

**Bold Steps and New Partnerships:
Proposals for University-First Nations Relations and the Return of Self-Government**

**A Discussion Paper Prepared
for the First Nations Governance Centre**

**Prepared by Patricia Monture and Ken Coates
September 2004**

Our Goals in Writing this Paper:

Our purpose in writing this paper is to both foster the development of partnerships among academics working across institutions and to facilitate the process of generating ideas about the relationship possibilities for the First Nations Governance Centre (FNGC). It is not our intention to provide the definitive framework or to limit the generation of ideas. Part of what is so exciting and encouraging for us is having a forum where we can talk across our differences – both those of the western academic traditions of departments and traditions as well as our cultural diversities. This document is a place to start discussions and is not intended to be a finished place. It already builds on the ideas of a number of people involved with FNGC. We look forward to many opportunities to continue and expand upon the conversations that have been started.

First Nations and the Governance Challenge

The establishment of the First Nations Governance Centre represents a vital step in the development of Aboriginal managerial capacity and is a sign of growing federal government recognition of the value and necessity of First Nations self-government. The FNGC has a formidable task, for its mandate covers research, training, policy development and community empowerment. First Nations communities and organizations across Canada have very high expectations and needs, and will expect rapid and innovative responses to their challenges. Similarly, the federal and provincial governments continue to put enormous pressure on First Nations in the governance area, and often establish unrealistic expectations about the speed and nature of the managerial “revolution” underway among First Nations.

For the past forty years, First Nations and leaders have been engulfed in a culture of political confrontation and litigation. Unable to convince governments to make the necessary modifications in governance structures and funding arrangements, and clearly unable to secure adequate recognition of inherent Aboriginal rights, First Nations resorted to the courts to seek a clarification of their situation. First Nations were not asserting their rights as understood within their communities and as practiced for hundreds of years but rather the need for Crown recognition of these rights. For the most part, they could do little more than demonstrate to national and provincial governments that their agents and departments were ignoring established British and Canadian law. Only with the passage of the Constitution Act of 1982 did the federal government entrench and recognize Aboriginal and treaty rights as a foundational principle of Canadian policy and law. And, of course, the passage of time has shown the subsequent movement in the recognition and respect for Aboriginal rights continues to be slow and hard-won. The growing acceptance of First Nations self-government as a practical reality in Canada has the potential to change this culture of dispute and constant argument, but the promise remains unrealized at present.

The slow response to First Nations needs and aspirations has placed an enormous burden on the leaders and managers at the community, tribal council and national level. First Nations governance is one of the most demanding, if not the most demanding, area of public administration in Canada. Legal uncertainties, financial shortages, the inherent paternalism of the federal-First Nations relationship create significant pressures. At the same time, the social, cultural, economic and political realities among First Nations people creates simply staggering demands on the Aboriginal leaders. Virtually no non-Aboriginal politicians or public administrators deal with the complexity and intensity that is the norm among First Nations officials. Coping with the constant pressures of inadequate housing, minimal employment opportunities, generational conflicts, the aftermath of residential schools, efforts to preserve and enhance culture and language use, and the many other difficulties leaves little time for the nuances of drafting policy, professional development, and long-range planning. When self-government arrangements have been implemented incautiously, the process of assuming greater control over administrative matters has often added to, rather than solved, the problems.

First Nations self-government is now a reality. Many communities across the country have eagerly taken on additional responsibilities and challenges. Most of the federal money spent on Aboriginal affairs now flows through First Nations governments and organizations. The transition has not always been easy, and nor should it be expected to be rapid or without difficulties. First Nations operated for generations under federal government control; only recently has local administration emerged as a major career option. The nation's press have made a great deal about a small number of difficult situations, creating the inaccurate perception that all First Nations have difficulty managing their affairs. Virtually nothing is written about the hundreds of successful examples of First Nations governance, ranging from elementary schools to Aboriginal colleges, co-management agreements, joint ventures, cooperatives, and

many other comparable examples. Thousands of Aboriginal people, working for hundreds of First Nations employers, are now actively engaged in the practice of Aboriginal self-government. In the coming years, this number will grow dramatically as more communities conclude self-government agreements and as First Nations build off successful practices in one field to expand their areas of responsibility.

