

Stepping Stones to Improved Relationships: Aboriginal Equity and Northwest Community College

Summary Report

Prepared for Northwest Community College

by

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Background

In February 1995, Northwest Community College began a long-term process to improve its relationships with the First Nations communities it serves. This process was initiated in order to

- make education at Northwest Community College more relevant in the lives of First Nations students;
- develop strong partnerships to support education within First Nations communities; and
- develop ways for the communities to have a greater say in Northwest Community College educational initiatives.

The College contracted two project consultants to begin a dialogue with communities, gather information, work with a Liaison Committee, develop an action plan, and write a summary report including recommendations to the College. This initial work took place between February and May 1995. During this time an Equity/Aboriginal Liaison Committee was established to

- provide information about existing College programs, services, delivery methods, and participation;
- assist the consultants in developing an action plan to implement recommended changes to improve service and programming to aboriginal communities;
- provide a link between the College and aboriginal communities, in support of College/community partnerships.

Consultation Process

The consultants conducted a series of interviews and small group discussions with over 50 individuals across the Northwest. People from First Nations communities and Northwest Community College went out of their way to be helpful, and contributed articulate and thoughtful comments about education for First Nations adults. Many indicated that they were pleased that a process was being initiated to begin a dialogue and were keen to see the results of the study and to see changes at the College.

Meetings took place between mid-February and early May 1995 in communities from Smithers to Old Massett Village. In addition, three Liaison Committee meetings were held, with representatives from First Nations communities and the College. Due to the constraints of scheduling, some people were not able to attend meetings or become involved in the interviews. Although the consultants tried to meet with as many people as possible, we recognize that some have not yet had the opportunity to express their views. This initial dialogue begins a long-term process, with continuing opportunities for on-going communication.

The meetings that form this dialogue included representatives with a range of experience:

- First Nations Education Coordinators
- First Nations Economic Development Officers
- First Nations Band Council members
- Northwest Community College personnel
- Members of the Equity/Aboriginal Services Liaison Committee
- Students enrolled in Northwest Community College programs

The consultants also reviewed recent reports, research literature, and publications related to First Nations education and drew upon their previous work to provide a context for the development of the Action Plan. Lists of project participants, committee members, related research, and a selected bibliography can be found in the Appendix.

The Liaison Committee met three times between March and May 1995 and worked with the consultants to develop an Action Plan. The Action Plan details the implementation of the recommendations in this summary report. It addresses key issues common to many First Nations communities in the region, while recognizing that each community has unique and individual needs. This summary report provides greater detail about the process that has taken place so far and makes recommendations. It should be read in conjunction with the Action Plan.

The consultants would like to express their sincere appreciation for the significant contributions of members of First Nations communities and Northwest Community College to this process.

Current Research

Although there has been considerable research undertaken on the educational needs of First Nations children, relatively little attention has been focused on First Nations adult learners. This trend is changing. There is a growing area of literature that specifically addresses First Nations education in the context of self-determination and integration with culture and community. A partial listing of related research along with a selected bibliography of related publications can be found in the Appendix.

Cultural, Political, and Social Context

Public schools, colleges, and universities are cultural institutions with implicit values, structures, and behaviours that reflect and support the majority culture in society.¹ Richard Daly (1990) speaks of the process of internalizing the cultural goals and values of the dominant society through social institutions. Basic assumptions that underlie these values, structures, and behaviours are seldom challenged. First Nations students in public educational institutions are surrounded daily with pervasive examples of a culture that is not their own.

In order for education for First Nations adults to be meaningful, it must be connected to the cultural, political, social, and economic values and realities of First Nations communities.²

A member of the Liaison Committee spoke of culture being the roots of education, anchoring the people and providing them with nourishment and strength:

It is like a tree. When there is a storm, if the roots are strong, the tree will hold. Recent history has weakened our roots. Our people are now developing a strong roots system, getting back our strength. Education is another way to strengthen our roots. We use our culture to strengthen our roots.

The initial consultation process between the College and the communities is taking place within the context of major historic processes that will shape future relationships between Northwest Community College and First

¹ Cross, B. E. (1995). *The Case for Culturally Coherent Curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, p. 71.

² Wilson, E. & Napoleon, V. (1995). *First a Weaving, Then a Telling....* Victoria: Ministry of Education, p. 7.

Nations communities. The most significant of these processes are treaty negotiations which are developing concurrent with the evolution of aboriginal self-government.

The First Nations that comprise the College region are actively involved in negotiating treaties with the governments of Canada and British Columbia over issues ranging from education to lands management and jurisdiction. Educational initiatives are integral to these negotiations and to self-government. Key issues in education emerge from the same sources as all other self-government issues.

Major Themes and Emerging Issues

Emerging themes and issues discussed in this Summary Report reflect the organization of the Action Plan. The Action Plan details how and when the recommendations will be implemented. Emerging issues are organized within three interrelated themes.

- Building Relationships
- Self-government Initiatives
- Student Support

Building Relationships

Strong relationships between the College and the First Nations communities are vital to developing meaningful partnerships. These relationships must be based on mutual understanding, respect, and trust.

The major issue of the nature of the relationship itself between First Nations people and the College pervades all other issues. Many individuals spoke about their experiences with the College with a high degree of frustration and disappointment. They cited instances of the College acting in a unilateral, paternalistic, and arrogant fashion. Respondents recognized that the College must overcome its previous image and establish a level of trust with First Nations communities. Concomitant with this, the College must avoid the temptation of launching programs and studies prior to establishing working relationships and agreements of understanding between itself and Native communities. Many recommended a movement from *project and product to process and participation*.

