



FNPS

First Nations Public Service Secretariat

Nation Building Through Human Resource Capacity Building

A Discussion Paper on the
BC First Nations
Public Service Secretariat

June 2010



*The Courage
to Excel*

This paper is intended to capture the overall objectives of the BC First Nations Public Service Secretariat, reflecting feedback that has been received from First Nations throughout BC regarding this initiative, as well as potential further work to advance the development of this critical component of Nation building.

This paper represents an update of an earlier discussion paper. It is meant to extend discussions and continue dialogue about potential work to support First Nations in the area of capacity building and human resource development.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

First Nations in Canada are pro-actively engaged in Nation rebuilding, with a focus on developing communities and building healthier citizenships by meeting their challenges and moving forward in positive ways. Achieving those goals will depend, among many other factors, upon an effective First Nations workforce.

First Nations leaders and employees who work for their Nation (called “Nation workers” in this paper) must continually make informed, strategic, and effective decisions in the best interests of their community members – and they must do so while working within particularly complex socio-economic and legislative environments. This situation leads to a need for focused and meaningful capacity building and human resource development efforts to ensure that the First Nations workforce is adequately prepared for and supported in undertaking its important work.

In BC, First Nations leaders and community representatives have carefully considered the issues of capacity building and human resource development, and they have agreed to explore a collective approach to supporting and enhancing this critical component of self-governance. First Nations leaders believe that doing so will significantly strengthen the foundation for ensuring the survival, dignity, and well-being of First Nations people in BC.

At the same time, widespread efforts are underway to increase the availability of adequately trained, well-supported professionals to work in a number of critical sectors of First Nations community health, human, and social development. Those sectors include, among others, health, education, child care, social services, and child and family services. Numerous First Nations-controlled organizations have been created to pursue that goal, and to be most effective their work ideally will be coordinated and complementary with all of the other human resource development efforts being undertaken within Nations and at the provincial level.

Significant discussion has now taken place regarding possible supports for First Nations leaders, Nation workers, and professionals working in a variety of sectors within First Nations communities, including the potential role for a collective organization to advance these critical efforts. This discussion paper describes some of the background and a framework for such an organization and its work. It is critical to note that in preparing a First Nations Public Service (FNPS) strategy, care will be taken to ensure that strategies and activities are built, where possible, upon a foundation that incorporates and embraces First Nations traditional values, beliefs, and approaches.

1.1 - The BC First Nations Public Service Secretariat

Approximately two years ago, First Nations leaders in BC responded to the expanding human resource development needs of First Nations communities by initiating the development of a provincial-level organization that would provide support and innovative programming to assist with relevant programs and activities. That organization is the First Nations Public Service Secretariat (FNPSS).

Since its establishment, the FNPSS has been conducting ongoing consultations with First Nations leadership, communities, and other First Nations provincial-level organizations, with the intention of identifying common human resource development needs, determining appropriate services and programs to assist communities in this area, and establishing partnerships and networks to advance relevant and efficient activities.

The purpose of the BC FNPSS is to create and implement a collective plan to support First Nations communities and organizations in BC as they pursue excellence in capacity building and human resource development.

What is Human Resource Development?

Human Resource Development has been defined as the framework for helping employees develop their personal and organizational skills, knowledge, and abilities. Human Resource Development includes such opportunities as employee training, employee career development, performance management and development, coaching, mentoring, succession planning, key employee identification, tuition assistance, and organization development. The focus of all aspects of Human Resource Development is on developing the most superior workforce so that the organization and individual employees can accomplish their work goals in service to customers.

This definition is to be clearly distinguished from Human Resource Management, which has been defined as the function within an organization that focuses on recruitment of, management of, and providing direction for the people who work in the organization. Human Resource Management is the organizational function that deals with issues related to people such as compensation, hiring, performance management, organization development, safety, wellness, benefits, employee motivation, communication, administration, and training.

(http://humanresources.about.com/od/glossaryh/f/hr_management.htm)

The FNPSS is concerned with *development* and overall capacity building. It is not intended to address the field of *management*, which encompasses a distinct set of concepts and practices.

The BC FNPSS is meant to identify opportunities to work through partnerships and/or other arrangements to strengthen and enhance community and staff capacity to deliver high quality and efficient programs and services to BC First Nations communities.

