Needs Assessment Report: Brandon University
Recruitment and Retention of First Nation Students
The Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies (CARES) is an applied research institute of the Faculty of Education at Brandon University. Its role is to promote and facilitate research activities that are of interest to rural, northern, aboriginal and rural school divisions, communities and related organizations. The Centre also offers research training and networking opportunities for educational researchers actively involved in aboriginal and rural education research.
Needs Assessment Report:
Brandon University
Recruitment and Retention of First Nation Students

2011

Submitted by:
Karen Rempel, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies
Faculty of Education, Brandon University

Written by:
Karen Rempel, Ph.D., Coordinator, BU CARES
Chris Brown, M. Ed., Assistant Professor, Brandon University
Jacqueline Kirk, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, Brandon University
Sheryl Moose, B.A., B.Ed., Graduate Student, Brandon University
Acknowledgements

Brandon University’s Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies (BU CARES) would like to recognize Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for their financial contribution to the research process and the production of this report.

A project team comprised of individuals from across faculties and services at Brandon University provided guidance and written contributions to this project. Members of this project team were:

- Chris Brown, Faculty of Education, Brandon University
- Blessing Emadedor, Graduate Student, Brandon University
- Katie Gross, Student Services, Brandon University
- Jacqueline Kirk, Faculty of Education, Brandon University
- Mel Lall, Faculty of Education, Brandon University
- Sheryl Moose, Graduate Student, Brandon University
- Arnold Novak, Faculty of Education, Brandon University
- Paul O’Driscoll, Ancillary Services, Brandon University
- David Paul, Faculty of Education, Brandon University
- Doug Pople, Student Services, Brandon University
- Karen Rempel, Faculty of Education, Brandon University

Note: The opinions and recommendations expressed in this needs assessment reflect those of the authors and members of the project team who wished to comment. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Brandon University or of individual faculty, staff or students.
Table of Contents

Scope of the Project ................................................................................................................................. 8

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 9

   Purpose .................................................................................................................................................. 9

Background ............................................................................................................................................... 10

   BUILD 2010 and current context at Brandon University ................................................................. 10

Participation of Aboriginal Students in University Education .......................................................... 12

Demographic Overview ........................................................................................................................... 13

Factors Affecting Participation of Aboriginal People in Postsecondary Education ............................ 15

   1. Financial Barriers and the 'Layering Effect' .................................................................................. 15

   2. Academic preparedness ................................................................................................................. 16

   3. Lack of awareness of institutional understanding of Aboriginal culture .................................. 17

Research Methodology ........................................................................................................................ 19

   Limitations .......................................................................................................................................... 20

Findings and Discussion ........................................................................................................................ 20

   Table 1: Examples of recruitment and retention activities .............................................................. 22

Brandon University Current Recruitment and Retention Efforts ....................................................... 25

   Strengths ............................................................................................................................................. 25

   Weaknesses ........................................................................................................................................ 27

Recommendations ................................................................................................................................... 29

   Campus Support ............................................................................................................................... 29

   Outreach ............................................................................................................................................ 32

Recruitment ............................................................................................................................................. 34

   1. Products for recruitment .............................................................................................................. 34

   2. Processes for Recruitment ........................................................................................................... 34

   3. Transition Processes ..................................................................................................................... 35

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations ...................................................................................... 36

   Recommendation 1: Development and implementation of an Aboriginal Student Policy .......... 36

   Recommendation 2: Consultation and involvement of Aboriginal People in Brandon University 37
Recommendation 3: Develop and implement an Academic and Student Support Program aimed at University Advancement at Brandon University for First Nations students ........................................... 37
Recommendation 4: Partnerships with other PSE institutions......................................................................................................................... 38
Recommendation 5: Monitoring Programs, Services and Policies......................................................................................................................... 38
Recommendation 6: Faculty, Staff and Student Awareness of Aboriginal Culture ................................................................................................. 39
References ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 40
Appendix A – University of Calgary’s Aboriginal Student Policy................................................................................................................................. 41
Appendix B: Recruitment and Retention-Thematic Analysis by Sheryl Moose................................................................................................................................. 42
   Administration Support........................................................................................................................................................................ 42
   Barriers........................................................................................................................................................................................................... 44
   Situational Barriers........................................................................................................................................................................ 44
   Dispositional Barriers........................................................................................................................................................................ 44
   Informational Barriers........................................................................................................................................................................ 45
   Institutional Barriers........................................................................................................................................................................ 47
   Inside and Outside Supports........................................................................................................................................................................ 50
   Inside Support.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 50
   Outside Supports.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 51
   Importance to First Nations........................................................................................................................................................................ 53
   Learning Supports.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 53
   Faculty Staff.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 54
   Course Content.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 55
Weaknesses........................................................................................................................................................................................................... 56
1. Learning Supports........................................................................................................................................................................ 56
2. Staff........................................................................................................................................................................................................... 56
3. Unawareness and/or lack of support services................................................................................................................................. 57
4. Courses........................................................................................................................................................................................................... 58
5. Lack of Community Building/Partnership......................................................................................................................................................... 58
Recommendations.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 60
1. Welcoming Presence, “Belonging”........................................................................................................................................................................ 60
2. Director for IPC.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 60
3. Make Students Aware of Services........................................................................................................................................................................ 61
4. Transition Process .................................................................................................................................................. 61

Student Recommendations for Recruitment of First Nations Students .......................................................... 63

Recommendation 1: Hire a BU Recruiter ................................................................................................................ 63
Recommendation 2: Invitation to all First Nation High Schools ........................................................................ 63
Recommendation 3: Distribute Program Information to Communities .............................................................. 63
Recommendation 4: Incorporate Athletic Awareness ............................................................................................ 63
Recommendation 5: Aboriginal Representation on Advertisements ................................................................. 63

Concluding Remarks ............................................................................................................................................................ 64

Appendix C: Overview of University Programs and Services Aboriginal Students ........................................ 65

Simon Fraser University ........................................................................................................................................ 65
University of Alberta .................................................................................................................................................... 66
University of British Columbia ............................................................................................................................... 66
University of Manitoba ............................................................................................................................................. 67
University of Northern British Columbia ............................................................................................................... 68
University of Regina .................................................................................................................................................. 68
University of Saskatchewan ................................................................................................................................. 69
University of Victoria .............................................................................................................................................. 71
University of Winnipeg ........................................................................................................................................... 71

Aboriginal Student Services Centre Brochure http://www.uwinipeg.ca/index/cms-filesystem-action/pdfs/assc/assc-pamphlet.pdf ....................................................................................................................... 71
Scope of the Project

The goal of this needs assessment was to identify the challenges and opportunities for recruitment to and retention of First Nations students in particular, but all Aboriginal students in general to Brandon University. Subsequently, the findings have been used to develop a comprehensive program proposal in order to develop, align and/or integrate programs that will support the recruitment and retention of First Nation and Inuit students.

A project team from across Brandon University helped guide the project. They also provided information and participated in focus groups that involved faculty and staff. Several individuals from the project team also spent considerable time and effort in interviewing students, faculty and staff and reviewing publicly available information on other recruitment and retention practices. This broad-based approach helped provide concrete recommendations for Brandon University.

The report consists of four sections. These are Section 1 presents the background information with particular mention of BUILD 2010, Brandon University's 5-year plan. Section 1 also includes a review of a few key documents that are pertinent to this assessment and extremely timely. One of these documents, A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions of Aboriginal People from K-12 Postsecondary Education (2010), provided an excellent overview of the literature and brought important information to the findings. Section 2 summarizes the research methodology include research questions and selection of participants. Section 3 presents the findings from the needs assessment. Section 4 sets out concluding remarks and recommendations for Brandon University. The most significant conclusions were that (a) Brandon University needs a framework of academic programs and institutional policies and supports for Aboriginal students and (b) the University is lagging behind other universities in efforts to recruit and retain Aboriginal students. Key recommendations are (a) the development and implementation of an institution-wide Aboriginal Student policy; (b) a planned academic program for Aboriginal students that takes into account academic preparation as well as personal supports and (c) the involvement of the Aboriginal community in developing policies, programs and services for Aboriginal students.

The intended audiences for the report are (1) the Brandon University community, faculty, staff, and students and (2) the Indian Student Support Program sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
Introduction

In an analysis of the 2006 census data, Statistics Canada (2008) explains that only 8% of the Aboriginal population in Canada completes a university degree compared to 23% of the non-Aboriginal population. This statistic alone urges Canadian universities consider why this is so. The following report constitutes the findings of a group of researchers who chose to reflect on the current practices for the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students at Brandon University with the intention of identifying possible opportunities for improvement.

Purpose

The purpose of this needs assessment was to identify factors that Brandon University and the Faculty of Education in particular, should take into consideration to help recruit First Nations and Inuit students into our programs and to support their success once they had been admitted to the university. This study utilized:

- interviews with representatives from six Aboriginal communities;
- interviews with former Aboriginal graduates;
- a survey of current Aboriginal students;
- focus group discussions with faculty and staff;
- an environmental scan to build an understanding of how other universities were serving Aboriginal students; and,
- interviews with the current Deans of Arts, Education, and Health Studies.

to collect information about the current processes for recruitment of Aboriginal students, current supports for success of Aboriginal students, and current recommendations for improvement.

This study was planned as part one of a multiphase project at Brandon University. This first phase was a needs assessment to establish several options for building success for Aboriginal students at Brandon University. The research group has the authentic intention of following up this needs assessment with a series of action research projects that will strive to implement several of the recommendations from this report. We genuinely seek to make a difference for all Aboriginal students who choose to study at Brandon University.
Background

BUILD 2010 and current context at Brandon University

Since its beginnings in 1899, Brandon University has had a special interest in rural, northern and aboriginal communities. These interests are continually embedded and fostered through our mission statement and institutional plans. The most recent of these plans is *Brandon University: Innovation, Leadership and Development 2010 (BUILD 2010)*. This plan sets the course for the plan for Brandon University for 2010 to 2015. It begins with the following *mission statement* for the University.

We promote excellence in teaching, research, creation and scholarship. We educate our students so that they can make a meaningful difference as engaged citizens and leaders. We defend academic freedom and responsibility. We create and disseminate new knowledge. We embrace cultural diversity and are particularly committed to the education of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. We share our expertise and resources with the greater community.

This mission statement is followed by a statement of commitment for the University.

We have a commitment to education for all as a social justice goal and a particular purpose with respect to the successful education of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. However, we need to increase resources for access programs and student retention in order to fulfill this mandate.

As an explicit statement of action, the BUILD 2010 states that it will “enhance and develop new policies and programs targeted toward the success of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, as well as non-traditional learners.”

Apart from recruitment activities, Brandon University’s current efforts (as of the date of this report) for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students are:

- the Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP), which will end in June 2012, offers teacher preparation programs at centers in rural and remote communities across Manitoba (Appendix A); and
- the Program for the Education of Natives Teachers (PENT), offers teacher preparation programs that combine teaching experiences in Northern communities during the fall and winter with on-campus coursework during the spring and summer terms (Appendix B);
- the Native Studies program, which concerns the scholarly recognition of Native culture and Native peoples of North America. The Program reflects the increasingly important position of Aboriginal people throughout Canada and the world;
• the Indigenous Health & Human Services (IHHS) Degree Program is a new and innovative program that provides instruction in Indigenous perspectives of holistic health and wellness; traditional approaches to healing and Western intervention theories and skills. Graduates of the program will engage in activities that promote the health and well-being of Indigenous People and assist Indigenous People to become more self sufficient; prevent dependency; strengthen family relationships, and restore individuals, families, groups, or communities to successful social functioning. The program combines Indigenous knowledge and spirituality with courses from the School of Health Studies, and the faculties of Arts, and Science;

• the Aboriginal Art Program offers courses specifically in developing work inspired by the arts of the Americas. The Aboriginal art courses provide an understanding of the multitude of indigenous art forms and how they have evolved through the ages. The emphasis of these courses is on the non-western arts and their development from prehistory to present;

• the First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling (FNAC) Degree Program is an innovative and interdisciplinary blend of Traditional Indigenous Teachings and Western counseling theories and skills. Traditional philosophies and spiritual practices are taught through Circle in the ceremony room and with the land-based activities incorporated elders. Personal growth and development as counsellors is recognized as an ongoing journey throughout the program; and

• the Indigenous People’s Centre (IPC) is an on-campus resource center, which available for First Nations and Métis students, their tribal councils counsellors and the Elders Program. The IPC is part of student services and is responsible for many programs for First Nations and Métis students. Services include a special orientation to the university and community, learning skills workshops, and various workshops related to students needs.

