

Keeping the Seventh Fire: Developing an Undergraduate Degree Program for Aboriginal Adult Educators

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This article focuses on the actions currently underway in the development of a Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education Degree program (ADED-AB) with the Aboriginal community located in southern Ontario in partnership with Brock University. This is a story of the Wildfire Circle and how the "First Principles of Aboriginal Adult Education" came to be and how they might act as a path to understanding and anticipating the circumstances needed for successful learning experiences. This is also a story of the broader context of what Aboriginal adult education must be, and how Aboriginal education must begin, in order to have meaning, substance, and direction for future generations. Finally, this is the story of a spiritual enterprise that is both by its very existence a learning challenge to the prevailing postsecondary world view and a roadmap for the future.

The Journey to Wildfire

This is a story of the Wildfire Circle and how the "First Principles of Aboriginal Education" came to be and how they might act as a path to understanding and anticipating the circumstances needed for successful learning experiences in Aboriginal communities. This is also a story of the broader context of what Aboriginal education must be, and how Aboriginal education must begin, in order to have meaning, substance, and direction for the next seven generations.

In 1993 Brock University's Faculty of Education introduced the Bachelor of Education in Adult Education Degree program (ADED) designed and developed by Michael Kompf in 1991. This program is unique in several ways and is different than the general Bachelor of Education degree program in that it is an undergraduate first degree. The ADED option does not lead to an Ontario Teaching Certificate, as such designation is not required for teaching adults in Ontario or elsewhere.

The ADED program was designed to parallel the general structure of Brock's mainstream teacher education program with curriculum content collaboratively developed through consultation with the population served by the program and included a novel approach to program delivery, that is, video-based instruction and site facilitation. The program consists of five full undergraduate courses at fourth year level focusing on:

1. Foundations of adult teaching and learning;
2. Curriculum design and development;

A glossary of terms appears in the Appendix.

3. Curriculum delivery and evaluation;
4. Organizational and administrative issue; and
5. Developmental issues in adult teaching and learning.

An additional 10 undergraduate courses (transfers, awarded or earned credits) are needed for a total of 15 to complete the ADED as a first degree. A certificate option is available for those wishing to complete only the five ADED courses without continuing to degree completion.

In the first stages of development of the program, the Ontario central region Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) designated representatives to act as members of an advisory committee and facilitated curriculum and delivery needs assessments. The findings were used to structure and further develop elements of the courses so that they would connect directly with the instructional needs and circumstances of learners and teachers in the CAAT system. The first round delivery of the ADED program was carried out in two locations in and near Toronto (Seneca College, North York, and Sheridan College, Oakville). During the initial development TVOntario (TVO) joined the project forming the Brock, CAAT, and TVO alliance.

In the fall of 1994, based on the first delivery, a series of videos were produced to supplement a first offering of the program at 10 sites across the province of Ontario. Since that time hundreds of community college personnel and other adult educators at dozens of sites have completed their undergraduate degrees including First Nations groups from Kenjegin Teg Educational Institute and Saugeen First Nations

During the initial 1993 offering of the ADED program, John Hodson, a Mohawk of the Turtle Clan, was enrolled as a candidate in the Seneca College section. Early in the first course Hodson reported to Kompf a strong association with the course content and process and found significant elements of Native ways of thinking and learning throughout. Through conversation and correspondence the idea of a special degree program by and for Native people was discussed and temporarily set aside.

In the summer of 1998 Michael Manley Casimir was appointed as Dean of Education at Brock University. With a strong interest in distance education and Native issues he encouraged redevelopment of the ADED program and asked Kompf to lead the process. Kompf contacted Hodson and the dream of a Native program came off the shelf.

The following pages describe the vision, relationships, knowledge, and actions taken and actions currently underway. Although aspects of this report outline the process used for curriculum development, the actual story is more than that. This has been a process of the authors' personal growth, institutional awareness, and the discovery of right-thinking Native educators of one mind.

Historical and Cultural Context of Aboriginal People in Higher Education

From an historical perspective the level of success attained by Aboriginal peoples in Canadian mainstream postsecondary education can be described as dismal. Recent studies from Statistics Canada (1991a, 1991b) illustrate the continuing community reality of failure and withdrawal:

- Only 22% of high school dropouts (15-24) will return to high school;

- Only 11% will take adult upgrading, and 63% will never return to school;
- 2.6% of Aboriginal people hold a university degree, compared with 12.2% of non-Aboriginal populations.