To date, the BC FNPSS has identified three broad goals.

1. **Strengthen and support relationships between First Nations leadership, administration, and communities**
2. **Coordinate and strengthen human resource development for Nation workers in the core competencies: human, financial, and information management, and policy development.**
3. **Support and enhance human resource development efforts for Nation workers in a range of professional sectors such as health, education, children and families, resource management, etc.**

Full-time work on this initiative began in April 28, 2008. Some of the work undertaken to date is reflected as examples in the discussion below.

2. WHAT DO THE GOALS OF THE BC FNPSS MEAN?

2.1 - Goal One:

Strengthen and support relationships between First Nations leadership, administration, and communities

In discussing human resource development in the context of First Nations, it is critical to begin by recognizing the role of First Nations leaders in directing the goals and activities of their communities. Support for First Nations leaders is critical to providing a strong foundation for all other aspects of the human resource development.

First Nations governments generally are responsible for:

- the effective management of service and benefit programs for their citizens;
- the efficient use of financial resources;
- policy and law-making; and
- appropriate representation of their community members.

In order to perform their complex roles, First Nations leaders must have a thorough understanding of their multiple responsibilities, and they must demonstrate, among many other skills, an ability to solve complex problems, make good decisions, use resources effectively, deal with grievances and conflict, facilitate meetings, plan effectively, and motivate and build effective workforces.

What Collective Help Can Be Offered Through the FNPSS?

- The FNPSS can work in partnership with the National Centre for First Nations Governance (NCFNG) to ensure that as the strategy to support Nation workers evolves, it is complementary with leadership development. For example, in 2009 the FNPSS staff joined with the NCFNG in organizing joint regional presentations on: the roles and responsibilities of Chiefs and Councils generally; the roles and responsibilities of Chiefs and Councils regarding administration; an update regarding the activities of the FNPSS; and information regarding constitution building and traditional models of governance. Other joint initiatives can be added in future years.
- The FNPSS can work with the BC Treaty Commission as it moves forward in determining what capacity is required to implement treaties. The FNPSS could then create Professional

and Personal Growth templates that could be used by communities as they determine who will participate in capacity building opportunities, and when. This work will be subject to the acquisition of funding by First Nations.

- The FNPSS can identify and support emerging First Nations leaders, as consultations have clearly asserted that skills and knowledge training and leadership development for youth must be a priority for the FNPSS.
 - Opportunities to work with youth through the United Native Youth Collective are being explored, and representatives of the FNPSS have agreed to make presentations to the Collective's members on a number of leadership topics.
 - The two existing Aboriginal Youth Internship Programs, federal and provincial, also provide opportunities for leadership development for First Nations youth.
 - The FNPSS participated in the BC Aboriginal Friendship Centres' youth conference as a presenter and vendor in order to solicit feedback from youth regarding their recommendations for leadership development and skills training for youth.

2.2 - Goal Two:

Coordinate and strengthen human resource development for Nation workers in the core competencies: human, financial, and information management, and policy development.

Nation workers are responsible for implementing the direction and decisions of First Nations leaders. Generally, Nation workers (i.e. those workers who are First Nations government employees and those who work for First Nations government agencies) are responsible for, among other duties:

- support for First Nations leadership;
- administrative support such as human resource, financial, and information management, as well as policy development;
- management and delivery of programs and services to First Nations citizens; and
- support for the preparation and drafting of laws and regulations as First Nations sign treaties and negotiate self-government agreements.

To undertake their work, Nation workers would benefit from information and training related to the skills that are common to all of their job requirements. For example, there is widespread

agreement that Nation workers all have responsibilities related to four common functions: human resource management, financial management, information management, and policy development. First Nations representatives have agreed that these functions are obvious areas for support from a collective organization.

2.2.1 - Capacity Building

In order to undertake their work effectively, it is critical that Nation workers are provided meaningful opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge to enable them to undertake their work in a way that promotes employer satisfaction and personal growth and job satisfaction. Ensuring that this capacity building takes place, however, will not be without challenges. For example, the following are some of the difficulties to be overcome in supporting human resource capacity building for Nation workers.

