



May 2007

**The University of Alberta
Aboriginal Initiatives**

The University of Alberta Aboriginal Initiatives

We Value:

***Pride in our history and traditions, including contributions from Aboriginal people and other groups, that enriches and distinguishes the University.
(Dare to Discover: A Vision for a Great University, 2006)***

The University of Alberta is committed to the recruitment, retention and graduation of Aboriginal students. The University also recognizes that Aboriginal applicants have traditionally been under represented in higher education, and has adopted the *Aboriginal Student Policy* with a view to having the University's Aboriginal student population attain a level that is at least proportionate to the Aboriginal population of the province.

The University of Alberta has heightened its efforts to increase the number of Aboriginal people on campus and to facilitate the success of Aboriginal students generally. Recognizing that the enhanced participation of Aboriginal people enriches and broadens its intellectual and cultural environment, the University remains committed to the recruitment, retention and graduation of students of Aboriginal descent.

In August 2001 the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) formed an Aboriginal Strategies Task Force to examine the issues and make recommendations relating to Aboriginal programs on campus as well as the University's wider Aboriginal community in Alberta and with other external bodies that have a special interest in Aboriginal affairs. (Aboriginal Strategies Task Force Report, March 2002)

One of the goals of the President's vision for the University of Alberta is to improve access for rural, Aboriginal, and non-traditional students through partnerships with colleges and by linkages with high schools across the province and improve affordability by enhancing bursaries and scholarships. To that end, memoranda of understanding have been signed with numerous institutions to offer U of A programs to students in rural communities; partners include Blue Quills First Nations College, East Central Health Region, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano, Lakeland, Medicine Hat, Norquest, Northern Lakes, Olds and Portage Colleges.

In fulfilling its commitment, the University of Alberta seeks through the following policy to address the right of Aboriginal people to access, and to receive appropriate support for, a university education. The issue of access and support for Aboriginal students requires special attention because of the barriers that have been created by political, historical and socio-economic circumstances.

In order to facilitate appropriate representation of Aboriginal students on campus, additional qualified applicants may be considered over and above the Aboriginal students who are admitted in the regular competition for places in a Faculty. Aboriginal applicants who wish to be considered for such additional places must attain the minimum admission requirements of their chosen program as prescribed by the University and its Faculties and Schools. To assist the University in achieving this overall goal, Faculties are encouraged to set aside places specifically for Aboriginal applicants, the number being consistent with the available pool, student interests, and available teaching and learning support services.

Transition Year Program (TYP) for Aboriginal Applicants

The University of Alberta encourages Aboriginal students to apply for entrance to its degree programs through the normal admission categories. Prospective students who do not meet these requirements may be eligible for admission by successfully completing a Transition Year Program. The ***Aboriginal Student Services Centre (ASSC)***, in conjunction with several Faculties, administers these Transition Year Programs. Transition Year Program: 1st year entrance program offering students entrance to their faculties after a year of intensive support, lighter University course load and University skills class. This is provided in cohort format with such supports as tutoring, writing classes, instructional assistant for English, first year texts, computer lab, orientation and study space.

Admission into a degree program via this particular route is a two-step process. Students must first be admitted into a Transition Year Program, perform satisfactorily on all courses during the program, and then apply the following year for admission to the degree program.

In addition to administering the TYP program the Aboriginal Student Services Centre also offers:

- Tutoring,
- Mentoring Aboriginal Peers (MAP) program: A program for 1st year Aboriginal students to connect with 3rd & 4th year and graduate students for social and personal support through their first year.
- Orientation and Round Dance
- Smudge Room
- Elder Support
- Speaker's Series
- Moose Tracks: On-line newsletter
- Campus Tours
- Computer Lab
- Photocopying, Faxing and Student Phone
- Advocacy and Advising
- Eagle Feather Ceremony at Convocation
- Aboriginal Housing Program (NEW): Support on campus for single Aboriginal students: Belcourt-Brosseau house is being renovated this summer and can house 6-7 students. Another home in East Campus Village will house another 4 students and is also being renovated this summer. Up to 10 units in Michener Park are being held for Aboriginal families with a new family residence being proposed (to government for financial support) in the very near future.
- Though not directly part of ASSC, there will be a new Aboriginal recruiter position established in the Registrar's Office.

