

Changing Attitudes Fact Sheet

Why are there so many education programs for FNMI students?

History and Challenges Unique to FNMI learners

- Elders commented in one study that the high dropout rate is connected to historical oppression and colonialism. Many parents and grandparents had traumatic experiences in residential schools resulting in distrust of the mainstream educational system that many parent and grandparents feel today. Intergenerational impacts that include, high rates of suicide, substance abuse, family breakdown and domestic violence and criminalization are also a result of colonialism and residential school policy.
- Past education research has focused on the inherent “failure” of Aboriginal people to success academically, without addressing the ways that the education system has failed Aboriginal people. This focus on the academic failures of Aboriginal students reinforces negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people’s ability to achieve success academically, and in turn affects some student’s ability or desire to complete school.
- The higher dropout rates of FNMI students (compared to other Canadian Students) can be attributed to various interrelated historical, cultural, economic and interpersonal factors.
- The persistence of racism and stereotypes makes coming to school a stressful and traumatic experience for many FNMI students. They may begin to avoid social and academic participation in school or leave school to avoid this negative attention.
- Unlike many other cultures, FNMI students have rarely seen themselves of their culture reflected in curricular content therefore they are less able to relate to what they are learning or see how it is significant to their lives. This can translate into apathy, disinterest and lack of motivation in completing studies.
- FNMI students often do not have the opportunities to interact with FNMI teachers who as role models and mentors help demonstrate the positive benefits of staying in school.
- Mainstream teaching methods are often not consistent with traditional FNMI teaching styles, and as such are not as effective with FNMI students. Many

Racism

- ❑ Racism can often be hard to see or understand especially if one has never personally experienced its devastating effects. As the population becomes more “racially” diverse, problems of discrimination become more frequent. Education and raising awareness is one highly effective method in which these societal issues can be dealt with.
- ❑ Many Albertans may be aware of the powerful fight that FNMI people are putting up to challenge the problems facing their communities, but FNMI people are still challenged by stereotypes and overgeneralizations used in the media and reinforced in everyday culture.

Economic Repercussions

- ❑ It is imperative for future First Nation, Métis and Inuit success in education and normal economic participation that these reverberated effects of residential schools are eliminated.
- ❑ According to Statistics Canada 60% of FNMI children under the age of 6 live under the poverty line. Failure to address education issues will continue to promote disparity and have devastating social and economic repercussions in the future.
- ❑ FNMI success in education should be of vital importance to all Albertans. Improved educational outcomes will result in better social conditions for Aboriginal peoples as well as contribute to needed skilled-labour force generating economic prosperity for all.
- ❑ FNMI education is of critical importance due to the large number of FNMI students who are not completing high school. In 2001, 48% of the FNMI population in Canada did not complete high school. The evolving economy may soon require at least a high school diploma for a minimum wage job. If this trend continues, a lifetime of poverty for high school drop-outs will be a reality.
- ❑ Economic opportunities presently available in Alberta may cause students to drop out of school in order to get a job, often out of financial necessity.
- ❑ A lack of educational supports such as career development, work placement assistance and postsecondary advising may result in FNMI students dropping out of school because they feel there are no opportunities for them to put their education to use.

Why do First Nations not have to pay taxes?

- In general, First Nations in Canada are required to pay taxes on the same basis as other people in Canada, except where the limited exemption under Section 87 of the Indian Act applies. Section 87 says that the “personal property of an Indian or band situated on a reserve” is tax exempt. Métis and Inuit are not eligible for tax exemption. This means that only Status Indians working on reservations are exempt from income tax and property taxes while on the reserve. Non-status Indians are not entitled to be registered under the Indian Act. This may be because their ancestors were never registered or because they lost their status under the former provisions of the Indian Act (e.g. Enfranchised Indian).
- The courts have held that the exemption is intended to preserve the entitlements of Indian people to their reserve lands, and to ensure that the use of First Nation reserve lands is not eroded by taxations.
- The Indian Act prevents non-Aboriginal governments from taxing the property of Status Indians on a reserve. However section 83 of the Indian Act gives First Nations the power to impose property taxes on interest in land in the reserve.
- GST generally does not apply to purchases by Status Indians if the purchase is made on the reserve or is delivered to a reserve by the vendor.