Capacity Building Challenges

Preparation

1. In spite of ongoing efforts, the grade 12 graduation rate for First Nations learners remains unacceptably low, and there is a large gap between access to, participation and success in higher learning opportunities for First Nations and non-First Nations students. Similarly, the achievement rates of First Nations K-12 students in numeracy and literacy are not adequate. As a result, far too many First Nations people who are employed by First Nations governments have not enjoyed a reasonable opportunity to develop some of the fundamental skills needed for them to effectively fulfill their roles.

Recruitment

1. As a result of the issues highlighted above, there is a limited number of First Nations people available to recruit for employment by First Nations governments.
2. It can be difficult to recruit trained workers to remote First Nations communities.
3. First Nations often are not able to pay wages that are comparable to those provided through the public sector.
4. In the public sector, First Nations people who are seeking work are sometimes ineligible for hiring due to union restrictions.

Retention

1. First Nations are not provided funding at levels that will allow them to compensate their employees at rates that are comparable to the mainstream public sector. Often new workers may start in a First Nations community to gain experience, but may then move on to higher paying jobs outside of the community.
2. In very small communities, the role of Nation workers may expand beyond the scope of their formal job descriptions, leading to very stressful work environments and often burnout.
3. Non-First Nations people who take employment in First Nations communities can experience significant “culture shock” when they move to First Nations communities and are required to operate in a new legal and political environment. This situation can lead to people spending only short periods of time in First Nations communities.
4. The limited ability of First Nations communities to offer opportunities for professional growth can limit workers’ access to effective training.
5. There are limited opportunities for employees of First Nations governments to network and support one another, due primarily to geographical and financial challenges.

Training

1. Nation workers need access to high quality, relevant training, but training opportunities are too often available outside of First Nations communities, meaning that employees must travel, miss significant time from work, and possibly relocate in order to participate in them.
2. Many relevant training programs do not include a focus on the unique needs and circumstances of First Nations peoples and communities. This gap represents an impediment for non-First Nations people who work in First Nations communities, and for First Nations people who participate in the training.

Addressing those challenges will clearly require long-term, sustained effort and commitment, as the challenges to be overcome reflect historic inequities and are now systemic, which means that they will not be solved through quick and simple solutions.

That reality, in fact, strengthens the need for immediate and coordinated work to advance improvements, and the FNPSS can lead capacity building initiatives for Nation workers, including initiatives in the following areas.

- Given the complex policy and legislative environment effecting how First Nations communities operate, new employees must be supported through a comprehensive orientation process. They will need to know more than most about policy and legislation, as working on-reserve is much more complicated than working in other communities. Orientations could include being introduced to: the First Nations governing structure; decision-making processes; administrative practices; the community vision or strategic plan; funding agency requirements; expectations for the position; and evaluation procedures.
- Succession planning is an extremely useful tool to ensure that the plans and visions that have been put in place are continued and enhanced.
- Given the limited resources – human and financial – available within First Nations communities, it is critical that Nation workers act as a team, building on their respective strengths and providing support in difficult times.
- Recognition ceremonies or awards for excellence are one mechanism for encouraging employees who work for government agencies – including First Nations government employees. Research confirms that even small recognition programs within a work environment can provide inspiration and convey the message of valuing employees.

What Collective Help Can Be Offered Through the FNPSS?

Research and Materials Development / Sharing for Common Capacity Building Needs

- Consider what types of human resource capacity development are needed for First Nations, as well as how First Nations and First Nations organizations can build on existing strengths and traditions related to organization, leadership, financial management, etc.
- Consult with First Nations communities regarding the development of standards and competencies for First Nations government employees, including possible mechanisms for evaluating or monitoring performance according to the standards.
- Investigate issues associated with compensation in First Nations communities. In fact, discussions are now underway between the FNPSS and other groups that are concerned with this topic, including the First Nations Financial Management Board, as well as the Assembly of First Nations in Ottawa.
- Identify, develop, and share relevant templates and materials to assist Nation workers in their jobs. For example, the FNPSS can continue its visits to First Nations communities to learn about their governance systems and to gather template policies, job descriptions, and other documents that will be posted to the FNPSS website.

Orientations

- Develop template orientation policies and handbooks.
- Ensure that professional development opportunities for Nation workers include directions for implementing successful orientation processes.