Notably, only BUNTEP and PENT programs are specifically targeted for Aboriginal students including academic supports.
Participation of Aboriginal Students in University Education

This needs assessment including its participants, findings and recommendations has a narrow focus - the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students at Brandon University. That said, an overview of the larger context of Aboriginal student participation in postsecondary education (PSE) in Canada is particularly relevant for Brandon University's current and future efforts for Aboriginal students helpful. The literature on Aboriginal participation in university and postsecondary education is extensive.

For the purposes of this needs assessment, we turned primarily on current policy documents presented by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2010) and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2010). These were deemed to most relevant to Brandon University and the intended outcomes of this needs assessment. To this end, the document, A Literature Review of Factors that Support Successful Transitions of Aboriginal People from K-12 Postsecondary Education (2010) prepared by the Atlantic Evaluation Group on behalf of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, has been extremely valuable. This document “integrates all the research in this area so that policy makers, researchers, Aboriginal people, and educators can understand the complex issues that exist in the area and how these issues might be addressed using the tools at our disposal.” (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010, p.1). The authors of this needs assessment recommend it as a worthwhile read for all faculty and administrative staff at Brandon University.
Demographic Overview

In 2006, there were 1.17 million Aboriginal people in Canada comprising 3.8 per cent of the total Canadian population. (While this is a relatively small proportion of the Canadian population, it is extremely noteworthy that the Aboriginal population grew 45 per cent between 1996 and 2006. By comparison, the non-Aboriginal population grew at only 8 per cent during the same time period.) Approximately 53 per cent of Aboriginal people identified themselves Registered Indians and according to the 2006 Census, nearly one-half of these individuals lived on reserves located mostly in rural and remote areas of Canada (Malatest & Associates, 2008).

There is no argument that individuals benefit significantly from a postsecondary education (PSE) in terms of increased earnings as well as physical and mental well-being. These benefits extend beyond the individual to increase the social and economic well-being of the wider community. These benefits are even higher for Aboriginal people and communities (Malatest & Associates, 2008). About 70 per cent of Aboriginal youth aged 16 to 24 have aspirations for postsecondary education. However, while these aspirations match those of the non-Aboriginal youth population, there is persistent gap between recruitment to and completion of PSE across all subgroups of Aboriginal people (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010). Notably, this gap is largest for the completion of university degrees.

It is noteworthy that this education gap, as measured by PSE admissions and completions, between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal population is persistent across all subgroups of Aboriginal people (that is Métis, First Nations, Registered Indians and Inuit). It is however, greatest for Inuit people followed by First Nations and Registered Indians particularly those living on reserves. The gap is lowest for Métis people. Malatest & Associates (2008) offered that only 8 per cent of Registered Indians had completed a university degree compared to 23 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.

While this gap is shrinking when it comes to both admissions and completions of non-university programs such as trade programs, apprenticeships and college certificates, this is not the case with participation in and completion of university programs. In fact, the gap between the proportion of Aboriginal people and the proportion of non-Aboriginal people who attend and complete university programs has increased but varies across age groups (Malatest & Associates, 2008). According to Richards (2008) the largest gap is among those aged 25 to 34; a moderate gap among those aged 35 to 44 and the smallest among those aged 45 and older.

While this disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student recruitment to and completion of PSE has existed for many decades, there are strong indications that the time has come to mobilize efforts that result in real change for recruitment
and completion of PSE for Aboriginal people (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2010).

In light of the growing population of young Aboriginal people in Manitoba, the recruitment to and completion of PSE is nothing less than critical. According to Michalowski, Loh, Verma, Germain and Grenier (2005), Aboriginal children in Manitoba will comprise the largest proportion of all school-aged children in the province by the year 2017. This significance this forecast becomes apparent when it is coupled with the lack of high school completion by Aboriginal youth in the Province. According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2009) less than 30% of all Aboriginal youth living on reserves in Manitoba had completed high school. Sadly, this was the lowest (aka the worst) rate across Canada.
Factors Affecting Participation of Aboriginal People in Postsecondary Education

According to the literature there are a number of factors that affect recruitment to and completion of PSE. The most significant of these are financial barriers, academic preparedness, lack of confidence and motivation, absence of role models and a lack of institutional understanding of Aboriginal culture (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010; 2010; Malatest & Associates, 2008). All of these factors are relevant however for the purposes of this particular needs assessment and Brandon University as whole, three factors stand out. These are (1) financial barriers, (2) academic preparedness, and (3) lack of institutional understanding of Aboriginal culture.

1. Financial Barriers and the ‘Layering Effect’

For Aboriginal students with aspirations to obtain a university education, lack of funding is one of their greatest barriers (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010; Malatest & Associates, 2008). There is little argument that a large number of non-Aboriginal students also face financial barriers. For Aboriginal students however there is a layering effect that occurs. Specifically, they not only need money to attend university, they require additional supports including

- Students are often not certain of where to obtain additional funds beyond applying to the band. They typically do not have savings, nor do their families have additional funds to help support them.

- Aboriginal students often have a lack of financial awareness of when, where and how to garner additional funds. (For information purposes, it is a commonly held opinion that Aboriginal students get a free education. However, this is far from the case. Only a portion of First Nations and Inuit students who live in Canada are supported. Furthermore, they must be accepted into a university, enroll and then maintain a satisfactory academic standing in the program. Métis students have no access to this funding per se and must use the same channels as non-Aboriginal students to fund their university education).

- Band funding is often complicated. While band funding is often seen by potential students as an opportunity, the process of securing that funding is often seen as complicated to the point of being a deterrent. Furthermore, many reserves designate the application deadline for postsecondary education in June which leaves potential students with too little time to plan for additional funding even if they are accepted (Malatest & Associates, 2008).
• Aboriginal students attending universities tend to be older and have family responsibilities when they come to university (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010). These responsibilities include suitable housing, child care costs, transportation issues and distance to travel back to home communities).

• Even when university courses are delivered on-reserve, with the aim of providing transition programs or access, there is a persistent lack and/or continuity of funds to sustain the programs. There are also many cases, where the politics and relationships of band councils compromise the funding of individuals or of programs (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010).

• Funding levels for the support to Aboriginal students have also decreased. At the same time, more universities (including Brandon University) are forced to adopt a cost-recovery model for programs. This is particularly problematic for on-reserve university programs. For many universities, the cost of delivery is becoming prohibitive and in some case, punitive to local bands.

2. Academic preparedness

Academic preparedness, another major barrier to Aboriginal students’ participation in university education, refers to (a) high school graduation and (b) measures of education achievement. While academic preparedness of Aboriginal students is chronic and systemic across Canada, this problem is particularly troubling among those living on reserves across the county.

Manitoba’s high school graduation rates are particularly low in comparison to other provinces. According to the report prepared by the Atlantic Evaluation Group (2010) poor high school completion rates are related to:

• the clustering of low socio-economic living conditions;
• the proportion of Aboriginal students in classrooms;
• the mobility and frequency of moves of Aboriginal people in and out of cities, between reserves and more urban areas, and even within neighborhoods;
• the lack of role models in education; and the
• the legacy of residential schools in communities.

The Canadian Council on Learning (2007) also added that the lack of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing in curriculums, instruction and assessment are detrimental to Aboriginal student success.
The issue of educational achievement and standards between the two systems has drawn considerable attention but has yet to be fully understood. It is, however, particularly critical for Brandon University. Firstly, the University faces a rapidly diminishing pool of prospective pool of eligible students for its programs in spite of the growing proportion of Aboriginal youth in Manitoba schools grows. Secondly, there is no doubt that Brandon University will need to provide additional academic, cultural and financial supports to Aboriginal students. At the time of this needs assessment, the university's intentions are laudable (vis-à-vis BUILD 2010) but concrete efforts for academic, cultural and financial supports will require dedicated financial and human resources.

The lack of academic preparation certainly crosses jurisdictional boundaries not the least of which is two systems of K-12 education – provincial schools and federally-funded schools. Although both systems follow the same curricula including educational achievement standards, there continues to be a disparity between the two systems (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010).

Suggested measures to help improve academic preparation include mentoring by role models, orientation to and familiarization with university settings, career counseling and university transition programs. For maximum effectiveness, these measures should begin early, take multiple approaches, feature continuity from elementary school on through high school and involve families and communities.

3. Lack of awareness of institutional understanding of Aboriginal culture

Preston (2008) stated that the language, learning styles, communications modes, and cultural patterns of many formal postsecondary institutions, differ greatly from the traditional approaches of Aboriginal people. This statement misses a critical point – that being the differences that exist between subgroups of the Aboriginal people. For example, in Manitoba, and even closer to home, at Brandon University, there are cultural differences between subgroups of First Nations people and Métis people that prevail and may even erode efforts to increase participation of Aboriginal people in university education. Even with this complexity, some overarching statements from Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) warrant direct quotations:

1 Brandon University’s Faculty of Education has received two Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada – Community-University Research Alliance awards aimed in Aboriginal students. The 2006-2011 award lead by Dr. Helen Armstrong examined curriculum and instruction. The second award (2011-2016) lead by Dr. Alex Michalos and Dr. Karen Rempel, is specifically aimed at developing indicators of educational success including community-based processes aimed at understanding and improving educational achievement in First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Northern communities in Manitoba.
The most compelling problem that First Nations students face when they go to the university is a lack of respect, not just as individuals, but more fundamentally as a people. To them, the university represents an impersonal, intimidating and often hostile environment, in which little of what they bring in the way of cultural knowledge, traditions and core values is recognized much less respected. They are expected to leave the cultural predispositions from their world at the door and assume the trappings of a new form of reality, a reality which is often substantially different from their own (p.6).

They go on to add

For the First Nations student coming to the university (an institution that is a virtual embodiment of modern consciousness), survival often requires the acquisition and acceptance of a new form of consciousness that not only displaces, but often devalues their indigenous consciousness, and for many, this is a greater sacrifice than they are willing to make. If they enter and then withdraw before ‘completion’, however, they are branded by the university as a ‘dropout’ - a failure. Those who persevere and make the sacrifice can find themselves in the end, torn between two worlds, leading to a further struggle within themselves to reconcile the cultural and psychic conflicts arising from competing values and aspirations (p.6).
Research Methodology

The intention of the needs assessment was to inform Brandon University on recruitment and retention current and proposed practices for increased participation of First Nations students at Brandon University. The project team comprised of individuals from across the University, contributed input into the data collection instruments (quantitative and qualitative) for the needs assessment. Brandon University Research Ethics Committee reviewed the process and questions for the needs assessment. The Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies (CARES) in the Faculty of Education coordinated the efforts of the project team.

In general, the needs assessment focused on Brandon University's recruitment and retention practices and needs for First Nation communities that (a) are situated close to Brandon University or (b) have previous relationships as evidenced through our Community-Based Education programs (Professional Education of Northern Teachers - PENT and Brandon University Teacher Education Program – BUNTEP) or the Faculty of Education’s Graduate Studies program.

The data collection activities were aimed at identifying factors that Brandon University and the Faculty of Education in particular, should take into consideration to (a) help recruit First Nations and Inuit students into our programs and to (b) contribute to the academic success of these students. Key informants for the interviews were individuals from First Nations communities involved in education; current and former students, the academic deans at Brandon University, individual interviews and focus groups from other groups across the University including a specific focus group with the Faculty of Education.

The following set of questions was used to guide the key informant and focus group interviews:

1. What are the formal mechanisms and academic supports do we have to support Aboriginal students in your faculty/department? What else can we do?

