exemplar practice" (2011, 132). Recognizing the necessity of continued progress, Universities Australia formally recommended that its members "establish mechanisms, cultural protocols and codes of conduct to guide the University in its engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities" and "create formal structures, such as an Indigenous Advisory Committee, to obtain the views of local Indigenous communities on an on-going and regular basis" (2011, 189).

In view of this, however, it is notable that the expert panel recently tasked with advising the government on how to improve higher education outcomes for Indigenous students did not include among its 35 recommendations an explicit mention of consultative or advisory committees to provide guidance to university executives on Indigenous issues and facilitate engagement with local Indigenous communities (Expert Panel, 2012). The panel did, however, emphasize the importance of a "whole-of-university approach to the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff" which "requires responsibility to rest at the highest levels, with appropriate accountability mechanisms for these senior positions across all areas of business." As part of an approach where "accountabilities are set at the highest levels," the Panel "expects that universities would increasingly include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities and activities within their core policy and planning documents including their strategic plans, business plans and organisational policy documents" (see Expert Panel, 2012, Section 6.2).

In focusing on a whole-of-university approach without singling out the need for an advisory committee specifically focused on Indigenous education, the panel sought to draw attention to the importance of integrating the consideration of Indigenous education into all aspects of a university's decision-making and accountability structures, rather than isolating them within a single body. It is not that the panel is suggesting that Indigenous education advisory committees should not be used; rather, it is not singling them

out as a solution in and of themselves. This strategy reflects the advice provided to the panel by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council. The Council argued that advantages of a whole-of-university approach include "removing the excuse that 'someone else' was tackling the issue of Indigenous participation." They advocated for a model that combines "Indigenous leadership of the agenda with shared responsibility for outcomes" (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council, 2015, 1-2).

In sum, then, the review of both current institutional practices in Australia and of the recent literature suggests that there is an emerging consensus on the importance of incorporating the consideration of Indigenous education into the overall governance structure of the institution, such that it becomes a collective responsibility of the university's executive leadership. While in some circumstances, Indigenous education advisory committees can form part of such a whole-of-university approach, in other circumstances they may limit it by allowing Indigenous issues to become compartmentalized within one sector of the university's administration. The question of how in practice such committees do or do not connect with the university's overall planning and operations is therefore paramount.

AUSTRALIA: ELEMENTARY / SECONDARY EDUCATION

The decentralized nature of the management and delivery of primary/secondary education in Australia means that it is more difficult to summarize practices there than in New Zealand. Policies regarding the structure and management of schools are the responsibility of each Australian state and territory.

State and territorial governments in Australia have established state/territorial Indigenous education advisory committees, currently called Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECBs). These bodies provide independent policy advice to the state and territorial governments, monitor progress, and engage the public on Indigenous education issues. The Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee, for instance, "enables governments to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities on education, training and employment issues in Queensland," and specifically acts to: consult with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; monitor the performance of education providers; provide expert advice to ministers on strategies to improve outcomes and the appropriateness of new policy and program options; promote engagement between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and promote public awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues.[16] The New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group has similar functions but also operates as a not-for-profit corporation with a 16-person secretariat that provides services such as training and professional development and development resource kits. The Group has a membership base drawn from local and regional Aboriginal education consultative groups.[17]

[16] Information obtained from the website of the consultative committee; see: http://qiecc.eq.edu.au/index.php/about/vision-and-values/.
[17] Information obtained from the website of the consultative group; see http://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/about/.

Australian state and territorial governments also encourage engagement with Indigenous communities at the local level, although as in New Zealand, the exact mechanism through which this engagement takes place is not necessarily prescribed. Government policy statements advocating "effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation" of primary and secondary education date back at least to the late 1980s (see MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education, 2000, Appendix 1). This commitment to involving Indigenous communities in decision-making at the school level was recently reiterated in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy that was endorsed in September 2015 by the Education Council, which is formed by the national, state and territorial education ministers. In the strategy document, the education ministers agreed that education systems and providers should be guided by a set of principles that includes "partnerships: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged in decision making, planning, delivery and evaluation of early childhood, schooling and higher education services at local, sector and national levels" (Education Council, 2015, 3). The strategy also identifies partnerships as one of seven priorities, stating that "quality partnerships are encouraged between education sectors and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other stakeholders. These partnerships are characterised by listening and responding, strong accountability and active engagement, collaborative information sharing and informed decision making" (Education Council, 2015, 5).

An earlier report issued by an inter-governmental working party summarized the emergence of a consensus on the issue this way:

> "The development of genuine partnership, based on the principles of cross-cultural respect between the school and the Indigenous community, remains the primary platform to productive, stimulating and responsive highly effective schools servicing Indigenous students. Recent and past policy and program development at both national and state and territory levels has consistently and vigorously established and maintained this assertion. National and international research strongly supports the inherent benefits of schools and education systems working closely with Indigenous communities" (Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education, 2006, 21).

The working party, however, also argued that "past practices of community consultation have had very limited success" and concluded that "a more formalised partnership is required between schools and their local Indigenous communities." This partnership should entail a negotiated formal agreement between the local school and local community "that clearly articulates, for example, arrangements relating to community participation in school governance, expectations of student attendance and performance, and curriculum focus" (Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education, 2006, 21). The working party therefore recommended the phasing in of "agreements between schools with significant Indigenous students [*sic*] cohorts and local Indigenous communities, which…enable community input into all school planning and decision-making processes" (Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education, 2006, 22).

A more recent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory similarly emphasized both the consensus around the need for school-community engagement and the need to improve current practices. The review noted that "there is a widespread view…that the engagement of communities in the education of Indigenous children is critical to their success" and acknowledged that "this view has led to a long series of

initiatives designed to establish stronger community engagement." It further noted that "despite determined efforts, however, engagement remains uneven and there is no clarity about what outcomes either the department or the community expects from the process" (Wilson, 2013, 77).

In fact, the review concluded that the "goal to improve partnership and greater local ownership in education has gained little traction, particularly at the system level. The review has heard stories of success with local level partnerships, but feedback from the Northern Territory Indigenous Education Council (NTIEC) and others suggests that there is limited impact on education policy and planning. Neither the council nor the department seems impressed with the outcomes to date on engagement and partnership actions" (Wilson, 2013, 78). The review noted a number of factors that served to limit the effectiveness of engagement practices, including:

- "lack of clarity in the department's expectations about the responsibilities of principals and teachers for community engagement;"
- "lack of confidence by some school personnel about community engagement and in some cases, a degree of resistance;"
- "weaknesses in cultural training and ongoing support for existing and new staff;"
- "failure by both the department and communities to sustain engagement efforts beyond the initial development of an agreement" (Wilson, 2013, 77)

The review recommended the development of a "new community engagement charter" which would more clearly establish expectations and responsibilities, as well as better training for school principals and teachers (Wilson, 2013, 88). Interestingly, in keeping with developments outlined above relating to the universities, the review also emphasized that "that community engagement is central to the improvement of Indigenous education, but that it must be broadly conceived as affecting all elements of the education system and the delivery of education, not regarded as a discrete process conducted in parallel with, but separately from, all the other elements of a better education for Indigenous students" (Wilson, 2013, 87).

A 2014 evaluation report that examined school practices across Australia, however, is more confident that progress has been made. The results of a survey conducted for the evaluation "demonstrated general improvement in school relationships between schools and their communities," and specifically showed that, compared with a previous evaluation, "a greater proportion of schools had high amounts of contact with parents and families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students" with over 90 percent of responding schools demonstrating "moderate or high levels of contact with parents and communities" (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2014, 77). Additionally, the evaluation reported that "despite different contexts and practices, engagement and connections activities were identified as a critical priority for all schools, with case studies unanimously identifying a school-wide desire to better engage and communicate with families and community members" (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2014, 83). Looking specifically at school-community partnerships, the survey results "demonstrated significant growth in the proportion of schools with partnerships in place over the past three years" (namely an increase from 30 percent to 44 percent of responding schools; note that a future 30 percent of schools reported having agreements in development) (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2014, 78). This study, however, is one of the few to raise the issue of the responsiveness of Indigenous families and communities to school outreach. The evaluation noted that

"engagement and connection activities…often suffer from limited reciprocal involvement by parents and communities, with some schools facing difficulty engaging parents and community members" (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2014, 83).

The review of the literature makes clear that engagement between schools and Indigenous families and communities in Australia takes many forms and typically goes well beyond the establishment of a single consultative mechanism such as an advisory committee. While such committees may be used, engagement and consultation may also take a more direct form, involving more individualized, more regular, and less structured interactions between school leaders and principals and Indigenous parents and community leaders.

BRITISH COLUMBIA – UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Postsecondary institutions in British Columbia have also adopted the practice of establishing advisory committees on Aboriginal education to facilitate Aboriginal community input into institutional decision-making. A review of websites at the province's three largest universities finds mentions of such advisory committees, namely the President's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (University of British Columbia), the Indigenous Academic Advisory Council (University of Victoria), and the Aboriginal Steering Committee (Simon Fraser University). Unlike universities in New Zealand and Australia, however, these committees do not fall under the purview of a member of the senior management team with responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and are not clearly integrated into the central governance structure.

A review of the websites of the province's largest public colleges also finds mentions of Aboriginal education advisory councils, though in many cases there is no specific webpage devoted to a council and no information is available about its mandate, membership or meeting schedule. One prominent exception is Camosun College, whose Indigenous Advisory Council "is the longest continuously-run postsecondary Indigenous Advisory Council in the province." The Council members "provide direction to the college president regarding Indigenous programming, partnership and services at Camosun College, and links with local communities;" and "all Indigenous programs at Camosun must be vetted through the Council."[18]

The practice of establishing Aboriginal education advisory committees is aligned with provincial government policy. Beginning in 1995, the provincial government has, as part of its policy framework on Aboriginal postsecondary education, encouraged – though not required – postsecondary institutions to "to increase Aboriginal voice, by establishing Aboriginal advisory councils" (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012, 15). The updated (2012) version of the province's policy framework includes the following proposed action: "working with Aboriginal postsecondary partners to develop leading practices for Aboriginal Advisory Councils" (16). Encouraging the use of such advisory councils, however, is clearly only one mechanism

[18] Information obtained from the website of the college at http://camosun.ca/learn/school/indigenous-education-community-connections/community/aac.html.

among many; the province, for instance, is also stressing the importance of appointing Aboriginal persons to the governing boards of public postsecondary institutions.

The province's first progress report on the implementation of the 2012 framework states that "during the last year there has been an increase in Aboriginal voice in institutional leadership and governance at British Columbia's public postsecondary institutions…As of the end of December 2013, almost 90 per cent of institutions (22 of 25) report Aboriginal appointees on their Boards of Governors. Additionally…all institutions have incorporated Aboriginal expertise in teaching, research, program development and student support services" (Province of British Columbia, 2013, 11). The progress report does not, however, state how many institutions have Aboriginal advisory councils in place or what steps have been taken by the province and institutions to develop leading practices for the councils.

This lack of specific information about Aboriginal advisory councils was a feature of earlier progress reports as well. A 2005 review of the province's Aboriginal postsecondary education programs, services and strategies found that "while most institutions report having Aboriginal Advisory Committees, how these committees are used, reporting relationships and overall effectiveness are variable" (Human Capital Strategies, 2005, 72). In terms of reporting relationships, the review found that the committees operated "at varying levels in the institution" and that "some institutions have multiple Aboriginal Councils or Committees, often attributed to the reality that the majority is at the program/project or regional/campus level" (63). While "several institutions have an Aboriginal Advisory Committee that reports to the President…several report to a program area and several were not clear about reporting relationships" (64). Moreover, "a few institutions indicated that the Aboriginal Advisory Committee is not active "currently" or "not currently operational" or is "being rebuilt"" (64).

Similarly, an evaluation of the results of the 2007 strategy provided little concrete evidence regarding how widespread the councils had become or how effective they were. The evaluation confirms that "many postsecondary institutions have tried to implement a number of measures to gain Aboriginal direction to their institution's direction. These measures extend beyond representation on public postsecondary institutions' boards and may include Aboriginal advisory committees, community "boards", Elders groups and others." The evaluation also notes, however, that "the existence and effectiveness of these other measures were not captured in this review" (Jothen, 2011, 123).

<u>British Columbia - Elementary / Secondary Education</u>

In British Columbia, the government has encouraged school boards to establish plans in collaboration with local Aboriginal communities called "enhancement agreements." The implementation of these agreements is expected to be facilitated by means of Aboriginal education committees "with membership from all Aboriginal communities involved with the school district" that will "provide advice to the board of education regarding Aboriginal education" (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2015, 22).

Examples include:

1. School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen): the district's Aboriginal Education Advisory Council (AEAC) acts to "enhance and increase school success for Aboriginal learners" and to "represent Aboriginal interests in the design, implementation and assessment of programs and services that will improve the school experience and academic achievement of Aboriginal students." The Council monitors the implementation of the Enhancement agreement and evaluates performance, makes recommendations about new programs to provide better service to Aboriginal students, and communicates with Band Councils and other Aboriginal groups served by the District.[19] Membership includes school teachers and administrators, representatives from area First Nations, and students; the council meets quarterly.