Educational initiatives have not kept pace with the expansion of governance responsibilities. There is a growing and dramatic need for professional preparation and professional development. The demands at the community level, however, have made it difficult to free people for the kind of long-term, reflective study that is generally required; equally, the shortage of qualified and willing First Nations people has often meant that individuals with incomplete training have been rushed into high pressure and difficult jobs. There has often been too few opportunities for training during employment. For those that have the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education – and the funding is well below the need in this crucial area – the situation has been far from perfect. College and university training programs in administration have, with only a few exceptions, offered little coverage of the specific cultural, structural, legal and Aboriginal elements of managing First Nations organizations. First Nations communities, for example, are overwhelmingly small in population. What observers have described as the “politics of smallness,” where there are considerable family connections, strong local pressures, and detailed understanding of each other’s business and private affairs, adds to the managerial challenge. Standard textbooks, course materials and academic assumptions do not apply readily in a First Nations environment.

First Nations people pursuing academic and professional preparation in management and administration can select from a small but significant number of programs. College-level programming tends to get little national attention, but the combination of adult basic education and basic career preparation programs have served hundreds of Aboriginal students extremely well. Colleges in the North, particularly Yukon College, have done very well in this regard (Yukon College has gone further than most colleges, brokering degree programs in education, social work and public administration in order to enhance opportunities for local students). First Nations University of Canada, in collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan, developed a ladder business administration diploma. Schools like the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology provides a variety of diploma and degree preparation options. There are numerous specialized education and social work programs, special support initiatives for Aboriginal students studying in regular professional programs, and the University of Saskatchewan’s introductory program for First Nations students entering law school. The tendency has been to develop programs that train people in the social service sector. Many of these programs do not focus on or prepare students for careers in the areas of First Nations governance or administration.

Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions and First Nations Needs

Thirty years ago, one could confidently say that Canadian universities and colleges were neglecting the educational needs of Aboriginal peoples. There were only a handful of highly selective programs, most focused on teacher training. First Nations were receiving little support and encouragement from the country’s post-secondary institutions. That is no longer the case. Virtually every university in the country has programs with considerable Aboriginal content (usually in the form of Native Studies or the like) or targeted support initiatives designed to encourage and retain Aboriginal students. The latter programs mostly focus on professional preparation, specifically in Law, Education, Social Work, Nursing and Medicine. There are, in addition, support programs for Aboriginal students, typically at the first year level and usually structured as some form of a transition initiative. Institutions emphasize the number of Aboriginal students and publicize the accomplishments of Aboriginal graduates and the success of targeted initiatives.

The diversity of initiatives varies widely. Northern-based colleges, including Yukon College, Arctic College, Aurora Colleges and the numerous provincial colleges, devote an exceptional amount of money and effort to Aboriginal programs, with much of it placed on adult basic education and career programs. Urban institutions tend to marginalize Aboriginal programming and therefore Aboriginal students, but even here the effort is considerable. Over the past two decades, the growth and emergence of Aboriginally-controlled institutions, such as the First Nations University of Canada, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, First Nations Technical Institute and Grand River Polytechnical Institute have provided additional opportunities. Most of these programs are only loosely connected or affiliated, and transition between programs, particularly college and university offerings, tends to be weak.

There have been numerous initiatives in the areas of First Nations administration and governance. A great deal of institutional emphasis has, historically, been placed on legal training (often to the detriment

of other educational opportunities). Faculties of Commerce and Business have increasingly focused their efforts on short-term, diploma and degree programs for Aboriginal students. These efforts typically emphasize the provision of additional support for Aboriginal students; much less often do they provide extensive course coverage of the particularly important needs of Aboriginal business and administration. Public administration programs, several with a specific emphasis on Aboriginal governance, have emerged, although they have attracted relatively small numbers of students.

The federal government provides a considerable amount of money to support Aboriginal post-secondary education, primarily through funding to the bands for school attendance, although the sums fall far short of meeting the demand. (And, it must be added, the level of funding runs counter to promises made only two decades ago that the government would support all qualified students who wished to go to university or college.) Funding for graduate studies is often not available to students from their bands and this factor has contributed to the inability of students to access graduate programs. A further cutback in funding available to First Nations students will result from the implementation of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency's plan to tax the band allowance paid to students while in school. Also as troubling, the federal support for Aboriginal students sparks considerable on-campus hostility among non-Aboriginal students, who mistakenly believe that the government covers all costs for all Aboriginal people (including Metis) and who rarely understand the nature of the treaty rights and provisions of the Indian Act covering education. Initiatives must therefore keep in mind the particular funding situations of First Nations students.

The existing programming, extensive and well-intended as it is, is not addressing the specific and evolving needs of Aboriginal persons particularly well. Programs reflect institutional priorities and the academic culture generally and often lack the flexibility to fit with Indigenous needs and opportunities. A few more flexible offerings, like the initial First Nations Governance program at the University of Victoria, were extremely expensive, relied heavily on special and targeted funding and could not be sustained in their original format. The University of Victoria program brought in practicing First Nations government officials for highly targeted and specialized training and education initiatives, and was applauded by participants for its relevance and attention to their specific needs and commitments. For all of its successes, the program relied on substantial federal funding and did not mesh well with standard academic priorities and approaches.