Succession planning

- Promote greater awareness of the importance of succession planning by working with First Nations communities to determine how to support this planning and its implementation with the current resources and with possible future resources.
- Create and share template tools to assist First Nations communities with succession planning.
- Seek funding to support efforts in this critical area for communities.

Team building

- Work with First Nations communities to consider how to augment team building traditions, and to promote the benefits of team building.
- Facilitate collective efforts to promote team building, such as highlighting this issue at conferences and other networking opportunities.

Recognition

- Create a province-wide recognition program to honour and encourage people working in the public sector. In fact, the FNPSS is already striving to facilitate recognition of individuals nominated for making significant contributions to their communities.
- Assist First Nations communities in developing and implementing local employee recognition programs.

2.2.2 Professional Development

Over the last ten years there has been substantial growth in the number of opportunities available for professional development in a variety of fields that are critical to the effective and efficient operation of First Nations governments.

Formal training programs continue to be critical for providing the skills and knowledge workers need to be successful in their jobs. As described above, some skills and functions are common to

a number of government employees, including, but not limited to: human resource management, financial management, policy development, technology, information management, understanding the policy and legal environment (including Aboriginal history and cultures), communication skills, and leadership skills.

Common courses to address these skills can be developed and possibly delivered for people working in communities that are in close proximity, creating sufficient cohorts of learners to make it economically feasible to deliver courses and allowing for a sharing of curricula and course materials amongst communities.

Mentorships also can offer a practical, relevant, and relatively inexpensive opportunity for Nation workers to learn from experienced and successful colleagues. In addition, internship opportunities with various governments or industry partners can provide potential employees with hands-on experience in a specific field. Internships allow people to experience what it is like to work in a particular job to determine if it is right for them.

What Collective Help Can Be Offered Through the FNPSS?

Training

- Facilitate or link Nation workers with existing bridging or transition programs to ensure that candidates have the pre-requisite skills and knowledge needed for them to enter and be successful in training programs.
- Promote the importance of professional development with both Nation workers and their employers, helping to increase understanding of this critical investment in the people who make First Nations governments succeed.
- Share understandings of how to deliver professional development programming in a manner that is accessible to, relevant, and supportive of Nation workers, and also is cost-effective and includes a sufficient cohort of students in order to build a community of learning.
- Build on existing strengths within First Nations communities, recognizing the existing leadership, financial and human resource management capacities, and the importance of First Nations' values and traditions related to respect for the environment and natural resources.
- Explore and promote possibilities for Nation workers to become involved in relevant training provided by mainstream agencies. For example, through the efforts of the FNPSS, a number of representatives of First Nations organizations and communities have participated in several courses provided by the BC Public Service Agency (PSA), and the participants generally have been very impressed with the training opportunities they have enjoyed.

Further discussion will now take place to establish an ongoing relationship with the BC PSA with respect to training.

- Similarly, the FNPSS facilitated the involvement of several First Nations people in Conservation Officer trial training in 2009, to explore the quality of training as well as suggestions for improvement. Two First Nations representatives also were selected to attend the Health and Education Assistants Conference in Victoria, and those individuals have been asked to provide feedback regarding the relevancy of the training, its potential in terms of networking opportunities, and whether these opportunities should continue to be made available to other workers.
- Exchange programs can involve various types of opportunities, ranging from week-long exchanges between communities to year-long exchanges with government, industry, or other communities. In each situation, participating employees can bring new ideas to the exchange hosts, and then share their new experiences, skills, and understandings when returning to their regular employment.

Mentorships

- Work with existing First Nations service organizations to explore mentoring opportunities and possibilities for the FNPSS to support and coordinate mentoring initiatives.
- Develop partnerships with professional associations, such as the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) for shared professional development and mentorship opportunities.
- Provide handbooks and template policies to support the implementation of mentoring programs.
- Explore possibilities for funding mentoring programs to ensure that they are comprehensive and effective.
- Promote opportunities for mentorships with public government and service agencies. For example, a trial placement opportunity was tested in March 2009, during which the FNPSS Executive Assistant spent three days in the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR). The purpose of this trial was to allow the FNPSS staff to become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of an Executive Assistant in government, and to provide her with new skills to compliment her work with the FNPSS. Based upon the success of this trial, opportunities for First Nations to place employees in field offices of the provincial government are being explored.