2. What are the informal mechanisms and academic supports exist for Aboriginal students in your faculty/department?

3. What recruitment material and resources does BU have that focus on Aboriginal students and First Nations communities?

4. How can we improve the dialogue/partnerships with Aboriginal students and First Nations’ communities?

5. How could we develop or revitalize access programs to support Aboriginal students at Brandon University?
6. In what way could we better provide accommodations for Aboriginal students (with and without families) attending Brandon University?

In total, the project team conducted more than 40 individual interviews with current students, academic deans, school principals, educational counselors and elders. In the course of conducting the interviews, members of the team also visited four northern First Nations communities and two southern First Nations communities. In addition to these interviews and focus groups, the project team undertook a small survey of First Nations students living in residence at Brandon University and carried out an environmental scan of recruitment and retention practices in other Western Canadian universities and colleges.

Limitations

There is no doubt that understanding and awareness of Aboriginal culture is essential to recruitment and retention of First Nations students. A limitation of this needs assessment is that it did not explore the extent of understanding of Aboriginal culture across the Brandon University. That said, the project team would like to see future efforts to explore the interests, needs, and barriers of faculty and staff for increased understanding of Aboriginal culture. A useful example is the Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training (SFACT) Needs Assessment Report (2009) carried out as part of the LE, NONET Project at the University of Victoria.

Findings and Discussion

Perspectives from First Nations people

A number of First Nations people were asked to provide comments and suggestions on formal and informal recruitment and retention activities. Throughout the interviews it was clear that Brandon University overall was ‘losing ground’ in terms of programs and services for Aboriginal students. This was particularly noticeable when compared to recruitment and retention activities at the University of Manitoba. For example, one individual commented that there didn’t appear to be anyone in Brandon University’s Indigenous Peoples Centre and therefore, “there is no welcoming presence”. In contrast, the University of Manitoba has sharing circles, tours, preparatory and tutoring sessions that provide students with 50 free hours of tutoring on campus. It also has a mandatory, week-long orientation specifically for First Nations students. The University of Manitoba also has ‘many Aboriginal faces’ at student services, among faculty and also an increasing number of students.
The First Nations key informants offered a number of recommendations for improvements. These include:

- The need for an access-type of program that includes introductory math, science and writing programs.
- A week-long mandatory orientation for First Nations students.
- Housing is an on-going issue and opening up the residence for student to bring their families should be an option.
- The writing program should be revamped and English as a Second Language classes developed to meet the unique Aboriginal language needs. These language needs should also be tied to particular programs. As one informant stated, “This is one area where they can emphasize more because language is how we express ourselves.”
- The University should try to increase the awareness and understanding of faculty and staff of the feelings and conflicts that Aboriginal students face while attending school at BU. As an Elder stated, “In Aboriginal culture, elders are respected and are not to be questioned. In school we are taught to listen and be respectful and to never question authority. We teach our children the same way. But that’s beneficial when Aboriginal students go to university. They need to question authority and ask questions to gain insight as to what is the expectation of the assignment given. Our students are scared to ask for help, they get behind in assignments and therefore fail the class.”
- BU should consider sport camps for students and families to make transition easier for Aboriginal students.
- Recruiters need to establish relationships with the schools early on to recruit students. This also includes promoting more family events for students at Brandon University. One example was that the U of M provides sporting event tickets to students and families and then added that they had never been invited to any sporting events at Brandon University.

Finally, several individuals commented on Brandon University’s key strength which was the support and encouragement provided by individual faculty and staff at Brandon University. This individualized, personal contact was a key factor for retention of Aboriginal students at Brandon University.

Environmental Scan of Recruitment and Retention at Other Universities

This section presents the results of the environmental scan of publicly available information on recruitment and retention efforts for Aboriginal students in selected universities Canada. As a general comment, all of the universities and colleges contacted as part of this scan claimed that they have various programs and/or activities for the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students. Examples of these activities are set out in Table 1.
### Table 1: Examples of recruitment and retention activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Recruitment Activities</th>
<th>Examples of Retention and/or Completion Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Websites</td>
<td>• ACCESS / transition model programs for academic preparedness and success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Orientation programs</td>
<td>• Tuition/ funding support through awards, scholarships and bursaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pathways from high school transitions</td>
<td>• Assistance with housing and financial supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community visits</td>
<td>• Aboriginal student centers and associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aboriginal community support</td>
<td>• Cultural activities for students, faculty and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Early (middle and early high school visits to communities)</td>
<td>• Integration of Aboriginal content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tours</td>
<td>• Aboriginal Alumni Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Designated aboriginal recruiter</td>
<td>• Aboriginal children daycare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitated registration process</td>
<td>• Elders’ Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recruitment information (print materials and websites) specifically targeted for Aboriginal students</td>
<td>• Celebration Powwows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Summer science and recreational programs for young Aboriginal students</td>
<td>• Assistance for preparation of financial, registration and graduation applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presence at career fairs and community visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the unique programs and services include specialized math and science programs, Aboriginal Alumni Association, business programs focused on First Nations students, and familiarization programs for K-12 students. Particularly noteworthy are:

- The Northern Advancement Program offered by the University of Northern British Columbia is a liberal arts degree that helps students from isolated northern communities make the transition to university.
- The University of Winnipeg has an Outreach Centre in the inner city to develop relationships with the community.
- Simon Fraser and the University of Calgary have institution wide policies to enable positive action.
- The University of Victoria has a handbook for Aboriginal students to help with processes and procedures.
- A collaboration of six postsecondary institutions in British Columbia developed to collaborate and partner on common efforts that support Aboriginal students such as housing, child care and financial support.

These programs are all aimed at special recruitment and retention efforts for Aboriginal students to PSE. Many institutions have developed and implemented these activities as part of their overall institutional plans such as BUILD 2010. Three types of institution-wide frameworks were identified in the environmental scan. These are:

1. Aboriginal Student Policy established by the Board of Governors for the institution. The University of Calgary’s Aboriginal Student Policy Standing Committee (Appendix B) is an example of this type of institutional-wide effort.

2. Staff and faculty cultural awareness program of activities that build cultural awareness with faculty and staff. Greater awareness will help build and sustain academic and institutional efforts of the aboriginal student policy of the university. The Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training at the University of Victoria is an example.

3. Access or transitional programs aimed at the development of academic skills as well as social and counselling supports and services to assist with Aboriginal students’ academic programs. The University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg and the University College of the North have ACCESS programs. The Brandon University’s Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) and the Professional Education of Northern Teachers, (PENT) are also listed as Access Programs and were at one time the only programs in Manitoba. At the time of this needs assessment, the BUNTEP program is scheduled to end in June 2012 and the PENT program has significantly reduced numbers of students. The University College of the North (UCN) is believed by many in the BUNTEP and
PENT programs to be the contributing factor although no research has been done to confirm or deny these assumptions.

While it is reasonable that particular activities and institution-wide efforts vary from institution to institution the following key elements are significant (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010; AUCC, 2010). These are:

- an advisory council or committee comprised of members from the Aboriginal community is necessary to provide advice and guidance for recruitment and retention activities;
- Partnerships with Aboriginal communities;
- an institutional acknowledgment of and attention to Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing;
- policies, procedures and academic programs that take into account the unique financial, social and physical needs of Aboriginal students; and
- the integration of Aboriginal knowledge and culture in academic programs and institutional practices in appropriate ways.

In addition to these key elements, the selected universities reviewed in this environmental scan have recognized and/or have initiated some kind of (1) access or transitional academic programs, (2) cultural programs and activities aimed at improving Aboriginal students’ identity, and (3) housing supports and financial supports to address these particular barriers to Aboriginal students. Appendix XX provides a brief summary of the activities of these institutions.
Brandon University Current Recruitment and Retention Efforts

To determine the current state of recruitment and retention efforts at Brandon University, the research team talked individually to the deans of the academic faculties at Brandon University, conducted a faculty and staff focus group with the Faculty of Education, and a focus group with staff involved directly with student support services such as the bookstore, career planning, enrolment and student counselling. The interview questions were aimed at formal and informal processes for recruitment and retention and recommendations for future activities. The following questions were asked of participants:

1. What are the formal and informal mechanisms in place to support Aboriginal students in your faculty/department? (Consider those that are used to provide equity and reduce systemic barriers, i.e. hegemony) What else could we do?

2. What are the informal practices, that you are aware of, that support Aboriginal students in your faculty/department? How do faculty members support the success of Aboriginal students? What else could we do?

3. Discuss recruitment material and resources that focus on Aboriginal students and First Nations communities. How could we improve our practice?

4. How could we improve the dialogue/partnership with Aboriginal students and First Nations’ communities?

5. How could we develop or revitalize access programs to support Aboriginal students at Brandon University?

6. How could we provide better accommodations for Aboriginal students (with and without families) attending Brandon University?

The data was sorted into strengths, weaknesses and recommendations, and then into further subcategories. All of the information contained in this analysis was synthesized from the focus group and interviews. The Faculty of Education’s perspective is strongly represented in this analysis because several members of the Faculty of Education chose to participate in the process.

***Strengths***

The research participants identified a number of areas where Brandon University was well positioned in the area of Aboriginal recruitment and retention. Four areas in particular, spoke to current and past practices that had placed Brandon University as a school of choice for Aboriginal students. Those areas included learning supports, place/space to congregate, a political will to improve, and current outreach and access programs.


**Learning Supports.**

Generally, in all of the focus groups and interviews, there was the perception that faculty members across campus support the success of Aboriginal students by accommodating their needs. “We liaise with Sioux Valley High School” was one participant’s response, which acknowledges how several faculties are working to support the instruction of Dakota students at Sioux Valley High School. This is happening in the Faculty’s of Science, Arts and Education.

There were also a number of positive references specifically from within the Faculty of Education where faculty felt they were aware of Aboriginal issues. There was the acknowledgement that faculty in education work to integrate Aboriginal content and Aboriginal perspectives into education courses. One participant recorded that “we are continuously validating, recognizing, and affirming Aboriginal students”. There is the perception by education faculty that professors in education are committed to Aboriginal student success through more inclusive approaches. This may be because of provincially mandated requirements to provide Aboriginal perspectives to students in public schools. For example, there is a provincial initiative requiring that a course in Aboriginal perspectives be taught to all pre-service teachers. Faculty members in the Faculty of Education generally work to introduce students to Aboriginal issues and topics in their classrooms as a function of inclusive education and culturally relevant pedagogy. As well, a substantial research initiative is on-going within the Faculty of Education that supports ‘indigenizing the curriculum’. Members of the Faculty of Education are currently working with teachers at Sioux Valley High School and other First Nation schools to help indigenize the curriculum and support classroom teachers in their efforts to provide culturally relevant learning.

**Place/Space to congregate**

Brandon University also has the Indigenous Peoples Centre (IPC), which is a designated space for Aboriginal students to come together. The IPC is currently staffed by two Brandon University students who are also Aboriginal. The IPC is similar, but on a smaller scale, to the University of Manitoba model where Aboriginal students have access to their own Aboriginal Student Centre. Since November of 2010, there has also been a Métis centre in the Faculty of Arts building. Several focus group members thought it worth considering whether we should have one common centre for both Aboriginal and Métis students?

**Political will to improve**

The participants also recognized that there was a new political will to improve the educational experiences and opportunities for Aboriginal students attending Brandon University. Examples cited included that the senior administration is currently hiring a Director of Aboriginal Initiatives. As well, Aboriginal initiatives
are strongly articulated in Build 2010, with the acknowledgement that significant fiscal resources are to be directed toward support for Aboriginal recruitment and retention at Brandon University.

One other newer initiative that will continue to support Aboriginal students is the Respectful Environment Policy. This is a policy forged around ensuring social justice for all. As well, we will be able to use the new, Healthy Living Centre to attract and recruit more students, including Aboriginal learners. Another interesting mention is that Sioux Valley High School has recently been given a permanent residence in our community. Sioux Valley High School is now permanently located only three short blocks from Brandon University. The schools close proximity to Brandon University should facilitate more collaboration.

