

DRAFT SNAPSHOT REPORT - PART B
First Nations Public Administration Programs
BC Post-Secondary Institutions

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report looks at First Nations public administration programs in BC post-secondary institutions. There are currently four First Nations public administration programs operational in BC. These are delivered by: (1) Nicola Valley Institute of Technology; (2) North Island College; (3) the University of Victoria; and, (4) the University of Northern British Columbia.

Key successes of the programs include: (1) content that is relevant to First Nations; (2) cohort model with face-to-face instruction; and (3) transferability of accredited programs. Key challenges of the programs include: (1) lack of base-funding by post-secondary institutions; (2) departmental capacity to expand and maintain programs hinges on year-to-year funding; and (3) high student attrition rates for two of the programs.

The scope of this report was limited specifically to First Nations public administration accredited programs delivered by public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. It does not include: programs delivered outside of British Columbia; programs that are not targeted to First Nations public administration specifically; or (3) programs that are delivered by non-profit organizations. In the case of (3) some of these programs fell into the earlier report, Snapshot Part A, as this is the second half of the two-part report.

3. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the offerings of First Nations public administration programs offered in BC post-secondary institutions. At present, there are four First Nation public administration programs: (1) the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology; (2) the University of Victoria; (3) North Island College; and, (4) the University of Northern British Columbia.

This report includes an overview of each of these programs and concludes by identifying common themes — including successes and challenges for all programs.

In addition to the above programs, there are three other programs that develop business, leadership and financial skill sets, but these programs are not geared toward First Nation public administrators, specifically. These programs are: (1) the Executive Master of Business Administration in Indigenous Business and Leadership offered by Simon Fraser University; (2) Aboriginal Financial Management offered by the College of the Rockies; and (3) Business Fundamentals for Aboriginal Communities offered by Vancouver Island University. Short summaries of these programs are included in Annex A.

This report is part two of a two-part report (Part A and B). Part A of this report examined capacity building programs specific to the First Nation public service that were delivered primarily by Aboriginal non-profit organizations. Many of these programs were non-accredited, or non-transferable with the exception of two organizations. Please refer to Part A of the report for additional details.

4. METHODOLOGY

To identify First Nation public administration programs the websites for all public British Columbia post-secondary institutions were examined. Potential programs were reviewed to determine whether the curriculum of the program fell within the scope of this report. Following that analysis, the above four programs were selected for follow-up interviews to gather detailed information. Interviews with administrators or professors from each institution were conducted between April 18 – May 31, 2019.

5. PROGRAM DETAILS

5A. Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Program Overview

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is an accredited post-secondary institution that was started by and is controlled by Aboriginal people. NVIT offers both a certificate and a diploma in First Nations public administration. Once a certificate has been completed, there is also an option to complete a diploma with a concentration in the following streams: (1) Band Administration; (2) Education Director; (3) First Nations Housing; (4) Human Services/Social; and, (5) Parks/Public works stream

The NVIT Public Administration Certificate has been delivered for about twenty years, with the curriculum being reviewed every five years. The curriculum was originally developed through conversations and outreach with First Nations leaders, Elders, First Nations communities and potential students.

The certificate program is unique in BC as it is delivered face-to-face in a First Nation community, on a contractual basis. By eliminating the need for travel and increasing face-to-face supports, NVIT's delivery model helps to ensure a high completion rate of students who are enrolled in the certificate. When the certificate is delivered in the community, all, or nearly all students graduate. The program requires 15 students to run, with a maximum of 25 students. The certificate program is also unique in that it has been delivered on a contractual basis to First Nations in other provinces, including Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

Each of the ten required courses is delivered Monday-Saturday, or one week a month for 10 months. There is also a small on-line component where the students are required to do their advance reading, and also at the end where assignments may be submitted online.

The diploma program tends to be delivered on-line. Detailed statistics for the diploma streams were not available at time of writing. The Education Administration has seen particular success with a high completion rate. For example, the recent Education Administration stream had 44 graduates from an initial group of 47 students.

Curriculum Details

The 30-credit certificate consists of the following ten courses: (1) Negotiations and Contract Management; (2) Introduction to Management; (3) Community Development 1; (4) Finite Mathematics; (5) Organizational Behaviour; (6) Introduction to Economics; (7) Business Law; (8) English Composition; (9) Canadian Govt. & Politics; and (10) Strategies for Success.

To acquire a diploma in Band Administration a further six courses (18 credits) are completed, along with 4 elective courses (12 credits) electives. The required courses for the Band Administration diploma are: (1) Project Management; (2) Aboriginal Governance Development; (3) Contemporary First Nation Issues; (4) Introduction to Statistics; (5) Introduction to Finance; and (6) Human Resources Management.

The 30 and 60 credit programs are generally transferable to other universities.

5B. North Island College

Program Overview

The Aboriginal Leadership Certificate offered by the North Island College is a new program that started in September 2018. The program was developed through outreach and extensive consultation with local communities and is designed to build skills for public administration in Aboriginal organizations.