Internships

- Work with the BC provincial government to monitor the success of the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program, and to explore possibilities for expanding this initiative, as appropriate. To date, the third year of the FNPSS Provincial Aboriginal Youth Internship program is now well underway. Despite the difficult economic times and limited budget available, the province hired 26 youth for the 2009-2010 year, and there is growing interest in hiring Aboriginal youth interns across the province.
- Identify and work with other potential agency, government, and industry partners to develop other internship strategies and programs. For example, the Federal Aboriginal Youth Internship Program will be launched February 2, 2010. Thirteen participants have been hired to work in more than six different Departments. This program also reflects an expansion of the youth internship by providing several seats for middle managers, who will be seconded to a federal department at the middle manager level.
- Promote the importance of internship opportunities with workers and employers.

Professional Exchanges

- Work with First Nations communities to explore options for a First Nations-specific provincial exchange program, including considering what types of employment and potential opportunities would be most appropriate for this type of professional development.

2.3 Goal Three:

Support and enhance human resource development in areas that are common to a range of professional sectors within First Nations communities (sector meaning health, education, child care, children and families, etc.).

As described above, one of the key goals of the FNPS strategy is to support program and service delivery within specific sectors of First Nations communities, including, but not limited to, health, education, social services, technology, child and family services and protection, etc. Specifically, discussions with First Nations communities during two rounds of regional sessions have identified common goals and priorities within each sector, as well as a number of challenges that are relevant to them all.

The goal of the FNPS strategy is to be attentive to and provide support in areas of overlap, especially through participation in and assistance with ongoing initiatives in the various sectors. Doing so will allow the FNPSS to identify best practices, innovative approaches, and resources and materials that can be shared and adapted for use in other sectors.

Common Challenges

Across numerous sectors in BC, there is a shortage of trained First Nations professionals and/or non-First Nations professionals who are available to work in First Nations communities throughout the province.

For example, ensuring adequate human resources in the health sector represents a widespread challenge. In BC, the trend of an aging population is mirrored in the health care workforce, and there is a looming shortage of health care professionals, as many people near retirement. The expected decline in the number of healthcare professionals, combined with the increased demand for health services, will impact both the Province of BC and First Nations' ability to recruit and maintain adequate numbers of health care professionals. In fact, the shortage will be especially acute in First Nations communities, as they are already experiencing a shortage of employees in this area.

Similarly, there is an alarmingly limited availability of First Nations teachers in the province. This challenge has led the K-12 Aboriginal Education Partners Group¹ to establish an Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC). ATEC's goal is to increase the number of certified Aboriginal teachers in order to bring more Aboriginal perspectives and Aboriginal role models into BC schools for the benefit of all students. ATEC members devised a strategy that has four main components.

- Outreach to potential teachers, to foster an interest on the part of students and community members to pursue a career in teaching.

¹ The BC Aboriginal Education Partners Group includes some of the most significant stakeholders in the BC education system, including First Nations Education Steering Committee, the First Nations Schools Association, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Ministry of Education, the BC Teachers' Federation, the BC College of Teachers, the BC School Trustees Association, the BC Superintendents Association, the BC Confederation of Parents Advisory Council, the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association of BC, United Native Nations, and the BC Métis Nation. The cooperative efforts of the Education Partners Group have resulted in effective information sharing and several important initiatives to enhance the success of First Nations learners. The Education Partners have specifically focused their efforts on three main issues: Aboriginal Teacher Retention and Recruitment, through the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC); Employment Equity; and Anti-Racism.

- Academic counselling/in-school support, including work with counsellors and advisors to develop effective strategies for ensuring First Nations students select courses that will enable them to access post-secondary opportunities, such as teacher education.
- Support for students to enter and successfully complete teacher education programs, including study skills, upgrading, bridging to education, and financial support.
- Increasing access to teacher education programs through satellite programs and by securing spaces in existing programs.

Similarly, the newly created BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (FN ECDC) has identified the need for more trained and accredited First Nations workers available to work in First Nations and non-First Nations early childhood development centres in BC.

Clearly, the need for more educated and certified First Nations professionals is consistent across a number of critical health, human and social development sectors.