Clearly the personal tragedy is not reflected in the statistical reality. The inability of a First Nations community's best and brightest to "measure up" and graduate only reinforces a sense of hopelessness in individuals, families, and communities.

For the 2.6% who do complete their postsecondary studies, their world view has been shaped and fundamentally altered to reflect an understanding that is at best alien to the needs and world view of First Nations communities. In many instances such experiences further divorce graduates from their culture and language. Cultural alienation of those few individuals capable of successfully negotiating the academy and their subsequent absorption into mainstream education during the most productive years of their careers is an additional resource drain experienced by First Nations.

Recent developments in Aboriginal postsecondary education at Canadian universities and community colleges, the vibrant expansion of Aboriginal institutes, and initiatives between the federal and provincial governments and First Nation governance speak of a changing reality. Associated with this is a continued devolution of responsibilities to First Nations and the progress toward Aboriginal self-government. At the same time Aboriginal adults are participating in unprecedented numbers in upgrading, postsecondary education, and training. Finally, Aboriginal people are rediscovering and integrating the traditional beliefs, spirituality, and associated ceremony in their endeavors. The emerging realities suggest a growing need for qualified, culturally and spiritually strong Aboriginal faculty, administrators, counselors, and support personnel and provide needed encouragement and guidance for this program.

Wildfire I

Following the encouragement from Dean Casimir, lengthy discussions were held between Kompf and Hodson that focused on how to begin. From the outset it was agreed that whatever was to be done must be done in an open and accountable way that would meet the expressed needs of all who might be touched by the program. It is important to understand that this process was developed in close association with a group of Elders closely involved with Aboriginal postsecondary education in Ontario.

Developing the ideal program involved not only consultation with Elders, but also seeking advice from the most prominent educators and leaders in Ontario's Aboriginal community and mainstream educators from Brock and other institutions. It was obvious that the successful completion of what was labeled a "needs assessment" would depend on constructing a bridge of understanding and respect between mainstream academia and highly diverse Aboriginal communities. For the mainstream participants this took the form of an informal style of "Aboriginal Way Training" that was designed to familiarize them with Aboriginal educational issues, customs, and ceremony and generally to raise individual levels of confidence and knowledge about the process and what might be experienced.

Aboriginal communities in Ontario are culturally diverse in language, history, and custom. As the inclusion of culture is central to the development of the program, it was decided, in consultation with the Elders, to focus initially on the Hotinonshó:ni (Iroquois), Anishnabe (Ojibwa), and Métis Nations located in central and southern Ontario. The consultation methods are quite adaptable to understanding the experiences and wishes of other Indigenous cultures worldwide.

Clearly a project of this magnitude could not be accomplished without meaningful input and long-term involvement of the various stakeholder groups of those Nations. Accordingly, tobacco was offered to some 25 individuals representing First Nations governance, funding organizations, students, institute and college counselors and faculty, literacy trainers, and other service providers and Brock Aboriginal Education Council members (see Acknowledgments for a list of participants). This group, since known as the Wildfire Circle, was especially honored to have the spiritual and ceremonial guidance of three Elders including an Anishnabe woman, an Hotinonshó:ni woman, and a Mi'kmaq man.

Although the initial response from the Aboriginal invitees was positive, it was a cautious response. Although Brock was offering to enter into a relationship with the Aboriginal community, the organization was perceived as a marginal player in Aboriginal postsecondary education. Nonetheless, all those invited committed to attend out of interest in the program and relationship possibilities.

Extra attention was given to the choice of venue, as it was understood that the physical environment should be warm, inviting, and promote intimacy. The choice of the Wildfire Outdoor Education Centre more than fulfilled these objectives. Located just outside Midland, Ontario, Wildfire lies in the heart of the traditional territory of the Wendat (Huron) Confederacy who were traditionally a mediating influence between the Anishnabe and the Hotinonshó:ni Nations, and the venue was also close to the Wye River. Furthermore, the living accommodations were semicomunal in nature; perhaps most important, the food was pure "Indian" and plentiful.

The Clan System

As a planning and evaluation tool the Clan system is unparalleled in its thoroughness and adherence to holism. This territory is experiencing an awakening of the teachings and responsibilities of the Clan system in both the Hotinonshó:ni and Anishnabe Nations. However, the Hotinonshó:ni and Anishnabe understanding of Clan are not mutually exclusive, and the Métis traditionally do not follow the Clan system.

The solution to this problem lay in the creation of generic clans that all nations could identify with. Members of the Clans-Vision, Protection, Teaching, and Doorkeeper were chosen based on their real Clan affiliations, their work, or their individual preference.

