

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY: ABORIGINAL INITIATIVES
Summary for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Roundtable
May 24, 2007, University of Winnipeg

Simon Fraser University is located in the heart of the traditional territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Sto:lo First Nations, and is proximate to a significant population of urban Aboriginals. SFU Kamloops is located in the heart of traditional Shuswap territory and serves over 40 Interior Salish Nations.

FOUNDATIONAL COMMITMENTS

President's First Nations Advisory Committee

Comprised of volunteer representatives from First Nations communities and co-chaired by the Vice-President, Academic, the Advisory Council provides strategic advice to the University on services, programs, and protocol which the Council believes will help increase aboriginal student access and academic success.

First Nations Guiding Principles

Established in 2003 and approved by the University Senate, these seven guiding principles set out an action plan for how the University can better serve First Nations students and communities.

First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan

In February 2007 Simon Fraser University's Senate and Board of Governors approved a First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan that seeks to transform the approach to academic programming, community engagement, student support, and research for First Nations. The Strategic Plan provides the foundation to develop a new language of engagement with First Nations peoples and communities that will a) increase the access, retention and completion rates of Aboriginal learners, b) increase culturally-relevant programming for Aboriginal learners, and c) strengthen partnerships and collaborations with Aboriginal communities. The vision begins with the establishment of a new Office for First Nations which will serve as the coordinating umbrella for First Nations activities across the University, drawing together researchers, educators, students, elders, First Nations communities and non-Aboriginal members of the university.

Vice-President, Academic's Three-Year Plan for 2007-2010

One of seven institutional priorities is "to support and pursue opportunities to provide educational opportunities for First Nations".

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Partnerships

For more than 17 years, Simon Fraser University has partnered with First Nations communities to provide post-secondary academic programming both on and off reserve. One of SFU's key Aboriginal partnerships has been in Kamloops, initially with the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, and over the past two years with the Kamloops Indian Band. Approximately 337 students have graduated from SFU Kamloops, the

vast majority of them working in Aboriginal communities today. Highlights of this partnership include:

- Certificates in First Nations Language Proficiency in Secwepemctisn, ST'at'imcets, Tsilhq'ot'in, Halq'emeylem, Hizaq'la, Nuxalk and Xaad Kil Nations.
- Joint development of a First Nations Archeological Field School.
- Baccalaureate degrees, certificates and post baccalaureate diploma programs in Anthropology, Archaeology, First Nations Studies, Linguistics and Sociology.

Partnerships have also been developed to provide teacher training programs in Kamloops, Alert Bay, Prince Rupert, Whitehorse, Salmon Arm, Mount Currie Indian Band, and Nisga'a Wilp Wilxo'skw'hl. Highlights include:

- A graduate diploma for teachers, special education assistants and First Nations support workers to develop skills from a culturally relevant perspective to increase the capacity of First Nations students to succeed in school.
- A two year developmental standards term certificate in Halq'emeylem Language developed in partnership with Sto:lo elders and the BC College of Teachers.
- A culturally based two year First Nations Masters of Education (cohort) in Chilliwack BC developed in cooperation with local bands in Sto:lo Nation.
- A partnership with 3 First Nations communities, (Sto:lo, Haida Gwaii, and Tsimshian) to explore how to engage Aboriginal students in the public school system to increase the success of Aboriginal learners.

SFU has also been successful in creating partnerships with BC Aboriginal post-secondary institutions and with First Nations-controlled organizations such as the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), the Chief Dan George Center for Advanced Education and the Native Indian Brotherhood of BC. Highlights include:

- SFU Continuing Studies' joint offering of an Aboriginal Community Economic Development Diploma located on NVIT campus.
- SFU's partnership with the Chief Dan George Centre to deliver a joint initiative on an Aboriginal Tourism, Ecotourism and Small Business Certificate.