Current Outreach and Access Programs

All participants in the focus groups in the Faculty of Education and most other participants identified several programs in the Faculty of Education as flagship programs designed specifically to support the success of Aboriginal students at Brandon University. One participant wrote, “We have the BUNTEP Program that creates centers and provides students with two degrees (B. A. and B. Ed.). This program takes 6 years to complete”. As well, it was felt by many that BUNTEP and PENT were still the best ways to connect and support Aboriginal students in communities. PENT is recognized in many communities as a first class program delivery program designed for Aboriginal students. These Community-Based Education initiatives were felt to be important to both the Faculty of Education and Brandon University because of the positive reputation that these programs had garnered, not to mention, the number of graduates from the programs who hold Brandon University in high regard as their alma mater.

Weaknesses

A number of weaknesses were identified in the thematic analysis as well. These weaknesses seemed to be identified more consistently across all of the interviews and focus groups. One item that several participants noted was that when students apply to attend Brandon University, they voluntarily identify themselves as Aboriginal. Although this is most appropriate, the uncertainty of the number of Aboriginal students attending, may call into question the accuracy of the number of Aboriginal learners who are actually attending Brandon University.

Of interest is that the participants could think of no formal mechanism in place to support the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students. The lack of mechanisms and processes to support First Nations learners are echoed in such statements as “There are no formal mechanisms in the Arts department to foster success or further enrollment efforts for Aboriginal learners”, or “there are no
formal mechanisms to support or to foster the inclusion of Aboriginal students in the Music department”, and “in the Education building, we cannot think of any formal mechanisms that we use to assist Aboriginal learners”. That is not to say that there are none, but rather, faculty and staff are unaware of their existence. Participants also identified a lack of representation of Aboriginal staff and faculty on Brandon University campus. For example, participants indicated, “IPC no longer has a full-time director of Aboriginal initiatives”.

What is currently a significant strength for Brandon University in its recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students will soon become a weakness. That is, the “Access programs at Brandon University (BUNTEP) will be discontinued in 2012”. This shift of funding from Brandon University to the University Campus of the North has the potential to result in a significant loss, for both the recruitment and retention, of Aboriginal students. One participant felt that the loss of Brandon University’s only Access program might be construed, by those First Nations families who are unaware of the political reality of the situation, as an abdication of Brandon University’s commitment to serve First Nation communities. Another weakness identified within the Faculty of Education was that a substantial SSHRC-CURA grant, attached to the Faculty of Education to assist First Nation community’s indigenizing the curriculum, is fast coming to an end. There will no longer be a formal connection to Sioux Valley High School through this program in the very near future.

There is also a perception that the current admission process restricts access. Participants acknowledged that sometimes there is a significant and burdensome financial impediment for sponsored student. For these students, they are challenged to be successful despite having to navigate significant financial hurdles. Not having control over their funding or whether they will continue to be able to attend university puts a great deal of stress on students and affects their capacity to attend and continue to attend Brandon University. Sponsored students also require book slips in order to purchase textbooks. Students currently acquire these through Finance and Registration services. This makes aid obvious and requires great logistical interaction by the student with the university.

Other logistical challenges identified by the participants which deleteriously affect recruitment and retention include a lack of affordable housing, little support for their families who come with students, a lack of childcare and funding for childcare, and a lack of adequate air service that makes it difficult for fly-in communities to get their students to and from Brandon.
Recommendations

The participants spoke openly about ways that we could build a campus that would be more inviting and supportive of Aboriginal learners. The recommendations are broken down into three foci: Campus Support, Outreach, and Recruitment.

Campus Support

Within the focus of campus support participants offered suggestions in six different areas:

1. **Strategic Organizing** - Expanding on the Build 2010 concept, a number of recommendations focused on strategic planning. In fact, one participant indicated, “We could create Build 2010 Consult for improving Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal students”. Strategic organizing would serve the purpose of building authentic partnerships with First Nation communities that would enable Brandon University “to have a deeper understanding of the communities’ actual need” and to “be able to ask them what they need”. One recommendation stated, “We need to go back to a Centre Advisory Committee, which gives community a medium to talk to BU”.

Strategic organizing could take many forms, including developing a “First Nation advisory committee that has muscle and could include yearly contact with First Nation schools in Manitoba”. Another set of suggestions encouraged the university to “Talk to other faculties/cooperate with one another” and to “look at other colleges or university philosophies, in regards to assisting Aboriginal students”.

2. **Education for Aboriginal Learners** - Campus support needs to include providing education for and about Aboriginal learners. This means noticing that some Aboriginal students may need academic and non-academic support, while others may not. The participants felt that in some ways it may be just as detrimental to label Aboriginal learners as “being in need”. As one participant put it, “do not make assumptions”. The participants spoke about the need to “value a person’s individual identity” first.

One of the most common statements made in the focus groups was about accommodating differences and exceptional circumstances. While these two pieces extend well beyond the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal learners, they also make sense in this context. Participants identified accommodations like “allow for and provide extra contact hours for some students”, “be more flexible with time constraints within courses”, “allow students’ children in class or in exams if there is no other childcare provided during that time”, and “allow students to ask for extensions when needed if there is a reasonable explanation as to why their assignment/test is incomplete”. Another person said we “need a policy for students who have to leave school, to attend to family emergencies and to amend deadlines
for assignments/papers”. There has to be a legitimization of the need to support
diversity and to accommodate difference as it relates to academic work products.

One of the areas of concern is that some students arrive without the academic skills
to succeed. This can happen for a number of socially unjust reasons, which also
needs to be considered. However, we could “have more support services on campus
for Aboriginal students that are up and running all year round”, “provide learning
assistants” and “develop learning resources for students”. This requires a
commitment to put resources in place that directly support the educational needs of
Aboriginal learners. There are a number of different courses that are designed for
students to upgrade such as 0:90 courses in math, physics, and chemistry. These
courses need to be protected to ensure they are still available in the future.

One participant felt that the university needed to re-examine the need for a Mature
Student Centre on campus. This centre would certainly address the needs of those
Aboriginal learners who are attending Brandon University as Mature Students. The
participant wondered whether the university “had thrown the baby out with the
bathwater”.

Within the faculty of education, continuing to strengthen the Graduate program in
the Faculty of Education in order to serve Northern students via distance delivery
would be helpful to aid in the recruitment and retention of Brandon University
Alumni. As well, a strong commitment to technical innovations in content delivery
including incorporating a blended approach into graduate courses will also draw
students to Brandon University. As suggested by one participant, Brandon
University “could utilize SKYPE or other software to facilitate courses and to speak
with communities members”. Being leaders and innovators in education will lead to
greater recruitment and retention in general.

3. Education about Aboriginal Learners - Workshops on being an Ally and
providing opportunities to raise awareness about social justice issues would be
helpful, as would “providing racism awareness workshops - however, we do not
make essentialist assumptions about Aboriginal students’ identity”. It was
indicated that we could have more in-service for faculty on “serving Aboriginal
students”, and Brandon University could become a site for more pow-wows that
reflect an awareness and commitment to embracing difference. An excellent
suggestion brought forward by a participant was to “provide a separate place
and space for the substantial Aboriginal literature collection accumulated at
Brandon University”. Celebrating the significant collection of Aboriginal
literature on hand at the university would go a long way towards demonstrating
our continuing commitment to Aboriginal learners. As well, having an Aboriginal
resource room in the Education building would provide a place for Aboriginal
learners to come together. Education for Aboriginal learners would also be
about “Critically examine policies for Aboriginal students. E.g. smudging policy”.
4. **Finance and Registration** - Finance and registration was identified in a unique way. Participants often spoke about the logistical difficulties that encumber Aboriginal students attending Brandon University but felt that a number of the problems were beyond Brandon University’s “sphere of influence”. One of the biggest issues brought forward by several participants was the mismatch between when bands receive their funding for students and when Brandon University requires payment. However, First Nation students seem to be the ones negatively affected by this lack of synchronization.

One participant suggested that the university “set timeline’s for the bands to let their students and the university know that they are sponsored and will have that student attend school in the fall”. As well, a participant indicated that Brandon University might benefit from early admission opportunities that are currently being missed because not all schools in the North are part of Brandon University’s recruitment agenda. Some of the comments suggested by the participants were to “be flexible with late fees, tuition fees”, “be more flexible with time constraints for registration” and to not ‘pester the student,’ if student fees are delayed by the band”. However, these may be recommendations that, if followed through on, may have more far-ranging implications than anticipated.

We could also give scholarships to those students who self-identify as interested in attending Brandon University in order to encourage more participation. As well, Brandon University could implement new deadlines for Entrance Scholarships; these early admission scholarships could help draw First Nation students to Brandon University.

5. **Hiring Personnel** - A number of suggestions were made that would augment the number of support personnel on Campus. Support staff needs to be available to support Aboriginal students when they require assistance. There was an extensive list of recommendations that included hiring more support personnel, a liaison officer, a recruiter whose portfolio would include Aboriginal student recruitment, a coordinator for access program development, and other similar suggestions.

6. **Accommodations** - It was recommended by participants that the residence office continue to keep “emergency rooms in residence” available for students who find out about their sponsorship late and that “food services needs to be available on weekends and in the summer when BUNTEP is in session”. Apart from those recommendations for ancillary services, the rest focused on tending to the housing shortage.
The participants in the interviews and focus groups identified a lack of (affordable) housing as one of the most significant factors affecting the recruitment and retention of all students, particularly Aboriginal students who may also be mature students with families. One strategy discussed in a focus group was to support students seeking accommodations by using the Brandon University website as a central place for students to post and retrieve information about apartment vacancies. The website could also be used to initiate discussion about subletting apartments. One participant stated that “there is a need to find Sublette’s for the students who come to school in the spring and summer sessions for PENT, we (could) add Sublette information to the website”.

A more ambitious, but certainly not new, recommendation was to “build a residence for Aboriginal families” and to “have daycare available”. Some of the more common themes relating to accommodations were to “build”, “renovate”, “develop” and “provide” reasonable accommodations for students and their families at an affordable cost. This need came through in every interview and focus group. That being said, whatever is done needs to take into consideration the needs of those Aboriginal students. This must include asking and getting feedback from Aboriginal students about what they want. For example, “some students need the break from bringing their families in order to succeed, while others need to bring their families”.

**Outreach**

Within the focus of outreach, participants identified two areas:

1. **Building Partnerships** - The theme of developing and extending partnerships with First Nations communities was present in all of the conversations. It was suggested that we “invite Aboriginal communities to participate in events and/or gatherings”. As well, “we could improve dialogue/partnership with Aboriginal students and First Nations’ communities by going into the communities to speak about BU”. As well, one comment was to partner with UCN as they develop their access program. Brandon University has a long history of providing post-secondary education to First Nation communities that could work to the benefit of Brandon University and the University College of the North. One participant suggested “We could go to communities to discuss BU and what BU supports”. It is always helpful to foster the existing positive relationship with Brandon University and “improve dialogue through Aboriginal families’ knowledge of BU”. As well, partnerships could be struck with the Brandon Friendship Centre, the Manitoba Métis Federation, and the elders program. It may also be strategic to “link with ACC to look for funding and to recognize the lack of programming at both ACC and BU”.

Center for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies
Page 32
2. **Building Programs** - As the current Access program winds down at Brandon University, some participants suggested “We could create a new community-based outreach program”. A revitalized outreach program would “take education to the communities and show the benefits that BU has in regards to Aboriginal content, curriculum and support on campus”. In doing so, we would need to “recognize the needs of Aboriginal students in communities and develop a program/plan to inherit characterization and identify who will get/give support”.

Brandon University also has an exceptional summer youth program. Participants indicated that Minu U “could be an excellent recruitment tool, that is not currently being realized” to encourage Aboriginal students to attend Brandon University.
Recruitment

Aboriginal student recruitment was a topic that was particularly well thought out and engaged in by the participants. Some of the suggestions that were put forward in the focus groups included the need to develop better products and processes for recruitment. Within the area of recruitment, participants identified three areas:

1. **Products for Recruitment** - The products for recruitment included creating an appropriate and "visible symbol that shows support for Aboriginal learners and our commitment to creating equity". As well, there is a need to focus on emphasizing that Brandon University is a place that embraces equity and success for Aboriginal learners. Some suggestions included developing a brochure with a focus on supporting Aboriginal learners, an Alumni program and "developing an Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit Handbook". As well, there is a need to "have pictures of Aboriginal students on brochure and website pages". Also, "we could design a website that has web presence on Aboriginal issues" and "advertise in Aboriginal forums E.g. APTN, NCI radio, pamphlets, newspaper, and e-mails".