2. School District 19 (Revelstoke): the district's Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee has been in place since 1996. The committee "has guided expenditures, programs and services supported by the Ministry of Education and has directed the enhancement agreement process." Membership includes school teachers and administrators, First Nations representatives, students and parents; the council meets monthly.[20]

3. School District No. 73 (Kamloops/Thompson): the district has in place both a First Nations Education Council and a First Nations Advisory Committee. The Council is composed of representatives of Aboriginal bands and communities and of the district's board of trustees; its responsibilities include "identifying program priorities, setting the annual Targeted Funding budget, developing the strategic plan for Aboriginal Education in the district, initiating program reviews, and preparing an Annual Report on Aboriginal Students." The Committee is composed of education professionals including principals, teachers and First Nations education workers and "assists the Council by identifying programs and service needs, doing research, serving on project sub-committees, and providing program and budget recommendations to the Council."[21]

A recent report by the province's auditor general, however, raises some questions about how consistently these practices are followed in all school districts across the province. The report found that while 56 of 60 districts had an enhancement agreement (EA) in place, half of these were out of date; additionally, only two thirds of the districts had an Aboriginal education committee in place. The Auditor General reported that board compliance with this approach is voluntary and not assisted by government guidelines, noting that "the ministry did not clearly define or monitor its expectations for what successful district collaboration with Aboriginal communities should be. Not surprisingly, practices varied across the province, with some Aboriginal communities more engaged in planning and decision making than others." The Auditor General further noted that "the ministry did not have information identifying which district practices had been most effective" and concluded that "an evaluation of the effectiveness of the EA policy would inform

[19] Information from the website of the district at https://www.sd53.bc.ca/aboriginal/aeac.
[20] Information from the website of the district at http://www.sd19.bc.ca/aboriginal-education/.
[21] Information from the website of the district at http://www3.sd73.bc.ca/education/content/aboriginal-education-initiatives.

improvements to both the policy and guidance, and identify successful practices that can be shared with all districts" (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2015, 35).

This does not mean, however, that the situation has not been improving over time, or that the enhancement agreements and associated education committees have not had a positive impact. In fact, one study has found that the effective use of community engagement by BC school districts does make a difference in terms of Aboriginal student outcomes. Richards, Hove and Afolabi (2008) first show that after controlling for other factors such as the socioeconomic characteristics of students, some school districts in the province "appear to play critical roles in creating impressive Aboriginal education outcomes" while "other districts are achieving much less impressive outcomes" (16). They then seek to identify which practices characterize better-performing districts, and conclude that "collaboration between school-district personnel and local Aboriginal communities is a prerequisite to improved academic outcomes" (14). More specifically, they argue that "what sets districts apart from one another appears less related to the programs themselves, although these undoubtedly matter. More significant are how decisions are formulated and how decision-makers and stakeholders interact….In more successful districts, there is a relatively long history of shared decision-making and the promotion of "ownership" over funding and program decisions among local Aboriginal communities" (14-15). Richards, Hove and Afolabi conclude by emphasizing that "improvements to student performance are more likely if Aboriginal stakeholders are incorporated into decision-making structures. Although all of the district-level personnel interviewed emphasized involvement by Aboriginal community members, the higher-performing districts were more visibly successful in realizing this objective. There are also gains to be achieved by encouraging participation of the broader community, especially parents and relatives, in the school system" (17).

These conclusions are echoed by those of an in-depth qualitative study of the experiences of developing enhancement agreements and working through education committees, which found that the process has been succeeding in redressing the balance of power within communities in British Columbia by facilitating the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in the development of education policies. The findings of this study are worth quoting at length:

> "Through Canadian history, Aboriginal voices were systematically excluded from the institutional processes that identified and set the markers for the measurement of successful learning. The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements connect Aboriginal communities to the decision making process that determines and measures educational outcomes for their children. Aboriginal communities involved in developing Enhancement Agreements have an opportunity to identify characteristics of success from their own point of view. The Aboriginal Education Enhancement agreements offer a unique opportunity to open up the assumptions of educational institutions, and inject new perspective on student capacity and student support. Though Aboriginal peoples won the legal right to have a voice in their children's education nearly 40 years ago, it is only now that there is an actual policy instrument that ensures that those voices are heard, and acted upon. This study of the Enhancement Agreements finds that people from these two very different world views and social structures can and do work collaboratively to develop policy relationships aimed at transforming social relations" (Lowen, 2011, 161-62).

The study further concludes that "Aboriginal voices grow in strength as new Enhancement Agreements are developed" (155) and that "the Enhancement Agreement process brings people from two different world views into collaborative relationships. The success of their work together holds promise to address the unequal social relations of education in British Columbia" (158).

SASKATCHEWAN – UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Saskatchewan is notable for both the relative size of the First Nations and Métis population in the province and the attention that the issue of improving education outcomes for First Nations and Métis students has received over the last several decades. That said, there appears to have been a lack of long-standing, shared decision-making structures within the province's two largest universities.

1. At the University of Regina, an Indigenous Advisory Circle was created in 2011[22] and operates "to regularly advise the President and Vice-Chancellor on measures that must be taken to ensure that the campus remains dedicated to and focused on meeting the needs of Aboriginal students, faculty and staff."[23] The Circle is focused primarily on assisting faculty with the indigenization of teaching and curriculum and providing support for students. The university has created the position of Executive Lead, Indigenization, although this position is not included in the university's executive team.

2. At the University of Saskatchewan, there is no mention of any similar advisory committee on the university's website. The University's administration, however, has since 1992 included a Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Initiatives and also currently includes a Director of First Nations and Métis Engagement. The Special Advisor "moves the University's Aboriginal agenda forward by identifying and developing university-wide initiatives," gives "advice and support…to the President, Vice-Presidents, Deans and senior staff in their interaction with the Aboriginal community and funding agencies," and is a member of the university's planning and priorities committee.[24]

Saskatchewan's colleges appear to have advanced further towards the goal of reforming their governance structures to allow for greater engagement with local Aboriginal communities.

1. Saskatchewan Polytechnic, for instance, created an Aboriginal Student Success Strategy Committee to develop and subsequently oversee the implementation of a strategic plan called the Aboriginal Student Achievement Plan. The committee is responsible for receiving regular updates on the progress of the plan, reviewing and providing feedback on recommendations from working

[22] See http://www.ammsa.com/publications/saskatchewan-sage/aboriginal-advisory-circle-advocates-aboriginal-success.
[23] Information from the website of the university at http://www.uregina.ca/president/indigenization.html.
[24] Information from the website of the university at: http://library.usask.ca/indigenous/history_essays/special_advisor.php; http://aboriginal.usask.ca/about/our-team.php; and http://www.usask.ca/secretariat/governing-bodies/council/committee/planning/index.php.

committees, providing input on issues that arise as part of the plan's implementation, and assisting with ongoing prioritization of initiative strategies and actions. The committee is co-chaired by the special advisor to Saskatchewan polytechnic, Aboriginal initiatives (a position created in 2014), and the associate vice-president, student affairs.[25] In 2015, the committee created an Indigenization Declaration to reinforce the institution's "commitment to the Aboriginal community and to sustain long-term positive change" – a declaration that was adopted by the institution.[26]

2. Cumberland College, located in the northeastern central area of the province, recently launched an "indigenizing the college" initiative and created a First Nations and Métis Advisory Council to "oversee the Indigenizing the College process and advise the College on matters affecting Aboriginal students and Aboriginal communities." In addition to overseeing indigenization, the Council is expected to provide feedback "as to how the College is perceived to be serving the communities it serves and how it may better serve these communities," to encourage dialogue between First Nations and Métis communities and the College, and to communicate with First Nations and Métis communities about college programs and services. The Council includes representatives from each of the local First Nations and Métis communities as well as members of the college's leadership including the president, board chair and an additional board member, the director of finance and administration, and the director of programs and services. As a result of this membership structure, the college maintains that the council "is directly connected with both the President's office and the Board of Directors of Cumberland College." It is notable that the council is prominent on the college's organizational chart, directly connected to both the president and the board.[27]

These initiatives, while not taking place in a vacuum, appear to be driven by each individual institution and are not linked to any province-wide strategy. There appear to be no government policy statements on the role of university or college boards and administrations in engaging with their local Aboriginal communities. The 2013 report of the province's joint task force on improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people recommended that "postsecondary institutions (regional colleges, universities, and SIAST) accelerate the indigenization and decolonization of all aspects of institutional life" but made no specific observations or recommendations about university and college governance structures, decision-making mechanisms or engagement practices (Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People, 2013).

[25] Information from the website of the polytechnic at http://saskpolytech.ca/student-services/support/ASAP/terms-of-reference.aspx.
[26] Information from the website of the polytechnic at http://saskpolytech.ca/news/posts/2015/saskatchewan-polytechnic-creates-indigenization-declaration.aspx.
[27] Information from the college's annual report (pages 10 and 13), from https://www.cumberlandcollege.sk.ca/docs/Annual%20Report%2014-15.pdf; see also the organizational chart at https://www.cumberlandcollege.sk.ca/docs/color%20Org%20Chart%20November2014%20-%20no%20names.pdf and related news at https://www.cumberlandcollege.sk.ca/index.php?id=12&news_id=233&track=+First+Nations+and+M%C3%A9tis+Advisory+Council+%28FNMAC%29.+.

The province is also home to several postsecondary institutions that are controlled by Aboriginal communities, including the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC) and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. Like the wānangas in New Zealand, these institutions constitute a very different model for incorporating Aboriginal peoples into institutional decision making; as First Nations and Métis controlled institutions, they do not need to develop special mechanisms for linking pre-existing governance structures with external Aboriginal communities. In the case of the FNUC, the board is appointed by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Education and Training Commission[28]; in the case of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the board members are selected from the regional and provincial councils of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan and the chair is the organization's minister of education (although appointments are approved by the province's minister of advanced education)[29]. There is no evidence of overarching Aboriginal education advisory committees having been established at these institutions, but it is arguable that such committees would be redundant given the direct accountability of the institutions' executives and boards to the communities they serve. Each institution engages in variety of community engagement and outreach activities, including the involvement of elders, consultation with local employers, and activities to celebrate and promote Aboriginal languages and cultures. (For example, the FNUC recently created the Katayak Elders Council "to provide advice, give direction and share important cultural teachings pertaining to FNUniv programming and activities. The Council consists of one Board of Governor Elder, five campus Elders, three Elder's Helpers, one Elder Advisor, one faculty member, one management representative and a recorder."[30])

SASKATCHEWAN - ELEMENTARY / SECONDARY EDUCATION

In contrast to the situation in postsecondary education, the government, though the Ministry of Education, has for many years clearly emphasized the importance of partnerships with Aboriginal communities in the governance of elementary and secondary schools, school districts and school systems. In the first instance, the Ministry of Education has had in place its own advisory committee on First Nations and Métis education since the 1980s; the committee is currently called the First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee and "makes recommendations to the Minister of Education for provincial programs, initiatives and policy regarding First Nations and Métis Education."[31] This committee has promoted shared decision-making in education between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders and communities; for instance, its action plan for 2000-2005 recommended that the province "develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate shared decision making" in education (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, n.d., 7).

In keeping with this recommendation, a review of developments in education conducted for the Joint Task Force found evidence of "clear efforts to forge a new relationship between the provincial educational system and First Nations and Métis people" and confirmed that "the provincial government took a strong

[28] Information from the website of the university at http://fnuniv.ca/governance.
[29] Information from the website of the institute at https://gdins.org/about/overview/governance/.
[30] Information from the FNUC's 2014-15 annual report at http://fnuniv.ca/img/uploads/about/FINAL_FNUniv_2014_2015_Annual_Report_webversion.pdf.
[31] Information from the website of the ministry of education at http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/FNMEPAC; see also the discussion of the history of the committee in Pelletier, Cottrell and Hardie, 2013.

lead in promoting the development of partnerships" (Pelletier, Cottrell and Hardie, 2013, 30). As an example, a 2003 government policy framework sought to clarify the education ministry's "commitment to partnerships and to shared management and governance arrangements with First Nations and Métis peoples in the provincial education system." It identified the following "desired state" or vision: "Saskatchewan's provincial Prekindergarten to Grade 12 education system is managed and controlled equitably by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people it serves. As full partners at all levels of education planning and decision making, First Nations and Métis and non-Aboriginal peoples share responsibility and authority for achieving goals for the benefit of all Saskatchewan students, teachers, and communities" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2003, 4). It then identified as a specific goal that "the provincial education system has representative governance structures that fairly and equitably engage and reflect the voice and composition of Saskatchewan's population" (5), and as a principle that "the provincial education system, division boards and schools actively engage First Nations and Métis peoples in collaborative partnerships. Shared leadership, planning, decision making, resources and responsibility exist at all levels" (6). The document concludes by noting that "the shared management and governance partnerships this policy framework promotes are developing across the provincial education system at local, regional and provincial levels" (12).