The Faculty of Law

Indigenous Law Program

The Indigenous Law Program was established to increase the representation of Aboriginal peoples in the legal profession by promoting the recruitment, participation and success of Aboriginal law students. The program provides academic support for Aboriginal students in the form of academic tutorials and informal academic assistance as needed. Aboriginal applicants and students are provided with funding information, support services, personal counselling, and employment and career opportunities. Curriculum enhancement of Aboriginal legal issues is a fundamental objective. In addition, the program is active in providing cross-cultural and

Aboriginal awareness training to Faculty, staff and students to foster a mutual understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of society.

The *Aboriginal Law Students' Association* is a student club which promotes awareness and understanding of Aboriginal issues and advocating reform. This is accomplished through sponsoring speakers and other activities. The group acts as a support network for Aboriginal students. Membership is open to all Law students.

The Faculty of Education

The Faculty of Education encourages Aboriginal students' study toward the Bachelor of Education degree. With the exception of the Faculties of Native Studies and Open Studies, the Faculty of Education has the largest number of self-declared Aboriginal students on campus.

Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP)

The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program was established by the Faculty of Education, in 2001. ATEP offers pre-service teacher education programs to Aboriginal students, in partnership with First Nations and other colleges and local school authorities. The program seeks, through its staff, curriculum, policies and partners to address barriers to accessibility for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

We are addressing the goal of geographical accessibility by offering the program in off-campus locations. Accessibility also refers to learning environments where the knowledge base, language and culture of a student's home community is represented and integrated with the learning. ATEP seeks to deliver community based education that is reflective of community culture, integrates local concerns and aspirations and is underpinned by the philosophy that students should feel "at home" in our classrooms.

We are committed to offering a high quality program of pre-service teacher education that meets or exceeds the academic standards of on-campus offerings of the University. We are also committed to an ongoing search for methods, materials and contexts for learning in pre-service teacher education that are inclusive and supportive of the culture and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Two cohorts of students have graduated; an additional two will graduate in Spring 2008. The fifth cohort will begin at Blue Quills First Nations College in 2007, the largest to date (30 students of which 90% are Aboriginal/Métis). An additional cohort will begin at Yellowhead Tribal College in the Fall of 2008 where we anticipate 100% of the students will be Aboriginal /Métis, with the goal of serving urban schools. ATEP has an Aboriginal director and co-director. Wherever possible ATEP hires Aboriginal instructors, co-instructors, and Aboriginal site coordinators.

Indigenous Peoples Education (IPE) Program

The First Nations Graduate Program (1996) became the *Indigenous Peoples Education Program* in 2005 to reflect the need to be more inclusive of all Indigenous people, and is housed in the Department of Educational Policy Studies. This specialization combines the conventional parameters and standards of university education with the collective efforts of Indigenous students, scholars, and Elders to develop Indigenous scholars who will preserve and respect the values, integrity, and knowledge of Indigenous peoples world-wide. Since 2002, there have been 3 Aboriginal tenure track appointments made in the program.

Canadian Indigenous Languages & Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI)

The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute, an Indigenous language summer school now in its 8th year of existence is offered through the University of Alberta, and has been housed in the Faculty of Education since 2003. The purpose of CILLDI is to provide opportunities for those interested in the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages to extend their professional growth as they take on the challenge of saving their languages. In addressing issues of Indigenous language loss in Canada, CILLDI has been expanding to include a wide range of courses based on needs expressed in Indigenous communities

Proposal for a Community Linguist Certificate

The goal of the proposed community linguist certificate is to give community based Indigenous language speakers training in documentation and analysis of their languages to work within their communities, It will also address the time-critical need for supporting language revitalization efforts; to provide students enrolled in CILLDI (the University of Alberta-sponsored Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute) with an alternate certificate track other than the Aboriginal Language Instructor Certificate offered through Education; The certificate will prepare them for community-based work rather than academic research; although some CLC students may go on to complete a BA in Linguistics, a BA in Native Studies, a BEd, or a MA in Endangered Language Documentation (Proposed program in Linguistics)

There is also a proposal to establish a language instructor certification program. A group of representatives from tribal colleges, the Universities of Lethbridge, Calgary, and Alberta and the province have been meeting on a regular basis to establish the development of a certificate program. The certificate will provide the pedagogical training necessary to teach an Indigenous language. Students can complete the program during the course of two summers; they may also continue on to complete a Bachelor of Education

The Faculty of Native Studies

The Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta is the only Native Studies unit in Canada that is independent of, and on par with, traditional university faculties such as Arts, Science, Commerce, and others.

