

Education

Relevant Details

Vancouver School Board's 2004/05 Aboriginal Report - How are We Doing? and VSB staff

- In 2005/06 there were 2,003 Aboriginal students in Vancouver schools, 3% of overall students. Approximately 155 lived on-reserve, 1204 elementary, 789 secondary.
- There are at least five alternate schools or day programs with approximately 100 students.
- Musqueam First Nation is within Vancouver boundaries, but has no on-reserve school.
- VSB 2003/04 Aboriginal graduation rate was 14% (average was 22.25% for the 4 previous years), compared to the non-Aboriginal rate of 86%.
- Provincial Aboriginal graduation rate is 46%.
- Most youth drop out of school during the transition from elementary to secondary (7, 8, 9).
- Once a Native youth makes it to grade 12, s/he does quite well. The challenge is in getting them there. In 2003/04, Aboriginal youth who were in grade 12 English had a success rate of 95% compared to non-Aboriginal students at 86%. Those in grade 12 Communications had a success rate of 84% compared to 89%, and Math 60% compared to 87%.
- The number of Aboriginal students in special education classes was 166 elementary students and 233 secondary students. Percentage of overall Aboriginal students in special education classes: 1% for sensory disabilities, 7% for learning disabilities, behavioural 18%, mild intellect 1%, and only 10 students were classified as 'gifted.'

Other info:

- Post-secondary education [is] particularly important for Aboriginal people since it dramatically increase[s] their chance of obtaining employment. In 2005 only 39.9% of Aboriginal people had completed some form of post-secondary education compared to 55.6% for non-Aboriginal people. In Western Canada, the employment rate for Aboriginal people aged 25-64 who had finished post-secondary education was 82.5%, almost equal to non-Aboriginal people (Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve in Western Canada: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2005).
- Only 8.9% of off-reserve Aboriginal people attain a university degree compared to 24.6% for non-Aboriginal people in general. The rates for trades programs and non-university post secondary credentials are almost equal to that of the non-Aboriginal population. (BC Stats article: Educational Attainment of Aboriginal Peoples: Part II - Post Secondary Completion).
- There are only three dedicated Aboriginal libraries, all of which are small, in Vancouver; Xwi7wa at UBC, the Native Education Centre, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.
- Institutionalized concerns have been identified as key factors in dropout rates (i.e. not enough Aboriginal teachers, action on issues, Aboriginal-focused curriculum, or

supports to Aboriginal youth despite all indicators identifying them as needing the most supports).

- Although it is commonly believed that all Aboriginal people obtain a free post-secondary education, only 'status' individuals can apply for the limited funding of each First Nation whose funding may only send 4 or 5 students to school each year.
- Many youth who drop out of school drift towards street involvement such as drug sales, sex trade, gangs, and alcohol & drug use to make money and/or cope with their personal issues.

Who's Involved? (Elementary & Secondary)

Qey-Sta:m Learning Centre (Musqueam)

- Helps members to improve their reading, writing, and math skills and to complete their high school education. Students may also learn and begin a cooking apprenticeship, as well as gain work experience.

Urban Native Youth Association (1640 East Hastings Street)

- Alcohol & drug prevention-focused School Support Program to help Aboriginal youth stay in and do well in school both socially and academically.
- Trains and pays Aboriginal post-secondary students to be part-time tutor/mentors to Aboriginal elementary and secondary students.
- Computer lab with designated times and support for youth doing school related work
- Summer Daycamp to outreach to students transitioning from elementary to high school (when most Aboriginal students drop out).
- Two Day Programs for at-risk Aboriginal youth ages 13 - 18 (a.k.a. alternate school).

Vancouver School Board, District 39 (1580 West Broadway)

- 2,003 Aboriginal students in 2005/06.
- Federal transfer payments for Aboriginal students help to fund the 26 First Nations Support Workers who cover over 100 schools. They offer some or all of the following; personal support, referrals, in-class support, crisis intervention, liaison between school & guardians.
- 35 First Nations teachers, and two Principals/Vice-Principals.
- VSB leads a committee for day programs and alternate schools operators.
- The VSB is in the midst of creating an Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement as part of a district-wide strategic plan. Some community members participate on the committee.

First Nations House of Learning (1985 West Mall, UBC)

- Summer Science Program for grade 10 students from across the province.
- Cedar Program for grade 6, 7, 8 students with interest in science, forestry, and arts. Two week summer program.
- Museum of Anthropology's Native Youth Program offers Native youth the opportunity to research and interpret their own cultures in a museum setting.
- Chinook Aboriginal Business Education Entrepreneurship Leadership Forum for grades 10, 11, and 12. One week summer program.