The program is a cohort model and offers a blended learning option with course content delivered on-line and then periodic face-to-face intensives at the various campuses. The face-to-face intensives move around to the different communities that the students are from. Elders are involved in the program in a number of ways: they attend the face-to-face intensives and also answer questions and offer emotional support in the online forums.

Most of the people attending the program are already working and many have family and child-care responsibilities. The decision was made to deliver the program full-time (3 courses per semester) so that course participants would be eligible for tuition funding and living allowance funding through their First Nation. To help remove this financial barrier, the college waived tuition for the first semester of the first co-hort.

The first cohort is graduating in December 2019 and a second cohort is tentatively planned for September 2020, based on securing funding. The first cohort started with 15 students – the majority female. All students were from the Northern Island, with a few originally coming from Coastal BC (Bella Bella). Of the original 15 students, 8-9 will graduate. The high attrition rate is attributed to a variety of factors, including: (1) the existing

heavy load of participants; (2) family responsibilities and childcare; (3) the added expense and logistics of travel (on top of tuition); and, (4) the challenge of on-line learning.

Feedback from program participants has been positive and the program participants have particularly enjoyed the face-to-face time and working with Elder mentors to further their knowledge. The face-to-face intensives have been identified as a key success of the program.

Curriculum Details

To obtain a certificate, the following courses must be completed: (1) Effective Organizational Writing or Effective Organizational Communications; (2) Histories & Impacts of Colonization; (3) Governance & Organizational Structures; (4) Vision, Values, Philosophies & Ethics; (5) Politics, Policy & Practise; (6) Community Development & Planning; (7) Economic Development; (8) Human Resources; (9) Communications; and (10) Finance.

The 30-credit program is generally transferable to other post-secondary institutions.

5C. University of Victoria

Program Overview

The University of Victoria offers a Diploma in Indigenous Community Development and Governance (ICDG). The ICDG Diploma has been offered since 2016. However, the program's predecessor, the Certificate in Administration of Aboriginal Government (CAAG), later called the Certificate in Administration of Indigenous Government (CAIG) program, was operational for many years, dating back to the early 1990s.

The new ICDG program was developed in consultation with First Nation leaders, Elders, communities and potential students. Feed-back during the development of the program included the desire for a rigorous diploma, as well as transferable credits.

The 11-course diploma¹⁴ is delivered part-time through a blended model, with course-work being completed on-line and face-to-face learning taking place throughout the duration of the program. The program is two years in length, with two courses being completed per semester. The week-long face-to-face intensives take place in Victoria three times throughout the program.

The program emphasizes content that is relevant to First Nations and brings in Elders and Indigenous Speakers during the week-long intensives. The program is also distinct from the other First Nation public administration programs because of its focus on upper level (300 and 400) course-work.

Students are typically already working when they undertake this program. With the students already working and having child-care and family responsibilities, there has been some attrition. As the program is delivered on

¹⁴ Each course is 1.5 units (except for one). The 1.5 unit courses at the University of Victoria are the equivalent to what most other institutions would call their 3.0 credit courses, based on the number of hours in the classroom per week.

a part-time basis, students who take the program are not eligible for funding through their communities nor for scholarships or bursaries.

The program graduated its first cohort of eight students, in 2018. The program started with 13 students but lost five to attrition. The second cohort will have twenty students and has enrolled students from across Canada. Of these, about half are from British Columbia with the remaining students coming from: Saskatchewan; Manitoba; Quebec; Ontario and the Northwest Territories.

Curriculum Details

To obtain the diploma, students must complete the following courses: (1) Skills Workshop and Orientation; (2) Governance in indigenous Communities; (3) Communications in Indigenous Governments & Organizations; (4) Lands, Resources & Economic Development; (5) Strategic Planning & Implementation; (6) Financial Management in Indigenous Governments & Organizations; (7) Human Resource Management in Indigenous Organizations; (8) Managing Change for Effective & Social & Community Development; (9) Indigenous Research & Project Management; (10) Leadership in Indigenous Communities & Governments; (11) Intergovernmental Relations: Working with Others; and, (12) Capstone for Indigenous Governments & Organizations.

Course credits are generally transferable to other Universities. The diploma currently “ladders” into the Bachelor of Public Administration offered by Thompson Rivers University.

5D. University of Northern British Columbia

Program Overview

The First Nation Public Administration certificate offered by the University of Northern British Columbia is offered through general classes available to all undergraduate students and is not a cohort model. The courses are offered through a variety of departments across the University. Statistics for the number of graduates who received this certificate were not available at the time of writing.

The certificate does not have a program manager to oversee or promote the program and does not receive government funding.

Curriculum Details

On the university website, the 30-credit certificate indicates the following courses would be required: (1) Financial Accounting; (2) Macroeconomics; (3) Writing & Communication Skills; (4) Research Writing; (5) the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada; (6) Contemporary Challenges Facing Aboriginal Communities; (7) Aboriginal Resource Planning; (8) Law & Indigenous Peoples; (9) Contemporary Political Issues; and, (10) Canadian Government & Politics. Each course is 3.0 credits and may be applied to a degree.