2. **Processes for Recruitment** - Another common suggestion put forward during the first focus group was that "Brandon University could have representatives go to Aboriginal communities and answer all questions their future students may have about coming to BU". This is really about “travelling to the Northern communities to recruit more Aboriginal students. We could go to communities to recruit”. This would not preclude continuing with the Career Fair and other established forums for recruitment; this would be in addition to those activities. "Other universities have an Aboriginal recruiter who visits Aboriginal communities, but Brandon University doesn’t”, one participant indicated. Recruitment has to start with the First Nation Education Directors as many students who will not apply for university until their sponsorship has been approved. As well, we could “invite Aboriginal student to TREK where they will get information about BU initiatives”.

One of the challenges identified was that it “is difficult to find Aboriginal student ambassadors, we need to ask more Aboriginal students to participate and build stronger relations with more Aboriginal student body”. Recruitment could also include “actively recruiting Aboriginal athletes”, having the “Faculty of Music go to communities to perform and inspire Aboriginal talent to come to BU” and “having our Physics and Geology students go up north to 8-10 high schools to spur on an interest in the sciences".
3. **Transition Processes** - It seemed that the transition process, where students are coming to Brandon University and getting started in their studies, was an area of concern. It was recommended that the recruiters from Brandon University develop and communicate a checklist that would assist students to have all the required documents ready for BU before they arrive. Another support that would help students as they transition to university life would be to “contact every student that self-identifies as Aboriginal to welcome them and, if necessary, to let them know of supports that are available”. Another participant added that it would be helpful to “Find out who is coming from the North, to get future students registered with a resident advisor who will assist them as they adjust to residence life”. This would include “providing new students with a complete orientation session, which will include all the required information to assist them on campus.”

The data that was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, a survey, and an environmental scan to build an understanding of how other universities were serving Aboriginal students paints a fairly clear picture of our current practices regarding the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students, and of some options for improvement. The findings of the study will be represented in Section 4 in the form of recommendations for Brandon University to improve their practices for recruiting Aboriginal students and to improve the level of support for success that they offer to Aboriginal students who are accepted into Brandon University programs.
Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

This needs assessment revealed that in there is a significant amount of good intentions for recruitment of Aboriginal students at Brandon University. In practice however, our recruitment efforts (particularly in building relationships with First Nations communities) warrant considerable attention. The same holds true for Brandon University's efforts for recruitment. There are good intentions, but the most significant efforts are found in the individualized, ad hoc support and assistance provided by Brandon University faculty and staff.

It also appears that Brandon University has lost students as well as its longstanding reputation as a university of choice for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. The loss of the BUNTEP is considered by many faculty, staff and students alike as a major source of both of the loss of students and reputation. But it is only a part of the story. The decline of the Indigenous Peoples' Centre and its associated activities and the lack of a transitional or access program have also contributed a great deal to this decline. It is also apparent that there is a need for greater awareness of Aboriginal culture and tradition, ways of knowing, learning styles and barriers to recruitment and retention across the University. This applies to faculty, staff, students, alumni and donors.

Finally, Brandon University is losing ground in comparison to the efforts of other Canadian universities. This is particularly troubling given the University's long tradition as a small university aimed at serving the needs of rural students and communities.

The following major recommendations speak to these conclusions and to the many suggestions for recruitment and retention activities offered by the key informants.

Recommendation 1: Development and implementation of an Aboriginal Student Policy

BUILD 2010 is a written plan that sets out Brandon University's strategic directions for the years 2010 to 2015. Included in this document is the statement that Brandon University is “particularly committed to the education of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people”. A great many of the faculty and staff interviewed for this needs assessment echoed this commitment. Many also identified activities that were underway and also gave a number of suggestions on how it might be operationalized. In spite of these good intentions, there is clearly a lack of system-wide, identifiable set of policies, processes and programs that attest to this commitment. As a result there were a number of misunderstandings and misinterpretations about what Brandon University is actually doing including questions about the role of the proposed Director of Aboriginal Access Programs.
Based on the comparison of efforts at other universities, the comments from First Nations informants, and Brandon University faculty, staff and students, it is clear that Brandon University must do much better if we are serious about our stated commitment to the education of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

It is recommended that:

*Brandon University develops and implements an Aboriginal Student Policy of the Board of Governors that establishes a guiding framework for other efforts for the education of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.*

**Recommendation 2: Consultation and involvement of Aboriginal People in Brandon University**

Consultation and partnerships with Aboriginal communities are essential to creating culturally appropriate academic and professional courses and programs. Furthermore, these relationships are critical in developing programs and services that meet Aboriginal learning and employment needs. This goes beyond ad hoc consultations and meetings. Consultations and involvement need to be on-going and formalized.

It is recommended that:

*Brandon University undertakes a number of efforts to increase the explicit involvement of Aboriginal. These efforts include the establishment of an Aboriginal Academic Advisory Council, increased numbers of Aboriginal faculty and staff and membership on the Board of Governors.*

**Recommendation 3: Develop and implement an Academic and Student Support Program aimed at University Advancement at Brandon University for First Nations students**

This recommendation emerged as a major recommendation from this needs assessment. The BUNTEP is scheduled to end in June 2012 and while many spoke of its successes, the suggestions were for an academic program that was on-campus and based on an access or transitional model. Access or transition models offer student academic supports such as special classes and tutoring. These supports are non-credentialed courses. Laddering programs bridge this gap, offering both student academic supports and modified academic programs that are (a) developmental; (b) credentialed as a certificate; (c) based on Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing and (d) can subsequently be used towards regular academic programs. The Aboriginal Student Policy, the Aboriginal Academic Advisory Council and a designated Director of Aboriginal Education are integral elements to laddering programs.
It is recommended that

Brandon University begin the development and the implementation of First Nations Certificate Programs, a ‘laddering program’ modeled after the program established by the University of Northern British Columbia. This program would be managed by the Director of Aboriginal Education.

**Recommendation 4: Partnerships with other PSE institutions**

Aboriginal learners have extenuating circumstances that set them apart from non-Aboriginal students. For example, Aboriginal students are more likely to be older. They are also more likely to have family responsibilities with regard to both children and extended families. Many older students may have to leave existing jobs and find ways to replace lost income. Another set of extenuating circumstances involves the challenges of relocation, loneliness and isolation when students move to attend university. Finally, Aboriginal people experience a greater incidence and severity of health and social conditions, which again both increases the costs for and places greater demands on learners. In part, these conditions are due to the legacy of residential schools and other historical policy approaches now recognized as negative and inappropriate. (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010).

Taken together, these factors mean that many Aboriginal learners require a higher level of broad-based supports such as housing, child care, and health services than non-Aboriginal learners. Research has shown the effectiveness of these supports for both recruitment and retention particularly when they are delivered in holistic and individualized ways and in partnership with Aboriginal organizations and other postsecondary institutions (Atlantic Evaluation Group, 2010).

It is recommended that:

Brandon University promotes and develops partnerships with Aboriginal organizations and other postsecondary institutions in order to cooperate on these broad-based social and health supports.

**Recommendation 5: Monitoring Programs, Services and Policies**

Postsecondary institutions are trying to make progress in responding to the needs and circumstances of Aboriginal learners. However, there is very little evidence to show the effectiveness of these efforts. The appropriate data for academic programs, student supports and University policies needs to be gathered. Furthermore, this monitoring needs to be planned, systematic and shared with First Nations communities and external agencies.
It is recommended that:

Brandon University’s recruitment and retention efforts include a planned and systematic monitoring of programs, services and policies.

**Recommendation 6: Faculty, Staff and Student Awareness of Aboriginal Culture**

Many Aboriginal students come from rural and remote areas and must relocate to access PSE programs. Relocation not only increases the cost of their education but also creates challenges involving dislocation, loneliness, and isolation and which affect retention and completion. An institutional climate where Aboriginal learners and learning are welcomed, respected, and valued underpins all efforts for recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students.

It is recommended that:

Brandon University undertake a planned program of activities aimed at increasing the knowledge and awareness of faculty, staff and students in Aboriginal culture, knowledge, ways of knowing and circumstances. This program should be aimed at increasing respect for Aboriginal learners; the recognition and responsiveness to Aboriginal needs and circumstances; inclusion of Aboriginal culture in events and activities; and the involvement of Aboriginal people in decision making and implementation.
References


Appendix A – University of Calgary’s Aboriginal Student Policy
Appendix B: Recruitment and Retention-Thematic Analysis by Sheryl Moose

This thematic analysis is based on a series of interviews from 7 Graduate students, 13 BUNTEP and/or PENT students, support workers from the Brandon University Indigenous Peoples Center and three representatives from First Nations Educational Authorities.

Administration Support

In regards to administration support at Brandon University students gave many pros and cons to the support that was given to First Nation students in the Faculty of Education. Interviewees gave both positive and negative feedback in their interviews regarding their experience. Some of the positive feedback that was received from students was based on the faculty staff at Brandon University. A pro identified is the professors and coordinators provided support and guidance to their students when they were needed. Another pro was the support from Brandon University’s Indigenous Peoples Center (IPC), which assists Aboriginal students, while attending university on campus.

Some of the administration support on campus at BU is the counsellors who are there to speak to students when students felt discouraged or needed help with the familiarities of the university. During spring and summer sessions, support workers were assigned to the students in the Education department to assist with campus life and course information if students needed assistance. Support workers also provided after hour support groups, and study groups to assist students with any questions and concerns they may have had.

The grad office located in the Education department was reported as a great assistance to students attending BU. Grad coordinators of all education programs was of great assistance and workers were always there to provide answers to the many questions that students may have had during their time of study at BU. Grad workers are reported as great advisors, who are there to answer questions and provide program information to students.

Professors are reported to be very supportive and available to provide assistance to students at any time needed. Professors are also reported as knowledgeable and understanding towards students needs. Students reported that they were very grateful to have professors teach in their communities to teach because there was no need to leave home to receive university degrees.
Brandon University provides community-based programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal students who do not wish to leave their families and communities to get an education. Some of the centers available to students that provided assistance were the Indigenous Peoples Center (IPC) and the Writing Center. IPC worker of the IPC was reported a great help because she was supportive, understanding and made students aware of services that Brandon University offered. The writing center was reported as a great resource center to assist and motivate students in the area of writing. Although, students reported many support and services that assisted their needs on campus at BU, there are students who had more awareness of BU than others. Some students reported where they had found out about BU and the programs that BU offers.

Students reported they heard about BU and their programs from the following: school counsellors, co-workers, previous students who had attended BU, brochures, posters, education authority, pamphlets and online. Students who reported receiving their education through the BUNTEP program reported that they are unaware of what BU offers, except for those students who attend spring and summer courses on campus. The availability of online courses also makes getting a degree efficient, while working full-time. One student in the Graduate Studies program reported,

*I like the ease of access that Brandon University offers. The online delivery makes it most accessible, and most of the teachers in my school division took their masters through Brandon University.*
Barriers

Examining each of the student’s comments from the interviews indicates that there have been many barriers that students have discussed, in regards to attending Brandon University. The barriers that students mentioned were situational, dispositional, informational and institutional barriers. When I say situational, I mean that the student at that time came across a barrier(s) that either overwhelmed or intimidated them.

**Situational Barriers**

For instance, many students made situational comments like:

*I was intimidated by my surroundings, and being away from my community for the first time. I wanted to quit and go home, but I also wanted to remain in school.*

*I was intimidated by the huge city. If you have people talking to the Aboriginal students and being made aware of these things, it would help because I was scared. I had difficulties even finding my own class.*

*There is no housing available right now. I had to move out of Brandon to find rent that reasonable. It is an inconvenience!*  

Students discussed the feelings they had during their first experience at university. Mostly, students discuss the barriers they faced. Something needs to be done to address Aboriginal student’s needs when they attend university to make them feel that they belong, so that they are not scared or intimidated by the university.