The use of the Clan system helped focus the strengths of participants in specific discussions about aspects of the program and the community. In addition, the concept of needs assessment has two distinct meanings in the mainstream world and the Aboriginal world. The Aboriginal understanding prevailed and drove the

process, and the exercise transformed into a full holistic consultation over March 23, 24, and 25, 1999.

As the report compiled by observer John Waring (1999) details, the specific process and content of the Wildfire I consultation are summarized in the following sections of this article much as they are in the executive summary provided for Brock's president David Atkinson and the Brock AEC.

The first teaching that was provided by an Elder as a way of providing cultural context for the consultation was related to the medicine wheel (see Figure 1). According to the Elder, the Wildfire Circle was beginning this endeavor at the "vision" stage and at the same time building our mutual "relationship." The other stages (i.e., "knowledge" and "action") would take place only after a firm foundation was established by addressing the first two. Although we would be tempted, we were cautioned not to move to action before having sufficiently addressed vision, relationship, and knowledge.

Findings of the Clans Pertaining to Aboriginal Programs at Brock The Vision Clan

- The recipe developed by this Clan places the AEC in the position of representatives and protectors of the greater community. It also suggests that only through relationships based on respect between equals can the Council and the University move forward together.

The Teaching Clan Teaching First Principles

- A support system for social and personal issues must be available and maintained for the Learners throughout the learning process;
- Learner(s) will be seeking cultural relevance (themselves) in the curriculum and may require assistance in coming to that understanding;
- Evaluation techniques (must) be based on the future use of the knowledge;
- Wherever the program goes, there must be access to a literacy program or other assistance and resources, for example, with writing academic papers, tutors, mentors.

Learners' Needs

- Incorporate cultural norms relevant to the Learner Group;
- Know that Learners are not familiar with educational vocabulary or academic literacy levels;
- Provide support to the students that encourage personal development;
- Incorporate current community issues into curriculum.

The Protection Clan

- AEC-Active participation from within the Aboriginal community;
- Relationship/partnership between/among AEC/Brock;
- Institution (must): provide classroom space, instructors, counselor(s), staff, Native student space, policies, that is, racism, equity, professional development for faculty/staff (in) cultural awareness, Elders program (in residence), redress process to deal with racism, dollar commitment, support to Native students/faculty/staff;

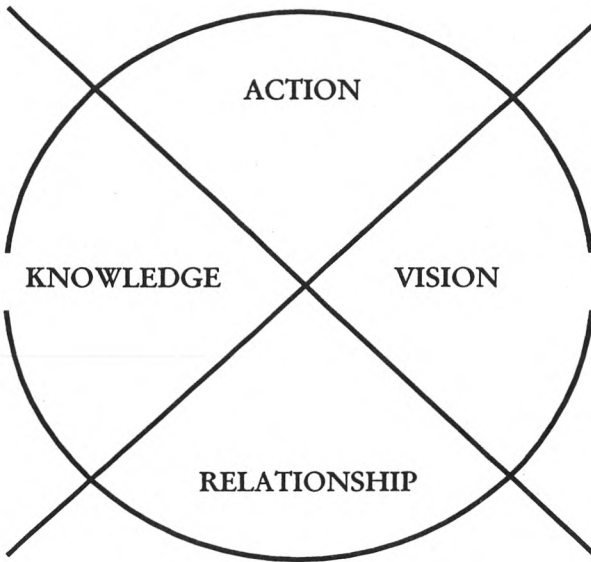


Figure 1. The Medicine Wheel.

- Who owns the curriculum?
Needs to be defined, stated (Articulation Agreements)
Aboriginal knowledge is owned by Aboriginal people(s), not institutions;
- Curriculum has to be written by, delivered by Native people;
- Institutions need to value education that occurred outside of the institutional learning environment;
- Listen to and hear the voice of Native students;
- We need to access our Native Elders to help us define how we bring ceremony into the classroom(s).

The partnership between the community, Brock, and the AEC will determine what the needs, strengths, and direction are according to the self, family, community, and Nation, based on kindness, caring, sharing, and respect. The partnership will be complementary, not competitive. Partnerships, programs, services, and evaluation will be based on the teachings of the Medicine Wheel.

The Doorkeeper Clan

- We recommend that Brock adopt the points set out in RCAP 3.5.34 as policy;
- We feel as Doorkeepers that Brock must develop its AEC to the point where it can open the door to direct contact with First Nations and Aboriginal organizations;
- Brock needs to proceed with the relationship with its AEC immediately;
- Then Brock needs to work together with the AEC to change the policy of the university in order to allow our entrance procedure;

- Brock needs to expose its decision-making executives to Aboriginal Way training immediately to create understanding and relationships.