There also are a number of common barriers to increasing the number of First Nations professionals in various sectors – many of which are similar to the challenges that relate to Nation worker capacity building, as described above. These barriers and additional challenges include the following.

K-12 Education System

1. A limited number of First Nations learners graduate from grade 12 with the appropriate pre-requisites in math and science to allow them entrance into a variety of career programs.
2. Too many First Nations students have a limited understanding of the diversity of professional options that are available to them, and they also have an insufficient understanding of the pre-requisites for admission to the related post-secondary education programs.

Education

1. Funding for First Nations students to attend post-secondary programming often is insufficient to meet their full needs, limiting their success in the education programs.
2. The current post-secondary education funding available to First Nations students through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) sets limits regarding program eligibility with respect to number of months of support. Given the bridging support that is required for the many First Nations students who did not take the pre-requisite math and science courses in high school, students often run out of financial support prior to completing their programming. A second challenge is that many professional education programs require

more than the number of months INAC allows for funding. This situation limits students from taking graduate and specialist programs.

3. Data regarding the number of First Nations learners engaged in various types of programming can be difficult to access and is complicated by the self-identification process.

Recruitment

1. As a result of the issues highlighted above, there are a limited number of First Nations professionals available to recruit.
2. It is often difficult to recruit professionals to remote First Nations communities.
3. First Nations often are not able to pay wages that are comparable to those provided in mainstream employment settings.
4. In mainstream settings, First Nations professionals and workers are sometimes ineligible for hiring due to union restrictions.

Retention

1. First Nations are not provided funding at levels that will allow them to compensate professionals at a level that is comparable to other employers. Often new graduates may start in a First Nations community to gain experience, but may then move on to higher paying jobs outside of the community.
2. Non-First Nations professionals can experience significant “culture shock” when they move to First Nations communities and are required to operate in a new legal and political environment. This situation can lead to people spending only short periods of time in First Nations communities.
3. There are limited opportunities for professionals in First Nations communities to network and support one another, due primarily to geographic and financial challenges.

Existing Strategies: Their Challenges and Solutions

Throughout the past decade, a range of stakeholders have implemented numerous activities to address the challenges highlighted above and to increase the number of trained and certified First Nations professionals available for employment. Initiatives also have been established to recruit and retain First Nations professionals in the First Nations and public health care, social service, education, and other sectors. Unfortunately, those initiatives have been limited by a number of factors, as described below.

Bridging Programs

Many post-secondary institutions and First Nations communities have created bridging programs to address the needs of First Nations students and to help them take and pass the courses required for entrance to specific programs. Such programs generally include upgrading in English, math, and science, as well as courses that address life, study, and computer skills.

In spite of their importance, however, direct contact with post-secondary institutions has highlighted several challenges related to bridging programs.

- Proposal driven processes, which are common to most programs, result in institutions competing against one another, limiting opportunities for sharing information and experiences amongst post-secondary institutions.
- Funding generally has been limited to annual, proposal driven projects. This situation has resulted in programs and services not being institutionalized (regularized into the institutions' budget), which affects the ownership / commitment to having programs continue beyond the period of the external investment.
- Proposal driven programming takes time to process, and often funding is not secured until late in the fiscal year. This situation can make it difficult to plan and deliver the proposed initiatives within the timeframe allowed.

Recruitment Officers

Recruitment officers representing a range of sectors have been attending gatherings and career fairs across BC, providing information to both youth and adult learners who are considering specific careers. The officers also have been available to visit communities and provide presentations on the benefits and opportunities available to First Nations professionals.

However, the availability of these officers – while positive – cannot in itself address the issue of inadequate preparation of students who are interested in post-secondary education programs and careers, nor can they address insufficient funding for First Nations students. Therefore, these officers must be considered an enhancement to other, broad initiatives.

Scholarships and Bursaries

Reflecting the well-recognized need for increased numbers of Aboriginal professionals, many organizations and various levels of government have created scholarships and bursaries to support Aboriginal students in a variety of post-secondary programs. These efforts provide much-needed assistance to support First Nations students in terms of living allowances,

childcare, transportation, and other living expenses associated with studying outside of their communities.

