

ABORIGINAL LEARNING

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Pedagogy of Professionals and Practitioners

Wîtskêwin (Sharing Success)

Promising Practices, May 2009

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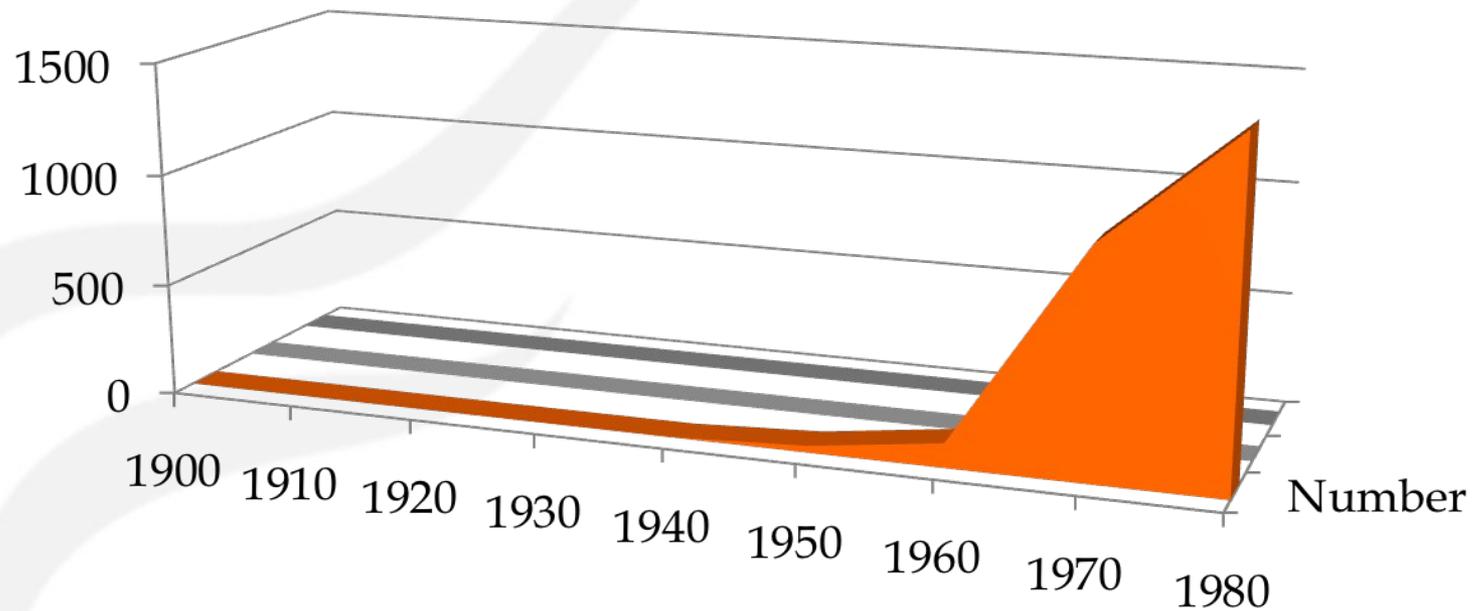
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- Since the 1970s universities have encouraged Aboriginals to pursue education in the fields of teaching, law, health, social work and business, which has increased Aboriginal professionals in multiple fields.
- Aboriginal professionals are the vanguard generating the Aboriginal renaissance.
- This bundle is focused on their achievements.
- It seeks to share knowledge on the learning environments in professional colleges and practices that improves Aboriginal participation in those professions.

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Post-Secondary Degrees of First Nation Students