One community group spoke of the opportunities facing the College:

The College has a big role as the only post-secondary institution in this area. It should be an initiator and innovator for offering programs relevant to local community needs. There is a great opportunity, if they approach it right, to help us be successful and for the College to be successful too.... I'm not

aware of a specific mandate that targets First Nations people within the College.

First Nations Education Council

First Nations communities throughout the northwest and British Columbia are strongly involved in education. They are developing programs, establishing skills centres, writing proposals, obtaining funding, contracting instructors, and providing educational services for the members of their communities. Education Coordinators, Economic Development Officers, Band Administrators, and other community leaders are pivotal to the processes of communication and coordination. They are well-informed about the individual and collective educational needs of their communities. They provide support for students within the community or in distant places. They are knowledgeable and articulate about post-secondary educational issues and initiatives.

Virtually all First Nations communities in the region are forging partnerships with the post-secondary institutes that are best able to work with them to deliver the programs they need. There was an overriding sense that the timing is right to begin responsible partnerships with the College.

A major recommendation from the Liaison Committee is the formation of a First Nations Education Council that would provide a strong voice from the First Nations communities, recognizing both common goals and unique needs. This Council would be made up of representatives from First Nations communities and supported by Northwest Community College. It would

- ensure that First Nations communities are involved in decision-making;
- set tangible goals and targets based on common threads of interest and concern;
- work toward common goals in education; and
- work with post-secondary institutes to develop, fund, and implement programs to meet common goals of First Nations communities.

Cultural Competence

Although the Action Plan includes a range of strategies that may be employed to better serve the needs of First Nations communities, the focus of future action must be on the nature of the relationship itself. The way in which the College and First Nations communities interact cannot be separated from the level of services and type of programming provided, and ultimately, the level of student support and success.

The single most important finding of this study is that the College needs to examine very closely its internal mechanisms and look at how it can take

steps towards changing ingrained habits and begin working collaboratively with First Nations communities as equal partners, on an ongoing basis.

Conflicts between people and institutions often emerge from a lack of understanding of cultural assumptions about education and about the importance of culture in providing strength to individuals and communities. Culture and education are integral parts of each other. In order to make education meaningful and relevant for First Nations adults, educators and community members must examine culturally-determined assumptions about culture, history, and education.

People must become “culturally competent,” able to understand their own culture and those of others. They must somehow internalize a sensitivity to First Nations culture, the interrelationship of culture and education, and the influence of culture on a person’s identity.

The findings indicate that there is a willingness and a strong desire among all parties to improve the level and quality of services provided to First Nations communities in the region. The physical and fiscal constraints of the College are also clearly recognized. However, the majority of respondents identified the attitudinal barriers and negative perceptions as the greatest barrier to improving relationships with First Nations communities and students in the region.

Mandate for First Nations Education

Incremental changes to programs and service delivery will have no understandable context without a clear mandate for First Nations education within the College. It is difficult, if not impossible, to expect collaboration with a group that feels its role is unclear at best and nullified at worst. Before the College can begin to work through the Action Plan for change, it is critical that it clearly articulates its mandate for First Nations Education. Given an identifiable place in the College structure and operations, the relationship between the College and the communities can evolve and grow and provide a starting point for true collaboration in the future.

Effective Pathways for Communication

Many First Nations community members felt that there has been little significant communication between the communities and the College in the past. This lack of communication ranged from the College having no presence at all within a community to inadequate notification of course cancellations and offerings. Lack of timely information was cited as a both a frustration and a hardship.

To build true partnerships, the College and the communities must develop a network of people involved in First Nations adult education in the region. There must be ways for people to share information about programs and students easily and effectively. The College must support processes that encourage College personnel and First Nations communities to meet, discuss problems, and seek ways to support First Nations students.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on these issues and expanded in the Action Plan include—

- 1) Establish a First Nations Education Council comprised of representatives from First Nations communities in the northwest.
- 2) Increase cultural awareness and sensitivity of College staff and personnel.
- 3) Develop a College-wide mandate for First Nations education.
- 4) Develop effective pathways for communication between the College and the communities.

Self-Government Initiatives

Self-government initiatives and treaty negotiations are dynamic, evolving processes which have significant, long-term impact on the future of communities in British Columbia. A prevalent theme throughout community and committee discussions has been the importance of education for the future of First Nations communities. The great need for trained and educated people is evident in discussions about work to be done in resource management, administration, business, trades, education, and other areas. Education must not only fulfill the needs of the community for training; it must be truly integrated with the present and future realities of First Nations communities: "Future educational planning, goal setting, design, and policy must encompass a strong, living, contemporary understanding of the dreams and aspirations of First Nations [people]."³

Programs and courses that are developed independent of the First Nations communities too often reflect the values and knowledge of western society and ignore or misrepresent the First Nations culture of the students. When this happens, students may leave a program because it fails to acknowledge what is important in their lives and for the future of their communities.

Concurrent with the need for trained and educated people within the communities to meet these challenges is the need for non-aboriginal people

³Wilson, E. & Napoleon, V. *Enhancing Relationships between Schools and First Nations Families*. Victoria: Ministry of Education, p. 26.

to understand the complex issues that surround self-government. It is not necessary for all people to agree about issues of self-government. It is important, however, that people have the opportunity to discuss these issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The College could play a strong role in public education about self-government and treaty negotiations.