However, challenges related to scholarships and bursaries include insufficient financial support for all students who need it, as well as insufficient awareness of and applications to existing funding opportunities.

What Collective Help Can Be Offered Through the FNPSS?

Identifying Capacity Building Needs

1. Work with provincial-level organizations to consider what human resource development strategies are needed consistently across sectors, including bridging programs, orientation initiatives, etc. For example, the FNPSS has been and plans to continue working closely with the First Nations Health Council (FNHC) to explore how to work together to advance the development of a Health Human Resource (HHR) Strategy, one of the deliverables outlined in the Tripartite Agreement between Canada, BC, and the FNHC. A proposal for joint work was submitted for 2010-2011.
2. Consult with various provincial-level organizations and First Nations communities regarding the development of standards and competencies for all professional sectors, including possible mechanisms for evaluating or monitoring performance according to the standards. For example, the First Nations Schools Association has prepared standards and competencies for teachers who work in First Nations schools in BC, as well as an accompanying First Nations-controlled certification and support process for those teachers. The FNPSS could assist in sharing that model for possible adaptation by other interested First Nations organizations, resulting in very beneficial information sharing.

Research and Policy Development

- Undertake research and develop template policies and materials to address issues that are common to all professional sectors. For example, in 2009 the FNPSS supported a review of nursing programs at BC post-secondary institutions to identify what programming is working, what more is needed, ideas regarding how to coordinate a sharing of ideas and outcomes, and the development of a network to support further developments in nursing programs in BC. The information gained through this research could have relevance for professional development programs in other health and even non-health sectors, and the FNPSS could coordinator a sharing of such information.

A second example of how the FNPSS can contribute to research with broad impact relates to ongoing discussions between the FNPSS and the First Nations Technology Council. The two organizations have been exploring possibilities for the development of a toolkit for information management in First Nations communities. The toolkit will include: background regarding legal requirements and standards for Records Information Management (RIM); a sample classification framework that will be available for communities to tailor to their specific needs; sample forms for various types of records; and a sample RIM policy in downloadable form, which can be tailored to meet the specific needs of communities throughout BC. This issue also is relevant to all professional sectors.

A third example of joint research relates to work being coordinated with the FNPSS, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA), and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA). FNESC, the FNSA, and IAHLA have developed copyright policies and research protocol agreements to guide the appropriate conduct and sharing of research results for projects with which they are involved. The FNPSS has been invited to participate in this work, with the hope that the FNPSS can use the materials developed by FNESC, the FNSA, and IAHLA to create templates that will be useful to other First Nations organizations and communities.

Training

- Work with existing provincial-level First Nations organizations to promote cooperative bridging or transition programs, focusing on requirements that are common to all relevant post-secondary programs, with additional courses that may be specific to each sector.
- Promote the importance of ongoing professional development with employers, helping to increase understanding of this critical investment in the professionals who choose to work within First Nations communities.

Mentoring

- Work with existing First Nations organizations to explore mentoring opportunities and possibilities for the FNPSS to support and coordinate mentoring initiatives.
- Provide handbooks and template policies to support the implementation of mentoring programs.
- Explore possibilities for funding mentoring programs to ensure that they are comprehensive and effective.

Professional Exchanges

- Work with First Nations organizations and communities to explore options for a First Nations-specific provincial exchange program, including considering the types of employment and potential opportunities that would be most appropriate for this type of professional development.

Work To Advance Post-Secondary Opportunities for First Nations People

- Support work to increase funding for and recognition of the key role of First Nations-controlled post-secondary institutes in BC for the provision of training and higher educational opportunities for First Nations professionals. For example, the FNPSS has a continuing role with the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group², and is committed to working with the FNEESC and IAHLA to promote a relevant policy that will lead to increased support from the Province of BC for First Nations post-secondary institutes.
- Coordinate the efforts now being taken by a variety of First Nations communities, organizations, and post-secondary institutes to advance more positive, beneficial, and respectful relationships with public post-secondary institutions in BC. For example, the FNPSS is monitoring ongoing work by IAHLA to research and promote equitable and effective agreements between Aboriginal and public post-secondary institutions.

Ongoing efforts with the First Nations Health Council on human resource development also will necessarily involve discussions and agreements with post-secondary institutions.