Most institutions focus heavily on providing access and pay much less attention to retention and graduation rates. The situation in this regard is not particularly impressive, particularly given the amount of money the First Nations expend in this effort and the high expectations placed on the students by their communities. (The challenges are not exclusively at the institutional level; First Nations selection procedures are often less than reliable and the motivation of some Aboriginal students is suspect. Add to this the particular challenges First Nations people face adapting to largely urban, western and highly institutional environments, and it is not surprising that many Aboriginal students do not complete their studies.) Part of the problem is the social conditions and poverty in the community and as a result sometimes funded education is the only available income option.

Acknowledging First Nations Realities:

One of the most significant obstacles in the journey to provide meaningful educational opportunities has been that post-secondary education has failed to take account of the realities of many First Nations communities. Many of these realities are defined by the experiences of colonization. This is particularly true in the area of First Nations governance as the imposition of the Indian Act regime has had significant consequences, often devastating consequences. And the imposition of the Indian Act is an ongoing reality as attempts to amend the Act (but not repeal it) have been unsuccessful. This is because First Nations leaders believe that the answer is in their own people and their own communities, not in another act of imposition.

In the worst case, the imposition of the Indian Act forms of government have resulted in the loss of community memory of how things were done under an Indigenous system of governance. This often leads to a strong community reaction to any move away from the imposed structures. Students from these communities are often frustrated. They want some suggestions and ideas about how to get change started in a climate of complete opposition. University programs have often failed to provide ideas for these students to consider. This demonstrates just one gap that exists in the knowledge possessed within the university and a significant difficulty in meeting the needs of First Nations students and the communities from which they come from.

In many First Nations communities, it is unrealistic to focus solely on the impact of the imposition of the Indian Act and the colonial impact on forms of governance as the imposition has been much more complex. The imprint of residential schools, foster care systems and racism leaves many individuals in situations where they do not value their identities. This leads to multiple issues based on the inability to trust. The context into which efforts to re-claim traditional forms of government are placed is not only a challenge for communities but also for educational institutions. Creating opportunities for positive identity formation is not a common theme in academic discourses. Individual students also often face immediate challenges during their courses of study (from ending battering relationships to suicide and other chaos in their family). Programs and those who staff them, must recognize that many of the areas studied or researched are immediate issues in the lives of First Nations persons and are not necessary objective and areas of contemplation where there is distance from the subject matter under study.

In other communities there is a consciousness that the imposed Indian Act governance structures do not easily reconcile with the responsibilities and values of a system of traditional Indigenous governance. Even self-government negotiation processes established by the federal government might offer insufficient opportunities to cross the distance between the two forms of government. This is an area where both research and training are essential. Research needs to examine the opportunities under present federally recognized self-government arrangements and the changes that have occurred in those communities. Training opportunities must recognize not only the differences in Aboriginal communities but also that those realities are in a period of transition in many places. Sometimes those transitions are dynamic. Both training and research options must be able to respond to the unique realities in Aboriginal communities.

The third community strategy to re-claim space for First Nations governance responsibilities has been to pursue litigation. Within the broader academic community, relatively little is known about the impact of those processes and judicial outcomes on the community involved in the litigation. This is a large gap in our knowledge. Understanding what the courts have said really tells us very little about the communities that engaged in the litigation and the impact that litigation has had in and on the community.

The fourth alternative available to communities is to “just do it”. This alternative can have serious political consequences, often in the form of fiscal cutbacks. None-the-less this is an alternative pursued by some communities. Because of the federal response, and perceived consequences, news of the changes rarely spreads beyond the communities affected by the strategy..

Developing Indigenous governance training and research opportunities must always respect First Nations diversities. There are two particular areas of diversity beyond cultural and linguistic multiplicity that are essential considerations for the development of government training and research. The inclusion of urban First Nations citizens is a challenge to existing, imposed structures of governance. The first step here is to recognize that many of those “urban” residents still live in their traditional territories. Inclusion of all citizens is a principle that must be embraced in all areas of professional development.

The second area of diversity that is often absent from university educational opportunities is the area of treaty relationship and particularly the inclusion of First Nations knowledge about those relationships. Such an understanding cannot be developed by turning to the text of treaty first. Again,

treaties are a complex matter for study and the forms of the arrangements and relationships vary nationally including communities who have elected to remain without treaty. Treaty education must be an area that grounds the work of the FNGC in each distinct territory.

Each of these realities provides a context within which training and research developments must take into account. Meeting the needs of First Nations students and the communities in which they are from will require a degree of specificity and flexibility that has not been previously demanded of or provided by post-secondary institutions.