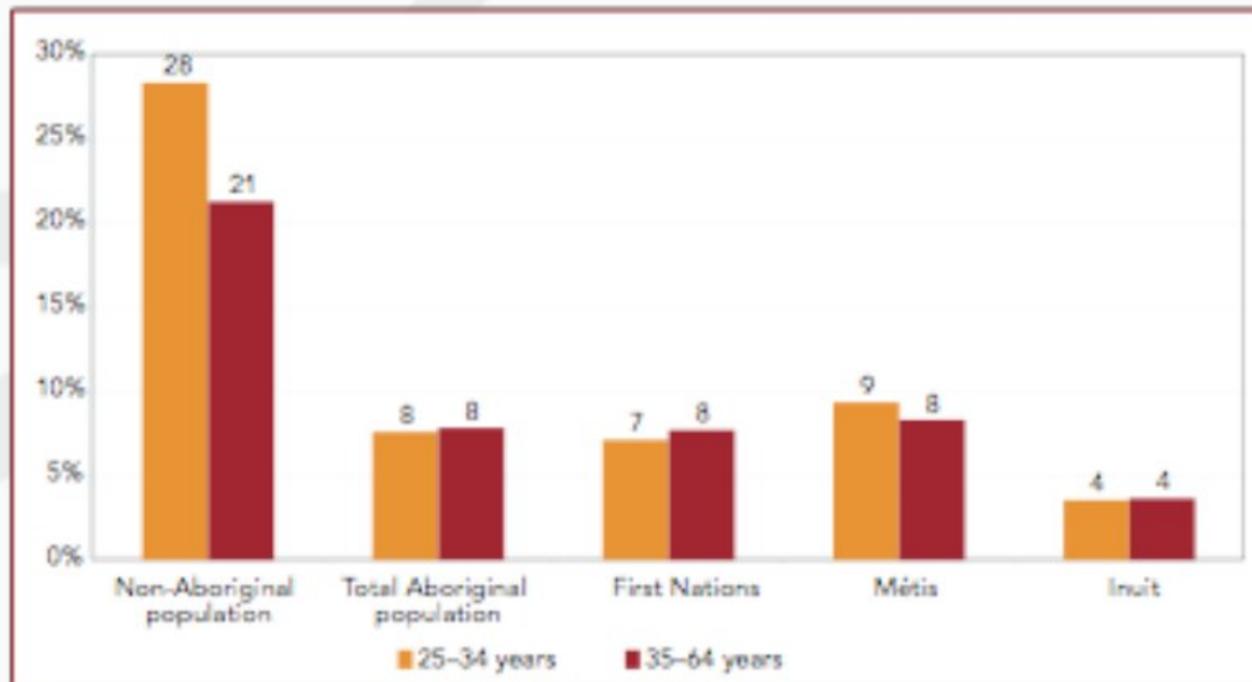


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Holders of University Degrees By Age, 2001

Proportion of Aboriginal populations with a university degree, by age group, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001

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1934-76: Seventy percent (531) of completed degrees were professional degrees

Education	(72%)		381
Teacher Certificate		286	
Bachelor of Education		95	
Nursing	(24%)		130
Medical Doctor	(2%)		11
Law	(1.6%)		<u>9</u>

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Programs that generated Aboriginal professionals:

- **Teacher Education Programs**
- **Native Law Centre**
- **Native Access Programs to Nursing/Medicine (*NAPN/M*)**

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Foundational Themes of Promising Practices

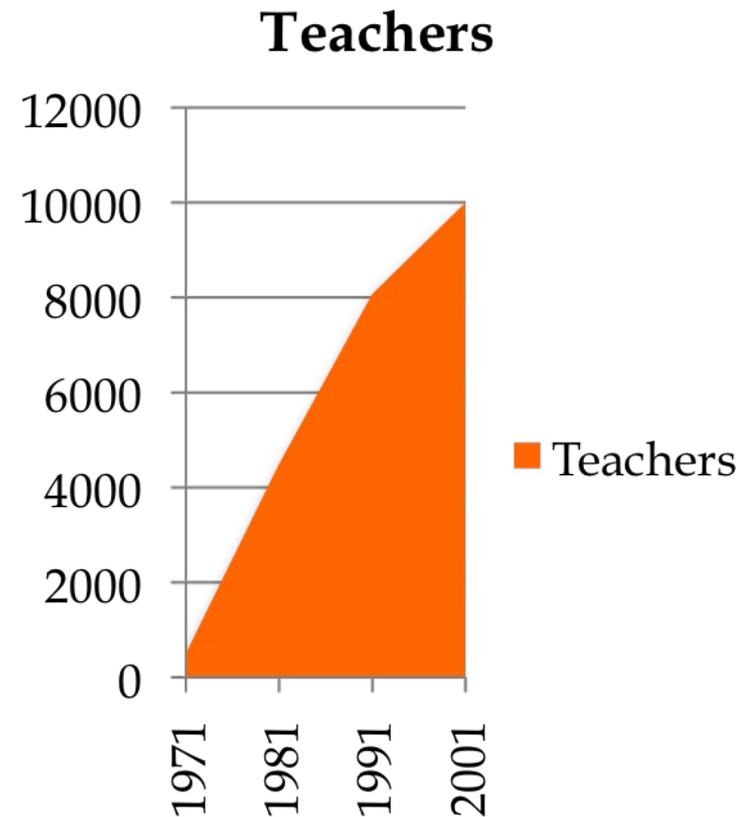
- improves the learning of Aboriginal individuals,
- respects diverse learning styles in a holistic manner,
- legitimizes the voice of all Aboriginal people,
- encourages *a transformative approach* to learning which embraces Indigenous knowledge, and
- supports *learning and community* by linking and encouraging the involvement of parents, Elders and community in order to build a successful learning continuum and healthy resilient communities.