Despite this policy framework, it is not clear what mechanisms school divisions in the province typically use to support engagement with Aboriginal families and communities, and how successful their efforts have been. School divisions such as Regina Public Schools, one of the province's largest, include as part of their strategic plans the objective to "continue to engage FNMI community leaders and Elders in educational planning," but there is no information available on Regina Public Schools' website as to how this is to be achieved (although there is some indication that the division has convened an Elder's Advisory Committee).[32] Similarly, the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division serving Prince Albert and the surrounding region indicates that it intends to "establish and enhance partnerships with local First Nations and Tribal Councils," but does not indicate how.[33] Saskatoon Public Schools, for its part, "is guided by an advisory committee for the development and implementation of culturally responsive schools. The committee is comprised of lifelong advocates for the protection and advancement of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures… The role of the committee is to provide guidance, direction and feedback with respect to the development of culturally responsive schools. In addition, the advisory committee supports professional development both at the school and division level" (Saskatoon Public Schools, n.d., 14). The committee, however, does not appear to be directly connected to school or school division governance or decision making.

This does not mean that these and other school divisions do not engage actively and effectively with Aboriginal peoples; indeed, efforts by teachers and school administrators from individual schools to connect directly with Aboriginal parents, families and communities may occur even if they fall outside of the parameters of the formal governance mechanisms of the school divisions in which they are located. For example, Saskatoon Public Schools reports that its First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education Unit "has

[32] Information from the school division's strategic plan at http://www.rbe.sk.ca/sites/default/files/pages/files/rps_strategic_plan_2014-2017.pdf
[33] Information from the school division's strategic plan at http://www.srsd119.ca/publicationsfiles/SRPSD%20Strategic%20Plan%202014-2017.pdf.

supported the division's learning priorities and has provided learning and cultural supports for all students and staff. They have engaged the community and our partners while also advocating for the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, staff, and parents/caregivers. These efforts have received national and provincial recognition" (Saskatoon Public Schools, n.d., 6). Many also have partnership agreements with local First Nations and on-reserve First Nations schools which, while not affecting the governance of public schools *per se*, could serve as a means though which to enhance engagement with Aboriginal communities. Unfortunately, no review of the status or effectiveness of these different practices across the province's school divisions appears to have been conducted (as is the case, for instance, in BC) that would allow the overall situation to be assessed.

One possible reason why the Saskatchewan school divisions do not appear to rely on formal mechanisms to facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal communities in decision making is the fact that schools are already required to maintain school community councils. The councils are composed of: elected representatives drawn from the local community (the majority of whom must be parents of students from the school); the school principal, teacher representatives and student representatives (in the case of secondary schools); and appointed members "to broaden the representation on the council, and encourage community partnerships and engagement with the council." Additionally, the council is expected to include First Nations representatives "if students who live on-reserve attend the school and the First Nation has provided representation in response to a request from the board of education." The purpose of the councils is to "work with parents and community members to: develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth; and, encourage and facilitate parent, community and youth engagement in school planning and improvement processes."[34]

In school divisions serving regions with high concentrations of Aboriginal peoples, it is arguable the school community councils serve *de facto* as Aboriginal education advisory committees, since the parents and community representatives can be expected to be Aboriginal. This may be the case, for instance, for the Northern Lights School Division, which describes itself as "serving a predominantly Aboriginal school population located throughout the northern geographical half of Saskatchewan."[35]

Outside of these particular regions, however, there is reason to question whether the school community councils are an effective mechanism for engaging with Aboriginal families and communities. A survey conducted by the provincial government in 2010-11, for instance, shows that schools are not fulfilling the requirement to include representatives from First Nations reserves in cases where schools serve on-reserve students. The survey reveals "the continuing challenge of recruiting First Nation representatives for SCCs. Despite an increase in the number of SCCs with students attending who live on-reserve, the number of SCCs with First Nations representatives declined slightly." Specifically, of the 91 SCCs reporting having students who live on-reserve attending the school, only 39 (43%) have a First Nations representative (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012, 6).

[34] Information from the website of the ministry of education at http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/scc.
[35] Information from the website of the school division at http://www.nlsd113.com/Schools.

More generally, the school community councils policy has been criticized for failing to account for the need to ensure adequate Aboriginal participation. According to Gordon Martell, "there is only cursory consideration for Aboriginal participation within School Community Council policy. This does not give good policy direction to those implementing School Community Councils. The policy introducing this new level of local school governance does not emphasize Aboriginal participation to the extent that is appropriate given the provincial context" (Martell, 2008, 20). Martell observes that "the Saskatchewan Government policy document guiding School Community Councils makes no mention of Aboriginal issues within substantial aspects of the document…and there are no Aboriginal issues referenced in the principles and vision used to establish School Community Councils. The absence of consideration for Aboriginal issues within School Community Council policy is evident" (23). There thus appears to be a disconnect between the government's consistent policy message, noted above, emphasizing the importance of partnerships between schools and Aboriginal communities, and the policy connected to the main instrument that schools have for engaging with local communities. Interestingly, the issue was not addressed in the final report of the Joint Task Force (Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People, 2013).

MANITOBA – UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Postsecondary institutions in Manitoba have been active recently in strengthening the mechanisms in place to facilitate the incorporation of the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples in planning and decision-making. The province's two largest universities, the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, have each created Indigenous advisory circles.

1. The University of Winnipeg's Indigenous Advisory Circle to the President was created in 2011 to "ensure the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' perspectives in the governance of The University of Winnipeg;" it's specific mandate is to be "a visionary and advisory body, working together to bring the issues and experiences, expertise and perspectives of Indigenous peoples to the University. Members will consult regularly with representatives of Indigenous organizations throughout the country, and internationally, and with individuals who are working at the community level on Indigenous issues, and make recommendations to the University to achieve its objectives of Indigenous inclusion." The university's president appoints the members and names the chair; the circle is supported by the associate vice-president of Indigenous, government and community affairs; and it meets quarterly.[36]

2. The University of Manitoba's Indigenous Advisory Circle on Indigenous Achievement was created in 2015; it advises the university's executive lead for Indigenous achievement. The circle's mandate is to provide advice on the development and implementation of the university's Indigenous achievement plan, liaise with Aboriginal communities, and receive updates from the Executive Lead

[36] Information for the website of the university at http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/advisory-circle/index.html.

on Indigenous student achievement and relevant university initiatives.[37] It is, however, less visibly connected to university governance than its counterpart at the University of Winnipeg.

There are no comparable advisory bodies at Red River College or Assiniboine Community College. Red Rover College, however, does seek to engage with Aboriginal communities directly through its Aboriginal liaison officers and has held community forums on Aboriginal education.[38]

A further recent development is the signing in 2015 by all of Manitoba's public postsecondary institutions, together with the province's school boards association, of an Indigenous education blueprint. The blueprint is significant in marking the shared commitment of the province's public education and postsecondary education institutions to prioritize Indigenous education, even if its specific provisions are generally worded. Among other things, the signatories commit to "engaging with Indigenous peoples in respectful and reciprocal relationships" and to "collaborative development, implementation and evaluation of the requisite policies, procedures and practices of our institutions and the broader community to advance Indigenous education and reconciliation." While specific actions and mechanisms are not identified, the blueprint promises that a "5-Year Manitoba Indigenous Education Collaborative Blueprint Implementation Plan" will be completed in 2016.[39]

MANITOBA - ELEMENTARY / SECONDARY EDUCATION

As in Saskatchewan, the provincial ministry of education in Manitoba has advocated for the development of partnerships between schools and Aboriginal communities to ensure the responsiveness of teaching and educational programing to the values, needs and perspectives of Aboriginal students. The department's latest First Nation, Métis and Inuit education policy framework (still listed as a draft) contains numerous mentions of the importance of partnerships, collaboration and consultation with Aboriginal communities. "Family and community engagement and educational stewardship" is one of the four identified goals of the policy framework, and a related objective is "to support and engage in partnerships that enhance educational stewardship through increased dialogue with First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations and education, training and postsecondary education stakeholder groups" (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015, 23). The policy framework, however, is not prescriptive about how this goal and objective should be pursued by schools and school divisions, although it does mention in passing the option of "the establishment of committee/councils" (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015, 19).

A search of the websites for a selection of Manitoba school divisions shows that actual practices vary considerably among them. The Winnipeg School Division, for instance, maintains an Advisory Council on Indigenous Education (ACIE) with a mandate to "provide feedback to the Winnipeg School Division Board of Trustees on matters relating to the teaching, learning and cultural needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit

[37] Information for the website of the university at http://umanitoba.ca/admin/indigenous_connect/5617.html.
[38] Information for the website of the college at http://www.rrc.ca/aboriginaleducation.
[39] A copy of the blueprint is available at http://news-centre.uwinnipeg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/BluePrint-signed.pdf.

(FNMI) students in the Winnipeg School Division as contemplated by its Aboriginal Education Policy." The Council is composed of board members, staff, elders, parents and Indigenous community representatives, and reports directly to the Winnipeg School Division Board of Trustees Policy/Program Committee.[40] However, no other similar examples could be found in the other school divisions examined.

As in Saskatchewan, the absence of formal advisory committee structures at the board level does not mean the absence of consultation and engagement with Aboriginal communities. The school divisions examined typically have specific Aboriginal education programs with staff designated to liaise with Aboriginal students, families and communities, as well as initiatives to indigenize curriculum and teaching practices. The Seven Oaks school division, for example, has a directive that "staff at all levels shall seek to engage Aboriginal parents/community in active and meaningful ways that demonstrate respect and reciprocity" and the division's website lists a number of initiatives designed to improve the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures.[41]

SUMMARY

Several themes can be highlighted in this review of the use of university and elementary/secondary school Indigenous education advisory committees in other jurisdictions both within and outside of Canada.

1) The use of Aboriginal education advisory committees is common but by no means uniform; while there are numerous prominent examples, there are also frequent cases where no committee can be found where one might be expected. The use of advisory committees also appears increasingly common, with a number of new ones having been created in the last five years.

2) In those cases where advisory committees are in place, the form and function varies considerably. Particularly important in the context of this study is the different relations that committees have to institutional executives and governance structures. While some committees are closely integrated within the governance structures, reporting to senior executives and retaining accountability for the achievement of the institution's overall strategic goals, others are more distanced, focusing mostly on providing direct support in one area (such as to students, teachers or faculties).

3) While governments frequently endorse and encourage the development of mechanisms to facilitate engagement with Aboriginal communities and the participation of Aboriginal representatives in institutional and systems governance, they are rarely prescriptive, leaving it to the discretion of the institutions as to whether and how to implement a general policy direction. This creates the potential for significant gaps between overarching policy frameworks and practice.

[40] Information from the website of the school division at https://winnipegsdca.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Id=101.
[41] Information from the website of the school division at http://www.7oaks.org/Resources/aboriginaleducation/Pages/default.aspx and http://www.7oaks.org/Governanceleadership/boardoftrustees/Policies/Policies%20Section%20I/IDAAD.pdf.

4) There is some debate as to the extent to which the use of Aboriginal education advisory committees constitutes best practice. In those institutions where the indigenization process is more advanced, advisory committees may be counterproductive, serving to inhibit the comprehensive adoption of a "whole of institution" approach by compartmentalizing responsibility for Aboriginal issues and thus letting most senior executives "off the hook." In those cases when indigenization is less advanced, however, the creation of advisory committees may serve as a means of achieving a breakthrough by bringing communities together for the first time and facilitating the development of mutual understanding and trust.

3. Overview of Participating AECs

This section provides the methodology used to identify which AECs to invite to participate in this study as well as an overview of the participating AECs by institution type: colleges, universities and school boards. In total, seven colleges, eight universities and four school boards collaborated in this study. While this section provides a portrait of AECs by sector, the next provides an overview of AECs by theme, including membership, onboarding, agenda setting, resources, strategic planning and links to institutional decision-making bodies.

METHODOLOGY

The following process was used in selecting which AECs should be invited to participate in this study. On the recommendation of the Ministry, Academica focused on institutions within communities with the highest number of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario (according to Statistics Canada data). Academica also included postsecondary institutions in regions near the largest on-reserve Indigenous communities. These two steps resulted in a list of 15 cities in Ontario. Academica then identified one postsecondary institution per community, ensuring a good geographic distribution of institutions and an equal mix of colleges and universities within major regions of the province and across the province as a whole.

There were two exceptions to this method. First, in one community, Academica included three institutions: a university, a college and a school board. This is because this community has one of the highest numbers of Indigenous Peoples and serves as a regional hub for a number of smaller Indigenous communities. Academica wished to interview AEC members from the university, college, and school board in this community to examine possible connections and common approaches among their respective AECs. The second exception was the decision to include an additional postsecondary institution because it appeared to have the most information-rich website relating to its AEC, including complete information on its terms of reference, its meeting schedule and its meeting minutes.

The selection of school boards followed a slightly different process. A Ministry of Education representative identified school boards that were perceived as provincial leaders in Indigenous education as a result of

previous pilot projects. Two of these school boards were added to the invitation list. Three other school boards were selected, as they had information on Indigenous education on their website, and they represented various urban and rural regions of the province.

Academica then invited AECs from the 10 universities, 8 colleges and 5 school boards on the target list to participate in the study. Academica contacted either the institutional chair/co-chair of the AEC, or when a list of AEC members was not available on the institution's website, the office of Indigenous education at the institution. In response to this invitation, a very small number of institutions opted not to participate in the study or did not respond to email or phone messages. In the end, 19 AECs were included in the study, located at seven colleges, eight universities and four school boards. Academica completed 57 interviews with AEC members at these 19 participating institutions.

