



University of Northern British Columbia

Summary for the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Roundtable May 24, 2007

Background

UNBC is a relatively young institution at just 15 years old with a population of 4,100 undergraduate (3,600) and graduate (500) students. In addition to the main campus located in Prince George, there are four Regional campuses located in Quesnel, Prince Rupert, Fort St. John, and Terrace. We also are affiliated with the Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a college campus located in the Nass Valley.

UNBC's student population is approximately 70% from northern BC communities with 23% originating from southern BC and 7% made up of students from other Provinces and countries. The northern regions from which a majority of UNBC students reside is over 632,762 square kilometers (an area equal to 2/3 of British Columbia) and is home to approximately 414,380 people. This northern geographic area is made up of the traditional territories of 16 Tribal Councils, 78 First Nations Bands, 4 Métis organizations, and 10 Friendship Centres. Of the 414,380 people living in the region, approximately 30% have self identified their ancestry as Aboriginal. Eleven percent (11%) of UNBC's student population is made up of "self-identified" Indigenous ancestry. Approximately another 4% of UNBC's population is made up of "undeclared" Indigenous ancestry. Therefore, Indigenous students make up approximately 15% of UNBC's student population.

UNBC's motto is 'En Cha Hunà which was borrowed from Carrier elders and is used to remind us that all people have a voice and a viewpoint. Directly translated as "respecting all forms of life," 'En Cha Hunà encapsulates the spirit of academic freedom, respect for others, and willingness to recognize different perspectives.

Aboriginal Initiatives

The following is a brief listing of UNBC's Aboriginal initiatives in point form.

1. Senate Committee on First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples to provide administrative guidance. Membership includes community members from northern First Nations Bands. The terms of reference for this Committee include:
 - To review existing and proposed protocol and affiliation agreements between UNBC and First Nations and Aboriginal communities and educational institutions and to recommend guidelines to Senate for future protocol and affiliation agreements.
 - To encourage and facilitate First Nations programs throughout UNBC and to create a university environment that honors the validity of First Nations expertise.

- To encourage policies and mechanisms for the development of undergraduate and graduate course offerings and course content relating to First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples and cultures.
 - To encourage appropriate research initiatives related to and with First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples through the establishment of research protocols (in collaboration with the University Research Ethics Board).
2. Numerous protocol and affiliation agreements with First Nations Bands and governments. Examples include Nisga'a, Gitksan, Carrier Linguistic society in Nak'Azdli, Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority, Lake Babine Nation, etc.
 3. First Nations Centre
 - The Centre includes a computer lab, study room, Elder's meeting room, and student supports.
 - Director
 - Counsellor
 - Peer Counselling Program headed by a coordinator
 - Elder support
 - Peer tutoring
 - Aboriginal Recruiter
 - Northern Advancement Program to provide academic, social, and emotional assistance to students from remote regions of British Columbia and Canada
 - University Diversity Committee
 4. First Nations Studies (BA)
 - General First Nations Studies Program
 - Joint Major in First Nations Studies/Women's Studies
 - Minor in First Nations Studies
 - First Nations Language (7 different languages offered)
 - Aboriginal Health Sciences
 - Aboriginal Community Resource Planning
 - First Nations Public Administration
 - Nisga'a Studies
 - Métis Studies
 5. Developmental Standard Teaching Certificate in First Nations Languages and Culture designed to provide elementary language teachers so that First Nations languages and cultures are not lost. There are currently 6 separate First Nations Bands (an additional two programs are being developed) are part of this Program. The components parts includes:
 - Upgrading courses in basic math and language arts skills;
 - Language and culture courses designed in collaboration with the First Nations Band;
 - First year Arts and Science courses;

- Teacher Education courses.

6. Seats in Nursing, Social Work, and Education reserved for qualified Aboriginal students.
7. Two Aboriginal teacher education courses required for all students enrolled in UNBC's BEd Program.
8. Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University–
 - Weekend University offers post-secondary educational opportunities to the adults of the Carrier, Chilcotin and Northern Shuswap Bands in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region.
 - In 1995 the Cariboo Tribal Council invited Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) to partner with them. The first courses began in September 1997. Classes are offered primarily in Williams Lake because of its central location in the Cariboo Chilcotin.
 - Programs offered include Certificates in First Nations Studies (from UNBC), Associate of Arts degree (from UCC), Bachelor of Arts, General (from either UCC or UNBC), and Bachelor of Arts, with Minor or Major in First Nations Studies (from UNBC).
9. BSW: First Nations Specialization
 - The First Nations Specialization has been designed to provide a program of studies that prepares students for practice with First Nations people, while also satisfying the general practice criteria required for BSW accreditation and for designation as a Registered Social Worker (RSW).
10. BHSc Program with a stream offered in Community and Population Health – Aboriginal and Rural Health
 - This stream is designed to keep Aboriginal knowledge from being lost and to acknowledge that this knowledge is valuable to all cultures.
11. UNBC received Federal funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada for the establishment of a National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAH). UNBC's Centre is one of six that was established by the Public Health Agency of Canada to renew and strengthen public health. Each Centre has a unique focus.
 - The NCCAH at UNBC seeks to support Aboriginal communities across Canada to realize their health goals and in doing so reduce the health inequities that currently exist for Aboriginal peoples.
12. Aboriginal Environmental Health researcher Dr. Laurie Chan is UNBC's first Chair funded by the Leading Edge Endowment Fund created by the British Columbia Government.

13. Provincially funded Aboriginal Community Services Project that is currently in the planning and implementation stage.
 - UNBC was successful in it's initial application for funding under this program that is designed for the purpose of fostering collaboration among Aboriginal communities and universities to develop post-secondary education programs will foster the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students.