Inclusion of First Nations content does not require agreement with all First Nations issues. Rather, the intent is to foster an appreciation of the complexity of the issues and the questions which must be addressed within our province. Land claims and self-government, for instance, will not go away, and we all have the responsibility to understand and develop solutions in our lives and in our communities. What is needed is an acceptance of cultural diversity and difference on the part of our students and instructors.⁴

First Nations people are in the midst of unprecedented and historic change. Turmoil and conflict often occur when people question assumptions and work to redefine education. Discussions between institutions—such as those between the College and aboriginal organizations—often reflect these conflicts. A new vision of education can grow from this conflict when people are willing to listen to each other with respect, even though they may not agree on key issues. People will not grow in their ability to work together and communicate if they ignore or minimize the key issues affecting First Nations education.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on these issues and expanded in the Action Plan include—

- 1) Jointly support, develop, and implement First Nations Studies programs about the cultures of the Northwest.
- 2) Create and support ways to incorporate First Nations culture within the College.

Student Support

In the context of First Nations learners, student support must go well beyond providing information and opportunity. In order to attract and keep First Nations students, the College must integrate its programs with the needs of the communities it serves and reflect the values and cultures of the First Nations of the Northwest. The College must become relevant to the needs of First Nations individuals and communities.

⁴ Northwest Community College, Locally Initiated Curriculum Project Proposal, 1994: *Incorporating First Nations Studies: A Proposal for the Forest Technology Program.*

To build true partnerships, the College and the communities must develop a network of people involved in First Nations adult education in the region. There must be ways for people to share information about programs and students easily and effectively. The College must support processes that encourage College personnel and First Nations communities to meet, discuss problems, and seek ways to support First Nations students.

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Concurrent with the need for trained and educated people within the communities to meet these challenges is the need for non-aboriginal people

³Wilson, E. & Napoleon, V. *Enhancing Relationships between Schools and First Nations Families*. Victoria: Ministry of Education, p. 26.

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⁴ Northwest Community College, Locally Initiated Curriculum Project Proposal, 1994: *Incorporating First Nations Studies: A Proposal for the Forest Technology Program.*

Supporting Students

Personnel and staff within College centres should recognize the many transitions that First Nations students make when they enroll in post-secondary programs. A number of students may come from modified school programs that do not prepare them for post-secondary education. Their experiences within the K-12 school program may have minimized their potential and contributions. Many students are adults who have been away from school for some time and may lack the self-confidence needed to embark on College programs.

First Nations communities have support systems in place for students which include strong community and kinship ties. There is, however, a need for the College to provide additional support and to develop a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere. Support can take a number of forms, including

- providing opportunities for student recognition;
- supporting First Nations study groups, student associations, and informal networks;
- integrating First Nations issues and culture into a range of curriculum areas and programs for all students;
- providing trained student counsellors;
- establishing mentorships and hiring First Nations instructors who will act as role models.

Additional recommendations are included in the Action Plan.

Community and Family Ties

Testimony from First Nations people within the communities is strongly supported by research. Both provide overwhelming evidence that families and communities must be fully involved in initiatives for First Nations education. In the United States, a number of Tribal Colleges have been established to meet the needs of adult Native students. Research on the effects of these Colleges supports the views of community leaders in the Northwest Community College region: "... if Native students were to be well served, Colleges needed to be integral parts of their communities—geographically, culturally, socially, economically, and organizationally."⁵

In discussing the Action Plan, the Liaison Committee grappled with the question of how First Nations kinship ties and House support can be effectively translated into the College environment. Recognizing these community supports is the first step in this process. Many people spoke of the

⁵Houser, Schulyler, *Underfunded Miracles: Tribal Colleges*, Dept. of Education, Washington, D.C. 1991

roots of their culture and the ties they have to their community, as did this person:

We have nine traditional chiefs in our community, and strong values that are associated with the land. ...My culture is what has made me what I am. I had to live a certain way because I was carrying a name, and with that name came responsibility.

Family and student orientation is a means of reinforcing and acknowledging the important socio-political structures in First Nations communities. Additional actions focus on holistic approaches to education, including providing opportunities for cooperative learning and co-teaching, as well as integrating First Nations culture into the curriculum in ways that challenge western worldviews and provide understanding for First Nations culture and customs.

According to Houser (1991), much of the strength of viable systems of post-secondary education for First Nations students is based on developing ongoing and personal relationships with students, their immediate families, and their communities. These institutions provide opportunities for inclusion of community in culturally relevant ways, including ceremonial occasions to honour the families of students and recognizing the contributions and values of Elders.

Curriculum and Program Development

Attracting and retaining First Nations students goes well beyond the principles and practices of the College operations. Curriculum development is also key. In times of dramatic social and political change, curriculum must incorporate the turbulence of the times to be considered relevant and to avoid negating the importance of these issues.

This is supported by Cajetes' (1994) discussion of community centred curricula which is integrally connected to the social problems and processes of the times.