**Dispositional Barriers**

Dispositional barriers included the barriers of the student and their learning. After examining the student’s comments, I found that Aboriginal students lack the confidence to succeed. Student’s comments reflected their confidence and their sense of ability to do well academically. Some student’s reported that the courses were challenging, therefore their confidence levels decreased when an assignment came back with a low mark. Another academic barrier is online courses where students do not have access to the supports that BU offers. Students also reported that English being a second language made it tough to write at the university level. Here are some of the strong comments that the interviewees reported:
A lot of new students are from isolated communities and they haven’t transitioned into a larger center. They come to university and are unaware of services that are provided for them. There needs to be more pamphlets, word of mouth or information on the web. New students are too far behind or insecure, therefore we need to help them.

The course I found that was frustrating was the writing course because there was a rigid and obsessive focus on grammar and APA. I know a majority of my classmates had to rewrite their assignments to pass the course.

My style of teaching is not the way that I have been taught by my grandfathers and grandmothers, but I am learning to adjust to new ways of understanding and learning.

Informational Barriers

Awareness to support Aboriginal students was mentioned numerous times and how BU should accommodate this concern. Instead of seeking assistance, students report of getting behind, and as a result dropping the course. Student’s feelings towards assisting other Aboriginal students were strong throughout the interviews. For example, three different students state,

Many students have never seen a sideway. It’s a big transition; it’s a game, its non verbal communication. Students need to learn how to speak and function. You need to know your rights as a students and tenant and find out all the resources to help you succeed.

Students need a support system in place because it’s a competition, a struggle, but success is attainable if we have resources to assist us.

I know a lot of students who weren’t aware of that, and now they have an “F” in their university transcript.

Students report that they would like to see assistance in the following areas:

- Living in a city
- Meeting accommodation needs
- Living on campus
- Detailed Orientation
- Library services
- Personal support group
- Open door policy
- Study groups (writing, reading, and how to study)
Student’s stressed the importance of making students aware of services. Students give many informational barriers they come across, while attending BU. BU needs to improve informational barriers for Aboriginal students, so that their education experience would be attainable and successful. Informational barriers are barriers that indicate the lack of awareness of educational opportunities. Students give many informational barriers they came across, while attending BU. Informational barriers include assistance in regards to registration, course requirements, grading system, bursaries, and services available on campus,

I know a lot of students who weren’t aware of grade point averages, now have an “F” on their university transcript.

It is not easy to register as my studies were not in education field, but the university has a clause that I can enroll in the graduate studies in education, if I meet the requirements.

Most of the program I have taken was online; therefore, I had limited support on campus due to my location.

The area that needs improvement is in promoting and ensuring that First Nations know all the services that are available

One student reports that mandatory orientation is a great way to go over the whole University concepts to answer all the questions that students need answered. In doing so, Aboriginal student will be aware of all the areas they wish to see improvements in (registration, campus & city life, accommodations, library services, tutoring, writing, grading system, study groups, map location of all buildings on campus and services they provide, scholarships, and bursaries). A student coming to BU, with a very detailed orientation may have a better chance at success if the student knows what is expected, and where to go for assistance.

Student preparation is a common thread I found with interviewing previous grads of BU. Once students feel they are prepared and want to be here at university, getting their education and conquering their dreams is easy. Sometimes, maturity needs to be instilled into a student before the student realizes that dedication and hard work determine if one succeeds. Students, who reported being parents, report that their children were motivation enough to want to succeed and provide a better future for them. This is something I was proud to hear, because sometimes there is an assumption that students with children will have a higher chance of failure in university. Students fail, due to all the responsibilities of parenting, financial burden and school duties. However, this is not the case, being a parent allows the student to have great time management, and see what they really are capable of. Students, who see themselves as being achievers and hard workers have a high self-esteem because they are proud of themselves. Having a high self-esteem allows the student feel good about school, home, and the future; therefore, continuation of success is
attainable. Students report the following in regards to institutional barriers and responsibility as a student,

\[
\text{We are students who have families, who have to find the time to study and complete assignments on time, and work. It is a balancing act, and if we have assistance to make school more efficient, that would be great.}
\]

\[
I \text{ have five children and sometimes life gets in the way. There is a daycare here, but a waiting list. Other daycares in Brandon are full, making childcare difficult. My first year of university, I missed nearly half of my classes because I didn’t have daycare, and I failed one course because of it. If I knew daycare was difficult, I would have thought about this situation before attending BU.}
\]

**Institutional Barriers**

Institutional barriers are barriers that are the result of the management and organization of educational institutions. Students report that they did come across institutional barriers; however students discovered to accept the fact and continue on.

\[
\text{Last year my father in law passed away and I attended his funeral. I missed a test, but I had a good GPA and I approached my professor and she told me that policy states the late procedure. Therefore, I had to drop her course because I needed a good GPA to get into nursing. I saw her in Brandon and she asked why I dropped her class. I told her my reasoning, and she did not comment. Some professors are lenient, but others are not.}
\]

Students report that attending the IPC on campus was a great resource center for Aboriginal students to visit and seek advice. However, the center is no longer being used a social network for Aboriginal students to interact and seek advice. There is no coordinator no longer running the IPC, therefore the result is more Aboriginal students are feeling lost on where to go for support on campus. One student reports,

\[
\text{There was an Aboriginal center by the library where we would eat and meet people from the community. It was a nice network. We eventually moved away from it because there are less and less students who go there anymore.}
\]

\[
\text{We had an elder, who ran the IPC. She is no longer there, making it difficult to talk to someone who understands us and give guidance.}
\]

\[
\text{There is the IPC, however there is no one there anymore and no welcoming presence. I do not hear of any Aboriginal events anymore either.}
\]

Other institutional barriers were racism, lack of Aboriginal staff, little Aboriginal content being implemented in the curriculum, and little information being
distributed to First Nation students in regards to scholarships. A student who is a graduate of the Masters program at BU reports,

*I met with many facets of racism, prejudices and subtle and outright discrimination from university staff and instructors because I am a First Nation woman.*

Other students report,

*I once was informed that I am too spiritual. This comment was about my writings and presentations in my studies.*

*Racism today is subtle; some staff undermines you for being Aboriginal. Therefore, we have to learn to be more assertive. Racism is still there.*

In regards to staff on campus and little representation of Aboriginal staff a grad student reports,

*Not very many people are comfortable accessing the resources because they are not Aboriginal. Therefore, there is no understanding of Aboriginal family dynamics or the situations we come across.*

*I did not speak or seek assistance from the counsellors available because they were not Aboriginal, I did not feel they would understand where I was coming from.*

*We as Aboriginals, Métis, and Inuit sometimes cannot be understood. The level of understanding leads to understanding what is needed.*

Aboriginal curriculum was mentioned throughout interviews as well. Students report that there is a need to implement more Aboriginal content, so that students will learn and understand the history, past and present to encourage self-awareness to students and staff. One student reports in the nursing program

*There is no Aboriginal representation in the curriculum. We are not required to take an Aboriginal course and we don’t have to take a native studies course, and we should. Nurses will be working with Aboriginals and therefore we need to understand their culture and history, in order to provide support to Aboriginal patients.*

Another student reports,

*I think with the BU Native Studies program, there should be an emphasis on the First Nations curriculum, and to have a professor present who knows and has lived the life of an Aboriginal person. They in turn will be able to identify with colonization and all those systems that have an impact on First Nations people in Canada. Students should be able to speak whatever language they*
need to speak. This is one area they can emphasize on because language is how Aboriginals express themselves. Even if a student does not understand, at least it can be translated.

Distribution of scholarship information to First Nation students is reported as being an institutional barrier as well. For example, one student reports,

More information about scholarships would help because the courses and books are expensive when you have to pay on your own. Not everyone gets funding, I would have liked to apply for scholarships, but I did not know where to go or where to apply. I would have been able to complete more courses with financial assistance from a scholarship.

BU needs to consider this as a major concern otherwise retention and recruitment will lead to students transferring to other institutions that do offer more Aboriginal content, curriculum and courses. Aboriginal students are more interested in learning about themselves and their history, rather than looking at what mainstream society continues to instill in the same curriculum that is used year after year without modifications in the Aboriginal content areas. One student states,

BU needs to make First Nation people feel more at home by offering cultural programs, offering a place for First Nations to practice their culture, such as a sweat lodge or pow wows. This would be a big support to help First Nations practice their culture, and should be available on campus.
Strengths (Inside and Outside Supports)

After examining the barriers that Aboriginal students face, this leads to a list of recommendations that BU should consider. However, the importance to First Nations is going to be discussed first, along with the strengths and weaknesses of BU. What is important to First Nation, Métis and Inuit students? This question of inquiry has led me to review all research documentation to answer this question to my knowledge. There are two main findings that are discovered, which are students and courses, which in turn I thought the findings would report family and education. Every interview conducted stressed the importance of support the student received from family members.

Inside Support

For instance, other student's report,

I had a lot of support coming from my husband, kids, and parents. I had relatives who attending BU who I asked for help when I needed. I watched friends and family complete degrees at BU and watched them go through their programs.

Other than family, there were no supports that I know of that I had used in my Grad studies.

Family and friends supported me, so I was able to succeed. Without them, I would have not been able to afford school, daycare, and rent.

Since family importance and education are stressed so strongly, it wasn’t until I looked further into my findings to find that I was wrong in my inquiry. Tag cloud 1 combines all the undergrad students who were interviewed from the BUNTEP & PENT programs at BU.

Tag Cloud 1
Looking at this tag cloud and the importance of First Nation values, the figure demonstrates that students are younger and less sophisticated compared to tag cloud 2, which demonstrates that students are mature and sophisticated after completing a Graduate/Masters program. Tag 1 shows that Brandon and University is a big enough issue that students face, the transition to a larger center and the new surroundings students face.

Tag Cloud 2

In comparison, tag could 2 indicates that mature students focus on the course content of their studies, because they have conquered the transition process successfully to get as far as completing a grad and/or masters program at BU.

Outside Supports

Students report that they did have outside support that they took advantage of in Brandon. Services like the town library, transit service, Brandon Friendship Center (BFC), Harvest center, Education counsellors from communities, low income housing, and daycare. Students used the town library to take their children to visit because there was no cost. Students used the bus for transportation to and from school. The BFC was utilized for subsidized cost for children’s extracurricular activities, feasts, gathering functions, and a place to ask for assistance on where to find more resources. A few students state that they volunteer at Brandon Harvest, in order to get food hampers distributed to them to reduce on grocery costs. Students who are sponsored report that their education counsellors would make a monthly effort to visit and see how they are doing personally, academically and financially. Low income housing, from Manitoba Métis Federation, Brandon Friendship Housing, and Dakota Ojibwa Tribal Council (DOTC) housing was also utilized if accepted through application process. There would be a waiting list, but within a year or two, students report that their low income housing units would give them the ability to
use the money for other important bills. So one could see that Brandon in itself would be overwhelming to new students and to find where to locate services and then to figure out how to utilize the following outside supports that are mentioned.
Importance to First Nations

Although students came across challenges, financially, academically and socially, BU does have many advantages to support student success. Some advantages that students reported were in the following areas:

1) Learning Supports
2) Faculty staff- professors, counsellors, coordinators
3) Course Content

Learning Supports

In regards to the learning supports that BU offers, students report that study labs, the IPC, and the writing center are beneficial in assisting success for First Nation students. Throughout the duration of student’s studies, study halls, labs and groups are utilized to assist in getting help and more information that students require to do well in the course(s) they are taking. Study labs took place in all areas of the BU campus, such as the library, education building, and the dormitory. Students report that attending study labs, give them the understanding and opportunity to grasp all aspects of outcomes that were once difficult. The ability to socialize with other First Nations students was also a strong point that students reported in their interviews. One student reports,

As you go through university, you meet new people. I am lucky to have met my new friends in our study group. We helped each other out by supporting one another by motivating one another to continue and to work harder.