6. COMMON THEMES

In speaking with the administrators and professors about the programs, several themes began to emerge. Some of the theme areas were in areas that are described as “unquantifiable” successes. For example, the impact of having trained administrators working in a First Nation community, or having former students return to teach in their programs. Other themes emerged relating to the difficulties experienced in funding, departmental capacity and student attrition.

6A. Program Successes

Key successes of the programs include: (1) content that is relevant to First Nations; (2) the benefits of a having a cohort and face-to-face instruction; and, (3) transferability and laddering of accredited programs.

Relevant Content

The First Nation public administration programs in BC are of a high calibre and the curriculum has been designed to be relevant to First Nations. All three operational programs invested considerable time in consulting with Elders, leadership, First Nations and potential students to develop useful and culturally appropriate content. The programs also work to foster connections with Elders and bring in Indigenous speakers and instructors.

Cohort Model

The cohort model has been a significant success for these programs. The cohort model is invaluable for building a network and providing supports while completing the program. The cohorts also help to foster connections across communities. Students in the cohort are brought together for face-to-face intensives in two of the programs, while the NVIT program is delivered directly in the community. All administrators and professors interviewed stressed the strength of the in-person learning sessions as being key to the success of their program.

Transferability

The ability to allow students to earn credit towards a degree is an extremely important component of these programs. Post-secondary institutions indicated that in their consultations for program development, accredited and transferable programs were strongly preferred. All the programs provide for university transfer credit, and in the case of the University of Victoria, their diploma ladders in to the public administration degree offered by Thompson Rivers University.

6B. Program Challenges

Key challenges of the programs include: (1) lack of base-funding by post-secondary institutions; (2) departmental capacity to expand and maintain programs hinges on year-to-year funding dollars; and, (3) high student attrition rates.

Base-Funding

As none of the First Nations public administration programs are base-funded by the universities or college, the programs rely on a combination of funding to keep going. Funding sources have included: (1) federal and provincial government program funding; (2) the Vancouver Foundation; (3) the Victoria Foundation; and private donors. All cohort programs indicated they had received some government program funding, whether to get the program up and running or to continue its operation.

The difficulty in developing and maintaining a successful First Nations public administration program has been pronounced. One post-secondary administrator emphasized that the lack of base funding needs to be underscored and that to be seen as a “side program with soft funding has severe limitations”.

Fluctuating Program Capacity

Capacity to expand the programs, or in some cases even keep them running, has been a challenge. Not having sufficient funding means there is often no program coordinator and the program is coordinated “off the corner of someone’s desk”. The lack of a multi-year funding model has hindered the development and renewal of the programs. Having to seek funding renewal every year does not allow the administrators to plan long term or build long-term student recruitment. When funding has been available to support a program coordinator, the programs move forward. However, funding is needed on an ongoing basis to continue the momentum.

A disconnect on the timing of funding was also identified. Several of the programs indicated the timing of some program dollars did not always allow adequate time to recruit students. Students themselves also need to plan ahead and receive acceptance to a program before requesting educational dollars from their First Nation, as well.

High Attrition Rate

Two of the programs have experienced high attrition rates. The high attrition rate is generally attributed to the heavy load that the students are undertaking on top of existing career and family/child responsibilities.

In the case of the UVic and North Island College programs, almost all of the students are women. Program participants are generally working full-time and also have children and family obligations. Child-care arrangements are also needed for travel to the face-to-face intensives.

Financial barriers for travel expenses and tuition are also barriers to completion.

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Other Programs of Interest

Vancouver Island University – Business Fundamentals for Aboriginal Communities

The Vancouver Island University offers a 24-credit certificate program titled, Business Fundamentals for Aboriginal Communities. The certificate includes eight courses: (1) Introduction to Business; (2) Principles of Management; (3) Intro to College Algebra 1; (4) Intro to Marketing; (5) Intro to Economics; (6) Financial Accounting 1; (7) University Writing & Research and, (8) Student Success or Indigenous Learning & Recognition Portfolio.

Simon Fraser University: Executive MBA in Indigenous Business and Leadership

The 25-month program is geared towards mid-career professionals and includes 30-35 days each year of face-to-face intensives. The curriculum focuses on: entrepreneurship and business development; building capacity of people and organizations; sustainable, cultural and environmental stewardship; principled leadership and governance.¹⁵

College of the Rockies: Business Management: Aboriginal Financial Mgmt.

This two-year program is geared towards students who wish to pursue a financial career in Aboriginal organizations. Required courses are: Accounting 1; Strategy and Decisions; Micro-economics; English Composition; Finite Mathematics; Accounting 2; Advanced Professional Communications; Computer Applications in Business; Macroeconomics; Statistics; Business Law; Aboriginal History & Developments; Managerial Finance; Intermediate Accounting; Management Accounting 1; Quantitative Methods; Managerial Finance 2; Intermediate Accounting 2; Management Accounting 2; Aboriginal Ethics Case Study; Aboriginal Human & Fiscal Issues. This is a 63-credit program, with 9 of the credits being taken through partnership with AFOA.

¹⁵ Source: <https://beedie.sfu.ca/graduate/executive-mba/emba-ibl/about/curriculum/>