Recommendations to the Brock University AEC

Step One. Align the Council to the criteria outlined in the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS), MET immediately, including membership, voting rights for Aboriginal members, Senate membership, and so forth.

Rationale. AETS is the benchmark for relationships between the Aboriginal community and mainstream institutions in the province. It is necessary for this Council to reach that benchmark for it to have any credibility in the Aboriginal community in the province.

Step Two. In partnership with the Faculty of Education, organize and participate in Aboriginal Way Training with senior members of the Brock management team.

Rationale. Needs assessment findings consistently speak about the importance of the relationships between the Aboriginal community, the Council, and senior management at Brock. This relationship cannot be established without understanding and respect. The outcome of Aboriginal Way Training is that of understanding and respect.

Step Three. Begin work now to find the necessary resources to establish and expand Aboriginal Student Services including Counseling, Elder(s)-in-residence program, and an Aboriginal student centre.

Rationale. The availability of Aboriginal Student Services is pivotal to the success of Aboriginal Learners. Without them the abysmal levels of retention and graduation will continue.

Step Four. Adopt and recommend that Brock adopt RCAP recommendation 3.5.42 as the standard to which the partnership between the community and the institution will work.

Rationale. These RCAP recommendations surpass the principles included in the AETS and will become the postsecondary vision into the next millennium. Adoption of these recommendations will send a strong message across Turtle Island to mainstream institutions and to our communities that the partnership between this Council and Brock is based on that vision.

Goals of the Program

Although the goals of any program intended to meet the learning and teaching needs of Aboriginal people are complex, interconnected, and far-reaching, the recommendations of the Wildfire Circle pointed most strongly to the connections between individuals and culture as intended by the teachings. Thus the goals for program participants included development of a cadre of accredited, community-based Aboriginal adult educators who are

- Grounded in each's own culture;
- Able to bridge the traditional, the contemporary, and the future;
- Ready, willing, and able to develop a foundation to address the educational needs of generations to come.

The Next Steps

Our presence at the Assembly of First Nations Education conference (Kompf & Hodson, 1999) was one step farther along the path. Since the Wildfire Circle consultation the following events have occurred that further indicate that we were reasonably sure-footed.

At the time of writing the AEC at Brock has redrafted the Terms of Reference to align their endeavors with the rest of the province. At the same time Brock President Atkinson proposed that the revised AEC become a special Advisory Council to the President establishing a direct reporting structure between the Office of the President and the Aboriginal community.

The power of this vision initially prompted TVO, specifically the Creative Head Jan Donio, to commit to the production of the Aboriginal ADED (ADED-AB) program video materials and to create a series on Aboriginal postsecondary education suitable for broadcast, which in her words "must be done the right way." This interest also held promise for an emerging relationship between Brock, the new Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), and TVO. Since the first presentation of these ideas, TVO's interests, personnel, and focus have changed significantly and redefined their role. Jan Donio, however, has retained an active advisory role and attracted sufficient interest to facilitate private production of the video-based materials along with the insight and vision of director-producer Brian Murphy.

Wildfire II

If Wildfire I was metaphorically akin to preparing the ground, Wildfire II could be compared to planting the seed. During October 19, 20, and 21 the Circle was reconvened with additional members to receive a progress report and to consult on issues related to curriculum design and delivery, site facilitation, and marketing.

The recommendation that came from Wildfire I to inform the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the subsequent invitation to present at the AFN Education Conference also revealed additional participants to the Circle. Eber Hampton, President of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Donald Fiddler, Executive Director of the En'owkin Centre in British Columbia, and Paulette Tremblay, Director of the Education Sector of AFN agreed to participate in this round of consultation. The original Circle members viewed the addition of these respected Aboriginal adult educators as a testament to the power of the vision.

Adapting the Methodology

Given the more focused nature of the direction sought, we were unsure of whether the initial Clan system methodology employed during Wildfire I would serve the Circle or if a more open consultation process would be suitable. Not surprisingly, the Circle chose to address their consultation much as as before by establishing two groups.

A cursory review of the membership in these groups revealed that they roughly coalesced similarly to Wildfire I, that is, the suitability of the Clan system in a more specific research application prevailed.

Findings of the Wildfire II Consultation

In this round of consultation direction was sought by posing a number of specific questions to each of the groups.