COLLEGES

A number of the community colleges in our sample have had an AEC in some form or another since the early 1990s. For most, the AECs' creation was a direct result of the launch by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of the first round of the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy in 1992, which made such councils a requirement in order to secure funding. AECs at a smaller number of colleges had earlier or more recent origins: one college established a precursor to its current AEC in the 1980s, while another established its AEC only recently.

Key informants noted that in the beginning, there was the perception that many colleges had created the AEC for the simple goal of accessing additional ministry funding. Now, key informants – particularly community members of AECs – were unanimous in saying that the Councils serve an important role in bringing the views of Indigenous community members to the attention of institutional leaders and in improving the college experience of Indigenous learners by facilitating the creation of new curriculum, the employment of additional Indigenous faculty and staff, or the development of culturally-sensitive learning environments.

Some key informants noted that the AEC was not the only forum for strengthening Indigenous education. In particular, two Colleges also established a parallel structure of college employees whose role is to support the implementation of the strategic direction recommended by their Council. Those colleges seemed to have a stronger commitment to strengthen Indigenous education within the College.

The AECs at the colleges met no fewer than two times a year, and met as often as four times a year. There were three AECs that met twice a year, one that met three times a year, and three that met four times a year. The size of the AEC membership was fairly consistent across all colleges, with 14 members on average.

Representatives of each college's AEC mentioned that, over the years, college and community members have improved, clarified or redefined the role and the membership of their council, as well as its relationship with the senior leadership team and the board of governors of the college.

UNIVERSITIES

The universities in the sample have had their AECs in place for varied lengths of time. While roughly half of the universities date the Council origins to the 1992-1994 time period, two universities had a Council before the launch of the Ministry's Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy in 1992. The other two universities noted their Council is relatively new, with one Council starting in 2007. Larger (or smaller) universities or universities in certain regions of the province are not necessarily more successful; rather, high performing AECs had dedicated and experienced institutional and community members leading their AECs.

The size of AECs within universities ranged considerably. Three of the university AECs in our sample had the same membership size as most colleges, with either 14 or 15 members. The others were larger, with one university AEC having 20 members, two others having 24 members, one other having 28 members, and the largest having 40 members. The larger size is a reflection of the particular governing structures within universities, with the Senate (on academic matters) and the Board of Governors (on governing matters) being equally important. Faculty members, representatives from the Board of Governors and the Senate and a greater number of institutional representatives than is the case for colleges typically are part of the university-based Councils. That being said, the number of community members are either the same or larger than the number of institutional representatives. There were also many examples of institutional members being Indigenous. There is one exemption where one university has roughly 30 institutional members representing various units on campus, compared with just two Indigenous community members.

The number of AEC meetings per university also varies, with one university currently meeting on a monthly basis, five universities meeting four times a year, one meeting twice a year, and one meeting six times a year.

The category of membership of AECs for universities is similar to the approach used by colleges, with directors of education from Indigenous communities or tribal councils, elders, and Indigenous students typically being part of the Council. One university has created an Elders' circle to support its council, tasking it with questions relating to integrating traditional knowledge and culture within the curriculum and the institution, as not all Indigenous community members had the same level of comfort with these important elements.

The key informants from the AECs also pointed out that the president of the university sets the tone for the university community, and the presence of the president or her or his designate ensures that the university takes the Council and its advice seriously. In one case, the president attends the Council meetings in its entirety, and in another example, the president attends the final hour of the Council meeting to hear from the Council members directly, to receive an oral report from their meeting, to answer questions and to engage in discussion. There were more examples within our sample of Councils having either a vice-president or an associate vice-president as the most senior institutional member. Finally, in the remaining example, the most senior member of the institution's administrative team was equivalent to an assistant vice-president or vice-provost role.

The meetings of the AECs are almost always held on campus, but one university has made the commitment to bring the Council to an Indigenous community within its catchment area. Such meetings allow institutional members to meet with the chief and band council of these communities, and to discuss educational issues within their community.

SCHOOL BOARDS

School boards were included in this study as a means of learning more about the role and the operations of AECs in the K-12 sector, and comparing and contrasting these with the AECs of universities and colleges. The goal was not to draw separate conclusions about school board practices, but rather to complement the identification of promising practices within postsecondary institutions.

Unlike postsecondary institutions that have been in existence as early as the 1980s and 1990s, the AECs at the four school boards have been in existence since 2004, with at least one being instituted in 2012, with a senior representative of the school board guiding its development. Two other AECs have been dormant over the past few years, but are currently being revived under new leadership from the community. A community member chairs three of the AECs; the fourth is co-chaired by a senior Indigenous community leader and the superintendent of education responsible for Indigenous education.

The memberships of each school board's AEC are similar in size to most colleges and some universities with between 14 and 16 members, but are quite diverse in make-up. In one example, the members of the AEC are almost exclusively representatives of Indigenous communities with service agreements with the school board. The Council comes together to: a) monitor the fulfilment of service agreements b) discuss improving education outcomes (detention rates, persistence rates, graduation rates), and c) consider the needs and opportunities for greater faculty development.

Another school board's AEC is made up of parents who apply to be part of the council, Indigenous community agencies, Indigenous students, as well as administrators from both the primary and secondary sectors, school board officials and trustees.

Among these four AECs, only one has a representative from a postsecondary institution. In one regional community with three AECs – one for the university, the college and the school boards – Council members did not know each other and do not interact to advance Indigenous education within the community.

The school board AECs also had a varying number of meetings a year, with one school board AEC reporting monthly meetings, another reporting seven meetings annually, and the other two reporting four meetings per year.

In at least two communities, school boards within our research sample with either coterminal or partially overlapping borders have formed partnerships with other school boards, often smaller in size, on Indigenous education. The rationale for such partnerships included: ensuring a common approach to Indigenous

education within the community; avoiding drawing upon the same community members; and accounting for the fact that smaller school boards lack the human resources to manage their own AEC.

The four AECs have developed separate strategic planning processes to ensure a common vision for moving forward. Indigenous language revitalization is key for many of these school boards.

The success of these AECs rests in their leadership teams. The members from two school boards identified their Council as high functioning in large part because of the strong commitment from the chair or co-chairs.

4. AEC Interview Findings

The objective of the key informant interviews was to learn more about the internal operations of the 19 AECs by asking questions relating to membership, resources, agenda setting, and strategic planning processes as well as perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses and ability to influence institutional decision-making processes. Academica prepared a discussion guide that contained a standard list of questions that were asked to every interviewee (see Appendix B).

This section of the report reviews findings related to council structure and process, including membership, onboarding, strategic planning and links to institutional decision-making bodies. The following section summarizes perceived strengths, weaknesses, and impact on internal decision-making, policy and practice.

MEMBERSHIP

We examined three elements of AEC membership: the number, the type, and diversity of members.

1. Number of members

   There was considerable variation in the number of members of AECs. The smaller councils listed have 13 members and the largest council listed 40 members. For most of the colleges, half the universities and most of the school boards, the number of members was roughly 14.

   AECs at colleges and school boards tended to have fewer members than those at universities, with most of them reporting 14 members. Some colleges noted that their AECs were previously quite large, and that, over the years, efforts were taken to form a smaller group. The smaller councils reduced considerably the number of institutional members on the Council, thus ensuring that the council was more clearly the voice of the community.

   Universities, on the other hand, tended to have larger AECs, with some universities having between 20 and 40 members. However, there were two universities within our sample that had 14 members each. In the case of the universities with larger numbers of AEC members, a number of members (particular those automatically appointed to the Council simply by virtue of the position they held within the university, such as faculty deans) rarely attended the meetings. These AECs tended to rely on a smaller group of core members who attended regularly.

2. Type of members

Various types of members are invited to participate on AECs.

A) Indigenous Community Members.

One of the goals of AECs is to ensure strong relations between Indigenous communities and organizations on the one hand and postsecondary institutions on the other hand. This study identifies several different types of Indigenous community members.

i. Indigenous directors of education. Directors of education are most often invited by chiefs, band councils or postsecondary institutions to represent their Indigenous community on postsecondary AECs. As Indigenous learners from one community will attend multiple postsecondary institutions, directors of education are often solicited to serve on AECs for multiple postsecondary institutions. A few key informants noted that they serve, or have been invited to serve, on four different AECs at the same time. Directors of education interact regularly with students who receive band funding, thus making them a key group to capture intelligence on the experience of Indigenous students within the institution. Many key informants in this membership category feel overextended and feel they lack the breadth and depth of postsecondary education experience to provide meaningful input into issues of program choice, strategic planning and student services.

ii. Indigenous organizations. AECs seek the voice of Indigenous organizations, for example the Métis Nation of Ontario and friendship centres, organizations supporting children or youth, or organizations with an interest in education or training, to capture different perspectives. Friendship Centres are particularly important to identifying the needs of urban Indigenous learners.

iii. Elders. Elders constitute another important component in some, but not all, AECs. In some cases, the elders who work within the respective postsecondary institution are invited to serve as members of the Council. In other cases, elders provide the opening cultural blessing but do not formally serve on the Council. In one case, the Elders formed a separate Council but were linked to the AECs through meetings with the AEC co-chairs.

B) Indigenous Members within the Institution.

Many AECs invite Indigenous members who either work within or study at the institution to be part of the Council. These types of Indigenous members fall within three categories.

i. Students. More than half of the Councils have student representatives listed as members, but most Councils struggle to fill these spots. Programs at the college level

are shorter than universities, and thus student members more likely serve for one year before they graduate and move on to new employment or training opportunities. Students at colleges and universities juggle multiple priorities, such as their education, their part-time employment, and their families (especially child care commitments). As such, serving on committees is rarely the first priority of students.

ii. Indigenous faculty members. Indigenous faculty members most often teach in Indigenous program areas and serve as a bridge between community and institution. As such, many AECs seek the participation of Indigenous faculty members as they can bring faculty (both teaching and research), student and community perspectives to the council.

iii. Institutional resource members. There are often members of the institution, almost always Indigenous, who provide support to the Council, who share their insights and lead the organization of Council meetings. In some cases, the most important institutional resource is the most senior institutional representative responsible for Indigenous education, normally at the associate vice-president or director level. In some instances, Indigenous employees who work within the Aboriginal Initiatives office also provide support to the committee.

C) Institutional non-Indigenous Members.

The final category is that of AEC members coming from within the institution, serving in senior leadership or faculty roles.

i. Executive members. The senior leadership team of an institution is usually represented on AECs. Those individuals are most often presidents, vice-presidents or deans. In some cases, the president appoints a designate. In one case, the institutional president was Indigenous; in all other cases, the institutional leaders were non-Indigenous.

ii. Non-Indigenous faculty members. There are also a few cases of non-Indigenous faculty members who conduct research in relevant areas who participate in AEC discussions as regular members or as a resource to the Council. In some cases, these faculty members were instrumental in launching Indigenous studies programs in an earlier period when the institution had fewer or no Indigenous faculty members.

3. Variations in membership composition

Among the institutions represented within our sample, we observed a wide variety of council membership structures. These ranged from: exclusively, if not almost exclusively, members from outside the institution; mixture of members from within and outside the institution; and a majority

membership from within the institution. Over the years, some institutions have modified their membership composition with the goal to improve council functioning (some promising practices are highlighted in the following section).

We observed a trend among many Councils towards increasing the number of external community membership, in some cases moving to almost exclusively community members. Several key informants noted that some institutional representation was important to help ensure that individual community members could not advance personal projects or their own positions within the institution through the council, rather than working through the traditional processes of the institution. In the case of one AEC, the only recorded vote from the Council related to membership composition, with external community members voting in support of fewer or no institutional members, and institutional members voting to maintain the status quo.

Many key informants have noted their delight in having deans of schools or faculties, vice-presidents and other institutional leaders in attendance to listen to the discussion about the current challenges and needs of Indigenous learners and communities. Most key informants welcomed the presence of many institutional representatives, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as resources to the committee or as observers.

ONBOARDING

Organizations increasingly recognize the importance of onboarding new members – both employees and members of committees as a means of reducing the time to productivity, stress and turnover while developing a greater level of familiarity with the organization, its decision-making bodies, its funding and its operations. The question of how each institution brought in new Council members was thus a question asked of each key informant, with many reflecting on their own onboarding experience or that of others and sharing their thoughts on how the process might be improved.

Less than half of the institutions had an established onboarding process, and among those that did there was a consensus that the process could be improved. Indeed, the majority said the process was limited to providing a binder on the institution's internal operations to incoming members, with some using the same binder produced by the institution secretariat for the purpose of onboarding new members of the Board of Governors.

There were only two institutions that characterized their onboarding processes as extensive and successful. In one case, the institutional co-chair – a vice-president – welcomes new members by inviting them to campus for an in-depth orientation on the institution, its programs and its services, along with a campus tour. In the other case, the institutional lead for Indigenous education offers an orientation session that focuses on the Council, its mandate, its terms of reference and the institutional expectations of members. The orientation session is offered annually, permitting both incoming and recently appointed members the opportunity to participate.