Problems with the Current Approaches:

The existing post-secondary support for Aboriginal education and training contains a significant number of gaps and challenges, including the following:

1. **Divided and Fragmented Approaches:** Current offerings are generally institution-specific, with less coordination than is desirable between programs and with little laddering between institutions (ie. college diplomas permitting easy transfer to university offerings).
2. **Emphasis on Credentials Rather than Outcomes:** Universities are very traditional institutions and place a great deal of emphasis on standardized diplomas and degrees. The current priority is on granting degrees, not necessarily on ensuring that Aboriginal students are prepared specifically for the administrative, employment and personal challenges that exist in Aboriginal communities.
3. **Driven by Traditional Academic Values and Assumptions:** One of the greatest strengths of university offerings is that they preserve and defend traditional academic values. This is also one of their greatest shortcomings. There has been comparatively little flexibility shown in the development and offering of programs, and Aboriginal students often complain about the lack of relevance of their studies.
4. **Only Rarely Influenced by Aboriginal Values:** With a relatively small number of exceptions, university programs rarely reflect Aboriginal culture, traditions and values. A small number of courses, usually taught by Aboriginal scholars, include contributions from Elders and traditional Aboriginal teachers. Others provide very general coverage of Aboriginal issues, but not the depth and substance that Aboriginal students require and anticipate.
5. **Not Closely Connected with Need and Skill-Levels of First Nations:** Aboriginal communities have very specific needs and high expectations. The much more general, credential focus of standard offerings often miss the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Current issues in First Nations communities, such as the desire to move away from Indian Act forms of governance, do not inform the substance in most courses.
6. **Emphasis is on Campus-Based Programming:** The vast majority of university course and program offerings in Canada are available only on campus. Efforts have been made to deliver off-campus classes and in a few cases degree completion. These programs tend to be held in considerably less esteem within the university environment, and are seen as less than adequate academically. The distance education programs that have been offered have generally attracted little interest among Aboriginal persons, sometimes due to a lack of community understanding of the university-level academic enterprise. Access to technology is a significant issue in some communities which further diminishes opportunities for off-campus opportunities.
7. **Focus is on Attracting Additional Government and First Nations Funding:** Many university programs (considerably less so at the college-level) for First Nations people run on project or targeted funding. Relatively few are funded through institutional base budgets. Universities rely heavily on federal, provincial and territorial funding for Aboriginal programs and often tie additional initiatives to available government support. Studies have demonstrated that lack of university (that is base budget) investment diminishes success.
8. **Loss of Students to Urban Centres through Education:** Most Canadian universities are in major urban centres, requiring many Aboriginal student to relocate from their

communities in order to pursue advanced studies. While there are many positive aspects of this shift, the long-term reality has been that a significant (but unknown) percentage of Aboriginal students do not return to their communities at the end of their studies. This effect is compounded by the fact that a sizeable majority of the Aboriginal students attending university are women, thus changing the social dynamics within Indigenous communities. The loss of many of the most talented Aboriginal people to urban settings has very significant long-term consequences for First Nations governments, businesses and organizations.

9. **Universities Generally Have Slow Response Times:** Aboriginal communities have been pressing post-secondary needs, and require prompt and creative responses. Universities, for reasons of funding and inherent institutional conservatism, tend to react slowly and only through lengthy internal review processes. Aboriginal organizations are often frustrated by the delays, and believe the universities are unresponsive or unconcerned about Indigenous priorities.
10. **Learning Styles and Classroom Structure:** Classroom settings and learning expectations at the university are often not the best structures for students who come from cultural backgrounds that teach in a different method. Universities need to consider the form in which they deliver courses and how representative or inclusive that form is. A small step forward would be to dedicate Aboriginal classroom space.
11. **Respect for Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** Aboriginal traditions are in fact intellectual traditions. They have theoretical, methodological and pedagogical premises. These often remain unacknowledged in university programs and the potential of those programs, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, are seriously diminished.

