

HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
Report 54 (42nd Parliament, 1st Session), *Report 5, Socio-economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves—Indigenous Services Canada, of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada.*

Indigenous Services Canada
Final Report on the Negotiation of Regional Education Agreements
(Recommendation 2.3)

Reporting on the Negotiation of Regional Education Agreements

Introduction

In 2018, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a report on the Socio-Economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves. The audit sought to determine whether Indigenous Services Canada satisfactorily measured and reported on Canada's overall progress in closing the socio-economic gaps between on-reserve First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PACP) studied the Auditor General's findings and on November 17, 2018, tabled the Fifty Fourth Report, entitled "Report 5, Socio-Economic Gaps on First Nation Reserves – Indigenous Services Canada, of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada". In its report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts concluded that Indigenous Services Canada has not satisfactorily measured Canada's progress in closing the socio-economic gaps between on-reserve First Nations people and other Canadians; that it has not adequately reported on this progress; and that it has not made proper use of data to improve education programs.

The Committee put forward three recommendations to ensure that programs will reduce the socio-economic gaps between First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians. This report is intended to respond to the second recommendation that directly pertains to the development and negotiation of regional education agreements with First Nations:

Recommendation 2 – Regarding the collection, use and sharing of education data concerning First Nations' peoples living on reserve

"That Indigenous Services Canada provide the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts: 1) a first progress report on regional education agreements that have been reached or are being negotiated, and on their content by 15 June 2019; 2) a second progress report on the same subject by 30 June 2020; and 3) a final report on all of the regional education agreements that have been reached and on national education targets for kindergarten to Grade 12 by 30 June 2021."

The Government tabled its response on February 27, 2019, in agreement with the PACP report and has committed to providing all reports requested by the Committee by the recommended deadlines.

The first report was submitted in June 2019 and covered progress that had been made on reaching and negotiating regional education agreements up to March 31, 2019.

The second report was submitted in June 2020 and covered the reporting period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

This third and final report covers the reporting period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

Indigenous Services Canada committed in recommendation #2, as part of this final report, to list national education targets for kindergarten to grade 12. Due to the postponement of indicator/target development tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, Departmental Results Framework indicators/targets are currently under review and will be established with partners by March 2023 in support of the Departmental Results Framework renewal.

Background

Indigenous Services Canada provides funding for elementary and secondary programming for students between the ages of 4 to 21 who are ordinarily resident on reserve through a combination of core and proposal-based programming. Historically, the core Elementary and Secondary Program included basic education components, such as funding for instructional services (i.e. tuition, teacher salaries, professional development, and school administration) as well as student support services (i.e. transportation, guidance counselling, financial assistance for books, and supplies). In 2016 and 2017 the Department worked closely with First Nations representatives to design and implement an engagement process on elementary and secondary education on reserve. This process culminated in the co-development of a First Nations policy proposal that was ratified by Chiefs-in-Assembly in December 2017 through the Assembly of First Nations Resolution 65/2017.

Based on this policy proposal, in 2019-20, the Department established a new policy framework to transform First Nations elementary and secondary education on reserve; implementation of a new formula-based funding approach aimed at ensuring students attending First Nations schools are supported by predictable base funding that is directly comparable to funding in provincial education systems. This new approach aims to create a financially stable environment for First Nations education, enabling better quality and consistent supports for students, schools, educators, communities and First Nations education organizations – conditions that help improve student outcomes.

Transformation also includes an expanded effort to support the regional and local diversity of First Nations education approaches and implement the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education through the development and negotiation of regional education agreements. Regional education agreements do not prescribe a specific service delivery model, but are tailored to the particular local or regional context and the goals and priorities of First Nations.

The development and negotiation of regional education agreements between First Nations and Indigenous Services Canada encompass four key areas:

- comprehensive funding arrangements, covering all federal support for First Nations elementary and secondary education;
- clear and defined roles and responsibilities of the parties to the regional educational agreement, including applicable service standards, as determined by First Nations;
- mutual accountability mechanisms with clear objectives, performance indicators and reporting expectations for both the Government of Canada and First Nations education system participants; and
- First Nations' direction regarding the processes of working with ministries of education to ensure quality education is provided to First Nations students attending provincial, private or territorial schools.

The mutual accountability component of regional education agreements supports a shift toward First Nations-led performance measurement and accountability approaches that align with the education goals and objectives of their communities. This shift recognizes that First Nations should set their own success objectives and indicators to measure progress in meeting these objectives, and be primarily responsible for managing data collection and performance reporting.

Transformative Education Agreements

There are a number of types of education agreements that respond to the education goals and priorities set by First Nations, and include the development of regional results frameworks. These include regional education agreements, as well as education authorities, school systems and school boards.