In the absence of an onboarding session, one community co-chair of an AEC noted the importance for community members to participate in an Indigenous-only group session prior to the Council meeting to ensure that community members could ask questions about the institution's structures, decision-making processes, programs and services prior to the Council as a means of increasing the level of familiarity with the institution without fears of embarrassing oneself.

As an unintended consequence, this question led many key informants, particularly institutional representatives to recognize that implementing an onboarding process would be helpful for their Council's continued success, stating that they would be developing a formal onboarding process in the coming months.

AGENDA SETTING

Four elements of agenda setting are examined here: the frequency of meetings, the responsibility of calling meetings, the preferred meeting time, and the leadership role in determining the agenda items.

1. Frequency. The majority of AECs have established four meetings per year as their target number of meetings annually. Within our sample, the frequency of meetings ranged from a low of biannually to a high of monthly – though in one case, monthly meetings were instituted temporarily only because the Council was involved in developing a new strategic plan. At one institution, the Council previously met eight times per year, but this higher frequency of meetings had two negative consequences: first, many meetings did not achieve the required participation level of community members to reach quorum; and second, the higher frequency of meeting led the Council to take on a more operational role, as opposed to a more strategic, direction-setting role. By reducing the number of meetings by half, the Council could more easily reach quorum, and having fewer meetings enabled the agenda to remain focused on strategy, not operations.

2. Calling meetings. Key informants noted a variety of ways that each Council operates, including how it organizes its meetings. Some Councils set their meeting schedule for an entire year, hoping that by sharing the dates in advance, Council members can block the time in their schedules, thus ensuring the attendance of a full complement of Council members. Some key informants noted that their Council sets the date and time of its next meeting as the final agenda item of the current meeting. Finally, some Councils will send out a Doodle poll to members as a means of setting up a meeting when the need arises.

   Of these various approaches, the most successful method involved setting up meetings for a complete year as early as possible, thus ensuring alignment with the schedules of other decision-making bodies on campus, and ensuring a higher level of participation in those meetings.

3. Preferred meeting time. The various AECs have set their own daily timetables to ensure a higher level of participation. In the majority of cases, the meetings take place on a weekday, during regular

business hours to ensure that employers can accommodate community members' participation in the meetings. While some meetings take place in the morning and others in the afternoon, the common thread is that the Council begins or ends with a meal. There was one example of an AEC that met at the end of the workday, from 5pm to 8pm. This time was selected by Council members, and ensures that senior administrators of the university, who explicitly wished to attend these meetings, are able to do so without having competing agenda items.

4. Setting the agenda. The various AECs set their agenda in a variety of ways. For all, the Council meetings are opportunities for community members to hear from and question a variety of institutional representatives about new developments and new initiatives, and for community members to share their own developments with the Council. As such, there are almost always standing agenda items where institutional representatives provide both oral and written reports to the Council for information and for discussion, and where community members provide an oral report.

   For most Councils, there are also new agenda items each time, allowing Council members to have new discussions on emerging topics, with the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action being a very current and common theme at Council meetings. Many key informants noted that there is on average 50% of information sharing and 50% of discussion.

   Most key informants were comfortable with the process and the outcomes of the proposed agenda for each meeting. There was one institution that pointed out its efforts to propose agenda topics that would stimulate important discussions, thus increasing the likelihood that community members will attend the meetings, despite competing priorities. These efforts have been successful.

   There were also a few Councils that noted their agenda was seen as too structured and therefore as obstacles to real discussion. These same Councils have also experienced difficulty reaching quorum targets for their meetings.

   The agenda typically is proposed by the senior institutional lead responsible for Indigenous education (associate vice-president, special advisor to the president, director or coordinator of Indigenous Initiatives), and then submitted to the chair or the co-chairs of the Council for review and approval prior to circulating the agenda. Agendas are circulated in advance, and members are typically invited to request that other agenda items be added, though in one case a member was not aware that this option existed.

   There were also examples of agendas remaining fluid. At a few institutions, Indigenous community members get together immediately prior to Council meeting to review the agenda, to ask questions about the specific items, build consensus regarding new topics of discussion and discuss the need to add new elements to the agenda. If there are new agenda items to add, the Indigenous chair or co-chair will introduce those new items at the start of the meeting.

RESOURCES

This study was also interested in learning more about the Councils' access to both human and financial resources to carry out their work. This section provides a short description of what was shared by key informants.

1. Human Resources. The majority of key informants praised the leadership and coordinating role of institutional representatives as key elements in ensuring the success of meetings. While there were no separate human resources assigned to supporting the council, the work was shared among a few key institutional employees. The senior institutional leader for Indigenous education was typically most often tasked with the intellectual leadership and coordinating the logistics relating to the Council's work. Employees with the specific role of supporting Indigenous learners were often tasked with special assignments and reporting back to the Council. Finally, an administrative assistant to an executive team member or within the Indigenous support office is often tasked with being the recording secretary to the Council.

2. Financial Resources. The interview questions also aimed to capture a variety of information of a financial nature, including the process to finalize ministry funding requests through the Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL), financial reporting on the use of these funds and the institution's financial support of the work of the AECs.

   All key informants said that their AEC was involved in approving the ministry funding request through PEFAL. Those proposals were often authored by an institutional employee, often under the supervision of the senior institutional lead for Indigenous education and through the direction provided by the Council itself. As such, there were no concerns expressed by key informants.

   Some key informants noted that their Councils had a financial update on the use of these ministry funds as a standing agenda item, and thus the institution ensured a high level of transparency in the expenditure of these funds. Other key informants felt that the accountability for the ministry's funding came from the institution delivering on its ministry submission, rather than from examining a balance sheet.

   Many key informants, notably community members, expressed concern that the funding for Indigenous initiatives, including funding to pay the salaries of Indigenous student support personnel, were completely paid for by the Ministry's special funding envelope, without some additional or matching funds to support Indigenous support services coming from the institution's core operating budget. Most institutions risk-managed the ministry's delays in confirming new grant funding, but one institution did issue lay-off notices to its Indigenous employees as the ministry's confirmation of funding renewal had not yet been received. This situation led to perceptions by some key informants of lack of institutional support for Indigenous education in the absence of external funding.

Finally, all key informants noted the availability of travel reimbursement for those who incurred cost in attending Council meetings. No key informant knew of travel reimbursement being denied by an institution. Some key informants were certain that travel reimbursement was being provided through the Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners, not the institution's funding envelopes.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The study was also interested in learning more about the Councils' efforts to develop their own strategic plans or to participate in institution-wide strategic planning processes as a means of strengthening Indigenous education within them institutions.

1. Own Strategic Planning Process. Roughly half of the AECs in our sample undertake a three-year or five-year strategic planning process. Interestingly, AECs within university were far more likely to have their own strategic plan than their college counterparts. In fact, 7 out of the 8 universities in our sample had their own strategic plan, with the remaining university indicating that the absence of a strategic plan was its Council's biggest weakness. One college has established a ten-year vision for its activities through its AEC. The vision document states where the College should be within ten years, but is silent on articulating strategic initiatives to achieve the vision.

2. Institutional Strategic Planning. Many AECs noted that in the past, they had attempted to prepare their own strategic plan, but recognized the time commitment for doing this well, and shifted the focus away from providing direction and guidance to the institution. As a result, they embarked on one of two strategies.

    A) Integrating AEC plans within institutional plans. Some AECs were asked to develop a strategic plan or action plan as an extension of the institution's wider strategic plan, which now included elements relating to the strengthening of Indigenous education. This approach represents a strategic opportunity for these AECs, as the institutional leaders are responsible for delivering on the entire strategic plan, including the elements linked to the work of the AECs.

    B) Key stakeholder groups. Among the 40% of AECs without their own strategic plan or the development of a process to embed their priorities within the institution's strategic plan, key informants noted that they were invited to participate in the development of the institution's strategic plan as a core constituency group. As such, many key informants noted that they attended these sessions in the anticipation that the institution would add language to further Indigenous education in the institution's strategic plan.

INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING BODIES

This section profiles and quantifies the different types of formal interactions that allow the various AECs and their members to have a voice within the other decision-making bodies on campus. For universities, the focus was on the bicameral governing system, with the governing body defined as the Board of Governors (or Trustees), and Senate defined as the academic authority. For colleges, the focus remained on the Board of Governors.

1. Board of Governors

   Among our sample, 8 of 15 of the AECs within universities and colleges had an interaction with the institution's Board of Governors. The exact type of formal interactions varies considerably from one institution to the next, and four models have been identified: appointment of an AEC member to the Board of Governors only; appointment of a member of the Board of Governors to the AEC only; an appointment of a member from both the AEC and the Board of Governors to the other's committee; and representation of the AEC to the Board of Governors through the President.

   A) Appointment of an AEC member to the Board of Governors only. There were five institutions (33%) within our sample that reserved a seat for a member of the AEC on that institution's Board of Governors. In most cases, the AEC representative to the Board of Governors was reserved for the Indigenous leader who served as chair or co-chair of the AEC. This model was the most common of these four models.

   B) Appointment of a governor from the Board of Governors to the AEC only. There were four institutions (26%) within our sample where the Board of Governors selected one of its members to serve as a member of the AEC. In two cases, the Board of Governors representative was an Indigenous leader. In one case, the Indigenous Board of Governors representative was chosen to serve as chair of the AEC. At another institution, the Indigenous Board of Governor member was expected to also fulfill the role of chair of the AEC. In the other cases, the Board of Governor representative served as an ex-officio member of the AEC.

   C) An appointment of a member from both the AEC and the Board of Governors to the other's committee. There was also a single example within our sample where the relationship between the Board of Governors and the Aboriginal Education was bidirectional, meaning that the Board of Governors nominates one person among its members to serve as an ex-officio member of the AEC, while the AEC has a reserved seat on the Board of Governors for one of its members. As such, there at least two members from both committees who can speak about and represent the interests of the other committee in discussions.

   D) Representation of the AEC to the Board of Governors through the President. In two cases, key informants noted that the AEC formally reported to the Board of Governors through the President. Additional key informants could have made reference to the participation of

either the president or another executive team member of the institution on both the AEC and the Board of Governors as the main source of information sharing between both bodies. However, AEC members who participated in this study did not perceive, or may not perceive, the president or another executive team member speaking on behalf of the Council to the Board of Governors or having the opportunity to speak about AEC matters during Board meetings.

2. Senate

The focus of this section is exclusively on universities, as they are the only type of postsecondary institution with the bicameral governing structure. Only 50% of the universities in our sample had a direct link between the AEC and the Senate, with three different models identified.

A) Appointment of an AEC member to the Senate only.

There were three examples where the AEC had a reserved seat for one of its members on the Senate. The seat was not designated for the chair or co-chair of the Council, which was the case for the Board of Governors. The Council had the ability to appoint a member it felt could actively engage in academic discussions. In one example, the faculty member who co-chaired the Council was appointed by the Council to serve on the Senate. In another example, a retired Indigenous educator served as the Council's representative to the Senate. In both cases, those institutions felt that discussions on new programs, program review, and learning outcomes emerging from AEC discussions could be more seamlessly continue at Senate.

B) An appointment of a member from both the AEC and the Senate to the other's committee.

There was one example where the university ensured a Senate representative served on the AEC, and that an AEC member was appointed to the university senate. As such, there are at least two members from both committees that can speak about and represent the interests of the other committee in discussions.

3. Formal interactions with the institution's executive team.

Some institutions had no formal roles between the AEC and other decision-making bodies. However, key informants from two institutions noted that their AEC had the opportunity of engaging with the president in one case or the entire executive team for the other annually to discuss Indigenous education, the work of the Council and the institution's efforts to support Indigenous learners.

4. No direct links with other institutional decision-making bodies.

The AECs in some institutions within our research sample had no formal links with the Board of Governors, the Senate (if applicable), and the senior executive team. In these cases, the most senior institutional member of the Council was a director or an associate vice-president. In such cases, the ability of the Aboriginal Education Council to influence discussions at other decision-making bodies was more limited.

The ministry definition of an AEC includes a passage stating that "Institutions must ensure that representatives from Aboriginal communities/organizations have direct access to the board of governors and the senate (e.g., by reserving a seat on the board for an Aboriginal representative or by having the president serve as a member of the AEC)." This study was not designed to examine or pronounce on compliance, but the results suggest that institutions have interpreted the definition in a variety of ways.

5. Promising Practices

This section presents a series of promising practices drawn from an analysis of the information obtained through the 57 key informant interviews and from a process of comparing and contrasting the experiences of the 19 AECs. The selection of promising practices was also informed by the material collected in the environmental scan.

In considering what makes an AEC successful and in selecting promising practices, the research team kept several points in mind.

- The first is the different stages of the development of the AECs at the different institutions. While some AECs have been in place for many years, allowing enough time for effective processes to take root and for a track record of achievements to become known, others have either been established more recently or an in a period of renewal. It is important not to overlook possible successes and lessons that can be learned from the newer Councils, simply because they have had a shorter period of time over which to demonstrate their impact.

- The second is the possible distorting effect of local histories and local personalities. While it is tempting simply to look to Councils that are harmonious for examples of promising practices, such a lens would be too limiting. Internal tensions can sometimes arise either because of the legacy of tensions within the wider community or because of the personal styles of one or two individual members. In these cases, the existence of such tensions does not mean that that Council itself has not operated in an exemplary way. Conversely, a Council may be internally harmonious but nonetheless lack impact because of the absence of strategic direction or connection to institution decision-making.