What Do First Nations Need? Training and Education Challenges:

Before presenting a model for what might be developed under the leadership of the First Nations Governance Centre, it is important to be clear about the needs and the challenges. The following key points should be addressed in the coming years:

1. **The Need for an Evolving Program:** The situation is changing very rapidly. The needs of the early 2000s will be quite different by 2020. FNGC would be well-advised to ensure flexibility and to avoid entrenching permanent, long-term programs designed to address immediate needs.
2. **Strong and Consistent Need for Aboriginal Managers and Leaders:** First Nations across Canada require literally thousands of well-trained, highly skilled and motivated managers. The steps that are undertaken by the FNGC must address the scale of the challenge. A few small programs, designed to meet the needs and mandates of specific institutions, will not suffice. A major and sustained national initiative is required.
3. **The Cost to the Communities of Inadequate Governance:** To the degree that the educational and training system falls short of meeting the established need – and it is falling well short at present – the communities bear the majority of the cost. Programs that are not properly managed cannot meet local objectives. Funds that are not carefully budgeted and spent will not be available to meet pressing community needs. Major difficulties with administration tend to be widely publicized, harming general support for Aboriginal self-government. Federal and provincial governments have, over time, discovered that ill-organized and poorly managed organizations put far less pressure on them and are easier to ignore politically than those that function well.
4. **Education Attainment:** At present, the level of educational attainment among adult Aboriginal people falls well short of national norms particularly in the areas of math and natural science. There are, in most instances, too few Aboriginal people ready and able to step into major administrative responsibilities. Launching additional university-level programs when there are not enough qualified Aboriginal applicants for currently available university positions does not make a great deal of sense. The situation is improving, but only slowly, and it will take another generation at least until the level of Aboriginal education begins to approach national norms.

5. **Bringing Opportunities to the Communities:** Many Aboriginal administrators are place bound. Educational programs have to, in many instances, be delivered in the communities.
6. **Bringing Community Members to the Universities:** A large number of programs cannot be delivered locally in a cost-effective or academically sound manner. In these instances, Aboriginal communities have to find ways to ensure that local residents can attend courses on university campuses.
7. **Difficulties in Freeing Managers to Pursue Advanced Training:** Aboriginal managers work under exceptional pressure and have little free time within their work schedules and private lives. Finding sufficient time for these managers to attend training programs is extremely difficult, but must be seen as a high priority.
8. **Preparing Managers for the Realities of Governance and Management:** Individuals accepting administrative positions within Aboriginal organizations face an immediate and often intense transition to local and regional challenges. Educational programs have to combine practical examples and experiences with conceptual and theoretical work, and have to recognize that graduates will move very quickly into positions of intense personal responsibility and often stress. This is an area that present university programs have failed to fully consider.
9. **Limited Awareness of Models from Across Canada and Other Jurisdictions:** Many of the solutions that Aboriginal communities seek are currently in operation across Canada. Pressures of work and limited information sharing means that few communities and few administrators have a detailed understanding of projects, initiatives and structures in other communities. Linking the practical experiences of Indigenous communities must be a critical part of the educational and professional development processes.

TOWARD THE SOLUTION – FNGC and Education Programs in Partnership with Canadian Universities and Colleges:

There are a number of initiatives that FNGC can foster within Canadian post-secondary institutions. These include brokering “best practice” models, developing a national consortium of educational institutions committed to the development of programs that meet the needs of First Nations students and communities, and the creation of a capacity building fund. These ideas are discussed further below and are not intended to limit our ideas but provide a place to begin considerations.

Encouraging “Best Practices” and First Nations Inclusion: The First Nations Governance Centre has an opportunity to play a unique and powerful role in the development of educational and professional development processes across the country. The FNGC “stamp” should and could quickly become the new standard for Aboriginal programming in Canada, providing Aboriginal people, Indigenous organizations and governments with a clear indication of First Nations expectations, standards and priorities. The following represent potential key elements in the development of a national education and training strategy relating to Aboriginal governance in Canada; other considerations will undoubtedly be added:

1. The FNGC should become a practical partner and not a funding source for universities. Post-secondary institutions are funded to provide appropriate training for Aboriginal communities and they should be provided additional direction and support in meeting this responsibility.
2. All programs associated with the FNGC must accept, as a basic principle, that appropriate academic and performance standards be applied to programs developed for Aboriginal students and communities.
3. Universities across Canada must be provided with an opportunity to make a clear and long-term commitment to First Nations governance needs and opportunities.
4. Universities and the FNGC should work closely with colleges and other post-secondary institutions in addressing student and community needs. Adult Basic Education, for

- example, should be provided by colleges and local school boards; universities should focus on students who have the appropriate credentials and/or technical abilities.
5. Colleges and universities should be encouraged to work on easing the transition between institutions, and FNGC should play a lead role in encouraging the development and accreditation of laddered (ie. joint college and university) academic programs.
 6. FNGC should commence discussions with selected Colleges which have degree granting status to see if these colleges are prepared and willing to mount programs of specific benefit to First Nations people.
 7. Models that successfully combine First Nations knowledge and western academic traditions should be identified and acknowledged as examples of best practices. Respectful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge must be recognized as a minimum standard.