Group 1—Curriculum and Delivery

What is the importance of storytelling in curriculum?

- It helps us to integrate ourselves into the environment.
- The first course—first semester needs to be about self-discovery. “Who am I” as an Aboriginal person and how does that relate to where I am?
- Eldership plays a role in sharing stories.
- Build cultural/traditional experiences into the whole program.
- Diversity is inherent in the program.
- Storytelling is important to the process of learning. It helps us bring all elements of our being into the process (mind, body, emotion, and spirit).
- Copyright stories to ensure they are correctly used and carried into the future intact.
- Include many Aboriginal cultures as part of the first course.
- Address the needs of students who do not walk a traditional path through use of storytelling and inclusion of Elders.
- Build self-discovery into all courses, not just the first one.
- Build in opportunities for participants to experience ceremonies (addresses the need for spiritual nurturing).
- The Aboriginal perspective on curriculum development is really one of human development. This is central to the curriculum and permeates all aspects.
- Teaching tools and content in the program must be comparative including both Western and Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing. Elders play a strong role here.

Rationale

Group 1 noted that in the area of curriculum development a reordering of the course offerings was required beginning with personal development. Rationale for changing the order includes helping students to develop a strong sense of self as Aboriginal person/student/teacher.

What is the role of language in the curriculum?

- English is the dominant language that will be used in this program.
- Need to have a proficiency in English in order to understand what is being taught.
- Language as part of the first course “Who Am I?” and make available the opportunity to use language course(s) as part of the degree requirements.
- Include methodologies on how to enrich language in learners as part of the course.
- DVD-multitracking language program would make courses available to all students with the necessary technology.

Rationale

In the area of admissions the group made several recommendations. Efforts should be made to demystify the university registration system. The group suggested an interview process that would assist students' self-identify program needs.

A preadmissions session to assist candidates to prepare and train for the program was also recommended. In addition it was recommended that a way must be identified that would recognize the work done in this session as part of the first-term workload.

In the area of language several recommendations were made. English proficiency is necessary for the program. In order to aid ESL students, mentoring with English-speaking students would be an asset. Oral testing in Aboriginal languages should be an option for ESL students.

Who owns the curriculum?

- Three-way agreement between Brock/TVO/Community.
- Brock buys the rights to use the TVO videos made by TVO and/or independent producers.
- Special respect and acknowledgment including compensation for Aboriginal contributors to the program are currently under negotiation.

Rationale

They recommend treating each component in the program comparatively—Western and Aboriginal. Adapting cultural language in the program would provide enrichment. Archetypal Aboriginal symbols such as tobacco, sweatlodge, and canoe should be part of the curriculum.

The group noted that a discussion of Elder participation required further work once the framework of the courses was more complete. Elder involvement must inform all areas of the curriculum and the program generally. Time for reflection must be built into the program.

Finally, the curriculum model when developed should be reviewed by the community before delivery.

Group 2—Site Facilitation/Delivery

Facilitators

- Different from an instructor in this curriculum delivery model, the facilitator would guide discussion and support students in the community.
- The facilitators must be members of the local community. They would facilitate the preset program, but adapt it to local circumstances.
- Facilitators must work closely with local Elders.
- A cadre of facilitators would be necessary.
- Eventually facilitators could be hired from first cohort, but the first offering of the program would have the most difficulty finding qualified facilitators.
- For qualifications it was suggested that the facilitator have an undergraduate degree or exceptional skills. This would allow the hiring of an exceptional individual who does not possess a degree, but who would be a suitable facilitator in a community.

Autonomy

- Without a model for autonomy, further discussion of details of the program would be difficult. Several ways of delivering community-based programs were discussed.
- Considering this is a new program and a first opportunity for the Aboriginal community to work with Brock, it was decided to embrace a model where Brock had most of the control.
- Brock would hire and pay the facilitator.
- Brock would advertise and handle all administrative details. Brock would shoulder any problems associated with the program such as falling enrollments and unforeseen difficulties.
- In two to three years move the program to a state that gave the community-based location more autonomy. Under this second model Brock would have much less control. They would contract a facility to control the program, hire the facilitator, and oversee all details of the program.

Rationale

Group 2 noted that site issues must be built on a redefined relationship between Brock and Partner Institutions. To illustrate this, a two-stage development model that illustrated levels of autonomy was proposed. The group suggests beginning with Model A and after a short time, three years for example, moving to Model B. Reasons for this two-stage development model include an opportunity for both Brock and the Institute or College to have time to form a relationship and to ensure that the program has solid funding and support. This autonomy model is advantageous not only for Brock and the host institution, but for the enrolled students.