First Nations communities are experiencing accelerated change. Educational programs must be flexible and responsive to the needs of these communities. Policies and procedures should enable quick response to proposals from the communities. First Nations respondents identified a number of key educational and training areas, including

- Resources Management
- Public Administration
- Business Management

- Technical and Trades
- Clerical Skills
- Human Services
- Conflict Negotiation and Resolution
- Political Science

Joint planning should ensure that educational goals of the communities can be met. Courses and programs should integrate First Nations issues and culture, and recognize and reflect the realities of First Nations communities. One person summed up educational needs this way:

There are many shifts in the resource industries, and with land claims and treaty negotiations, these will all translate into future training needs. There are two groups, high school and adult learners, seeking upgrading and college prep. There is a lot of need in the natural resources sector to train our people in restoration, conservation, and stewardship of the forestry and fishery resources. Tourism will also be tied into this. People will need skills in both technical areas and management, including public administration.

Quality Education

Educational systems at all levels have a history of failing to meet the needs of First Nations students. A number of studies have examined issues of the quality of education for First Nations students (Smith & Pace, 1988; Atleo, 1991; Houser, 1991; Wilson & Napoleon, 1995). Respondents frequently spoke of the low expectations the public school system held for First Nations students and the fact that many leave school without the qualifications needed for post-secondary study. Significant inequities are apparent in a system that sees so many First Nations students complete 13 years of public schooling only to enroll for several years in up-grading programs.

Houser (1991) discusses this issue in his article about Tribal Colleges, and offers recommendations: "Weakening requirements for students, by bending standards or making unwarranted exceptions, weakens the institutions as well. Instead, tribal colleges work to help students acquire whatever skills they need to succeed. If the colleges allowed students to continue with impaired skills or diluted education, those students would only continue to face the limited choices—employment, careers, and further education—with which they are already familiar." One respondent summed up the opinions of many:

The instructor's attitude is what is important. If instructors have high standards but low expectations for Native students this creates resentment.

Ensuring quality education and high expectations are universal aims of the First Nations communities of the region. Much can be accomplished toward these goals with increased mentorship opportunities and more individualized and sensitive college entrance and assessment procedures, along with strong partnerships in program development.

Definitions of Success

No discussion of First Nations education would be complete without also considering the cultural assumptions that determine concepts of success that permeate all institutes of higher learning. Post-secondary institutions serve a number of students with very different learning goals and timelines for achieving their goals. First Nations community members and students indicated a strong desire for programs that provide credit for future work, but that also provide relevant, viable education to meet personal and community goals.

The College should work with representatives of First Nations communities to develop and deliver flexible programs that meet the goals of the students. Curriculum, assessment, and evaluation should be strongly linked to the personal and community goals of First Nations students.

Transitions and Bridging

In order for First Nations students to access the College, more coordination is required between the K-12 education system and the post-secondary institutions. Students need to understand the available possibilities and opportunities in order to make considered choices. First Nations respondents confirmed that their children's opportunities were being adversely affected by such practices as placement in modified and upgrading programs. First Nations communities across the College region are looking for ways to redress these and other inequities.

There are mixed views within the College in terms of how this situation can improve. One respondent, referring to the many Adult Basic Education programs for First Nations young adults, indicated:

The College has a whole industry in building programs around *getting ready*, when maybe it would be more advantageous for people to prepare themselves. It is in fact central to the process of empowerment.

Facilities and Space

First Nations students need to feel that they are a part of the College. Feelings of displacement and exclusion can occur when students are separated from their communities and support networks. Providing space for First Nations students to get to know each other and contribute to the College environment is seen as critical.

Establishing space for First Nations students, including a First Nations Resource Centre, within each region of the College would not only provide First Nations student support, but also assist in increasing cross-cultural understanding.

The provision of facilities and resources has to go beyond the campus boundaries in order for First Nations students to utilize available community resources:

We must look at the burdens of the personal lives of students—looking at day care, housing, and different strategies for alleviating problems.

Student advisors and counselors also have a critical role to play in providing timely information and exploring students' goals within the context of their communities. The responsibilities of student advisors should go well beyond distributing college calendars and course descriptions:

The advisors should be probing deeper, asking perspective students what they really want to do, where they want to live, and if they can get the support of their Band to support them in reaching their goals. Information should be provided regarding transportation and housing, and should be detailed.

A First Nations Student Handbook could be one vehicle for providing information regarding local community resources and acknowledging traditional support systems.

Recommendations based on these issues and expanded in the Action Plan include—

- 1) Recognize the importance of family and community bonds and support.
- 2) Address issues of education, curriculum, and program development in a long-term systematic way.
- 3) Ensure that education for First Nations students is of high quality, with high expectations.
- 4) Include holistic approaches to education within structures and policies relating to First Nations education.
- 5) Listen to students with respect and understanding.

- 6) Include in student support programs processes that help non-aboriginal students gain understanding of First Nations students.
- 7) Provide sufficient and appropriate space and facilities.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations in this summary report emerge from the dialogues within the communities and meetings with the Liaison Committee. They are supported by current research literature in the field of education for First Nations adults. These recommendations form the basis of the Action Plan.

- 1) Establish a First Nations Education Council comprised of representatives from First Nations communities in the Northwest.
- 2) Increase cultural awareness and sensitivity of College staff and personnel.
- 3) Jointly develop a mandate for First Nations education.
- 4) Develop effective pathways for communication between the College and the communities.
- 5) Jointly support, develop, and implement First Nations Studies programs about the cultures of the Northwest.
- 6) Create and support ways to incorporate First Nations culture within the College.
- 7) Provide sufficient and appropriate space and facilities.
- 8) Address issues of education, curriculum, and program development in a long-term systematic way.
- 9) Include holistic approaches to education within structures and policies relating to First Nations education.
- 10) Listen to students with respect and understanding.
- 11) Recognize the importance of family and community bonds and support.
- 12) Ensure that education for First Nations students is of high quality, with high expectations.
- 13) Include in student support programs processes that help non-aboriginal students gain understanding of First Nations students.