- The third is the inescapable diversity of both PSE institutions and of regional and local communities in the province, which means that there could never be one set of procedures and purposes that would be appropriate for each institution and community regardless of its particular circumstances. The search for promising practices must be a search for common guiding themes that respects this diversity and not a search for a one-size-fits-all model that could be implemented across the board.

That said, the selection of criteria for what makes an AEC successful in a study such as this is by necessity somewhat subjective. The research team has been guided by the Ministry's description of AECs as bodies established "to ensure that Aboriginal people are consistently and regularly engaged in decision making within the institution." What precisely makes engagement consistent and regular, what exactly is meant by engagement, and what types of decision making are envisioned (e.g. whether it involves decisions relating to operational, academic, financial, or governance matters), however, is not specified, leaving considerable room for interpretation. With this in mind, the research team has used its best judgment and opted to identify promising practices which are more likely to foster one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Forms of consultation that are experienced by participants as genuine and based on mutual, open-ended dialogue, and rather than as *pro forma* or as inauthentic exercises that simply to allow the institution to "check a box."
2. Influence that is felt across the institution, potentially touching all of its areas of operations, in such as way as to ensure that awareness and consideration of Indigenous issues is not compartmentalized or isolated within the institution.
3. Influence on decision-making at levels senior enough to affect the overall direction of the institution and not just the management or delivery of specific programs or services.
4. The strengthening of relations between the institution and its external Indigenous constituencies and not just better internal management of individual issues affecting Indigenous students, faculty or staff already on campus.
5. The mobilization of AEC community members as partners and as resources who can make a contribution to the life and mission of institution and not just as committee members whose connection to the institution is limited to their presence on the AEC.

The promising practices are presented in two categories. The first have to do with formal practices that relate to the structure and operation of AECs. These are practices that can readily be prescribed in the terms of reference or other governing documents. The second categories relate to leadership practices. These are practices that depend more on the way in which members and institutional leaders approach and engage with the AECs.

FORMAL PRACTICES

There are eight formal practices that emerged as promising practices in reviewing the 19 AECs across the province.

1. Clear terms of reference. Terms of reference typically cover a number of operational considerations, such as the frequency of meetings, the types and numbers of members, the selection of chairs or co-chairs, and the reporting relationship of the chairs or co-chairs to other officers in the institution. Among the most important elements of a terms of references, however, is the clarification of the AEC's role and purview. In the absence of clarity on this issue, members can have different views on such fundamental questions as whether the AEC is a forum for information sharing, has an advisory role, or should have a formal role in decision-making, and whether the AECs' focus should be on academic, operational or service-delivery matters or on matters affecting the long-term strategic direction of the institution. Absence of clarity on these questions can undermine efforts to build trust within the AEC and between the institution and the Indigenous community. In view of this, it is not surprising that a number of AECs mentioned the need to update their terms of reference as a means of ensuring greater clarity of their role and the institution's perceptions of their value-add to the organization. The information from the key informant interviews suggests that the more successful Councils are those that clarify both that the AEC's main role is advisory and that this advice will reach senior decision makers by virtue of their direct involvement with the council. This second point, which is also mentioned below, is essential as it

provides members with the reassurance that the advice offered will be taken seriously.

2. Majority membership from community. Not all institutions draw a majority of their membership from the Indigenous community outside of the institution; some are made up mainly of institutional members, although it should be noted that some of the institutional members may themselves be Indigenous persons. This is particularly the case in larger institutions, where the AEC can be used as a means of connecting people across the institution who share either a responsibility for or an interest in Indigenous issues and who otherwise risk working in silos. It was observed, however, that more successful AECs had a majority of members from the community. Councils with a majority of community members were more likely to serve as a forum to bring community needs and issues to the attention of the institution and to promote the strengthening of relations between the community and institutions. Conversely, AECs with a majority of institutional members suffered from three weaknesses. The first is that they were more likely to focus on internal information sharing and less likely to focus on advising the institution's leadership on strategic issues. This is partly because, in the absence of the weight of the community voice, it can be too risky for institutional faulty or staff to put pressure on institutional leaders, who in practice are their workplace superiors. The second is that, in a council formed mostly of institutional members, the forum can become a means for individuals to strengthen their own positions within the institution, that is, to engage in posturing to advance their own careers. Third, in a council formed mostly of institutional members, the small number of community members risk feeling at a disadvantage due to their lack of knowledge, compared with the other members, of the inner workings and dynamics of the institution. Their influence is thus minimized. One member in such a situation said she felt she could say yes or no if asked whether or not certain practices were culturally appropriate or respectful, but beyond that had a hard time offering a view on what actually needed to be done at the institution. AECs, therefore, should have memberships that ensure genuine consultation and dialogue between the community and the institution. The need to promote more effective information sharing about Indigenous issues among staff at large institutions is best accomplished through internal committees separate from the AECs.

3. Complementary structures to the AEC. The more successful institutions are at attracting Indigenous students, expanding Indigenous services, and engaging in Indigenous issues, the less feasible and the less appropriate it will be for the AEC to be the only (or even the primary) forum within the institution for dialogue about Indigenous issues. There are a few institutions that have already created complementary structures to support both the institution and by extension the AEC. One such example was an institutional steering committee, made up of mid-level institutional representatives who received the mandate to translate the direction from the AEC into concrete actions, and to report those actions back to the council. The existence of this steering committee helped to ensure the Council could remain focused on more strategic issues. Another example was a working committee charged with drafting the institution's Indigenous strategic plan, with a clear commitment that the draft plan would be submitted to the AEC for review and discussion. The working committee can draw in representatives from various units at the institution without altering the balance of membership of the AEC itself. In another case, a separate committee was made up exclusively of elders, who as holders of Indigenous knowledge, could

support the institution and the council with culture and knowledge, again leaving the Council to focus on more strategic discussions. (Note that a similar use of multiple forums within institutions was noted in the environmental scan, particularly with regard to universities in New Zealand.) The advantages of these complementary structures are clear:

- As mentioned, it allows the AEC to remain focused on strategic issues without getting overwhelmed by operational ones;
- It allows the institutions to move work forward in important areas without over-taxing members of the AEC (particularly the community members);
- It allows the institution to directly involve more staff and faculty in projects relating to Indigenous issues without diluting the community membership of the AEC;
- Perhaps most importantly, it helps to ensure that the AEC serves as an anchor for an ever-expanding influence across the institution rather than as a mechanism that allows Aboriginal issues to be compartmentalized within the institution by confining them to one committee. (As one key informant stated, the advantage of this approach is that "not everything about Aboriginal is just stacked into one committee because otherwise you're going to get stuck in the weeds").

As a final point, it is worth emphasizing that the complementary structures mentioned here were all tightly connected with the AEC; these structures did not represent a haphazard, disorganized or uncoordinated proliferation of forums but rather a purposeful deepening of the institution's engagement with Indigenous issues.

4. Integration within the institutional decision-making bodies. The most successful AECs were integrated within and across the layers of decision-making at the institution, providing advice and recommendations to the Board of Governors, the Senate, the executive team and other institutional leaders. This represents a sharing of responsibility for improvements in Indigenous education outcomes across the institution, resembling the "whole-of-institution" approach highlighted in the environmental scan. Institutions adopting this approach were much further along in their indigenization or inclusion processes than other institutions. The particular model that was adopted (e.g. appointment of an AEC member to the Board of Governors/Senate only; appointment of a governor from the Board of Governors/Senate to the AEC only; an appointment of a member from both the AEC and the Board of Governors/Senate to the other's committee; and representation of the AEC to the Board of Governors/Senate through the President) was less important, so long as there was a clear demonstration that the insights were heard and strongly welcomed by the institution's senior decision-makers. By contrast, less influential AECs were structured more as stand-alone bodies with limited interactions with or connection to the rest of the institution, beyond the interactions with the institutional members on the AEC itself. In these cases, members noted that the AECs had very limited visibility or presence on campus, and were known mainly (if not only) to those who worked directly on Indigenous issues. The consideration of Indigenous issues was more likely to be compartmentalized within the AEC and the institutional unit responsible for Indigenous student services.

5. Aligning AEC and institutional strategic plans. Most AECs had developed or are in the process developing a strategic plan setting their orientation and objectives. The process of developing such a document can help the Council achieve the type of clarity of purpose and role emphasized above (see Point 1); once in place, the plan can also help ensure the Council retains a strategic focus and is not sidetracked by dealing with more operational issues or issues relating to the organizational or career interests of a single member. The most successful examples, however, were of Councils whose strategic plan was also directly linked to or integrated with the institution's overall institutional plan. In some cases, for instance, the institution has developed a strategic plan that included a component relating to Indigenous student success. The AEC's own plan was seen as building on this, and indeed as an extension of the institutional plan, in that it articulated how a key deliverable of the institutional strategic plan would be achieved.

   At one institution, the AEC plan that was being developed was scheduled to be submitted to the board of governors and senate for approval. This is an important step in mitigating the risk of the compartmentalization of Indigenous issues within the institution, and it helps to entrench a whole-of-institution approach. The linking of the AEC plan to the institutional plan raises the visibility and prestige of the Council within the institution but, more importantly, serves to make the whole of the institution's leadership – including boards and senior executives – responsible for the AEC's success (since the delivery of the AEC's strategic plan is a component of the delivery of the institution's strategic plan). This in turn reinforces the sense among council members that their contribution is valued, that their engagement with the institution is meaningful, and that the process of consultation that they are engaged in with the AEC is a genuine one, designed to lead to change and not just to allow the institution to "check a box."

6. Senior institutional leadership presence at AEC. More successful AEC had one or more senior executive team members present, in a sustained fashion over the years. The direct involvement of a senior executive, such as the president of vice-president, was welcomed by both institutional members and community members. For community members, the involvement of the institution's senior leaders was seen as a sign of respect and as a demonstration of the importance that the institution was attaching to the issue; it was a sign that the institution was serious about listening to what the Council had to say and about acting on its advice. A number of community members mentioned specifically the importance to them of knowing they had "the president's ear." For institutional members, the leadership's involvement was similarly taken as a signal of how important the issue was viewed to be at the institution. In their case, however, the particular advantage was that it provided them with the visible backing they needed to move issues forward on campus; it is more difficult for initiatives to be blocked or stalled when they are associated personally with the president or other senior executives. Two further reasons why the involvement of the president or vice-president is particularly important to community members are worth emphasizing. The first is that this involvement is not seen as a means of circumventing institutional decision-making processes. No community member spoke of having an expectation that things on campus would get done quickly simply by virtue of them having raised it directly with the president at an AEC meeting. Rather, there is widespread recognition that change at

postsecondary institutions (and particularly at universities) happens slowly, and that lasting change is not likely to be imposed by decree from the president's office, but can only be achieved through a gradual process of bringing more and more people on board. Thus the direct involvement of the senior leadership is welcomed not because it allows for this gradual process of change to be expedited, but because it shows that the institution was genuinely committed to and invested in seeing it through.

The second reason has to do with the connection between consultation, dialogue and listening. For consultation with the community to be meaningful, it must take the form of a two-way conversation that allows community members not only to answer questions put to them *by* the institution *about* the institution, but to raise their own questions and to share information with the institution about their communities. In order for this to be effective, community members need to know that someone is genuinely listening to the questions and the issues they raise. Institutional officials below the level of senior management are often authorized to share information about the institution with the community, but are not necessarily in a position to ensure that the institution as a whole (as opposed to only themselves, personally) is really listening to what the community is saying. Thus the personal involvement of the president or another senior level executive helps to reassure the community that they are indeed engaged in a genuine dialogue with the institution, that is, that the institution is in fact listening to them as well as speaking to them.

7. Ensure Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners budget oversight, both in applying and in reviewing the outcomes of funding requests. The more successful AECs had a leading role in shaping the institution's funding request through the Postsecondary Education Funding for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL) – a role that went beyond simply signing off on it at the request of the institution. Many Councils used the strategic planning process or agenda-setting discussions at Council meetings to drive the formulation of their funding submission to the ministry. Some meetings of AECs include as a quarterly or annual standing agenda item a fiscal update on PEFAL grant expenditures. Other Councils use the reporting on the uses and outcomes of PEFAL funding as a means of enhancing institutional accountability for progress on priorities within the submission. In the first instance, of course, the involvement of the AECs in preparing and reviewing the results of PEFAL funding submissions represents an appropriate use of the AECs' expertise: the AEC can help guide the institution in terms of its understanding of the needs of Indigenous learners and the gaps in existing services and programs. It also follows naturally from the Ministry's policy that links the eligibility of PEFAL funding to the establishment of an AEC. Beyond this, however, the involvement of the AEC in the discussion of PEFAL funding serves to enhance institutional transparency and accountability to the community and, by so doing, contributes to the building of trust. (It is notable, for instance, that at the school board level, where government policy does not tie eligibility for funding for Indigenous education explicitly to the presence of an AEC, AECs do not seem to have had as clear a role in overseeing the funding; key informants pointed to this as a particular source of frustration and mistrust. As one informant stressed, "my observation has been that there's been a huge frustration on the part of the community with the school boards. For the most part, I think it's in and around the transparency.") The point made above about integrating discussions on PEFAL funding within wider strategic or agenda-setting discussions, however, is also a key part of the

best practice.