In addition, a draft Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared for the FNPSS and the National Centre for First Nations Governance outlining, among other joint activities, possible work with and relationship-building with post-secondary institutions.

² The BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners includes a range of organizations that are working collectively to improve access and success for all Aboriginal post-secondary learners in BC. The Partners were established by a MoU on March 11, 2005. Since that time, the Post-Secondary Partners have been meeting quarterly to share information, brainstorm strategies, and to create a Made in BC Strategy for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training. Signatories to the MoU include FNEESC, IAHLA, the First Nations Summit, the Strategic Action Committee, Métis Provincial Council of BC, United Native Nations Society, INAC, BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, University Presidents' Council of BC, University College Presidents, and the BC College Presidents. Other contributing members include the BC Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agencies Society, the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch of the BC Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Development, Service Canada, and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation.

This area of work will undoubtedly continue to be a priority, and the FNPSS' efforts to share information, experiences, and template agreements therefore should be beneficial for a range of First Nations organizations and First Nations communities.

2.4 - Building Partnerships for Change

As described throughout this paper, in order to help address the challenges that exist and to promote a comprehensive, integrated, and collaborative approach to Nation Building, the BC FNPSS is working to establish a network of partnerships, including – among others – the following.

First Nations Communities

As indicated above, BC First Nations communities already have tremendous skills, knowledge, and capacities that are relevant to human resource development. In addition to capacities that have traditionally existed in First Nations communities, many First Nations communities have been focusing on enhancing their human resource capacity by developing and building on traditional knowledge and skill sets. These experiences can be captured and shared amongst BC First Nations as best practices.

First Nations Provincial Organizations

As noted, First Nations recognize the strength and benefits to be gained from working together. Accordingly they already have created a number of provincial-level First Nations organizations to work on their behalf in areas such as health, child welfare, finances, technology, education, and governance. These provincial service organizations are already providing excellent programs and coordination for First Nations in BC.

BC First Nations have given these organizations a mandate to facilitate advocacy efforts, professional development opportunities, research, policy development, and, as appropriate, deliver services. These mandates are a perfect complement for the work of the FNPSS, which can work with other First Nations organizations to explore possibilities for creating a provincial network. Such a network could allow for a sharing of experiences, expertise, and ideas. A network of First Nations organizations also could explore possibilities for collective approaches to managing specific aspects of their operations in a cost-effective manner, such as financial and human resource management.

First Nations Post-Secondary Institutes.

There are approximately 34 First Nations controlled post-secondary institutes in BC, which came together in 2003 to form the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA). First Nations post-secondary institutes, with the support of IAHLA, can play a critical role in building First Nations human resource capacity. These institutes have experience and expertise in providing supportive learning environments to First Nations learners, and they provide many bridging programs that enable First Nations learners to acquire the study, life, literacy and numeracy skills required for further post-secondary education. The First Nations post-secondary institutes also have existing relationships or agreements with public post-secondary institutions, which allow students to ladder into diploma or degree programs.

Provincial Government Agencies

There are many ways that the Province of BC can support First Nations human resource capacity building initiatives in BC, including internship programs, shared training courses, hosting exchanges, and providing mentorship opportunities, among others.

Federal Government Agencies

The federal government also can support First Nations capacity building opportunities and implement internship, mentorship, exchange programs, and other opportunities as identified jointly with First Nations communities.

Regulatory Bodies

Some of the human resource capacity building initiatives that have been identified and developed by First Nations organizations and institutes have been designed to grant certification upon completion of the training and work experience, allowing those people who have been granted certification to be more mobile in pursuing other employment. In consultation with First Nations communities and First Nations provincial-level organizations, the FNPSS could explore how these processes would be regulated, possibly through the creation of a collective First Nations agency to coordinate and monitor the regulations.

Professional Associations

Professional associations can play a critical role in supporting the implementation and monitoring of the human resource development strategies, possibly through increased partnerships with First Nations provincial-level organizations. Such partnerships could support improved networking, mentorships, professional development, sharing of best practices, and research.

3. SUMMARY

As described above, First Nations representatives in BC have identified a range of activities that can be undertaken to support capacity building and the continued development of an effective and rewarding First Nations public service. The FNPSS looks forward to working in collaboration with First Nations to advance this important work.