BC Ministry of Children & Family Development

- Have consolidated all of their contracted services for at-risk youth in Vancouver to four not-for-profit organizations who each have a designated Youth Hub in various regions of the city. Each Youth Hub offers a variety of services on-site as well as satellite locations.
- Four day programs for at-risk youth, two of which are Aboriginal specific, are delivered by the four Youth Hubs. Day programs are what are commonly referred to as alternative schools for secondary students who for various reasons are unable to attend mainstream schools.

Vancouver Coastal Health

- Provides funding for mental health, alcohol and drug, and other support people for BC Ministry of Children & Family Development day programs.
- Provides some funding for mental health workers who provide services to VSB students.

First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) (100 Park Royal South, W. Vancouver)

- Committee of on-reserve reps who advocate for change in the school system throughout BC.
- Work includes research, policy recommendations, curriculum design, staff training, etc.

Partnerships

- The BC Ministry of Children & Family Development is leading a process to better integrate services, including education, to at-risk youth. This work is in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver School Board, and community not-for-profit organizations. Planning involves ensuring programs are in various regions throughout Vancouver, there is Aboriginal-specific programming, that they work towards ensuring there are adequate staffing resources at each site, and addressing diverse issues such as mental health, justice, and young parents.
- The Vancouver School Board partners with community not-for-profit organizations to offer on- and off-site programming to support students both academically and socially. For example, the Urban Native Youth Association offers homework clubs and tutor/mentors in VSB schools, and staff members refer students to community-based resources to help meet their educational and personal needs.
- Vancouver Coastal Health partners with BC Ministry of Children & Family Development and the Vancouver School Board to provide personal support to students.

Committees

- Vancouver School Board coordinates a Day Program Committee that includes Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver School Board, MCFD, and the four Youth Hubs to coordinate and integrate Day Programs. This group meets quarterly to provide updates, talk about issues and concerns, and identify gaps.
- Vancouver School Board has its own internal Aboriginal Planning Committee which makes funding and other Vancouver School Board related decisions regarding Aboriginal funding

- FNESC has a committee made up of the First Nations representatives who concentrate on on-reserve educational issues.

Trends

- In recent years, the Vancouver School Board has formed partnerships with community organizations to offer personal and academic support services both on- and off-site.
- In 2005, the BC Ministry of Children & Family Development restructured their day programs to provide services throughout Vancouver, and to better service distinct populations of youth (Aboriginal, justice issues, mental health, behavioural).
- Since 2004, there have been repeated efforts to launch an Aboriginal-focused elementary and/or secondary school to help improve the academic success of Aboriginal students. Although there has been no funding identified yet, the BC Ministry of Education, the VSB, and many Aboriginal community members and organizations are very interested.
- As few research projects are being conducted to identify what supports are needed to help Aboriginal youth graduate from high school. The focus is on what has been successful how to involve and support family participation, and how to best provide personal support.

Gaps

- Most partnerships and initiatives are focused on at-risk youth, so youth who may be doing well are receiving very little support and/or encouragement.
- Most partnership and initiatives are focused on youth, so children under the age of 13 are often left with minimal supports.
- Aboriginal youth are more likely to become young parents, but there are no programs to help meet their unique needs so that they can stay in and do well in school.
- Not enough First Nations teachers, principals, and support staff.
- Very little Aboriginal content in curriculum and/or those in secondary school that do focus on Aboriginal issues are electives rather than mandatory courses.
- There are only 26 First Nations Support Workers who work with over 100 different schools, so often a FNSW can only get to a school only a few hours a week.

Who's Involved? (Post- Secondary)

Native Education Centre (285 East 5th Avenue)

- Upgrading, College Prep, and Certificate programs.
- A few accredited courses that can transfer with full credit to other post-secondary institutions.
- Supportive and culturally appropriate environment, including building design.

Urban Native Youth Association (1640 East Hastings Street)

- Trains and pays Aboriginal post-secondary students to be part-time tutor/mentors to Aboriginal elementary and secondary students.
- Operates a computer lab that post-secondary students can use for research or data entry.

Institute of Indigenous Governance (Burnaby)

- Numerous programs taught from an Indigenous perspective.
- Some accredited courses that can transfer to other post-secondary institutions.
- Many of their students live in Vancouver.