Students report that the IPC center was a great place to socialize and to get the feeling of home when they were lonesome. The presence of other Aboriginal students and the guidance of the IPC workers is a great support. Students use the IPC center as a meeting place to visit their education counsellors from their communities on a monthly basis. The IPC center is also utilized for homework, since there is the availability of computers, phone or fax if needed. The kitchen in the IPC is used to warm up lunches, have coffee or keep their lunch in the fridge.

The writing center is an asset to First Nation students because of the support a student receives in regards to writing essays at the university level. Students report during their first year of university, they did not know how to write a proper essay. With the support of the writing center, students state that they were able to submit an essay and receive excellent marks, compared to the papers they had submitted on their own.

The PENT & BUNTEP programs are mentioned as being supportive by motivating students to continue when life’s challenges came into play. Staff is reported as being at the same level as students, which in turn made students feel wanted, and valued.
Staff of the program travelled to student’s communities, which demonstrated that staff wanted to be there. Students have great respect for their professors for this very reason as well because they left their home and family to assist in creating success for First Nation students. A BUNTEP grad reports,

_The coordinator is a big resource of any program, even though we are adults going to school, we need to be motivated. A big contributor was our coordinator because she seen students go through the program and witness our struggles on a daily basis._

Counsellors on campus were also reported as being supportive of First Nations needs. Students reported that counsellors assisted in course selections, guidance on a personal level, and were there at all times when needed. A student states,

_I was going through some problems and I would talk to her, and she was a great person to talk to, and if I needed help she would point me in the right direction._

**Faculty Staff**

There is a lot of support from the staff at BU, that students report as helping them in completing their degrees. Professors are knowledgeable, understanding, value First Nation students, have good working relationships with student and keep in touch with the students. Students report that their professors were very knowledgeable in their area of study and are able to teach, so that the student grasps the outcomes being taught. Professor are understanding of First Nation students, therefore when an unexpected situation arises, the professors are reported as being supportive and understanding by allowing the student extra time to complete assignment and tests. Students report that the professors at BU value First Nations students by making them feel welcomed by having an open door policy and providing extra help after hours. Therefore, students report that their working relationship with their professors was comfortable enough to confide in them when students needed to talk to someone. A few students report that they keep in touch with a lot of their professors on a personal level to let them know how they are doing in their professional lives and personal in some cases. One student reports,

_I love the way the professors keep in touch with me even though I am no longer a student at BU. I get mail from BU telling me what everyone else (classmates) is doing, through e-mails. It is wonderful because I am able to communicate with former classmates as well._
Course Content

Students report the courses BU offers is attainable, accessible, and informational to help create success for First Nation students. Students report the courses as being challenging, but attainable with the support of professors and services that BU offers. One student reports,

\[
\text{The courses are very comfortable to match my professional and personal expectations of a smaller institution}
\]

BU offers correspondence courses as well online to provide students who work full-time the ability to achieve higher education. Many Grad students who do not live in Brandon take a majority of their courses online, due to the fact that they work full-time. Students report the availability of online courses gives the ability to finish their degrees at their own pace. The website was also reported as being an asset in regards to accessing all information needed about courses and requirements. BU has two programs (BUNTEP & PENT) that students report being the main indicator to their success. Students report the ability of not having to leave their community a huge resource to their success because the thought of leaving their families would be a big enough challenge. BUNTEP was mentioned a resource because students are required to take one course over a six week period, which in turn is attainable compared to receiving courses on campus where three courses are required in order to be sponsored. PENT is reported as being attainable and achievable because of the spring and summer courses that BU provides when teachers are off for their summer breaks. A PENT grad reports,

\[
\text{I think positive programs like BUNTEP/PENT offer First Nation students a realistic approach to graduating because of students’ families and responsibilities. These programs offer students the ability to succeed.}
\]
Weaknesses

However, students report of weaknesses that they came across while attending BU, or taking courses online. Some of the weaknesses are identified in the following areas:

1. Learning Supports;
2. Staff;
3. Unawareness and/or lack of support/services on campus;
4. Courses; and,
5. Lack of community building/partnerships.

1. Learning Supports

In terms of learning supports students report that there are services available on campus, but little or no information on where and why to refer to support services for assistance. Students report that when they do visit support services, it is very time consuming because the student needs to make an appointment in order to access a majority of services before seeking assistance. Sometimes, the next appointment availability does not work with student’s schedule. Registration is reported as being difficult to deal with as well, because students have reported that they are pointed to another unidentified direction (building) to ask for assistance.

2. Staff

In regards to BU staff there was a few negative comments that were made towards professors or staff in general. Here are a few examples,

I met with many facets of racism, prejudices and subtle and outright discrimination from university staff and instructors

I once was informed that I am too spiritual. This comment was about my writings and presentations

BU lacks Aboriginal representation, students report that they feel more comfortable approaching another Aboriginal compared to a non-Aboriginal. Also, that the IPC center located by the BU library lacks a director to guide First Nation students, during their studies at BU.
3. Unawareness and/or lack of support services

In regards to unawareness or lack of services, the following were mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews; daycare, assistance in finding accommodations, scholarship information, services available (detailed orientation), no Aboriginal functions, and minimal direction on using online resources.

Daycare availability in Brandon is difficult to locate. Students report of having great difficulty in finding assistance on where to go to look for daycares and once found, finding the availability to enroll their child (ren). BU has their own on campus daycare; however, all seats are always full. Students report of missing classes, due to lack of childcare and therefore, failing courses after getting too far behind.

There is a day care here, but a waiting list. All other daycares in Brandon are full. My first year of university, I missed nearly half of my classes because I didn’t have daycare and failed one course as well.

Assistance in locating accommodations when you are new to Brandon is difficult. Students report that they did not know where to go on campus to ask for help in finding an apartment to rent. Students also report due to this lack of accommodations in Brandon, they would be forced to stay in a hotel as a group. BU does have a dormitory; however, the cost is too costly for First Nations students.

Scholarship information is reported as being unaware by First Nation students who attend BU. Students report that it would be nice to know what scholarships they are eligible for and what types of scholarships there are for First Nation students. Students report that if they knew what scholarships to apply for, they most definitely would utilize to assist them with the cost of tuition and books. A grad student reports,

More information about scholarships would help because the courses and books are expensive when you have to pay on your own. Not everyone gets funding. I would have liked to apply for scholarships; I would have been able to take more courses.

Orientation takes place at BU at the beginning of fall courses for regular students attending BU, and before PENT courses start end of March. However, students report the orientations to be dissatisfying, due to the lack of explaining what the services/support at BU offer. Students are shown where the services are, but not given a detailed explanation of why they would utilize the resource. Students report they receive orientation on the campus, but why not orientation of the city of Brandon in general, and who to seek for help in regards to outside supports (transportation, housing, daycare, etc.).
Students report that being Aboriginal students on campus, they see little Aboriginal representation. Students report that they see limited Aboriginal functions, such as gatherings and pow wows that they once seen a few years ago.

Another weakness students reported is the online guidance they receive, while taking a course online, through Moodle (online source to access readings, assignments, and communicate with other classmates and professor). Students report the online course, through Moodle frustrating because they have to figure out how to use Moodle on their own. Students report that there is minimal guidance when taking a course online. One student reports,

*A majority of my courses have been online and so the support that BU provides is minimal because I don’t have a professor to consult when I need to ask a question or for help.*

4. Courses

In regards to courses at BU, students identify some courses to be difficult when grammar and punctuation is part of the course content (APA). Students report that the focus on APA is too demanding, when they should be focusing on the writing process and its contents instead. Courses, then now become intimidating because of the stress on grammar and punctuation.

5. Lack of Community Building/Partnership

In regards to community building and partnership, students report that BU has limited support to creating success for First Nation students. A current student at BU and a B.A graduated tells a story of her experience of her attempt to have a gathering at the university.

*There was a pow wow against racism and it was a flop on BU because BU and ACC were supposed to come together to have this pow wow and the IPC assistance, one had a funeral to go to, and the other one had a sick child in the hospital. Because we were not there, BU would not assist and give money to run the pow wow, which was already an agreement. There was no one here to step in so the money was not given. The pow wow was cancelled because there was no money for the singers and dancers. It looked bad on BU because it was suppose to be a partnership with ACC and the community of Brandon. There was no support. The other student and I tried to figure out how to help them out, but we don’t have the power to find the funds to help them out. It would have been a great event.*

Sioux Valley has partnership with BU’s Science department, where high school students attend science labs in the BU Science building. However, the Sioux Valley reports the following in regards to partnership building,
The U of M gives us tickets to event and sports games in Winnipeg. The university invites us to hockey, baseball, and even football games. BU sports have never once come to the Sioux Valley high school to invite us for any events, and we are right next door.

Although, one area of the university strives to build partnership with other institutions, Brandon University is not always going to be successful in recruitment and retention. The following report just demonstrates that all faculties of the university need to work together, in regards to partnership with others in order for schools and organizations to see BU is dedicated in building trust with others. Trust is of importance when examining the recommendations that students, schools, and organizations. If BU should consider the following recommendations, then BU will succeed in recruitment and retention of First Nation students.
Recommendations

In regards to retention for students who attend university on campus, students report that the following areas should be addressed to create success for Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit students:

1. Welcoming presence, “Belonging”
2. Director for IPC
3. Make students aware of services
4. Transition and/or Mature Students Program

These were four areas that a majority of the students felt need to be addressed in order to keep students at BU.

1. Welcoming Presence, “Belonging”

Belonging was a big issue during the interviews. Students reported that once they felt the sense of belonging in their classrooms and on campus, they felt their chance of succeeding is greater. Students report that BU should make Aboriginal representation more visible on campus. Representation on campus should assist students to be proud of whom they are (accepted) and where they originate from. Also, hire staff that is of Aboriginal descent to assist students in making students feel more at home on campus. Students suggest that there be courses with more Aboriginal content, and have courses at the grassroots level of First Nations and Inuit schools to encourage the belonging aspect of university. More Aboriginal functions should be implemented, that encourage all Aboriginal minorities to come together with other minorities to assist in feeling that students belong. One student states,

I always felt that bringing students together to alleviate the loneliness, worries and problems that come with being away from home, especially when you are mom, wife and community member would help students want to succeed while attending university

2. Director for IPC

The IPC, is mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews because the IPC staff is viewed as counsellors, mothers away from home, mentors, and role models. Students report when they were trouble academically, personally, or financially, they will go see IPC worker to get guidance as to where to go or a possible solution to the students’ crises. Students report going to the IPC to eat because they always knew staff would either have a feast in IPC, or food on hand. Coffee is always
available and so is staff to lend an ear. IPC staff has a welcoming presence that makes students feel at ease, compared to the rest of the campus settings. However, with limited staff in the IPC, students report of not even attending the IPC anymore. There is no longer that welcoming presence, no gatherings, no events, and no one to neither confide nor seek guidance from. One student reports,

*I used to go to the IPC all the time, but there is no one there anymore, so I stop going there to do my homework or hang out with others.*

Students recommend that BU hires a director to fill in for Aboriginal students needs. In doing so, that sense of belonging will be filled and students will start to socialize in the IPC again.

3. **Make Students Aware of Services**

Students report that the unawareness of services and supports on campus is one area that needs to be improved upon. All students should have to attend an orientation where they will be shown the location of service/support and what its functions are.

4. **Transition Process**

The transition process is reported difficult for both new and mature students. Students report the difficulties of the unknown as being the hard part, and the following areas as well:

- Daycare;
- Housing;
- Transportation; and
- Life skills

*Daycare*

Many students that are interviewed are parents, so while attending university daycare is a huge issue. Students report of the difficulties they find while attempting to get their child into daycare in Brandon. Therefore, students report that BU needs a larger, onsite daycare for their students.

*Housing*

Housing is another issue that is mentioned throughout the interviews. Students report that it is hard to have to leave their families back home to attend school, so why not allow students’ families to reside in the dorms that BU offers. Or have BU
build an apartment complex for students with children to assist in First Nation student’s success. Students suggest a creation of a billet system for PENT/BUNTEP students be arranged before they attend their first spring or summer course. The cost decreased to stay in the dorms was also suggested to help out with the housing crises.