Appendices

**Appendix 1: First Nations within the Northwest Community College
Region**

Appendix 2: Project Participants

Appendix 3: Equity/Aboriginal Services Liaison Committee Members

Appendix 4: Sample Interview and Small Group Discussion Questions

Appendix 5: Related Research

Appendix 6: Selected Bibliography

Appendix 1: First Nations within the Northwest Community College Region

Tribal Council/First Nation	Member Bands
Gitksan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gitanyow 2. Gitanmaax 3. Gitseguekla 4. Gitwangak 5. Sik-E-Dak 6. Kispiox 7. Nee-Tahi-Buhn
Wet'suwet'en	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Hagwilget 9. Moricetown
Tsimshian	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Hartley Bay 11. Kitasoo 12. Kitkatla 13. Kitselas 14. Kitsumkalum 15. Metlakatla 16. Lax Kw'alaams
Haisla	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Kitamaat Village
Lake Babine	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Nat'oot'en (Babine Lake)
Nisga'a	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Gitlakdamix 20. Gitwinksihlkw 21. Lakalzap 22. Kincolith
Haida	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Old Massett Village 24. Skidegate

Appendix 2: Project Participants

This summary report and action plan emerged from the significant involvement of many people in northwestern B. C. communities. We would like to acknowledge, with gratitude, the contributions of the following people who took part in either the community discussions or the Liaison Committee:

Smithers

Ross Hoffman, Northwest Community College
Sheila Peters, Northwest Community College

Moricetown

Lucy Gagnon, formerly Kyah Wiget Education Society
Darlene Glaim, Assistant Negotiator, Social Issues
Sandra Martin, Kyah Wiget Education Society
Ruby Williams, Kyah Wiget Education Society

Hazelton

Bev Clifton, Northwest Community College and Gitxan Treaty Office
Pat Egan, Northwest Community College
Kate Greenall, Northwest Community College
Leah Marshalls, Northwest Community College
Anne Yunkws, consultant
Elmer Derrick, Gitksan Treaty Office
Ray Jones, Gitksan Treaty Office
Anne Howard, Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Economic Development
Harry Cummins, ABE Class
Allison Davis, ABE Class
Fred Johansen, ABE Class
Cheryl Leslie, ABE Class
Gwendolyn Grace Max, ABE Class
Melanie McCarthy, ABE Class
Esther McLean, ABE Class
Floyd Moore, ABE Class
Loretta Ruth Pierre, ABE Class
Tammy Wells, ABE Class

Gitwangak

Debbie Bright, Gitwangak Education Society
Chester Williams, Gitwangak Education Society
Darlene Williams, Gitwangak Education Society
Glen Williams, Gitwangak Education Society
Amanda Zettergreen, Gitwangak Education Society
Frank Daniels, Sawmill Workers' Retraining Program

Elliot Duncan, Sawmill Workers' Retraining Program
Sarah Elsworth, Sawmill Workers' Retraining Program
Dorothy Joseph, Sawmill Workers' Retraining Program
Nancy Morgan, Sawmill Workers' Retraining Program

Terrace

Shirley Bolen, Kitsumkalum Band Office
Laura Miller, Kitsumkalum Band Office
Tom Weegar, Kitsumkalum Band Office
Doug Baker, Northwest Community College
John Hart, Northwest Community College
Michael Hill, Northwest Community College
Norma Kerby, Northwest Community College
Larisa Tarwick, Northwest Community College

Kitamaat

Nancy Nyce, Kitamaat Village
Louisa Smith, Kitamaat Village

Nass Valley

Linda Adams, Nisga'a House of Learning
Laura Welde, Gitlakdamix
Darlene Stephens, Lax Galts'ap Village Government
William Azak, Gitwinksihlkw Band Council

Prince Rupert

Margaret Anderson, University of Northern British Columbia
Cliff Fregin, TRICORP
Dorothy Grant, North Coast Tribal Council
Pat Kucey, Northwest Community College

Lax Kwa'laams

Brenda Wesley (Bryant)

Haida Gwaii

Diane Brown, Skidegate Education Council
Gladys Gladstone, Skidegate Education Council
Pearl Pearson, Skidegate Education Council
Gail Russ, Skidegate Education Council
Joanne Yovaanovich, Skidegate Education Council
Heather Dudoward, Skidegate
Hope Setso, Old Massett Village
Sharon Matthews, Northwest Community College, Masset

Appendix 3: Liaison Committee Members

The following people attended one or more of the Liaison Committee meetings and provided strong direction and guidance in the development of the Action Plan:

Margaret Anderson, University of Northern British Columbia

Doug Baker, Northwest Community College, Terrace

Bev Clifton, Gitx̱san Treaty Office

Elmer Derrick, Gitx̱san Treaty Office

Kate Greenall, Northwest Community College, Hazelton and Stewart

John Hart, Northwest Community College, Terrace

Michael Hill, Northwest Community College, Terrace

Ross Hoffman, Northwest Community College, Smithers

Norma Kerby, Northwest Community College, Terrace

Pat Kucey, Northwest Community College, Prince Rupert

Sandra Martin, Kyah Wiget Education Society, Moricetown

Sharon Matthews, Northwest Community College, Masset

Sheila Peters, Northwest Community College, Smithers

Louisa Smith, Kitamaat Village Council

Darlene Stevens, Laxgalts'ap Village Government

Larisa Tarwick, Northwest Community College, Terrace

Tom Weegar, Kitsumkalum Band Office

Chester Williams, Gitwangak Education Society

Anne Yunkws, Hazelton

Appendix 4: Sample Interview and Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What has been your experience with Northwest Community College?
2. When you first became involved with Northwest Community College, what were your expectations?
3. What role does Northwest Community College currently play in your community?
4. How can Northwest Community College support, acknowledge, and respect your culture in its education services, programs, and delivery methods?
5. How can Northwest Community College support you and others in your community as you make life and career choices?
6. What role would you like Northwest Community College to play?
7. What is preventing Northwest Community College from fulfilling your vision of what it could be?
8. In what specific areas should Northwest Community College concentrate its efforts to change?
9. If you could recommend three changes to Northwest Community College programming and delivery, what would they be?
10. Do you have suggestions/ideas for how the Liaison Committee established by the College could best implement changes?
11. Do you have any questions you would like to ask? Anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix 5: Related Research

The following research and studies provide additional information about the field of aboriginal education.

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Appendix 6: Selected Bibliography

The following books would be useful for those who wish to learn more about First Nations issues and First Nations education.

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Stepping Stones to Improved Relationships: Aboriginal Equity and Northwest Community College Action Plan

Introduction to the Action Plan

The following material reflects the many discussions that took place with First Nations peoples and Northwest Community College representatives over the course of this project. As well, the proposed actions were directed by the Liaison Committee. The literature on adult education further reinforces the themes that emerged as critical to First Nations education in northwestern B.C.

Although many ideas for change are evident in the Action Plan, it is by no means an exhaustive list. However, it does include the most pressing issues in education on the minds of First Nations communities in northwest B.C. Our discussions and the Liaison Committee input confirm that the following changes are paramount to changing the relationship between the communities and the college. These proposed changes set the ground work for improved relationships that will provide a nurturing, supportive environment for First Nations education, addressing the communities' need to be heard, acknowledged, and respected as equals in the college education system.

- Establish a Northwest First Nations Education Council
- Jointly Develop a College -wide mandate statement about First Nations education
- Maintain ongoing contact with First Nations Education Counselors
- Hire First Nations Education coordinators to maintain ongoing contact with the communities
- Hire First Nations Student Advisors
- Develop a staff handbook on First Nations of the Northwest and a First Nations Student handbook

Further, it is imperative the College begin implementation of the Action Plan. The consultants' recommendation is that the Action Plan be adopted by the College Board as a memorandum of understanding between the College and the Communities regarding improved relationships between First Nations communities and the College.

There are three main themes under which all Goals/Objectives/Actions are listed. These are:

- Relationships between the College and the communities: understanding and addressing conflicting expectations
- Self-government initiatives and treaty negotiations
- Student support

The goals indicate directions for change, the objectives the reasons for the proposed change, and the actions begin to describe what can be done to achieve change. The measures of success indicate what the future of First Nations education at Northwest Community College might look like over the next five years. The timelines suggested are meant to be realistic horizons for achieving change. The timelines range from actions to be completed within one year to those to be completed within five years, by the year 2000. These are relatively tight timelines, due to the urgency of many of the recommendations.

This Action Plan accompanies the summary report of the consultation process which took place between February and mid May, 1995.

Relationship between the college and the communities; understanding and addressing conflicting expectations