Model A involves a structure where Brock has most autonomy over the program. Funding comes to the college or institute via Brock. At this stage in the Model the course provider adopts the role of Administrative Helper. The step between Brock and the Administrative Helper has a number of unknown negotiable elements represented by the question mark in the centre of Figure 2. The Administrative Helper risks little in Model A. It aids Brock in administering the program, but provides no funding. Facilitators are paid directly by Brock, and Brock is also responsible for program funding. For example, if the number of students falls below the minimum level part-way through a course, it is Brock's responsibility, not the Administrative Helper's, to continue funding at a loss or discontinue the course. One advantage for the Administrative Helper is an opportunity to form a relationship with a postsecondary institution and offer a degree program at its site.

With Model B, autonomy moves incrementally to the host institution. Brock once again provides funding for the program to the Partner Institution. As with Model A the step between Brock and the Partner Institution includes a number of issues that will be negotiated in order to offer the program. Now the structure has developed past the Administrative Helper level to a stage where the Partner Institution assumes control of the program. At this point in the Model funding from Brock ends. The Partner Institution hires the facilitator, controls the intake of

students, and assumes responsibility for the program. Brock no longer funds or controls the final stage of program delivery.

The first and final consideration in both models is, of course, the students. In both models the students receive the program in a similar way. The only difference is that under Model B the Partner Institution's name is included on the diploma.

Cautions were noted in the necessity to honor the relationships with community-based programs and stressed that marketing is an essential component to the success of this program

Identification of Sites

- Recruitment of students drives identification of sites.
- Determining where the interest lies is imperative. Sites would necessarily be determined by identified need.
- Fewer than five sites might be more manageable and successful.
- The program would quickly grow as potential learners noted the success of the program.

Rationale

Although not having specific locations makes recruitment difficult in some respects, it is easier to not state the location to begin with and to try to work out the bureaucracy after the number of students interested has been identified.

Marketing the Program

- Brock must move quickly to market this program within the Aboriginal community.
- Possible ways to promote the program: a more focused identification of who the learner would be might be advantageous. Brock should first concentrate on Aboriginal faculty, Elders, counselors, and support staff currently serving at colleges, universities, and institutes.
- Wildfire participants would be excellent sources for promoting interest in their local communities.
- The Consortium of Aboriginal Institutes in Ontario is a good place to begin promoting the program.

Rationale

A strong sense of human contact was recommended in relation to the marketing and application process. Posters and brochures alone will not attract Aboriginal students, and solid groundwork is necessary.

Criteria for Site Selection

- Programs could run at colleges, institutes, or friendship centres.
- It was agreed that a library and classroom space was needed.
- Technology has lessened the need for on-site libraries, but a caution concerning the lack of Internet access availability in the North was discussed.
- Another integral criterion for site consideration involves the issue of on-site Elder. An Elder must be part of this community-based program.

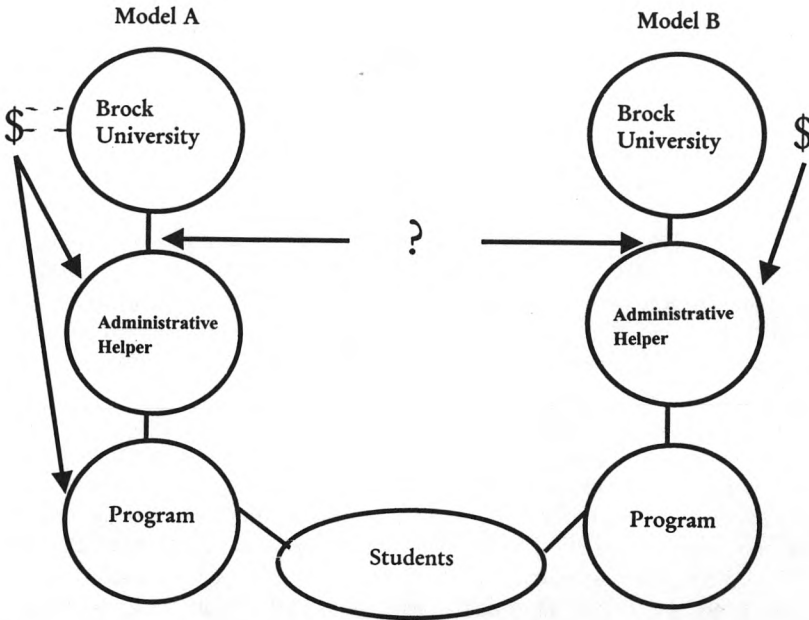


Figure 2. Two-stage model for site autonomy.