Regional Education Agreements

Regional education agreements identify collaborative education service delivery strategies and outline how the Government of Canada can best support First Nations schools, students, communities, and education organizations in ensuring that First Nations students receive a high quality, linguistically and culturally appropriate education that improves outcomes.

Education Authorities/School Systems/School Boards

Education authorities, school systems, and school boards are politically independent, incorporated legal entities. They are governed by a Board of Directors who administers education services to on-reserve students, negotiates education service agreements with provincial school boards, has support from Chief and Council and acts as a single window of accountability for the education system itself and student outcomes.

The Department successfully negotiated and signed three agreements during the current reporting period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021: the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Governance Agreement and the Whitecap Dakota First Nation Tripartite Education Agreement, both in Saskatchewan, and the Elsipogtog First Nation Education Agreement in the Atlantic.

Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Education Authority – Saskatchewan (September 2020)	
Description	Reporting Framework
<p>In September 2020, Indigenous Services Canada and the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Education Authority signed an education agreement. This Education Authority provides aggregated service delivery to all seven Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation schools and to eligible students in Saskatchewan.</p> <p>The Education Authority commits to producing an annual program report for the Chief and Council, which will also be provided to Indigenous Services Canada.</p>	<p>Under the agreement, the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Education Authority commits to report on the following performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the percentage of students who meet or exceed Government of Saskatchewan standards for reading, writing, and numeracy; and student attendance, retention, credit attainment, graduation and school completion rates. <p>Under the agreement, the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Education Authority reports directly to the Department through the following data collection instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nominal roll: and Elementary and Secondary Education Advancement.

Whitecap Dakota First Nation – Saskatchewan (September 2020)	
Description	Reporting Framework
<p>In September 2020, Indigenous Services Canada signed a tripartite regional education agreement with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools. The agreement built upon a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Whitecap</p>	<p>Under the agreement, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation commits to report on the following performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the percentage of students who meet or exceed Government of

<p>Dakota First Nation and Saskatoon Public Schools, signed in May 2019. Under the MOA, the Saskatoon Public Schools administers the on-reserve school, and the parties agree to create a collaborative learning system for their respective students. Under the regional education agreement, Indigenous Services Canada collaborates in the development and support of MOA objectives, consistent with the regional education agreement objectives.</p> <p>The Whitecap Dakota First Nation commits to making available a comprehensive annual report that sets out the objectives, activities and results of the school year.</p>	<p>Saskatchewan standards for reading, writing, and numeracy; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student attendance, retention, credit attainment, graduation and school completion rates. <p>Under the agreement, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation reports directly to the Department through the following data collection instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nominal roll and Education Staff Census Report: and • Elementary and Secondary Educational Advancement.
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Elsipogtog First Nation Education Authority – Atlantic (February 2021)	
Description	
<p>In February 2021, Indigenous Services Canada and the Elsipogtog First Nation Education Authority signed an education agreement. This Education Authority provides aggregated service delivery to eligible schools and eligible students in New Brunswick.</p> <p>The Education Authority commits to producing an annual report that sets out the objectives, activities and results of the school year, and which will also be made available to the Chief and Council.</p>	<p>Under the agreement, the Elsipogtog First Nation Education Authority commits to report on performance measures through the Annual Elsipogtog Education Authority Performance Report.</p> <p>Under the agreement, the Elsipogtog First Nation Education Authority reports directly to the Department through the nominal roll and Education Staff Census Report.</p>

Education Agreements Under Development

Indigenous Services Canada is presently developing and negotiating education agreements with other First Nations and First Nations education organizations. Negotiations with the following partners are well advanced and nearing completion:

- Treaty Education Alliance (Saskatchewan)
- East Central First Nations Education Authority (Saskatchewan)
- Saskatoon Tribal Council (Saskatchewan)
- Meadow Lake Tribal Council (Saskatchewan)
- First Nation Education Council (Quebec)

Summary of completed Education Agreements

The table below provides a summary of the education agreements that have been completed between July 1, 2018 to March 31, 2021 and reported on to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Finalized/Signed Education Agreements	Type of Agreement	Date Signed
British Columbia – First Nations Education Steering Committee	Regional Education Agreement	July 2018
Alberta – Kee-Tas-Kee-Now Tribal Council	Regional Education Agreement	March 2019
Alberta – Sunchild First Nation	Regional Education Agreement	July 2019
Saskatchewan – Athabasca Denesuline Education Authority	Education Authority	August 2019
Saskatchewan – Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Education Authority	Education Authority	September 2020
Saskatchewan – Whitecap Dakota First Nation	Regional Education Agreement	September 2020
Atlantic – Elsipogtog First Nation Education Authority	Education Authority	February 2021