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timeline	Measures of success
I. Establish a Northwest First Nations Education Council	<p>a) ensure that First Nations communities are involved in decision-making</p> <p>b) identify and work toward common goals in education</p> <p>c) work with post-secondary institutes to develop, fund, and implement programs to meet common goals of First Nations communities</p> <p>d) set tangible goals and targets based on common threads of interest and concern</p>	<p>1. continue liaison committee as the work group to establish the Council</p> <p>2. draft terms of reference for the council</p> <p>3. select Council representatives</p> <p>4. set date for inaugural meeting of Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations communities • First Nations Education Council • College Board 	within 1 year	<p>mandated through college board, controlled by First Nations</p> <p>representing the diversity of First Nations education interests in the region</p> <p>a roadway that can be traveled in both directions</p>
II. Increase cultural awareness and sensitivity of college staff and personnel	<p>e) establish and provide support for college personnel to gain cultural understanding</p> <p>f) establish and support formal and informal networks among college personnel, community members, parents, and students</p>	<p>5. provide public cultural competence workshops</p> <p>6. provide seminars about First Nations issues</p> <p>7. jointly sponsor open forums and conferences</p> <p>8. develop a college-wide mandate statement about First Nations education</p> <p>9. provide orientation and cultural competence workshops to new teachers, staff, and administrators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • Unions (put into Collective Agreements) 	within 3 years	<p>mandatory and continuous staff orientation to First Nations cultures involving elders</p> <p>cultural competence levels established for all staff</p> <p>increased contact between the college and communities</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timeline	Measures of success
III. Develop effective pathways for communication between the college and the communities	<p>g) encourage a well-developed network of people involved in First Nations education in the region</p> <p>h) increase knowledge of First Nations attendance and factors in student success</p> <p>i) ensure cultural protocol is respected and followed</p> <p>j) develop policies re: new program development and opportunities for joint collaboration</p> <p>k) provide resources and support for college personnel and members of First Nations communities to meet, discuss problems, and seek ways to support First Nations students</p>	<p>10. schedule regular joint meetings about issues in education</p> <p>11. provide timely written communication about college events and policies affecting First Nations students</p> <p>12. maintain ongoing contact with community Education coordinators</p> <p>13. hire First Nations education coordinators to maintain ongoing communication with the communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northwest Community College First Nations communities 	within 3 years	<p>regional First Nations education coordinators</p> <p>coordinators to have a high profile in the communities and be readily accessible: possibly housed outside of the college</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timeline	Measures of success
IV. Develop programs in partnership with First Nations communities	<p>l) work cooperatively for joint benefit, sharing resources</p> <p>m) develop service models that are responsive to the unique needs and opportunities of individual communities</p> <p>n) acknowledge and support community developed programs</p>	<p>14. establish processes to deliver locally-developed programs and curriculum in a timely manner that meets the needs of the communities</p> <p>15. implement appropriate service models as determined by the communities</p> <p>16. deliver on new models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northwest Community College First Nations Education Council Provincial Government 	within 5 years	<p>policy re: building in respect for First Nations kinship, family, and community roles and responsibilities</p> <p>cooperative development of programs ensuring First Nations voice</p>
V. Review/assess past relationships between Northwest Community College and the communities	<p>o) improve future relationships and avoid repeating mistakes</p> <p>p) implement recommendations that facilitate better relationships between the college and the communities</p> <p>q) create and implement processes to deal with cultural insensitivity of college staff around First Nations issues</p> <p>r) create and implement ways to publicly acknowledge and recognize the significance of First Nations</p>	<p>17. develop a memorandum of understanding between the Council and the College re: foundations for future relationships (trust, understanding, respect, equality, control)</p> <p>18. establish staff selection and review practices that reflect First Nations cultural awareness</p> <p>19. change personnel policies to explicitly articulate and respect the cross-cultural learning environment</p> <p>20. target resources (funding and staff) towards supporting the identified needs of First Nations communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northwest Community College Unions College Board Group established in each campus 	within 3 years	<p>performance guarantees to ensure First Nations students have the same level of success as non-First Nations students</p> <p>First Nations territories to be recognized in College calendar</p> <p>orientation and welcoming of students to reflect First Nations culture</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timeline	Measures of success
VI. Review hiring practices and policies	s) reflect a mandate for First Nations education in the region t) recognize expertise and experience of First Nations people in co-teaching situations and provide parity	21. hire more First Nations teachers, staff, and administrators 22. review and amend policies about cultural leave for personnel and students 23. develop and adopt a statement of employment equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • Unions • College Board • First Nations Education Council 	within 5 years	policies re: cultural leave in collective agreements co-teaching of courses utilizing community expertise registry of First Nations community expertise

Self-government initiatives and treaty negotiations

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of success
I. Jointly support, develop, and implement First Nations Studies programs about the cultures of the Northwest	a) represent the contributions of First Nations people throughout the history of the region, the province, and the country	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. establish processes and provide support for involving Elders and community members in a meaningful way as resources about First Nations history in the Northwest 2. jointly sponsor processes about treaty negotiations and self-government issues, with First Nations facilitators 3. develop curriculum that reflects and respects the diversity of the First Nations culture in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations communities 	within 5 years	jointly developed programs processes in place that facilitate an ongoing dialogue and ongoing communication guidelines for open discussion in place

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	measures of success
II. Create and support ways to incorporate First Nations culture within the college	<p>b) encourage heightened awareness and understanding of First Nations culture within the College</p> <p>c) provide visible and timely representations of First Nations Culture</p> <p>d) establish ways to understand and appreciate the living culture within the communities</p>	<p>4. display First Nations art and utilize calendars and other college promotional material as an opportunity to display and explain the history of the Nations in Northwestern B.C.</p> <p>5. ensure college calendars recognize and highlight First Nations special events, celebrations and important days in history</p> <p>6. utilize the First Nations of the Northwest modules</p> <p>7. provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to travel to communities to listen to and understand local issues and opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations communities 	within 1 year	<p>promotion of First Nations education within the college calendar</p> <p>First Nations resource centre in place with current material</p> <p>regular seminars on art and history of First Nations people, involving elders</p> <p>visible representations of First Nations culture in all campuses, including artworks and flags</p>

Student support

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
I. Improve student support services	a) provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for First Nations students b) profile the support services available to First Nations students c) provide opportunities for student support and recognition	1. hire First Nations student advisors 2. develop and implement ways to provide support for students coming from distant communities 3. develop a First Nations student handbook 4. encourage and endorse First Nations student organized events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations Education Council 	within 1 year	question of quotas for First Nations priority access to education to be resolved at First Nations Council Level First Nations student-initiated events First Nations student resource handbook developed

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
II. Provide sufficient and appropriate space and facilities	d) support First Nations study groups, student associations, and additional informal student networks and support groups e) increase participation rates and involvement in the College	5. designate a student lounge for First Nations students to get together, relax, socialize, and have access to support services 6. review and assess space and facilities requirements in all college centres 7. review and assess space requirements beyond academic and training programs, including counseling centres and recreational facilities 8. include a First Nations representative from the education council, on the facilities committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • College Board • Facilities Committee 	within 5 years	First Nations resource centres in each region, controlled by First Nations but with resources to share with non-natives

