

3.14 Federal

Population: 1,400,685

Number of K-12 Schools: 562

Number of K-12 Students: ~107,000

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 5

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: 1,927



Governance and Regulation

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) defines distance or online learning education and services as necessary components of education in general. Prior to 2014-2015 INAC Regional Offices worked directly with e-learning institutions to fund attending First Nations students living on reserve. As of 2015-2016, for online courses to be funded by INAC funds, online students attending K-12 have to be registered as a student on a First Nation's school nominal roll.

Since 2015-2016, INAC's policy direction had changed the funding approach, which now transfers funding directly to First Nations communities and their education service providers. This policy allowed those communities to determine how to support, manage, and finance culturally appropriate First Nation's online education programs and services that best meet the needs of its students from their communities and to also meet provincial program credit standards. Furthermore, to be eligible to receive *INAC Elementary and Secondary Education Program* funding, e-learning institutions must be recognized by a province as a certified elementary or secondary institution within the context of that province's jurisdiction.

New funding agreements between First Nation communities and their education service providers now contain instructions on providing student support services, determining eligible activities and expenditures, school administration, and operation and maintenance expenses. This is described in the *INAC's Elementary and Secondary Education Program National Guidelines*.

E-learning service providers are also encouraged to engage First Nations to discuss the possibility of seeking funding under INAC's proposal-based education programs, which are intended to complement the core *Elementary and Secondary Education Program*. For example, e-learning institutions, in partnership with First Nations, may submit *New Paths for Education Program* proposals for e-learning activities that support eligible program activities to improve school effectiveness. Also, e-learning institutions can partner with eligible *First Nation Student Success Program* aggregate recipients, which make decisions on engaging service providers as a means of implementing learning strategies described in school success plans funded through the program.

It should be noted that, while INAC is one of the federal government departments responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's legal obligations and commitments to Aboriginal peoples (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis), and for fulfilling the federal government's constitutional responsibilities in the North, the department has now been divided into: the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and the Department of Indigenous Services Canada (DISC). DISC is now comprised of: 1) First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, 2) Education, 3) Social Development Programs, 4) Partnerships (ESDPP), and 5) Regional Operations (RO) sectors of the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. This structure should position the programs and services to more effectively collaborate when beginning to develop and deliver holistic approaches to social, healthcare and infrastructure services to Indigenous partners.

K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity

INAC has a tracking system that collects school data activities and expenditures from its First Nation communities and education service providers. Based on INAC's First Nation school nominal rolls from the 2016-17 school year, there were:

- 1,211 students registered for distance education;
- 37 students registered for home schooled (online sourced); and
- 41 students registered for virtual (Internet).

At present there are a total of five K-12 distance education programs designated as First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit programs. Three of these are located in Ontario (i.e., Keewaytinook Internet High School, Wahsa Distance Education Centre, and Indspire's K-12 Institute), 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 other reasons – they have not yet established distance education programs. It should be noted that during the time that the annual *State of the Nation: K-12 E-Learning in Canada* reports have been issued, there have been two First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit programs that ceased operations. The first was the Credenda Virtual High School that ceased operations following the 2012-13 school year, while the second was the Gai hon nya ni: the Amos Key Jr. E~Learning Institute that closed around 2014-15.

K-12 Blended Learning Activity

INAC sees blended learning classes as those where students are physically separated from their teacher and classmates but have access to the support of classroom teacher with the flexibility of having e-learning options for those living in a different community.

INAC's First Nation school nominal rolls collects two indicators related to blended learning:

- classroom and distance education; and
- classroom and virtual (Internet).

Based on INAC's First Nation school nominal rolls from the 2016-17 school year:

- 245 students registered for blended: classroom and distance education; and
- 393 students registered for blended: classroom and virtual (Internet).

As such, there were a total of 638 students engaged in blended learning.