University of British Columbia

- Their Trek 2000 Vision had a recruitment goal of 1000 Aboriginal students by the year 2000, but this was not met as there were only 350 Aboriginal students that year. The new Trek 2010 Vision only mentions increasing Aboriginal student recruitment and retention without offering any specific goals.
- Offers the First Nations Language Program, First Nations Studies, Native Indian Teachers Education Program, First Nations Legal Studies, Aboriginal Residency Program, First Nations Concentration in the MAS & MLIS programs, and the Institute for Aboriginal Health.
- Has a number of First Nations Advisors or Student Liaisons in various faculties
- Has the First Nations House of Learning (see next category).

First Nations House of Learning (1985 West Mall, UBC)

- On-campus longhouse facility for students.

- Personal and academic support, cultural teachings, and employment for Aboriginal students.
- Works on policy recommendations, curriculum design, and administers a Native Indian Teachers Education Program (NITEP).

Chief Dan George Centre for Advanced Education (639 Hornby Street)

- Various on-site and E-Learning courses, as well as SFU off-campus courses
- Social activities to bring Aboriginal post-secondary students together

British Columbia Institute of Technology (3700 Willingdon Ave, Burnaby)

- Aboriginal-focused training opportunities in computer programming and other areas.
- Outreach to on-reserve communities to recruit students and/or offer satellite courses.
- Campuses in Vancouver.

Simon Fraser University

- First Nations Studies Program, Certificate in First Nations Studies Research.
- Has a First Nations Advisor.
- Some courses offered at the Downtown Vancouver location.

BC Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environment (UBC)

- Aboriginal student awards help build research capacity within the Aboriginal communities through scholarships/ fellowships for post-secondary students.

Langara College (100 West 49th Avenue)

- Offers an integrated university transferable program that addresses historic and contemporary Aboriginal issues in Canada.
- Has a First Nations Advisor.
- Curriculum adopts a unique outcome approach, providing flexible options for students in employment or further education, and strives to overcome many of the systemic barriers that can hinder the success and completion rates for many Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal Community Career & Employment Services Society (1607 East Hastings Street)

- Some funding to post-secondary students and summer student funding.
- Funding to the Urban Native Youth Association to provide part-time tutor and mentoring jobs to Aboriginal post-secondary students and a computer lab with resources for students.

First Nations Employment Society (440 Cambie Street)

- Some funding to post-secondary students.
- Summer student funding.

Partnerships

- none

Committees

- Native Education Centre, Urban Native Youth Association, and six other community groups are members of the Aboriginal Community Career & Employment Services Society Board of Directors who find unique ways to help support post-secondary students.

Trends

- UBC and SFU both have Aboriginal Recruitment Strategies, but numbers are still very low. There seems to have been a small amount of progress over the years, but none of the institutions post improvement rates.
- Aboriginal education organizations are evolving to meet the changing needs in the Aboriginal communities in the areas of law, social work, education, and environment. Many students come from out of town to complete their education, then return to their home communities.
- Aboriginal organizations are partnering more with non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions to encourage and support Aboriginal students to further their education.
- Aboriginal educational organizations are striving to have more accredited courses and programs, often in partnership with non-Aboriginal educational institutions.
- An increased number of Aboriginal students attending post-secondary institutes has led to decreased access to the very limited funding pool as there are now long waiting lists for funding from First Nations Bands due to the higher demand.

Gaps

- Of the Aboriginal youth who manage to graduate secondary school in Vancouver, very few have the academic, social, or financial means to pursue a post-secondary education. This sometimes means that Aboriginal youth cannot continue with their education despite graduating from high school, or it can lead to very challenging times in post-secondary studies for these students and/or an unsuccessful attempt at post-secondary studies.
- There are no funds to support upgrading, although this is a great need since the vast majority of Aboriginal youth drop out of high school before completion.
- There is a lack of knowledge within Aboriginal communities of post-secondary options
- There is a lack of basic knowledge of how post-secondary schools work, such as what a GPA, transferable course, bachelor's degree, or bursary is. This lack of knowledge can be very intimidating and inhibit many from exploring their educational options.
- Aboriginal schools have many high-quality, but non-accredited courses that cannot be transferred or transferred for full credit. So while the personal support they offer may help students succeed, the students have to face the realities of time, finances, or relocation which may lead them to attend other institutions rather than an aboriginal school which may be their preferred choice.
- With locations throughout Vancouver, there are no glaring gaps, but there is a lack of knowledge of these resources within Aboriginal and mainstream communities.

Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.