Partnership agreements and activities targeted to increase the recruitment and access of Aboriginal learners have been developed through initiatives like the "Strengthening Connections" pilot project recently funded by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education. Through the program, SFU's First Nations Student Center worked collaboratively with various post-secondary institutions (UBC, UNBC, NVIT, VCC, UVIC and Camosun College) linking Aboriginal communities with post-secondary educational opportunities. This was the first provincial initiative focused on Aboriginal student recruitment in BC. Other examples of successful collaborations with the SFU First Nations Students Center include:

- Panel presentations, workshops and conferences both on and off-campus with Aboriginal communities.
- Partnerships with Aboriginal organizations such as Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Center Society, Redway Magazine, and the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS).

Special Advisor to the Vice-President, Academic on Aboriginal Affairs

Dr. Lisa Sterling was appointed in 2004 to this newly created senior leadership position.

Recruitment and Retention

Working from a base of 448 First Nations students at SFU in 2005/2006, the goal is to increase First Nations undergraduate enrollment by 50% and First Nations graduate enrollment by 25% by the year 2012.

First Nations Student Centre

With a staff complement of 3.5 including a Director, a full-time position dedicated to First Nations student recruitment, a First Nations student life coordinator, and a half-time administrative assistant, the First Nations Student Centre has been effective in creating a framework for First Nations student support, maintaining connections to First Nations communities, working in partnership with the First Nations Student Association, and honoring First Nations students through events such as the First Nations graduation ceremony.

Programs

First Nations Studies is a well-developed area of First Nations activities within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Simon Fraser University. To ensure the continued success of the First Nations Studies program, the Vice President, Academic has recently committed to the creation of three new faculty positions.

Continuing Studies offers a Bachelor of General Studies for First Nations peoples, an Aboriginal Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and an Integrated Studies Program with an Aboriginal leadership and administrative focus. A new programming initiative aimed at increasing Aboriginal students' successful transition from high school into post-secondary education (The Aboriginal Transition Preparatory Program through the new SFU Surrey campus) is currently under development and funded jointly by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and SFU.

SFU's Faculty of Education has engaged in First Nations academic programming for the past 35 years, through well-established community-based and campus-based professional and field programs, and through a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses in Aboriginal education. The Faculty of Education's Professional Programs include a development standard term certificate in First Nations Language and Culture, the Indigenous People's Teacher Education Module, the Aboriginal Focus Teacher Education Module, the North West Teacher Education Consortium and the Kamloops Indigenous Teachers Education Module.

A variety of other First Nations-related courses have been developed in other academic units such as Criminology, History and the Centre for Community Economic Development. The newly established Faculty of Health Sciences at SFU is in the early stages of its overall academic program development but has identified First Nations health as one of its priorities and has invested in a new Aboriginal health faculty position.

First Nations Faculty

Augmenting our small group of five First Nations current faculty members, three new positions have recently been created and funded in addition to the new one identified in Health Sciences.

Research

Simon Fraser University has committed two Canada Research Chairs to First Nations issues: Dr. Mary Ellen Kelm as Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples of North America and Dr. John Welch as Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Heritage Stewardship. First Nations research activities are prominent in the Departments of Sociology and Anthropology, Archaeology, First Nations Studies, and Education.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO BETTER

The First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan builds on SFU's foundation of First Nations programming, history of engagement, collaboration and partnership with First Nations peoples and communities and the established excellence of First Nations research. The vision also responds to our deficiencies. We do not have First Nations culturally relevant programming across the University. We have not been as successful in attracting First Nations students, faculty or staff as we could have been.

Arising from the Strategic Plan is a First Nations Five Year Action Plan (2007–2012) that will form the operational strategy of the new Office for First Nations. Goals have been identified in eight areas:

1. Academic Program Development
2. Research Development
3. Student Recruitment, Support and Retention
4. Liaison and Outreach to First Nations peoples and Communities
5. International Engagement and Global Development
6. Indigenous Knowledge and Resource Development
7. Infrastructure and Facilities Development
8. Integration and Leadership Development