- Teaching and research in Native Studies addresses the inequity between Aboriginal and other Canadians through critical study of current and historic relationships between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. Study and relationships extend to Indigenous peoples globally.
- The Faculty's newest program is Aboriginal Governance and Partnerships, recognizing the need for expertise in leadership, management and joint economic ventures among Aboriginal people and with others.
- The Governance and Partnerships program recognizes the work force needed for sustainable economic development by Aboriginal people, and to implement modern treaties and agreements, such as self-government agreements, comprehensive land claims, and impact and benefit agreements with industry.

- Graduates from the Faculty work in several fields, including industry, government (First Nations, municipal, provincial and federal) law, health, environmental management, education and the arts.
- The Faculty offers combined degree programs as well as the B.A. in Native Studies:
 - B.A. Native Studies / B.Sc. Environmental Science
 - B.A. Native Studies / B. Education

Faculté St Jean

At present the Faculté is sharing a position on the study of Métis communities with the Faculty of Native Studies. With the Institut français of the University of Regina, they are working to develop or rather re-develop ties between the francophone and Métis communities in Western Canada, this time on a more respectful and egalitarian basis. In 2008, they will co-host with the francophone community a conference on Laurent Garneau, a prosperous Métis landowner on whose former lands much of the U of A main campus is built. The conference will also involve the Alberta Métis Association through Audrey Poitras. Dr. Pamela Sing just received a Fulbright to study the evolution of Métis communities and identities north and south of the US/Canada border.

The Faculty of Nursing

The proposed Faculty of Nursing Aboriginal Access and Success Program (FON-ASASP) will respond to the urgent need to prepare increased numbers of Aboriginal nurses to build health care capacity in Aboriginal communities. The goal of the ASASP is to enhance the recruitment and success of Aboriginal students in our nursing programs – both undergraduate and graduate.

The University of Saskatchewan, College of Nursing has developed the most successful model in Canada to support the recruitment and success of Aboriginal nursing students. This 20-year-old program, named the Native Access Program to Nursing (NAPN), presently supports 200 self-declared First Nations and Métis nursing students across the four years of the undergraduate (BSN Program) and boasts a retention rate of 90% for first-year students.

The FON-ASASP will emulate and build upon five key components of the NAPN model.

1. Designate a robust number of special seats for qualified, self-declared, Aboriginal nursing students whose entering averages are satisfactory but below the competitive “cut-off.”

FON proposes to set aside 25 special seats for Aboriginal nursing students, phased in over a period of four years, representing approximately 10% of our entering undergraduate students.

This approach translates to an additional 3 MN students and 2 PhD students admitted annually.

2. Conduct Aboriginal community outreach and engagement to enhance recruitment of Aboriginal students.

NAPN success stems in part from the ability of the Aboriginal Nursing Student Advisors to inspire Aboriginal youths to aspire to become nurses. They work with Elders and other leaders in the community to mentor youth toward nursing and the health professions.

3. Actively support and advocate on behalf of Aboriginal students

Advisors will assist students to apply for band funding (where this applies), and to complete grant, bursary, scholarship, and other applications.

Program staff will provide enhanced orientation that includes fostering a sense of community while also dealing with individual issues ranging from child care, to housing, to personal issues. Program staff will also serve as a resource to Nursing faculty members when problems arise relating to ASASP students. Individual faculty members contact the program staff if they identify potential problems with a student and vice versa. This partnership ensures that student issues are identified and dealt with in a timely way.

4. Assist with summer employment placement

5. Augment the NAPN Student Database

NAPN Student Database was initiated approximately 4 years ago and presently houses data on over 300 Aboriginal nursing students. The database includes information regarding student demographics, Aboriginal student support services that have been accessed, an appraisal of their efficacy, individual student movement through the program, and post-graduation employment intent.

The FON-ASASP is positioned for success. Unanimous support for the ASASP and a strong commitment to collaborate has been expressed by the NAPN at the University of Saskatchewan, leading Aboriginal stakeholders in Northern Alberta, and the Faculties of Education, Medicine, Native Studies, and Law at the U of A, all of which have exhibited a “track record” of success in responding to the needs of Alberta’s Aboriginal communities.

The School of Public Health (SPH)

1. The School has applied for and been awarded special initiatives funding to establish a Masters of Public Health (MPH) in Aboriginal Health. Planning and consultations for this new degree will commence during the next 6 months.

