

3.14 Federal

Population: 1,400,685

Number of K-12 Schools: 435

Number of K-12 Students: ~108,000

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 3

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 1,390



K-12 E-Learning Programs

At present there are a total of three K-12 distance education programs designated as First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit programs. One of these is located in Ontario (i.e., Keewaytinook Internet High School), one in Manitoba (i.e., Wapaskwa Virtual Collegiate), and one in Alberta (i.e., SCcyber E-learning Community). There are other First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations that have been exploring the adoption of K-12 distance education. However, for a variety of reasons – lack of bandwidth or connectivity, lack of community buy-in, lack of expertise for implementation and others – they have not yet established distance education programs.

Over the past three years, two First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit programs have ceased operations (i.e., Credenda Virtual High School following the 2012-13 school year and Gai hon nya ni: the Amos Key Jr. E-Learning Institute around 2014-15).

Governance and Regulation

Approximately 60% of First Nations students attend schools on reserve. In support of these students Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides funding support directly to Band Councils and First Nations education organizations. First Nations, or their respective regional organizations, have responsibility for managing and delivering education programs and services in band-operated schools on reserve. For students who live on reserve but attend provincial schools off-reserve, INAC pays the tuition that the applicable province charges for non-Aboriginal students. This is paid to the First Nation in question or directly to the provincial Ministry of Education depending on the agreement in place.

INAC requires that each of the educational programs (including K-12 distance education) work with the individual Ministry of Education in the province or territory in which they operate in order to gain accreditation. The accreditation process involves a validation that the education program is using provincial curriculum, which allows the program to grant provincial credit. As Ministries cannot fund enrollment in federal education programs, the First Nations education programs (including K-12 distance education programs) must also enter into agreements with individual school districts/divisions to serve off-reserve students.

As a part of the most recent budget, INAC invested \$2.6 billion over four years to support primary and secondary education on reserve, including funding to address immediate financial pressures and to keep pace with growth in the medium term (such as population and cost for services pressures). The investment also included targeted funding for special needs education, language and culture, literacy and numeracy, and funding to support the transformation of First Nation education and the establishment of new First Nation-controlled systems. INAC continues to engage with First Nations and education leadership to determine how best to gather input on how to proceed on the future of First Nations education. E-learning and other alternatives to traditional classrooms can certainly be a key area of discussion, both as a means of meeting individual student needs and incorporating these approaches into new education systems.