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Teacher Education Programs

- In the mid-60s, the first programs were launched
- there have been at least 34 Aboriginal teacher education programs across the country, many of which continue today despite short-term funding.
- Need to triple the current numbers to reach parity with non-Aboriginals. Only 30% of Aboriginal students have Aboriginal teachers.

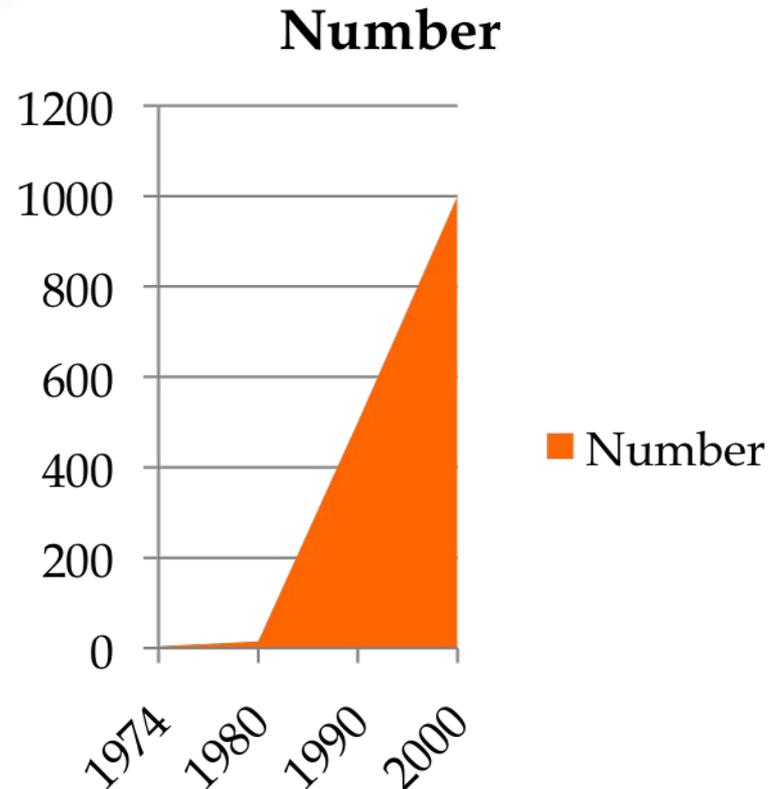


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Native Law Centre

- Native law programs began in 1973, with only four Native lawyers in Canada.
- Only nine in 1976
- Now, there are 1,000 Aboriginal lawyers trained.
- Still need **2,800** more Aboriginal lawyers for parity with population.

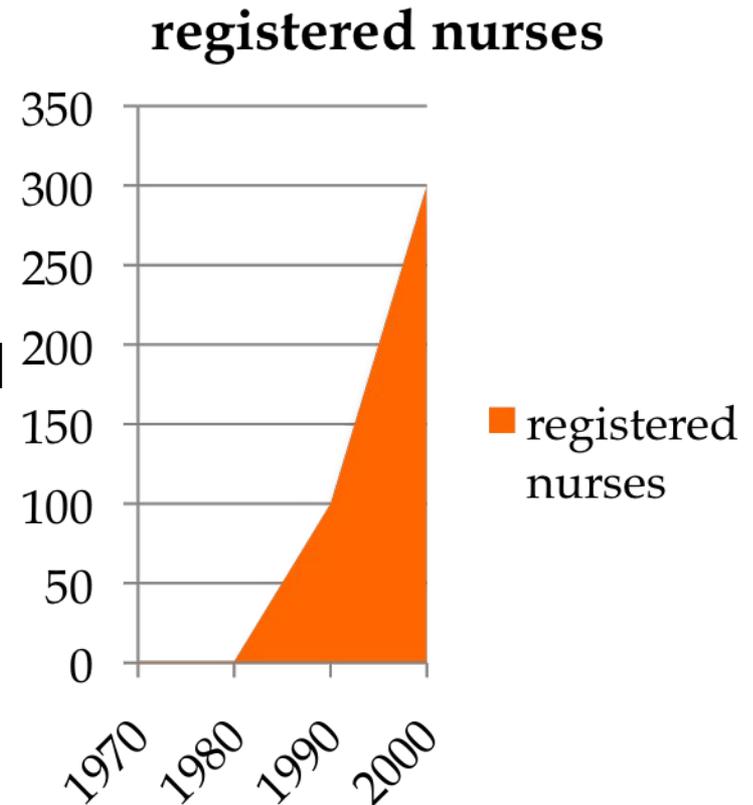


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Native Access Program to Nursing/Medicine

- Began in 1984, with only one registered nurse.
- Has more than 200 Aboriginal students enrolled in year.
- In 2001: 300 Aboriginal registered nurses in Canada (0.1% of registered nurses).
- Three percent of the Aboriginal labour force reported occupations in medicine and health.
- By 2006, Canada needs 10,000 Aboriginal people in health and social services, including professional and managerial roles.



