



Aboriginal Education Research Centre

Preparing a Holistic Approach for A Virtual Aboriginal Health Training Centre of Excellence within Saskatchewan

Dialogue Paper / Executive Summary

Dr. Alex Wilson
E-Mail: Alex.wilson@usask.ca
Tel: (306) 966-7679

May 2007

Introduction The Province of Saskatchewan, along with the Government of Canada, is determined to develop innovative strategies that will attract, engage and retain an Aboriginal health care workforce. In 2006, as part of this commitment, the Province announced that, working in partnership with Aboriginal Peoples, it would look into the creation of a virtual Aboriginal health training and workforce development “Centre of Excellence”.

A Holistic Approach is desired to create a place where diverse views can be put forward, valued and assist in contributing to new understandings. Applying a holistic approach will assist in creating an ‘ethical space’ among all partners.

Issues identified as affecting Aboriginal health training and workforce development include the following: community ownership and local design and control of health services; traditional Aboriginal and Western health and wellness concepts and practices; jurisdictional authorities and fiscal responsibilities; preparation of students for careers in the health sector; addressing gaps in employment and science training; recruitment and retention of Aboriginal individuals in health-related education and training; creating a welcoming environment for Aboriginal individuals at health sector workplaces; and recruitment and retention of health workers in Aboriginal communities.

Saskatchewan Initiatives already underway show our province is a leader in health training and workforce development for Aboriginal Peoples. Some of the initiatives include: Partnerships for Building a Representative Workforce; Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA): Capacity Development Program; Native Access Program to Nursing / Medicine (NAPN); Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan (NEPS); Kawacatoose First Nation Practical Nursing Program; Northern Health Sciences Access Program (NHSAP); and SAHO Aboriginal Awareness Training.

A Centre of Excellence attracts people who are leaders, innovators and experts in their fields, including community-based partners, representatives of government, industry and academic sectors. Tasks typically taken on by centres of excellence include: advancing knowledge in an area by conducting research and gathering information and data; sharing information with and transferring knowledge to communities, government and other stakeholders; developing and improving capacity among underrepresented groups; improving the connections and communications among diverse professional, community, government stakeholders; providing policy advice to government and other stakeholders; and developing and strengthening partnerships and networks between stakeholders. The term virtual describes something created or simulated using computers or computer networks. To create a virtual centre of excellence reflects a vision for the centre as a place or network where people will be able to interact, communicate and learn from each other, regardless of their physical location.

Centre of Excellence Models within Canada include: Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (ABLKC), National Aboriginal Health Organization, The Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence, Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, and the Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence.

Imagining a Saskatchewan Model involves examining a number of features useful in developing a holistic approach to a comprehensive Virtual Aboriginal Health Training Centre of Excellence. The illustration framework is based on activities found in other centres of excellence and is not intended to be prescriptive to those involved in a dialogue or consultation process.

Goal: Virtual Aboriginal Health Training

Stakeholders: Health Training Users and Providers:
Individuals, Organizations, Networks and Communities

Key Activities: Partnership Building and Networking
Knowledge Exchange and Knowledge Transfer
Policy Advice
Research and Consultation
Educational Programming
Support Services and Retention Services
Recruitment to Health Training and Professions

Scoping Questions for a dialogue on a Holistic Approach to a Virtual Aboriginal Health Training Centre of Excellence within Saskatchewan

Why?

- Why could a Virtual Aboriginal Health Training Centre of Excellence be useful for you? (What do demographics of Saskatchewan's population & health sector tell us about future needs in this province?)
- Why is a collaborative process important to you?

What / How?

- What research has already been done in the area of Aboriginal health training? What research remains to be done?
- What outcomes do you want to see result from Centre activities?
- What activities and operations do you think the Centre should carry out?
- What is a shared vision for a Centre?
- How could the Centre be designed and operated?
- What are challenges that can be foreseen? How can they be solved?

Who?

- Who are the key partners in the Centre?
- Who will define the roles and responsibilities of the key partners?
- Who will define and monitor ethical processes?

Where?

- Where would the Centre be based?
- Where would consultations be targeted? How will consultation results be analyzed and used?

When?

- What would a planning cycle of time for the Centre look like? (planning – consultation – establishment – strategic development – evaluation...)