A National Consortium on First Nations Governance Education: The First Nations Governance Centre should play a coordinating role in drawing together a national consortium on First Nations Governance Education. The emphasis in the consortium should be on encouraging flexibility, responsiveness and program appropriateness for First Nations communities. The key characteristics of the FNGC National Consortium should include:

- a. FNGC should determine which institutions, programs and individuals are part of the national consortium;
- b. The consortium will create the following:
 - i. A list of approved programs that meet the criteria set down by the FNGC;
 - ii. A list of transition and ABE programs of particular utility for individuals interested in pursuing advanced studies in administration;
 - iii. A list of core competencies, including both basic skills and specific abilities related to governance, that students must have at the diploma and degree levels;
 - iv. A national curriculum of courses designed specifically to meet the needs of students interested in Aboriginal governance and administration and a mechanism for transferring these courses between institutions;
 - v. A curriculum review committee to examine the content and instruction of the national curriculum;
 - vi. A modular (small units of the university's regular course structure which can be used in various combinations to secure course accreditation) approach to course and program development specifically designed to meet the needs of employed Aboriginal governance employees. This development also creates the opportunity to offer education programs in the community.
 - vii. A coordinated program of courses delivered by alternate delivery methods (television-based, Internet-based and correspondence based) to support face-to-face delivered programs and courses.
 - viii. An accreditation system that provides students with FNGC recognition for defined levels of preparation for Aboriginal governance and administration.
 - ix. A priority learning assessment structure (using existing institutional review procedures) to provide advanced credit for individuals currently working in Aboriginal governance situations. This could include a national examination system for the assessment of experience-based learning.
 - x. An online archive of "best practices" case reports in Aboriginal governance and administration (compiled by students and faculty approved by the FNGC), readily available to students, instructors and workers in the field of Aboriginal governance and administration.
 - xi. A model of community-based delivery that covers the following: appropriate protocols, arrangements for the payment of community teachers, principles re: localized course content, arrangements for accepting students from other communities, and structures which facilitate the identification of local best practices and teachable experiences.

- xii. Protocols and standards for work-related instruction and supervised learning, which should be integrated into all diploma and degree programs.
 - xiii. Develop international connections, with an emphasis on Aboriginally-controlled institutions and partners (including Indigenous governments wishing to host work experience students), non-Aboriginal institutions with strong track records for supporting Indigenous administration, and with the University of the Arctic, which has a strong commitment to community-based and alternative delivery systems.
 - xiv. FNGC should have the capacity to assist universities in which they have entered partnership agreements to identify gaps in existing programs. One example, commonly articulated by Aboriginal scholars, is the failure of legal education programs to develop opportunities for students to study Indigenous legal practices and structures.
- c. Participating institutions should agree to some or all of the following:
- i. FNGC should emphasize the funding of student participation and not the direct funding of academic programs;
 - ii. FNGC should develop a roster of instructional associates and institutional partners, based on the participants' ability and willingness to contribute to Aboriginal professional development in Canada;
 - iii. FNGC should invite institutional participants based on the strength and contribution of existing and planned programs. Access to funding for students should be based on FNGC acceptance of institutional partners;
 - iv. FNGC should develop research protocols and lists of needed research projects, to which the FNGC is prepared to provide funding. Faculty and graduate students would be encouraged to take on a research project from the approved and coordinated list;
 - v. FNGC will work with communities to ensure a smoother and faster process for providing approved researchers with access to communities;
 - vi. The universities will agree to work toward identifying barriers that interfere with First Nations students' ability to excel in programs (both those that are First Nations-specific and those that are not);
 - vii. FNGC should choose to work with institutions that have a demonstrated willingness to work cooperatively with First Nation communities or have demonstrated a clear plan to develop that capacity. Clear indication of this goal is seen in established relationships with Aboriginal communities and the hiring of Aboriginal scholars who maintain their connection with community;
 - viii. All institutions should adopt a principle of respect for the academic choices of First Nations students. First Nations, like all other students, have the right to choose between First Nations specific programs and general programs of study. There is the need to guard against ghettoization of Aboriginal choices and programs.

Capacity Building Fund: The goal of this fund would be to enhance the interest in studies of First Nations governance and to reward excellence in this field of study. The fund should be created with respect for the following elements:

- a. Bursaries and support programs for Aboriginal students entering the third or fourth year of their students and demonstrating an interest in administration and governance;
- b. Support for Aboriginal students pursuing studies of administration and governance at the graduate level. Students would have to enroll in an approved program and be studying with an approved faculty member;
- c. Support for Aboriginal scholars pursuing research on administration and governance. The support will be largely in the form of grants for graduate assistantships, grants to cover the cost of community-based research projects, and financial support for Elders and community leaders to assist with approved research projects;
- d. Support for non-Aboriginal scholars pursuing research on administration and governance. The support will be largely in the form of grants for graduate assistantships, grants to cover the cost of community-based research projects, and financial support for Elders and community leaders to assist with approved research projects; and,
- e. It is assumed that a preference will be given to supporting Aboriginal graduate students in each aspect of the capacity building grants awarded.