Rationale

Sites should be chosen based on student interest and geographic area, classroom space, and resources available.

Future Considerations

- Discussion took place around making a certificate program in adult education (5 core courses) a condition of employment at Aboriginal colleges and institutes.
- This might encourage staff to take the courses.
- At this point there is no real need to take the course besides personal development.
- Making the program a condition of employment would ensure higher numbers in the program.
- Having the degree would give a potential employee an advantage over the competition, which was reason enough to take the program.

Recruitment

- The group insisted again and again that Brock must work hard to recruit students.
- Posters, easy-to-read brochures, Web sites, and information sessions for candidates to attend would all be necessary to attract students. This process must begin immediately because potential students need time to consider the program before deciding.

Next Steps on the Path

The overriding principles foundational to the relationship between Brock University and the Aboriginal community are respect, fair sharing, and acknowledgment. These principles have been essential to the next steps of the project.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Issues

The issue of the ownership of Aboriginal intellectual property has been an important concern for the Wildfire Circle in the development of the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education Degree Program. From a strictly historical perspective Aboriginal peoples have been unable to control the representation of their culture including sacred artifacts, oral traditions, legends, designs, medicines, songs, and prayers. The resulting reality has been misappropriation and misinterpretation of that heritage that is well documented and understood.

Intellectual property legislation (the Act) as it now exists in Canada and elsewhere is unsuitable and fundamentally at odds with the cultural norms of Aboriginal peoples, as it primarily focuses on the protection of individual ownership and management of financial remuneration over a given time. Because of this, most Aboriginal knowledge by its antiquity would be considered in the public domain and therefore beyond the protection of the Act. In addition, the individualistic nature of the greater society, as reflected in the Act, has forced many Aboriginal authors into conflict with the basic tenets of their communities, that is, the communal ownership of traditional knowledge.

The extent to which this issue is considered important to Aboriginal peoples can be seen in the *Report of the RCAP* (1996), which recommends,

The federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, review its legislation on the protection of intellectual property to ensure that Aboriginal interests and perspectives, in particular collective interests, are adequately protected. (vol. 3, p. 601)

A Recommended Ethical Use Statement

In the light of this reality an Ethical Use Statement has been developed that both supports the cultural aspirations of the Aboriginal community and maintains the letter of the law. This Statement has been recommended to Brock University, which has both a legal and moral responsibility to communicate the ethical use of Aboriginal knowledge to all stakeholders. The following statement would be attached to all ADED-AB materials.

The Aboriginal Ethical Use Statement is intended to recognize, value and embrace Aboriginal principles, which are interpreted, understood and expressed in different ways by various nations. This knowledge is an integral part of the cultural heritage of the First Peoples of Turtle Island and is to be shared as a gift from the Creator for the benefit for all. Fair and principled use of these teachings must be done in a way that respects their origins and intentions.

Compensation

Program Level

It has been recommended to Brock University that a royalty of the gross tuition revenues be paid to the AEC at Brock University for the administration of

Aboriginal Student Awards and special projects. The percentage may be renegotiated as student numbers stabilize.

Course Level

Course manuals, texts, and materials developed to accompany the video-based materials will be licensed for use in Brock's ADED-AB program by the author(s) for a comparable royalty rate as might be found in the book publishing industry.

Initial financial remuneration for prepared materials and a subsequent stipend for any and all revisions (i.e., following assessment of feedback after the offering of each course) will be provided to the author or author's designate that designs, develops, evaluates, or otherwise revises all course manuals, texts, materials, or script-based materials. Materials may be used by the authors in other applications.

On the Verge of Action

Our activities included identifying possible sites and building the necessary relationships with those partners, meeting the critical education funding deadlines, and establishing a Web site that promotes the program and is potentially the precursor of Web program delivery. Most important, we promised to maintain ongoing evaluation not only of the academic environment, but of the spiritual environment in which all activities were approached. As we come full circle around the Medicine Wheel teaching that begins this article, we find that in fall 1999 there was sufficient enrollment to host four Native sections (Six Nations [2], Fanshawe College, and Georgian College). As we learn from the community and fellow students to adapt to needs, attend to concerns, and wrestle with all the expected glitches in new programs, we can sense the expectancy and growing trust in the development of new courses.

Conclusion

The ADED-AB, as envisaged by the Wildfire Circle, combines effective and significant access to Aboriginal cultural and heritage education with the great thinkers in the field of adult education.