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Interesting Professional Programs

- Lakewood University Programs.
- 2006 Indigenous Physicians Association signed an three-year agreement with Associations of Faculties of Medicine in Canada Working Group to jointly work on recruitment and developing the medical curriculum framework in all 17 medical schools to provide cultural, safe health care to Aboriginal peoples.
- 2008 Aboriginal Professional Organization under discussion.

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First Lesson: Learning capacity is accelerating

- Human consciousness, in terms of its modern development, is in its fragile teenage years.
- Learning capacity of Aboriginal peoples, (and humans, in general) is no way near its zenith; it is in its infancy.
- What is declining is forced learning or traumatic learning.

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Second Lesson: Forced learning has been and is traumatic

- Teaching in residential schools and modern schools, the business of teaching, is inherently violent and traumatic in nature.
- While short-term effective, it creates long-term undesired feelings, liabilities and pathologies that are often limiting or crippling.

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Third Lesson: Punishment and Benefit - framework of education is traumatic and ineffective

- Current dropout rate of Aboriginal students from high school (70%) is related to forced learning and structure of education and its emphasis on comparison, competition and achievement for personal benefit rather than for relationship.
- Only one in five First Nations children was in school in the year 1999 (Auditor General, 2000, p. 8).

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Fourth Lesson: Transformative learning exists

- Transformative learning occurs in a traumatic, dysfunctional teaching world.
- Transformative learning persists, is holistically self-recruiting and self-reinforced, and has profound feelings and consequences; because it is volitional it creates a desire for lifelong learning.
- Transformative learning is built on the power of choice, the power to choose to learn. It nurtures the deepest part of who we are and our vision of who we want to become.

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Fifth Lesson: Effective educators don't teach, they mentor.

- Mentors can assist in learning, if they are trusted and experienced.
- Deep caring calls for deep inward passion to learn
- They must demonstrate or animate the way of curiosity, discovery, self-discovery, and cognition of a learning experience with the learner.
- The prime responsibility of mentors is to create no harm or trauma to the learners. Learners need to be free to identify and self-select the learning opportunities they need.

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Sixth Lesson: Belief in the capability of ordinary Aboriginal peoples

- The promising programs have placed hope above memory.
- They believe that the future remains open to national and cultural renewal and individual self-transformation.
- They refused to believe that anything in Aboriginal culture or situation condemns us to languish in permanent poverty, dependency and weakness in Canadian society.

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Seventh Lesson: Faith in the capacity of ordinary Aboriginal peoples

- Aboriginal professionals had faith that we can confront and defeat the racial and cultural prejudices and legislation that have prevented us from living more fully and freely.
- Faith that everyone can lift themselves up and help others lift themselves up.
- Faith that everyone can acquire the power to shape their immediate circumstances and to protect the many-sidedness of the future.
- Faith in the capacity for strong and original experience can be unlocked.

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Eighth Lesson: Faith in the problem solving power of an Aboriginal person to achieve a better life

- **Faith in aboriginal and treaty rights and laws.**
- **Faith in problem-solving.**
- **Believe that each of the problems that oppress, weaken, and frighten us can be confronted, problem by problem, through our effort, caring, and ingenuity.**

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Ninth Lesson: Hope is a consequence of action

- The experience of the outside observer favors fatalism.
- The experience of the involved produces hope.
- A preference from action and doing over watching creates problem-solving attitudes.
- Balance between reflection and action is necessary for collaboration.

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Tenth Lesson: Place the future first, not last

- Top priority is child protection: ensure food, medical services, education support, and family for every child who needs them.
- The cruel and irresponsible abandonment of the Aboriginal youth is one of the greatest injustices of Canadian life.
- The rejection of the Kelowna Accord in our war against poverty is one of many examples of the severely under-responsive Crown in action.

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Collaboration lies at the heart of unlocking Aboriginal potential

- Understanding the interrelationships in Aboriginal thought generates collaboration and cooperation.
- Reordering concept of production as learning.
- Child protection and educational renewal.
- Technical support centers, re-skilling services, and small business incubators.
- Reorganization of professionals and workforce needed by skill-based lifelong learning.