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
<p>III. Provide support for bridging and transitions</p>	<p>f) provide opportunities for empowerment</p> <p>g) recognize transitions facing First Nations Students</p> <p>h) acknowledge socioeconomic realities of the communities</p>	<p>9. establish role-modeling and mentorship programs jointly with the communities</p> <p>10. sponsor a student convention or conference involving high school and college students to find out what students want</p> <p>11. provide tutorials in study skills and organization, as needed</p> <p>12. work collaboratively to eliminate school-related problems that might cause students to withdraw from a program</p> <p>13. utilize First Nations speakers at job opportunity fairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations communities 	<p>within 5 years</p>	<p>regional coordinators hired</p> <p>family orientation to College</p> <p>First Nations advisors hired</p> <p>jointly developed mandate statement for each community identifying the role of the college</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
IV. Address issues of education, curriculum, and program development in a long-term, systematic way	<p>i) ensure that planning can take place and that educational goals of the communities can be met</p> <p>j) integrate First Nations issues and culture into a range of curriculum areas and programs for all students</p> <p>k) recognize that First Nations communities are experiencing rapid and significant change; programs must be flexible and responsive to emerging needs</p> <p>l) develop policy and procedures to ensure quick response to training and education proposals from First Nations communities</p>	<p>14. develop and implement a long-term community action plan</p> <p>15. regularly monitor and review the plan and make changes in response to changing needs</p> <p>16. develop long-term programming priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations communities • First Nations Education Council • College Education Council 	within 5 years	<p>changes to curriculum that honour and respect First Nations world views</p> <p>integration of First Nations perspectives in curriculum</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
V. Include holistic approaches to education within structures and policies relating to First Nations education	<p>m) ensure that programs support students' links to community and personal needs</p> <p>n) develop curriculum and programs that recognize and reflect realities of Northwest communities</p>	<p>17. integrate curriculum areas and disciplines</p> <p>18. develop and incorporate self-assessment and community assessment processes into program development</p> <p>19. provide for a range of representations of knowledge and competence in assessment and evaluation</p> <p>20. utilize current First Nations processes as field research opportunities (i.e. treaty negotiations)</p>	<p>Northwest Community College</p> <p>First Nations communities</p> <p>First Nations Education Council</p>	within 5 years	<p>depth of integration of First Nations culture and knowledge and worldview within the College</p> <p>increased understanding and appreciation of meaning behind First Nations culture</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
VI. Listen to students with respect and understanding	<p>o) increase cross-cultural awareness and understanding</p> <p>p) provide opportunities for student feedback and follow-up</p> <p>q) create a positive environment for learning</p> <p>r) establish the value and importance of treating First Nations students with respect within the college through policies, procedures, and support systems</p> <p>s) provide ongoing, viable opportunities and processes for First Nations students to give their opinions and recommendations to the college about issues such as racism, absenteeism, etc.</p>	<p>21. provide ongoing workshops and seminars in cultural awareness, cross-cultural issues, and cultural competence for college personnel</p> <p>22. provide trained student counselors</p> <p>23. develop peer support groups for First Nations students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations Education Council • Unions • First Nations communities 	within 3 years	<p>incorporated into standard evaluations</p> <p>increased partnerships and linkages with First Nations communities</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
VII. Recognize the importance of family and community bonds and support	<p>t) acknowledge and respect the connections students have to their communities</p> <p>u) increase student success levels by utilizing community resources</p> <p>v) acknowledge, through programs, structures, and policies that learning is a life-long process, from birth to death</p> <p>w) establish links between the college and the community within current student success programs</p>	<p>24. communicate on an ongoing basis with education coordinators</p> <p>25. provide opportunities for college personnel to visit students' home communities</p> <p>26. develop opportunities for students to obtain 1st and 2nd year transferable credits in their home communities</p> <p>27. provide forums for students to visit and learn from each other's communities</p> <p>28. provide opportunities for students to partner with people within their communities in cooperative learning situations</p> <p>29. develop community economic initiatives jointly with communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations Communities 	within 5 years	<p>increased community-based learning opportunities</p> <p>increased cross-cultural learning opportunities</p> <p>regular information-sharing between the college and the communities</p>

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Responsibilities	Timelines	Measures of Success
VIII. Ensure that education for First Nations students is of high quality, with high expectations	<p>x) gain mutual understanding of the educational and training needs of First Nations people</p> <p>y) develop clear articulated expectations for all students</p> <p>z) work cooperatively with employers and all educational institutions – including school districts and other post-secondary institutions – to increase quality and expectations for First Nations education in the northwest</p>	<p>30. develop partnerships among college and school districts to share information and collaborate</p> <p>31. student evaluation forms of programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations communities • First Nations Education Council • School Districts • Employers 	within 3 years	<p>ongoing dialogue between all organizations</p> <p>barriers to First Nations education identified and reduced</p> <p>parity for First Nations students</p>
IX. Include in student support programs processes that help non-aboriginal students gain understanding of First Nations students	<p>aa) increase awareness and understanding of First Nations community issues, history, culture</p> <p>bb) encourage field studies and participation in cross cultural exchanges including local community events</p>	<p>32. joint workshops</p> <p>33. additional First Nations instructors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Community College • First Nations communities • First Nations Education Council 	within 3 years	<p>increased number of First Nations instructors</p> <p>joint workshops</p>