Research and Policy Development with Canadian Universities:

Canadian scholars and researchers have conducted a considerable amount of research related to Aboriginal governance and administration. This research, to date, has the following characteristics:

- A strong emphasis on constitutional and legal issues;
- Limited understanding of specific cases and experiences, and less open discussion of best practices and common barriers and challenges
- Mostly supportive of Aboriginal self-government (often extremely partisan), but with little emphasis on technical and practical utility.
- Limited Aboriginal contribution to research activity and analysis.

The research conducted to date has not always been respectful of, or met the needs of, First Nations governments and communities. In order to advance and improve the situation consideration must be given to the structures that apply research ethics, collaboration and the creation of a centre to support the much needed advancement and improvement. Research ethics structures are of particular concern; this situation requires immediate attention.

Research Ethics: One of the greatest ironies in Aboriginally-based research is the fact that protocols intended to ensure that academic research was more useful and utilitarian have actually worked to restrict research and to deter and slow research work. In the 1990s, some granting agencies and university ethics committees began to take notice of the concerns of Aboriginal persons with respect to research being done on them or in their communities. This response to Aboriginal concerns was developed on the standard that it was non-Aboriginal persons entering Aboriginal communities. As a strategy, its aim was narrow and Aboriginal scholars have found the new ethics provisions, meant to protect them and their communities problematic. It is indeed an issue that needs to be addressed and one that FNGC can help solve.

Ethical standards must recognize that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars doing work in Aboriginal communities have varying relationships with those communities. In particular, not all Aboriginal scholars will follow an Aboriginal traditional or way of life. There are a number of Aboriginal scholars in Canada who are conducting research based on Indigenous knowledge systems and those systems are both grounded in Indigenous theory and the corresponding particular methodologies. The majority of granting agencies and university ethics committees do not have an expertise in assessing

research proposals grounded in these Aboriginal traditions.

We are aware, because of our relationships with Aboriginal scholars, of a number of incidents where ethics review has gone terribly wrong. In one case, an Aboriginal scholar doing research on citizenship in the community of their birth, wished to pass tobacco to each research participant. The ethics committee withheld clearance because they believed that this was a “bribe” to those participants. Passing tobacco is one of many traditional protocols required to gain access to certain forms of Indigenous knowledge.

An Aboriginal person (independent of their chosen occupation) who has accepted the ways of his or her people will be bound to a set of responsibilities that are also not well understood by ethics committees. The Indigenous rules often have more rigorous standards of knowledge sharing. Much of Indigenous knowledge is shared amongst family members in settings, such as over tea and around the kitchen table or around the fire at a family camp at a pow wow. Should a scholar wish to reproduce that knowledge (and the decision to reproduce that knowledge is indeed a complicated one), that their grandparents shared with them, they are likely in violation of university ethics standards as they have not shared with their relatives a research consent form. The thought of what would happen to those scholars, who have their feet in the university as well as in their families and traditions, should they produce such a form for their grandparents or other relatives to sign is comical. More generally, the current ethical requirements are cumbersome, time consuming and often discourage Aboriginal participation. There is a crucial role for the FNGC in this regard.

An FNGC Model for Collaboration on Self-Government Research: In order to facilitate research on Aboriginal governance and administration, FNGC should take the lead on the development of a new model and agenda for research related to self-government. This new approach must be sensitive to community needs. One of the best ways to accomplish this is through a structure that responds to community requests but also has the ability to respond to and anticipate potential issues. It must accommodate national research protocols, but should address the short-comings of the current system. The new program should have the following characteristics:

1. **Community-Based Problem Identification:** FNGC should coordinate the preparation of a comprehensive list of research needs and opportunities. Communities with specific research needs could approach the FNGC for inclusion on the list and for assistance with identifying suitable and appropriate researchers. This approach would also make it easier to coordinate research on related projects across the country and therefore to ensure that there was greater inter-community learning.
2. **Ethical Standards and Community Participation:** FNGC should, working with Aboriginal organizations and communities, develop specific protocols and standards for research. These protocols should make specific mention of the needs and challenges facing Aboriginal scholars. FNGC would take the lead in assessing the credibility of scholars, researchers and proposed projects;
3. **The Need for Systematic Analysis:** FNGC should identify major gaps in current research and should endeavor to coordinate nation-wide research activities to better address Aboriginal needs;
4. **Training of Aboriginal Researchers:** The FNGC must make it clear that the training of Indigenous researchers must be a key outcome of the research enterprise;
5. **Sharing Research Results and Ideas:** FNGC should become a clearinghouse for sharing the results of research on self-governance and administration; and,
6. **Creating Problem-Solving Capacity:** The overall objective of the FNGC-coordinated enterprise must be the development of problem-solving capabilities among Indigenous communities and organizations.