A number of key informants noted that while the institutions had previously seen their AECs mostly as a mechanism to help the institution access funding, most had evolved to the point that this "sign off" function was now folded into a more genuine strategic advisory role. In other words, there had been an important evolution in institutional thinking to the point that AECs were no longer seen by the institutions as being simply about accessing the money. One community member was particularly impressed that his orientation as a new AEC member did not even mention the fact that the institution needed the AEC in order to maintain its eligibility for PEFAL funding; rather, the orientation stressed the institution's commitment to working in partnership to improve Indigenous education outcomes. This didn't mean that the institution didn't have a role in the PEFAL funding process, but rather that the institution no longer reduced or equated the AEC's role or importance to that single function. To quote that member at length:

> *"Back in the day…it was a bit of a token….It seemed like: "Yeah we needed them because we've got to access dollars from the province so we've got to have that group." Rather than say, "Let's have that group and, you know what, because we have this group we end up accessing dollars." … That's what it seemed like at the time. … I'm sure there's still people today who think that way but I think we've moved on….I think universities and colleges -- not all of them, but a lot of them -- are starting to say, "how do I turn around and make my college more open to Indigenous communities and Indigenous people from all different areas?" … I think as that changes, the more information with Indigenous history and culture and all that is coming, more and more people are taking notice of that, and colleges are taking that notice too, saying "we've got to change."*

8. Sharing of data and research: More successful AECs regularly shared information with Council members on key indicators such as the number of incoming Indigenous students, the number of Indigenous students graduating from the institution, and the number of Indigenous faculty, as well as other forms of data such as results from student surveys and studies of student needs. In some cases, data is routinely shared as part of background meeting materials, though it is not necessarily reviewed or discussed at each meeting; in other cases, data is shared when available and can be the focus on a meeting agenda item. In one case, the AEC was consulted on the content of a student survey questionnaire to ensure it covered issues relevant to Indigenous students. The sharing of this information is useful as it can keep community members informed about the situation on campus, prompts helpful feedback from the community for the institution, and highlights problems that warrant the Council's attention. One of the main advantages, however, is that it can also reinforce trust by enhancing the institution's transparency and the recognition of its accountability to the community. The regular sharing of information therefore contributes to the development of a more respectful relationship that can in turn create a productive and successful Council.

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

While the formal practices are key elements to ensure the successful integration of the AEC within the host institution, the success of AECs often rest on the committed, determined and sustained leadership of key individuals. These include the senior leadership team of the institution, the senior institutional lead for Indigenous education, and the AEC chair or co-chairs. Leadership matters because of the very nature of AECs as means for establishing and strengthening relationships within the institution and between the institution and its Indigenous constituencies. In many ways, good leadership practices reinforce key relationship building efforts, and thus are often more important than the formal structures that may make AECs stand out on paper. Good leadership can make an AEC successful despite weaknesses in formal structures; exemplary formal structures cannot make up for an absence of good leadership.

One the one hand, it is difficult to prescribe good leadership practices: certain individuals are, by virtue of their personalities and personal experiences, more energetic, interested, sensitive and authentic than others. On the other hand, it is possible to highlight what it is that effective leaders do that makes a difference, in the hopes that this will help guide those willing leaders who are newly appointed or newer to issues relating to Indigenous education.

1. Senior institutional leadership team engagement. Above, key informants highlighted the importance of having a member of the institution's senior leadership as part of the AEC. This is something that can be inscribed in an AEC's terms of reference. But as important as the fact of the presence of a senior leader, such as a president or vice-president, is their degree of genuine engagement – something that goes beyond what can be mandated on paper. Active and sustained engagement by institutional leaders, including participation in meaningful discussion, listening to concerns and following-up on them to demonstrate that they have been heard, and endeavouring to get to know Indigenous partners by engaging in dialogue throughout the year and not just quarterly during AEC meetings (for instance, by visiting communities and community organizations), are all crucial. The most successful AECs, therefore, are those where one or more members of the senior leadership team are present, and where these leaders engaged fully and follow-up on their presence at AEC meetings by using their influence on strategic and operational decisions and their relationship with institution's governors to work for continuous improvements within the institution for Indigenous learners. This goes beyond the management of the president's or vice-president's schedule, and comes down to personal leadership style and a commitment to face-to-face relationship building and driving change.

2. Indigenous leadership on AEC. It is not only the institution's senior leadership that matters. The Indigenous leadership on the AEC is also crucial to its success and impact at the institution. Many Indigenous leaders of AECs will meet with community members to ensure they are comfortable with the direction of the AEC as a means of ensuring their full and continued engagement on the Council. Other Indigenous leaders on AECs will organize a pre-meeting (described by some as an Indigenous huddle) where community members only are invited to share their views and prepare their thoughts through a consensus-building process before a formal meeting. These steps are important, especially considering that in many cases community members are solicited to act as advisors on many types of boards and

committees, including in a number of instances, more than one AEC. Regular and respectful engagement with community members helps to ensure that the AEC can continue to function productively.

3. Meaningful agendas for community engagement. The most successful AECs develop their scheduling of meetings and the specific agenda for each meeting in a strategic way so as to provide sufficient opportunities for community members to fully engage and to make it worthwhile for community members to make time to attend. Examples of agendas that promote this type of engagement include those that allow time for community members to meet or "huddle" separately prior to the meeting to identify issues or raise concerns, those that invite institutional leaders to attend the meetings and allow for them to be questioned by community members, those that invite community members to make presentations or share relevant information from their organizations, and those that allow for informal networking among members following the meeting (sometimes over lunch or dinner). At the opposite end of the spectrum are AEC meetings that are mostly "show and tell" meetings where the institution provides updates on its activities without connecting these to any strategic discussions, or ones that are dominated by institutional members lobbying for their own program or research interests. The preparation of meaningful agendas thus depends in some ways on the chairs or co-chairs setting expectations and reflecting in advance on what makes the meeting worthwhile to attend for community members, as well as the institution's commitment to engage in genuine dialogue and not just information sharing.

4. Bridge building with communities. The more successful AECs are ones whose members feel that they are part of a larger relationship building and educational process that spills over beyond the AEC's sphere of operations narrowly defined. This tends to occur when the institution's leadership recognizes that the AEC and its members constitute an invaluable resource that can play a role and have an impact on the institution beyond that which is achieved through the formal exercise of its mandate and within the confines of a Council meeting. For instance, some institutions have asked AEC members to host AEC meetings in the community (i.e. off campus), allowing institutional members to learn more about Indigenous peoples, their experiences with education, and the needs of their students than could ever be accomplished through the discussion of a specific meeting agenda item. In other cases, institutional AEC chairs or co-chairs have made sure to meet with community members one-on-one in their communities or have endeavoured to attend landmark community events.

   Another approach has been to ask AEC community members to make presentations on campus or to lead training or professional development activities for institutional faculty and staff, or to connect the institutions with other Indigenous speakers who could visit campus to share their knowledge and experiences. What these various initiatives have in common is that they are examples of the institution's leadership recognizing the broader contribution that AEC community members can make to changing mindsets within the institution and to breaking down the historic divides between the institution and its Indigenous constituencies. In such a way, the AEC serves not only to advise the institution but to bring the institution and the community closer together through the deepening or mutual understanding. (As one AEC co-chair said, "it's not just a once a month for a couple hours, but we can rely on the

relationships that we've developed for lots of other things too, and we do.") This openness not only to receiving input or feedback from the AEC but to listening to and learning from AEC members tends to be a function of the personal approach of institutional leaders, and in particular of their own willingness to spend time engaging, listening and learning.

5. Funding for Indigenous Education. While funding to operate the AECs was not raised as an issue by key informants, the availability for funding for Indigenous initiatives was, with many informants mentioning that there was not enough funding available to address all of the priorities and projects identified by the AEC. One of the biggest concerns, however, was the practice of relying exclusively on PEFAL funding as the financial resource to support Indigenous education. Community members in particular (though not exclusively) were critical of the lack of funds from the institution's core operating budget to support Indigenous support programs and services. In one case, the absence of institutional funding led to the institution serving lay-off notices to Indigenous staff members hired through PEFAL funding in the absence of confirmation by the Ministry of funding for upcoming years.

   The most successful postsecondary institutions did not exclusively rely on PEFAL funding as their financial resource to support Indigenous education. This reinforced the perception among AEC community members that the institution was genuinely committed to improving Indigenous education outcomes. In some cases, in order to avoid funding shortfalls, institutions have either taken steps to risk-manage the ministry's delays in confirming new grant funding or ensured that the institution can prioritize those expenditures in light of their strategic priority. In other words, the institution is not allowing ministry delays to deter its ability to provide Indigenous services to its students. Funding decisions such as these are not related so much to the formal structure of the AECs, but to the institution's leadership's prioritization of Indigenous education more generally.

6. Considerations for Government

The goal of this project was to document practices within AECs and not to review government policies. The discussion guide used in the key informant interviews did not contain questions relating directly to government policies, such as the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy. That said, a number of key informants offered comments that touched on what the provincial government could do, or should not do, to enhance the work of the AECs. In view of this, the research team decided to summarize these, and to add other reflections informed by the research for this project, for consideration by the Ministry.

1. Circulate this report to each of the AECs and encourage discussion: The key informants who participated were almost without exception enthusiastic to learn about this project and its objective of identifying promising practices in the use of AECs across the province. Accordingly, most asked the research team to ensure that they would have access to the findings, so that they could benefit from the experiences of others. The research team was not in a position to confirm how the Ministry would use or distribute the report, but undertook to pass this request along. Accordingly, the first recommendation to government is to ensure that this report is made widely available, and in particular is distributed directly to the chairs and co-chairs of all AECs, the senior executive responsible for Indigenous students or services at each college and university, the presidents of each institution, Colleges Ontario and the Council of Ontario Universities, and provincial and regional Indigenous education stakeholders. To promote further learning across the sector, the Ministry should consider developing a process to encourage cross-institutional discussion of the findings and to capture feedback, such as the organization of a teleconference for AEC chairs, co-chairs and members (or a series of teleconferences, grouped by region or institution type), or the convening of in-person meetings (perhaps in collaboration with Colleges Ontario or the Council of Ontario Universities).

2. Continue to support variations in practice: While supporting this research project and objectives, there was among some key informants a concern that the recommendations would be used to inform a more prescriptive policy for AECs that would require them to conform to a standard model. Many AEC members felt that the practices they had developed responded to the particular needs of both their institution and their Indigenous partners, and they did not want to lose the flexibility to continue to evolve in the direction that best suited their own situation. In the view of the researchers, this does not reflect a desire by institutions to simply be left alone, and to escape Ministry scrutiny or the pressure to meet higher expectations. Rather, it reflects a view, particularly among some of the more successful AECs, that their local practice was already going well beyond the minimum requirements of government policy, and that any move to make the policy more prescriptive might actually be counterproductive by forcing them to divert attention away from the successful practices they had built up over many years in order to meet certain one-size-fits-all ministry requirements (or to "jump through hoops"). In this context, it is worth recalling one of the observations noted above, which is that there is already a discernable trend away from a time when institutions convened AECs simply in order to do what was needed to access government funding, and towards the use of AECs as a more genuine mechanism to

deepen mutual understanding and drive change. In other words, while in the beginning some institutions were simply going through the motions in order to conform to government policy, more and more institutions are now engaging in the process with more sincerity. The concern on the part of AEC members, therefore, is that the implementation of a standard model for AECs across all institutions would represent a step backwards; more and more things would need to be done simply to meet the government requirements, and not because they were called for as a result of the consensus built between the institution and the community. The conclusion is that government-mandated collaboration is a crucial first step to bring partners together (as is the case with the process for developing the enhancement agreements at the school district level in British Columbia, described in the environmental scan); but once the partners cross over from "going through the motions" to genuine dialogue, it is not clear whether further direction from the government about how this dialogue is to be carried out can add value.

3. Reinforce transparency: The above finding does not mean that the government needs to adopt a completely "hands off" approach. One of the central findings of this study is the importance of transparency. Transparency is the foundation on which greater trust and understanding can be built. It is possible for the Ministry to reinforce transparency without unduly interfering with the internal operations of either institutions or AECs. This could be done in three ways:

    a. By making it clearer what type of information about each AEC must be available on the institution's website, and where. Currently, MTCU requires that institutions "establish and maintain public access to information about the AEC."[42] But in preparing this study, the researchers were not able to find information for all AECs, and the type and quality of information that was found varied considerably. The Ministry could clarify that, at a minimum, all institutions must:
        - Provide information about the AEC's name, its terms of reference, its strategic or action plan (if available), its reporting relationship within the institution's governance structure, the name of its chairs or co-chairs, the names of its members, contact information for a liaison person at the institution, the dates of the last four meetings, and the date of the next meeting.
        - Make this information accessible through navigation starting from the same web page that contains information about the institution's governance structure (though it could also be accessible through navigation starting from other points, such as web pages devoted to Indigenous programs or services).

    b. By requiring institutions to also post, alongside the information on the AECs, a copy of their Multi-Year Aboriginal Action Plan for Postsecondary Education (MYAAPP). The ministry could also post links to each institution's MYAAPP from its own website, making it easy for the public

[42] Quoted from policy documents sent to the authors by the Aboriginal Education Office at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, January 6, 2016.

to access each one and compare them to one another. This practice would built upon the existing practice of publishing each institution's Multi-Year Accountability Agreement (MYAA).

c. By committing to publishing a series of annual key indicators in Indigenous postsecondary education within three years as part of its reporting on the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework, including the number of Indigenous students at each institution by level of study and type of program, the number of Indigenous graduates at each institution by level of study and type of program, the amount of institutional financial aid provided to Indigenous students, the number of self-identified Indigenous faculty members by faculty and level of position, and the number of self-identified Indigenous staff members by level of position.

