

EDUCATION & POLICY & PERSPECTIVES

Based on interviews by Landscapes staff and other information sources, Education Policy & Perspectives is a regular feature, containing current news on Ministry of Education policies, related legislative developments and commentary by key interest groups in education.

First Nations Profiles

The Ministry of Advanced Education of British Columbia has reported on a study it commissioned to examine education and labour market outcomes for former aboriginal students in universities, colleges and institutes. These are students who attended post-secondary institutions between 1995 and 2001. Findings from surveys conducted in 1995, 1997 and 1999 were used for comparison.

Among the findings, former students who identified themselves as aboriginal were more likely to be female, 65 per cent in 2001. Also in 2001, the median age of aboriginal former students was 29 and for non-aboriginal former students it was 25.

It was also found that aboriginal former students were much more likely to have children and to be single parents. In 2001, 27 per cent of aboriginal respondents were part of a couple with children and 21 per cent were single parents compared with 15 per cent and 6 per cent for the non-aboriginal students respectively.



First Nations depicted on
Canada's Parliament buildings

Among the top program choices over the last six years, 30 per cent of aboriginal students enrolled in Arts and Sciences, 17 per cent in Business and Management, and 10 per cent in Legal and Social studies.

In terms of motivation for enrollment, 41 per cent of the aboriginal respondents reported that they enrolled in post-secondary studies for job reasons.

However, it was also reported that since 1995 unemployment rates have been higher for former aboriginal post-secondary students and their fulltime employment rates have declined or lagged behind those of non-aboriginal students. In 1995, for example, 15 per cent of aboriginal respondents who had been post-secondary students reported that they were unemployed and this increased to 19 per cent by 2001.

FUNDING PARENTS

Schools in British Columbia with a functioning Parents' Advisory Council will receive a grant equivalent to \$20 per student to defray their operating expenses. The total for the province, to be allocated from gaming funds, will be \$12 million. For some Parents' Advisory groups, this will represent a loss because they had been successful in grant applications in the past and had received as much as \$40 per student.

In explaining the change to the Legislature, Solicitor General Rich Coleman said the previous system was inequitable because parents in some school districts were better at writing grant applications. Under the new system, applications will not need to be written, but recipients will need to prove that they have a functioning parents' association.

GOOD MARKS POSE DANGER

According to newspaper reports, the Vancouver School Board issued a memo to teachers warning them not to give ESL students A's or B's in Language Arts for fear that the provincial government will use the grades as an excuse to reduce ESL funding. According to the story in the Vancouver Courier, the memo says that even the most advanced ESL students demonstrate literacy skills that "are not yet minimally meeting expectations." It goes on to suggest that because of this, the assignment of an A or B as a Language Arts mark cannot be supported and the assignment of a C+ would be quite unusual.

In an interview in the same article, Associate Vancouver School Board Superintendent, Valerie Overgaard said she believes some elementary teachers continue to award A's and B's in order to be supportive to students who are trying hard and making progress.

The province gives \$1,000 to school boards for every student designated as requiring ESL programs.

FEMINIST EDUCATOR

The Feminist Caucus of the BC Teachers' Federation selected Linda Shuto as the recipient for the G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award, at this year's BCTF Annual General Meeting. The award recognizes outstanding service in the field of education. Ms. Shuto was recognized for her work as a teacher and "BCTF activist and as a feminist in the Federation." She was the first coordinator of the BCTF Status of Women program and was acknowledged for establishing a system which "ensured an incredibly powerful and active feminist movement within the BCTF."

Call for Nominations

The Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria is calling for nominations for the 2003 Distinguished Education Alumni Awards. The awards were established in 1997 to recognize UVic Education Alumni who have distinguished themselves as educators in British Columbia. Three winners are selected each year by a committee of alumni and faculty and three scholarships in their names are awarded annually to students deemed to have best served the goals of education during the preceding year.

Nominations including three supporting letters and a brief Curriculum Vitae of the nominee should be sent prior to August 31, 2003 to:

Office of the Dean
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria
PO Box 3010, Station CSC
Victoria, BC V8W 3N4