First Nations Governance Centre Research Initiative: This is a large and ambitious agenda. FNGC cannot fund more than a small portion of the research need, and efforts must be made to work with existing federal and provincial granting agencies to ensure greater attention to Aboriginal research needs. The following considerations should feature in the evolving FNGC research initiative:

1. FNGC will have limited internal research capabilities and should, instead, establish a coordinating service for the conduct of research and the sharing of research results. A major goal should be bringing researchers and communities together to work on problems and opportunities of mutual interest;
2. FNGC should play a major role in changing the emphasis from for-profit research, conducted by consultants (many of them university-based), to community-centred activity, where the funds available for research are targeted at the specific costs of research, Aboriginal driven research and governance capacity building;
3. FNGC should identify universities, departments and individual researchers that have agreed to operate under FNGC protocols and procedures. FNGC should play a major role in facilitating community acceptance of researchers and identifying funding of research activities that meet FNGC and community priorities;
4. FNGC should establish a roster of FNGC Research Associates, individuals who have established track records for working successfully with Aboriginal communities; this roster will be available to communities looking for researchers willing and able to assist meeting community needs;
5. FNGC should play a role, largely indirectly, in funding research on Aboriginal self-government, including the following:
 - i. Establish a coordinated approach to contract research, using FNGC funds, to minimize overlap and to maximize attention to the most pressing community needs;
 - ii. Establish scholarships for Aboriginal researchers who are prepared to work on FNGC and community-identified priorities; this capacity-building enterprise is crucial to the long-term success of the self-government initiative;
 - iii. The central FNGC capacity should focus on the development and implementation of research protocols and the management of the Canada-wide research activity; and,
6. FNGC should continue to develop their web-based system for sharing practical, experiential research results (and for more general and conceptual work). The emphasis should be on the prompt and readily accessible distribution of research reports and evaluations, with a view to educating Aboriginal governance workers on best practices and common problems in the field of Indigenous self-government. This means that all technical and conceptual work would also be presented in a manner accessible to general users and the community at large. The national database for self-government information should emphasize readily acceptable information, designed and written to be of specific use for employees in the area of Aboriginal self-government. This data base would, in the first instance, have the following substantive divisions:
 - i. Legal and constitutional models
 - ii. Business and managerial models
 - iii. Practical issues relating to traditional Indigenous governance

- iv. Human resource plans and policies
- v. Relations with federal government agencies
- vi. Relations with provincial government agencies
- vii. Relations with local and regional governments
- viii. Relations between First Nations
- ix. Best-Case examples and experiences
- x International experiences and lessons

Educating First Nations People about Developments in Self-Government. While the First Nations Governance Centre must address pressing, immediate and technical issues, attention should be given from the beginning to the development of a broader educational and outreach capability. The purpose of this initiative should be to raise the profile of governance, to build awareness of major achievements, to encourage debate about existing challenges and problems, and to encourage young Aboriginal people to consider careers in the field. This initiative should have the following characteristics:

1. There should be a coordinated, national effort to raise the profile of governance issues;
2. FNGC should work with both the Aboriginal media (print, television and radio) and the non-Aboriginal media (particularly community-based newspapers, radio programs, etc) on the promotion of public awareness about self-government;
3. FNGC should approach Aboriginal television stations, especially APTN, to identify opportunities for televised courses and modules on Indigenous self-government;
4. FNGC should approach provincial and territorial curriculum developers to identify opportunities to prepare curriculum material relating to Aboriginal self-government for elementary and secondary schools; and,
5. FNGC should take a very pro-active approach to the identification of positive experiences related to Aboriginal self-government and traditional governance, for distribution to national, regional and international media sources. This initiative should focus on best practices and major and positive initiatives in this regard.

It is important to acknowledge that First Nations governance programs do not just benefit First Nations. Many non-First Nations students are interested in these programs and believe that it prepares them for a career in the institutions of Canadian government. Non-First Nations communities can and will benefit from the exploration of Aboriginal governance systems just as they have benefited from restorative justice traditions. First Nations justice traditions have been shared and used to inform the restorative justice movement not just in Canada, but internationally as well. Development of these programs and course options as they enhance the skills and capacities in First Nations communities will also lead to economic benefit for all Canadians.