The provision of this information would not only enhance the transparency of each institution in the eyes of the public, but, more importantly in the context of this study, in the eyes of the members of the AEC. How each AEC would consider and respond to this information should be left to the discretion of each AEC itself; the Ministry's role should be in ensuring that AECs have the information required to track both the institution's priorities in the areas of Indigenous education, and the progress it is making over time in ensuring Indigenous student success.

4. Knowledge and capacity building: As has been noted in this report, the success of Aboriginal Education Councils is dependent to a significant degree on the leadership abilities of those in key positions within both the Council and the institution. It is very difficult for a government to mandate good leadership or prescribe good leadership practices. Yet it may be possible for governments to support leadership development. This can be particularly important in this area of policy, since many institutional executives find themselves involved with an Aboriginal Education Council automatically by virtue of the position they hold, and not because of any pre-existing interest or expertise in Indigenous issues. In terms of Indigenous education, the provincial government could offer experiential learning opportunities (for example, within First Nations communities) for institutional executives or officers who wish to deepen their appreciation of Indigenous cultures. The Ministry could also offer a more targeted approach by providing training opportunities specifically for AEC members (including both institutional and community members) in the different regions of the province, focusing both on the deepening of intercultural competency and on the sharing of promising practices relating to AEC operations. A more ambitious approach would be for the government to decide to interpret item 57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in such as way as to apply it to senior executives within public postsecondary education institutions. (Item 57 reads as follows: "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, 7)).

5. Continuing study: It is a predictable weakness of researchers that they cannot resist ending each report with a recommendation for further research. The researchers were struck, however, by the support for and interest in this study among the key informants, and the absence of other publicly available information about different AEC structures and practices across the province upon which AEC chairs, co-chairs, members and resource persons could draw. This study provides a one-time snapshot of the situation across 15 institutions. Future studies, however, could examine institutions not included in this one. It should be recalled that, following the consultation with the Ministry, the institutions that were selected to participate in this study were by and large those that were situated near concentrations of Indigenous populations. A study focused on other institutions might provide further insight, particularly into the promising practices of newly established AECs or AECs within institutions with a lesser history of concern with Indigenous issues. Another approach could be to conduct a study on an annual basis, involving 20, 25 or 33 percent of public institutions in the province on a rotating basis, such that each institution would be included in the study every five, four or three years. Regardless of which and how many institutions participate, additional studies similar to the one undertaken here, if repeated regularly, would help the Ministry, institutions, and Indigenous communities to track progress, to ensure that momentum has not halted, and to continue to shine a light on promising practices to the benefit of all concerned.

8. Conclusion

The practices relating to AECs vary widely across the province's postsecondary education institutions. This is to be expected and even welcomed, given differences in institution type, size, and mission, and the diversity of the local and regional communities in which they are situated and which they serve. Postsecondary institutions in Ontario are also at different stages in terms of their efforts to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. Some have been active in this area for many years, while others are just gaining an appreciation of the scale of change that is required. For these reasons, it would not be appropriate to think that AECs should resemble each other in terms of size, composition, structure and focus. Moreover, successful efforts to rebuild trust, repair damaged relationships, and redress broken promises often depend on the personal qualities of individuals in positions of leadership and influence. Over the course of this project, the researchers have been privileged to speak to dozens of leaders whose awareness of the challenges in this area and commitment to change is nothing short of inspiring. But the leadership qualities of these individuals are not things that can be easily captured in policy recommendations, replicated or spread by decree.

At the same time, this project has been able to take stock of the situation relating to AECs, describing both the features they have in common and notable innovations across 19 universities, colleges and school boards in the province. This has enabled the research team to provide an overview of how AECs are operating and, more importantly, to identify a number of promising practices which increase the likelihood that AECs can be effective agents of change within each institution and across the sector as a whole. These promising practices are not presented as a one-size-fits all model for each and every institution to follow, but as recurring themes that can serve to guide institutions that wish to continue to move forward in their efforts to work with the Indigenous community to improve experiences and outcomes for Indigenous students. While some of these promising practices can be implemented through changes to formal structures, through instruments such as Terms of Reference, others are more dependent on the approach of the AEC, and what its members, co-chairs or chairs, and associated leaders personally bring to the table in terms of their engagement, commitment and integrity. The researchers hope that, in presenting these themes to the Ministry, the postsecondary sector and Indigenous communities, this report can make a positive contribution to advancing the efforts that are already underway across the province to build more inclusive and responsive postsecondary institutions.

Bibliography

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council. (2015) *Implementing a Whole-of-University Approach to Improving Indigenous Access and Achievement.* Working paper. Canberra: Department of Education and Training; from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/atsiheac_whole_of_university_paper.pdf

ACIL Allen Consulting. (2014). *Evaluation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2012-2014: Final Evaluation Report.* Report to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group of the Education Council; from http://www.acilallen.com.au/cms_files/ACILAllen_ATSI_Education2014.pdf.

Auditor General of British Columbia. 2015. *An Audit of the Education of Aboriginal Students in the B.C. Public School System*; Victoria: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia; from http://www.bcauditor.com/sites/default/files/publications/reports/OAGBC_Aboriginal_Education_Report_FINAL.pdf

Education Council. 2015. *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015.* Education Council; from http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/NATSI_EducationStrategy_v3.pdf.

Education Review Office. (2010). *Promoting Success for Māori Students: Schools' Progress*. Wellington: Education Review Office; from http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Promoting-Success-for-Maori-Students-Schools-Progress-June-2010.

Expert Panel. 2012. *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report.* Canberra: Department of Education and Training; from https://iher.education.gov.au/.

Government of Ontario. 2011. *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework 2011*. Toronto: The Queen's Printer; from https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/APETPFramework.pdf.

Gunstone, A. (2013). "Indigenous Leadership and Governance in Australian Universities," *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* 6 (1): 1-11; from http://www.isrn.qut.edu.au/publications/internationaljournal/documents/volume6_number1_13-Gunstone.pdf.

Human Capital Strategies. 2005. *Review of Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Programs, Services and Strategies/Promising practices & Aboriginal Special Projects Funding (ASPF) Program.* Victoria: Human Capital Strategies; from http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/docs/educator-resources/2005-Jothen-Report.pdf.

Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People. (2013). *Voice, Vision and Leadership: A Place for All*. Final Report of the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People; from http://www.jointtaskforce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Joint-Task-Force-Final-Document.pdf.

Jothen, Kerry. 2011. *Evaluation of the BC Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Strategy.* Victoria: Human Capital Strategies; from *file:///C:/Users/Andrew%20Parkin/Documents/Andrew's%20files/Work%20projects/Academica/AEC%20lit%20review%20sources/APSES_evaluation_report.pdf*.

Lowen, Corinne. 2011. *Dialogue: Understanding the Process of Collaborative Policy Making in Aboriginal Education.* A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in the School of Studies in Policy and Practice, Faculty of Human and Social Development, University of Victoria; from https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/3702/Lowen_Corrine_MA_2011.pdf?sequence=5.

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. 2015. *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework: Transforming Educational Experiences: Through the Four Rs: Revitalization, Recognition, Relevance, and Relationships*. Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba; from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/fnmi_framework/document.pdf.

Martell, Gordon A. 2008. "Why Saving a Seat Is Not Enough: Aboriginal Rights and School Community Councils in Saskatchewan." *First Nations Perspectives* 1 (1): 19-40; from http://www.mfnerc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/article2.pdf.

MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education. 2000. *Achieving Educational Equality for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.* Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs; from http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Cultural%20inclusion%20and%20ATSI/Achieving%20Educational%20Equality%20for%20Australia's%20ATSI%20Peoples-Discussion%20Paper.pdf

Ministry of Advanced Education. 2012. *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Action Plan: 2020 Vision for the Future*; from http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/policy-framework.htm.

Moreton-Robinson, A., Walter, M., Singh, D., & Kimber, M. (2011). *On Stony Ground: Governance and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation in Australian Universities.* Report to the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Canberra Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; from: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/moreton-robinson_et_al_2011.pdf

Mutch, Carol and Sandra Collins. (2012). "Partners in Learning: Schools' Engagement With Parents, Families, and Communities in New Zealand." *School Community Journal* (Vol. 22, No. 1); from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ974691.pdf.

New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2013). Supporting Education Success as Māori: Information for School Boards of Trustees; from http://www.nzsta.org.nz/media/192051/supportingeducationsuccessasmaori-1.pdf.

Pelletier, Terrance, Michael Cottrell and Rosalind Hardie. 2013. *Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People.* Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit,

Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan; from http://www.jointtaskforce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Research-Report-for-the-Task-Force-March-26.pdf.

Province of British Columbia. 2013. Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training *Policy Framework and Action Plan: 2020 Vision for the Future – Report out for 2013*; from http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/docs/Aboriginal_Policy_framework_report_out_2013.pdf.

Richards, John, Jennifer Hove and Kemi Afolabi. 2008. *Understanding the Aboriginal/ Non-Aboriginal Gap in Student Performance: Lessons From British Columbia.* C.D. Howe Institute Commentary No. 276. Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute; from https://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/commentary_276.pdf.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2003. *Building Partnerships: First Nations and Métis Peoples and the Provincial Education System.* Regina: Government of Saskatchewan; from http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=11498.

Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. n.d. *Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee*

Action Plan: Year 2000 – 2005; from http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/aepac-action-plan.

Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. 2012. *School Community Councils Survey Results 2010-2011*; from http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/scc/links/survey-results-10-11.

Saskatoon Public Schools. n.d. *Saskatoon Public Schools First Nations, Inuit and Métis Education Action Plan 2012-15.* Saskatoon: Saskatoon Public Schools; from https://www.spsd.sk.ca/division/FNIMeducationunit/Documents/FNIMActionplan2013.pdf.

Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education. (2006). *Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008*. Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, and Curriculum Corporation; from http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/Australian_Directions_in_Indigenous_Education_2005-2008.pdf.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.

Universities Australia. (2011). *National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities.* Canberra: Universities Australia; from https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/uni-participation-quality/Indigenous-Higher-Education/Indigenous-Cultural-Compet#.VnPN04-cHic.

Wilson, Bruce. 20130. *A Share in the Future: Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory.* From: http://www.education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/37294/A-Share-in-the-Future-The-Review-of-Indigenous-Education-in-the-Northern-Territory.pdf.

Appendix A: Participating Institutions

Academica would like to acknowledge the 57 key informant interviews that participated in this project. They include AEC representatives from the following organizations:

Colleges	Universities	School Boards
Centennial College	Lakehead University	Lakehead District
Confederation College	Laurentian University	Ottawa-Carleton
Durham College	Nipissing University	Rainbow District
Georgian College	Queen's University	Upper Grand District
Mohawk College	Trent University	
Northern College	University of Ottawa	
St. Lawrence College	University of Toronto	
	Western University	

Appendix B: Discussion Guide

1. What is your role within the AEC? How long have you been a member? How were you selected to be a member? Who are the other members?

2. From your perspective, can you share with me the story of this specific AEC: when did it start, how was the membership determined, how does it operate, how often does it meet, whom does it report to, etc.?

3. What is the mandate of your AEC? Does it have specific terms of reference?

4. What types of issues has your AEC focused on, both historically and more recently? What are some examples of its achievements?

5. What are the greatest strengths of our AEC? What are the some of the biggest challenges it faces in terms of its ability to work effectively and efficiently? How could these challenges be addressed?

6. How is the AEC connected to decision-making processes within the postsecondary institution? How influential is the AEC within the institution?

7. What resources are made available to this AEC in carrying out its work (financial resources, administrative support, data or reports from the institution, research studies, etc.)?

8. Does your AEC set out annual or multi-year goals or objectives? How do you hold yourself and the institution accountable for the implementation of these goals or objectives, or for strengthening Indigenous education? How does your AEC measure its success?

For institutional members:

1. How does your institution support AEC members in familiarizing themselves with internal operations of the institution (governance structure and processes, role of senior executive, role of executive committees, strategic mandate agreement, government grants, research opportunities, student support services, etc.)?

2. How does this institution share information with AEC members to facilitate their work?

For community members:

1. How much time do you and other community members invest in serving on the AEC? How do you see this investment producing benefits for Aboriginal learners and communities in your region?

2. How does your institution support AEC members in familiarizing themselves with internal operations of the institution (governance structure and processes, role of senior executive, role of executive committees, etc.)? Have you received any professional development opportunities as part of your role on the AEC that would support you in gaining a better understanding of the operation of the postsecondary institution?