The primary goal of the Faculty of Education in the development of the ADED-AB program has been to send a significantly refreshed message to the Aboriginal community. Specifically, this message has been that Brock is prepared to enter into a true partnership with the Aboriginal community at large. To date this demonstration has galvanized the attention of the Aboriginal education community across Canada and has resulted in unprecedented levels of support for the program.

Common knowledge and a cursory examination of Aboriginal postsecondary enrollments and completion rates illustrates problems that are deeply rooted somewhere between institutional structures, policies, and practices and the unique learning and cultural needs of Aboriginal people. This program shows the first steps on a healing journey toward the mutual development of respect, acknowledgment, and partnership. The development of learning and teaching paths that reach children, youths, adults, and Elders and speak meaningfully to the body, spirit, emotions, and intelligence of each person and community can only be brought about through caring spirits and persistence.

The process of learning and teaching for Aboriginal people must begin wherever it is possible to begin, as long as those beginnings are right-minded. In order to achieve autonomy in the world of education, great advances must be made in higher education to foster an Aboriginal professoriate and learning in the professions. An academic learning path can address multiple cultures, needs, and goals, as long as representatives of that diversity are consulted and included in program conception, design, delivery, and evaluation. We believe this attempt with Brock University is a beginning. We have much to learn and have received much help and encouragement.

Our purpose in sharing these words and ideas is to extend an invitation and request to all who might be touched by this project to speculate where it might lead. We invite you to share with us the questions, misgivings, hopes, ideas, and possibilities that will ensure that this program is of, by, and for the people in a way that will serve future generations of all learners and teachers. We believe this and other visions for the red road to learning contain the seeds for the First Nations University of Turtle Island. Your comments and questions are invited. We also invite you to visit us at <http://nativeadult.ed.brocku.ca>.

Note

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The Wildfire Circle

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Appendix: Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal Institutes	Roughly equivalent to Tribal Colleges.
AEC	Aboriginal Education Council. College and university advisory groups that include representation from various Aboriginal organizations mandated by the MET and a prerequisite for AETS funding.
AETS	Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy. Established by the Provincial government in partnership with the Aboriginal community in 1990. The goal of the Strategy was to encourage Aboriginal involvement in postsecondary education.
AFN	Assembly of First Nations. Governing body that represents First Nations in Canada.
APTN	Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. Established in 1999 by the Canadian Radio Television (the Canadian FCC) as a national Aboriginal network.
Administrative Helper	A partner institution and a distance education site.
Anishnabe	Ojibway word roughly equivalent to "the good people."
ESL	English as a second language.
First Nation Community	Refers to what used to be known as Reserves or Reservations.

Friendship Centre	Aboriginal owned and operated community centres mostly located in large urban centres.
Hotinonshó:ni	Iroquoian word, "people of the longhouse."
Intellectual Property Legislation	Federal government legislation that governs copyright in Canada.
MET	The Ministry of Education and Training, Province of Ontario.
Métis	In 1982 the federal government amended the constitution to include people of mixed heritage (the Métis) as one of the three Aboriginal peoples of Canada.
Ontario Teaching Certificate	Mandated by the Province of Ontario to teach in the public and secondary school system.
RCAP	The federally appointed Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples produced a five-volume review of the reality of Aboriginal people in Canada including a 20-year plan to right the socioeconomic difficulties that have existed in Canada for over 100 years.
RCAP Rec. 3.5.42	Professional associations and self-governing bodies in the professions actively support the professional training of Aboriginal people by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Entering into dialogue on such issues as credentials, recruitment, mentoring, career paths linking para-professional and professional training, education based on Aboriginal culture, systemic discrimination and racism; (b) Establishing scholarships for Aboriginal people; (c) Encouraging their members to gain an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives. (d) Spearheading initiatives to introduce Aboriginal cultural perspectives into professional training programs; and (e) Providing leadership by encouraging implementation of the recommendations in this report that are relevant to their areas of expertise.
Tobacco	Considered a sacred medicine by many Aboriginal nations tobacco is also used as a gift when requesting assistance in an important endeavor.
TVOntario	The public television broadcaster in the Province of Ontario.
Turtle Island	Anishnabe and Hotinonshó:ni for North America and associated to the creation stories of both Nations.
Wendat	Referred to by the early French colonists as the Huron. The traditional territory of this confederacy of four nations was located in central Ontario until late in the 17th century. Their descendants now live in Quebec and Oklahoma.