2. The School was selected from among 5 Canadian Universities by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada to partner with the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health to develop and run a Joint Indigenous Summer Research Institute (JISRI) to address social determinants of health. Over the next 5 years, the University of Alberta’s School of Public Health will host the JISRI in alternating years, with the first in the summer of 2008. The aim of the Institute is to increase understanding among Aboriginal participants about findings and methods for research that addresses a broad range of factors, such as poverty, unemployment, unsafe workplaces, and lack of access to health care, that lead to ill health and health inequities. The desire is to build capacity for Aboriginal health researchers to work within their communities to tackle important social determinants of health.

Faculty members and adjuncts of SPH will work collaboratively with other units across campus. For instance, the Alberta Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environments (ACADRE) Network and the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute - both at the U of A - are committed to participating in the program. SPH will also involve other partners who bring experience in addressing Aboriginal health issues, including Capital Health; the Nechi Research, Training and Health Promotions Institute; and SEARCH (Swift Efficient Application of Research in Community Health) Canada.

The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry

The Aboriginal Healthcare Careers Program (AHCP)

The Office of the AHCC Program was founded by the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry in 1988 to encourage and assist more Aboriginal students to gain admission and graduate successfully from Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. As of June 2006, 42 Aboriginal physicians have graduated from the Faculty and are contributing to the health care of Canadians. A growing number of those who have completed their training are taking leadership roles in Aboriginal Health in positions in Faculties of Medicine, government and professional organizations across Canada, as well as providing direct health services to Aboriginal communities.

The Mandate of the AHCC Program is to correct the under-representation of Aboriginal physicians in Canada by encouraging more Aboriginal students to consider careers in medicine and dentistry; to facilitate their admission into the MD Program and other programs in the Faculty; and to provide support services to enable students to graduate successfully. It is the Faculty's belief that Aboriginal students with a commitment to their culture and traditions will serve as role models for Aboriginal youth, become leaders in producing improvements in Aboriginal health standards and enrich the life of the Faculty as a whole. In order to fulfill this mandate, the Faculty has instituted special status admission to the MD and DDS programs for Aboriginal applicants and a national pro-active recruitment policy.

The Faculty has a national recruitment policy. Students and graduates have come from across Canada and represent Abenaki, Blackfoot, Cree, Delaware, Inuit, Iroquois, Métis, Micmac, Maliseet, Mohawk, Ojibwa, Odawa and Saulteaux Nations.

- Five positions for 2007-2008 are available for Aboriginal students in the M.D. Program for students of Aboriginal ancestry within the meaning of the Constitutional Act of 1982.
- These positions cannot be filled by applicants from the general pool. If they are not filled by Aboriginal applicants in a current academic year, they are carried over to the following academic year.
- The Faculty also has one position available for Aboriginal students in each of the following: in the Medical Laboratory Science Program, the D.D.S. Program and the Dental Hygiene Program. All other Professional Health Sciences Faculties at the University of Alberta also offer special positions reserved for Aboriginal students.
- Residency requirements are waived for all Aboriginal applicants to the University of Alberta.
- Preference for positions set aside for Aboriginal students may be given to residents of Alberta.
- Capital Health has created a new endowed chair in Aboriginal Health Research. The chair will be held in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry.
- The Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry has recently hired an Aboriginal Elder and expert in traditional healing.

Applicant Interview Luncheon

Aboriginal students already enrolled in the Faculty as well as former Aboriginal graduates are also invited to attend. The luncheon gives the applicants an opportunity to meet each other as well as their potential peers and mentors in a social setting to find out more about the Faculty and the curriculum as well as the AHCC Program. Many former applicants have indicated that seeing familiar faces and being greeted by people they had already met before they started their medical studies made it much easier to adjust to the new and unfamiliar medical school environment.

Summer Science Camp

As of 1999 the Faculty has partnered with the Aboriginal Health Careers Coordinators from Alberta's three treaty areas to hold a one week long Summer Science Camp for high school students from Treaty 6, 7 and 8. As of 2002 through a partnership with the University of Alberta, ACADRE Network, urban Aboriginal high school students from Edmonton's Aboriginal high school, Amiskwaciy Academy, have also been included.

Aboriginal Health Day -- Patient Centered Care Course

MD & DDS students need to be provided with the skills and knowledge to address any cross-cultural challenges that may arise in clinical encounters with their Aboriginal patients. The goal of this session is to provide an orientation to Aboriginal health issues for all entering MD and DDS students in an Aboriginal setting through presentations and interactive small group sessions with Aboriginal physicians, Elders, traditional practitioners and community health workers and a cross-cultural theatre training session which will invite students to participate in role playing.

Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environments (ACADRE)

The Alberta ACADRE Network was launched in October 2001 through funding from the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health within the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. The purpose of the national ACADRE initiative is to develop a network of supportive research environments across Canada that will facilitate the development of Aboriginal capacity in health research.

Completed Projects:

- Aboriginal Mentoring Project (Completed 2003)
- Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (Completed 2003)
- Smoking Habits of Treaty 8 Youth (Completed 2004)

Current Projects:

- Improving Access to Health Care Services for Aboriginal Peoples (since 2002)
- How People Live with the Land: Cultural and Environmental Integrity in the Déline Dene Landscape (since 2002)
- Network North: Communicating Research Capacity through Technology (since 2003)
- Women's Vision of Midwifery-led Maternity Services for Fort Smith (since 2003)
- Traditional Knowledge and Ethics (since 2004)

The Centre for Health Promotion Studies (CHPS)

A new post-graduate diploma in Aboriginal health was launched by CHPS in the fall of 2006. It is now being developed in partnership with Aboriginal Capacity and Development Research Environments (ACADRE), and in consultation with Elders and other members of local Aboriginal communities. Operating within the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, ACADRE connects networks across Canada with a view to fostering Aboriginal health research.

The diploma will consist of 24 credits and will be offered through three community colleges: Blue Quills First Nations College, Yellowhead Tribal College and Maskwachees Cultural College. The aim is to allow Aboriginal students to "stay in their communities to build health promotion capacity...and identify and resolve some of the health needs in the community,"

Faculty of Extension

The Faculty of Extension is involved in a number of collaborative research projects including:

- Collaborative Aboriginal Health Education Project

Project Title: Building Capacity for Aboriginal Health Research

Summary: the proposed research brings together two Alberta Aboriginal community colleges, Native Counseling Services of Alberta, the Faculty of Extension, and the possibility of additional colleagues from a Tribal college in the of Washington, Seattle, in the development and delivery of curricula in community based health research.

Ultimately, this research will inform the development and delivery of a certificate program through the Faculty of Extension and possibly a Masters program in Public Health, both at the University of Alberta.

- Enoch Cree Nation Project – Research Team Member

Project Title: Miyonistohtamowin - Towards an understanding of healthy families: An Enoch Cree Nation Family Health Working Group Initiative

The Enoch Cree Nation Health Centre, under the direction of Patrick Bernard, is working with the Misericordia Hospital Children's Health Centre (led by Dr. Lola Baydala) to help address concerns around the number of babies from Enoch born to women who are addicted to cocaine

- Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation Research - Team Member

Project Title: Life Skills Training (LST[©]) Substance Abuse Prevention Program for Aboriginal Children and Youth

Additional Aboriginal-based research being conducted by Dr. Lola Baydala and the Misericordia Children's Health Centre:

- Mother Earth Children's Charter School (MECCS) Longitudinal Study - This three year study evaluates the efficacy of culturally compatible education as provided by MECCS on the academic achievement and mental and physical health of Aboriginal children enrolled in the school's program.
- A Visual Narrative Look at the Mother Earth's Children's Charter School: A Pilot Study - This research project focuses on the links between visual images, school narratives and our understanding of young indigenous people's stories about the interrelatedness of health and learning on identity development.

Aboriginal Initiatives History:

- 1973 – Aboriginal Student Council (originally the Native Student Club)
- 1975 – Native Student Services (originally the Office of the Advisor on Native Affairs)
- 1982 – GFC Committee on Native Studies
- 1985 – Transition Year Program (TYP) (originally Coordinated University Transfer (CUT).
- 1986 – School of Native Studies
- 1988 – Aboriginal Health Careers Program
- 1990 – GFC Aboriginal Student Policy: enrolment target of 5% for Aboriginal Students established
- 1990 – Indigenous Law Program
- 1986 – Graduate Program in First Nations Education
- 1998 – University of Alberta Aboriginal Council (UAAC)
- 2001 – The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program
- 2001 – Aboriginal Strategies Task Force
- 2003 – The Canadian Indigenous Languages & Literacy Institute is housed in the Faculty of Education
- 2005 - Graduate Program in First Nations Education becomes Indigenous Peoples Education Program
- 2005 - Chancellor's Roundtable on Aboriginal Youth, High School Completion and Transitions to Adult Learning
- 2006 – Native Student Services becomes Aboriginal Student Services Centre
- 2006 – The School of Native Studies becomes the Faculty of Native Studies

For information on any of the above initiatives, please contact Noella Steinhauer, Director of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, Faculty of Education 780-492-3187, or noella@ualberta.ca