**Transportation**

Transportation is another issue that students feel is important to be discussed. Students report that they do not have a vehicle while attending school; therefore difficulties arise because the student had to go to class, lives across town, and is unaware of the bus route. Students suggest that the bus route, taxi cabs phone numbers, and a map of Brandon be part of the orientation to assist students who are new to Brandon.

**Life Skills**

Life skills should also be part of orientation. Students report that moving to Brandon is a huge culture shock because of not knowing the responsibility of being a student in the city entails. For example, how to budget, pay bills, and locating services in Brandon. One student reports,

> In our community, when our kids leave, they are still kids. Not everyone is ready to go to university. We need to prepare them to live on their own. There is over crowding of our homes and we depend on someone else to take care of us. When we go into the city, we are shocked because we are on our own and we have to handle all new responsibilities of going to school and paying bills
Student Recommendations for Recruitment of First Nations Students

Students report five recommendations to recruit First Nations students to BU. Recommendations are based on the student’s interviews and comments.

**Recommendation 1: Hire a BU Recruiter**

In regards to recruitment of students, students recommend that BU send out an Aboriginal recruiter to their communities to speak about what BU has to offer and to prepare future grads of the university expectations that are required when you are a university student.

**Recommendation 2: Invitation to all First Nation High schools**

Students report that BU should invite schools to campus to demonstrate the benefits of university and its components. In doing so, students will have a general idea of what to expect when attending BU as a new student.

**Recommendation 3: Distribute Program Information to Communities**

Another recommendation is to distribute information regarding programs, courses, and costs about BU to the communities, band offices, schools, and education authorities. Students also report to use commercials or radio broadcasts with Aboriginal representation to attract Aboriginal students to BU.

**Recommendation 4: Incorporate Athletic Awareness**

Incorporate more athletic awareness to Aboriginal high schools because a lot of Aboriginal students are into sports and would see BU differently knowing what sports BU has to offer.

**Recommendation 5: Aboriginal Representation on Advertisements**

Students recommend pamphlets, flyers, and posters that incorporate more Aboriginal student intake on them, to show that Aboriginal students attend BU.
Concluding Remarks

Recruitment and retention is a huge issue for First Nation students, and having complete the following inquiry has only created more determination to find a solution to assist in retaining Aboriginal students at the postsecondary level. There are several pieces to recruitment and retention that the writer never considered, until writing the report on students’ feeling, concerns, beliefs, experiences, and recommendations regarding BU.
Appendix C: Overview of University Programs and Services Aboriginal Students

The programs and initiatives aimed to enhance Aboriginal student success and satisfaction that are undertaken by several western Canadian universities are listed below. The universities are organized in alphabetical order.

**Simon Fraser University**

- Website also does not make it easy to find the information. However, there was a media release about the MOU signing on January 19th on the front page. That was encouraging.
- Once the information was located. It seems like they are vigorously engaged in trying to meet the needs of their Aboriginal students.
- 2005 Study looks at the success of Aboriginal students at SFU [http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/9965/1/b51804530.pdf](http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/9965/1/b51804530.pdf)
- 2 Bridging programs – one general, one health focused [http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/community/aboriginal.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/community/aboriginal.htm)
- Indigenous Students’ Centre [http://students.sfu.ca/indigenous/](http://students.sfu.ca/indigenous/)
- Office for Aboriginal Peoples [http://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples/](http://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples/)
- Special library page for Aboriginal students (same information but...) [http://www.lib.sfu.ca/my-library/services-for-you/aboriginal](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/my-library/services-for-you/aboriginal)
- Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the Native Education College (NEC) will deepen an almost decade long collaboration on delivering higher education by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Wed. Jan. 19, 2011. [http://www.sfu.ca/pamr/media_releases/media_releases_archives/moving-aboriginal-higher-education-forward.html](http://www.sfu.ca/pamr/media_releases/media_releases_archives/moving-aboriginal-higher-education-forward.html)
- Centre for First Nations Languages approved in fall of 2010
- Specifically in the areas of recruitment and retention, SFU has set SMART goals for the increase in the percentage of First Nations students. Their action plan includes:
  - Indigenous student centre/newsletter
  - Recruitment officer who goes out to the communities
  - Program Co-ordinator for Indigenous programs
  - A new undergraduate admissions policy for Aboriginal students was approved in fall of 2010
  - Well-organized, well-funded student group
  - Contact people appointed to work with Aboriginal students
  - Priority access policy for Aboriginal students in student housing
- Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) programs at both undergraduate and graduate level - This is a provincial program involving six universities in BC. 

- Honoring feast
- Elders’ program

**University of Alberta**

- They offer a Transition Year Program where students can come to take one year and have extra support to transition into university life. This is not an upgrading program. Their courses will be chosen from their field by the looks of things but they will work with the Aboriginal Student Services Centre to ensure success. 

- The centre also offers a wide variety of programs. 
  [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/aboriginalservices/ProgramsandServices.cfm](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/aboriginalservices/ProgramsandServices.cfm)

- Aboriginal Students’ Council 
  [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/aboriginalservices/AboriginalStudentCouncil.cfm](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/aboriginalservices/AboriginalStudentCouncil.cfm)

- There is some attention paid to housing, however, it seems like small numbers of spaces for such a large institution. 
  [http://www.uofawebualberta.ca/residences/Aboriginal.cfm](http://www.uofawebualberta.ca/residences/Aboriginal.cfm)

**University of British Columbia**

**Recruitment activities**

- UBC’s strategic plan includes strategies for recruiting indigenous students. 

- Summer programs for youth

- Year-long programs offered by staff, faculty, and students to support Aboriginal youth

- Partnering with secondary schools

- Attending career fairs

- Recognizes that even those who are well positioned to be successful lack the skills or the support to navigate the bureaucracy at the University

- Consideration given for missing credentials

- Work to remove barriers for funding and access

- A recruiting program for Aboriginal graduates

- Consider entrance skills beyond the GPA
Retention efforts

- Building a more fluid funding process and working directly with education portfolio holders in bands.
- Housing assistance – consider housing clusters, build ability to bring children and parents
- Task group to focus on childcare needs
- Aboriginal Student Services Offices on both campuses to provide support
- Orientation programming
- Student resource centre includes phone services, computer services, kitchen, gathering area
- Annual Powwow

University of Manitoba

- The information was easy to find from the main page and seemed to be an authentic outline of current programs.
- The Aboriginal Student Recruitment and U-Crew Team will come out to communities to provide your school/community with the following:
  - admissions presentation at your school/organization
  - engaging tours of our beautiful campus
  - attendance at your career fair
  - information about our Aboriginal programs
- Aboriginal Students’ Centre [http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/](http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/)
- Aboriginal Students’ Association [http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/umasa.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/umasa.html)
- Graduation Powwow [http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/events/traditional_graduation_pow_wow.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/events/traditional_graduation_pow_wow.html)
- Two-day Elders and Traditional Peoples’ Gathering [http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/events/elders.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/events/elders.html)
- Elders-in-residence program
- They are marketing programs that might appeal especially to Aboriginal students and marketing access to programs like Engineering, etc.
- Aboriginal House is where the student centre is located. [http://umanitoba.ca/student/admissions/ab_brochure/abor_house.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/admissions/ab_brochure/abor_house.html)
University of Northern British Columbia

- Easy to find information on their website. It is current and seems accurate. Title of main page says, “Aboriginal Students: Top Reasons to Choose UNBC” http://www.unbc.ca/whyunbc/aboriginal/index.html
- Have a laddering program that recognizes credentials for short-term university achievements.
- Northern Advancement Program – Provides a degree to students from rural and northern communities, helps them adjust to the university setting, prepares them to enter other programs at UNBC http://www.unbc.ca/nap/index.html
- First Nations Centre – Six staff members http://www.unbc.ca/firstnationscentre/index.html
  - Peer counseling
  - Computer Facilities
  - Library
- Annual Powwow

University of Regina

- Great website – easy to access the information from the main page. http://www.uregina.ca/newstudent/aboriginal.shtml
- First Nations’ University of Canada http://www.firstnationsuniversity.ca/
- Aboriginal Career Centre http://www.uregina.ca/acc/
- Aboriginal Students’ Centre http://www.uregina.ca/asc/
- Spend a day on campus program http://www.uregina.ca/asc/
- School visits and career fairs http://www.uregina.ca/newstudent/aboriginal/ab_schoolvisits.shtml
University of Saskatchewan

- UofS has a new webpage. It’s beautiful. The information was easy to access and I was impressed with the amount of established programs that they offer. I found the information under the space for undergraduate students.
- Like UofM, they marketed their programs specifically to Aboriginal students. [http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/centres/](http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/centres/)
- They had a separate page that listed the Centres, Departments, and Associations. [http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/centres/](http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/centres/)
  - From there the site contained links to:
    - The Rawlco Resource Centre, which claims to be the only dedicated Aboriginal space in Business Schools across Canada [http://www.edwards.usask.ca/programs/aboriginal/Undergraduate/ Rawlco%20Resource%20Centre.html](http://www.edwards.usask.ca/programs/aboriginal/Undergraduate/Rawlco%20Resource%20Centre.html)
    - The Native Law Centre of Canada
    - The Department of Native Studies
- The students’ centre will help with funding issues [http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/moneymatters/](http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/moneymatters/)
- Graduation Powwow
- Tutoring
- Student Ambassadors Program to host prospective students on campus [http://students.usask.ca/current/aboriginal/ambassadors.php](http://students.usask.ca/current/aboriginal/ambassadors.php)
- There are several transition programs available:
  - Aboriginal First Year Experience Program to aid transitions [http://explore.usask.ca/programs/ar/afyep](http://explore.usask.ca/programs/ar/afyep)
  - Summer University Transition Program for Aboriginal Students [http://explore.usask.ca/programs/ar/sut](http://explore.usask.ca/programs/ar/sut)
  - Mathematics and Science Enrichment Program for Aboriginal Students [http://explore.usask.ca/programs/ar/msep](http://explore.usask.ca/programs/ar/msep)
- Support services main page [http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/support/](http://explore.usask.ca/aboriginal/support/)
- Annual Aboriginal Achievement Week...same time as the Annual Powwow
- Within the new Edwards’ School of Business there seems to be several initiatives that would aid the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students. [http://www.edwards.usask.ca/programs/aboriginal/index.html](http://www.edwards.usask.ca/programs/aboriginal/index.html)
  - A website called this is your future profiles some of the most successful Saskatchewan Aboriginal Business leaders. [http://www.thisisyourfuture.ca/](http://www.thisisyourfuture.ca/)
- An opportunity to take Grade 12 Math
- The College of Arts and Science offers special counseling services for Aboriginal Students
  [http://artsandscience.usask.ca/students/aboriginal/advising.php](http://artsandscience.usask.ca/students/aboriginal/advising.php)
University of Victoria

- Webpage under prospective students has links to all of the services from a page that is titled, “I am an Indigenous student.”
- Native Students Union [http://uvicsu.ca/](http://uvicsu.ca/)
- Aboriginal language revitalization program
  [http://www.uvcs.uvic.ca/aspnet/Program/Detail/?code=BHATI](http://www.uvcs.uvic.ca/aspnet/Program/Detail/?code=BHATI)
- First Peoples’ House [http://web.uvic.ca/fhouse/](http://web.uvic.ca/fhouse/)
  - All services housed within this building
  - Gathering space
  - Classrooms
  - Elders in residence
  - Office of Indigenous Affairs
  - Native Students Union
  - Ceremonial space

University of Winnipeg

- The information was easy to access from the main page but was located under current students rather than prospective students. This doesn't seem to be such a good recruitment strategy but it was still easy to find.
- Aboriginal Students’ Centre [http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-aboriginal](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-aboriginal)
- Aboriginal Students’ Council [http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-aboriginallife](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-aboriginallife)
- Transition Year Program [http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-aboriginalprograms](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/services-aboriginalprograms)
- Community Outreach Learning Centre located in Winnipeg's inner city [http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/wcclc-index](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/wcclc-index)

Aboriginal Student Services Centre Brochure