

The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and Sustainability Education in First Nations Schools in Manitoba

Natalie Swayze, IISD

March 2010

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AMC	Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
CCUNESCO	Canadian Commission for UNESCO
CEA	Canadian Education Association
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education Canada
DESD	United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EE	Environmental Education
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
LSF	Learning for a Sustainable Future
MESDWG	Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development Working Group
MFNERC	Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre
NGO	non-governmental organization
SD	Sustainable Development
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategy
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

Executive summary

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) designated UNESCO to lead the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), spanning from 2005 to 2014. Working with lead organizations for the DESD in Canada, including the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), Environment Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the Province of Manitoba has taken a leadership position in supporting the DESD. Manitoba Education (formerly Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth) has been active in all aspects of education for sustainable development (ESD). However, to date, much of the progress made by Manitoba Education has primarily focused on the Kindergarten to Grade 12 public school system. In Manitoba and throughout Canada, the management and financing structure for First Nations schools lies outside the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial Education Departments. This study was therefore undertaken to explore and develop an understanding of what progress has been made towards encouraging and supporting First Nations Schools in Manitoba to undertake sustainability programming and initiatives. The overarching goal was to identify successes as well as challenges, while developing recommendations for future changes where needed and strategies to overcome any existing gaps.

The research scope, methodology and design were developed in consultation with Manitoba Education and Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC). The final research report, findings and recommendations were developed primarily to serve audiences involved in First Nations education (e.g., MFNERC, INAC, and First Nations education directors) and/or Sustainability Education (e.g., ESD Canada, Manitoba Education). As a result of this broad target audience, contents of this report included in the background information (Section 2) will be relevant to some and less relevant to others. For example, audiences involved in primarily in sustainability education, such as Manitoba Education, will appreciate the contextual information on First Nations education (Sections 2.1–2.3), while other audiences familiar with the latter, such as INAC, will benefit more from background on the DESD (Section 2.4–2.5).

Although this research focused primarily on sustainability education in First Nations schools in Manitoba, it required collecting and summarizing contextual background of structural issues related to First Nations education in Canada more broadly. Compiling this background, along with information about the DESD implementation process within Canada, assisted in providing a more holistic understanding of key issues and possible gaps in encouraging and supporting sustainability education in First Nations schools in Manitoba. Following this, an online survey was implemented along with a series of telephone interviews to assess awareness levels of the DESD, sustainability education, and the fact that steps have been taken to encourage and support First Nations schools

to undertake sustainability education. Participants in the survey and interview process included Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) employees, Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) staff, and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba. The online survey was completed by MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba. A total of 44 responses were received. A total of five representatives and/or employees of INAC responded to the online survey. Respondents included both education specialists and operational specialists. The combined results of this survey, as well as relevant interview comments, are described in Sections 4.0 and 5.0.

While exploring the progress to date that has been made towards encouraging and supporting sustainability education in Manitoba's First Nations schools, successes as well as challenges were identified. Key findings based on the online survey, telephone interviews and literature searches include:

- **Capacity issues and a complex management process and financing structure for First Nations education:** First Nations education is comprised of different lead organizations at federal, provincial/territorial and local levels than the public school system, and education of on-reserve First Nations residents remains problematic. There are challenges in sustaining educational infrastructure and institutional capacity, coupled with demands for a financing mechanism that provides funding parity with the public school system. Unlike public schools in Canada, with provincial/territorial Ministries of Education, most on-reserve schools managed by individual First Nations are challenged to play the roles of both provincial/territorial Departments of Education and school boards.
- **Limited contact with INAC about the DESD by the federal leads for DESD:** More direct engagement or dialogue is needed with INAC (which has primary responsibility for funding First Nations education at the federal level) by Environment Canada, CCUNESCO and CMEC.
- **The gap in the DESD implementation scheme at the federal level for First Nations education alleviated by provincial and local leadership—a “bottom-up” approach for the DESD implementation scheme:** With a designated provincial lead government department, an established provincial working group and local champions within the First Nations education community in the Province of Manitoba, support for sustainability education in First Nations schools clearly exists. Given Manitoba Education's leadership position in the DESD, role at the federal level and presence on the UNECE, the potential exists for the province to lead advancements at a national level, providing direction for development of federal policy and strategy supporting sustainability education in First Nations schools throughout Canada.

- **Strong interest in sustainability education for First Nations schools:** The leadership for First Nations education in Manitoba is clearly interested in sustainability education and the DESD. Awareness has emerged due to individual interests, networking, lead individuals within key organizations and established means of communicating with Manitoba Education on issues of policy, curriculum, etc. In Manitoba, INAC representatives are interested in sustainability education, and willingness exists for recommendations and guidance related to new directions for INAC to be brought forward federally based on regional perspectives.
- **Sporadic existence of sustainability education policy, programs and initiatives in First Nations schools in Manitoba:** Based on the survey responses and interviews with MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba, sustainability principles are beginning to be reflected in education policies and in First Nations schools programming. However, there are no province-wide directives or overall policies specifically related to sustainability education in First Nations schools set by any of the stakeholders in First Nations education. Without this concerted effort and supporting structure across the province, the existence of sustainability education programming and initiatives is currently only sporadic and there are differing levels of engagement and capacity within individual First Nation communities.
- **Federal policy and funding called for—a unique approach is required:** INAC employees, MFNERC staff and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba confirmed that federal policy and funding are needed to encourage and sustain sustainability education in First Nations schools. In Manitoba, the Department of Education has a unique role in the DESD, and there are individual champions for sustainability education within MFNERC, but the noted absence of INAC policy and funding support is problematic. A broad federal strategy would facilitate coordinated support within Manitoba as well as for other provinces and territories. However, when developing strategies to support sustainability education, capacity issues in the First Nations education system must be considered.

The following recommendations are made as a result:

1. **MFNERC and INAC should consider the development of a federal strategy, funding approach and implementation process for Education for Sustainable Development in First Nations Schools across Canada.**

The interest and support for sustainability education in Manitoba's First Nations education community clearly exists and has led to interest at a federal level in INAC. In 2010, INAC provided financial support to MFNERC for ESD initiatives in First Nation Schools in

Manitoba. INAC should consider Manitoba as a pilot province for ESD in First Nations Schools. Once the results of the pilot phase are measured, there is potential to roll this out in other provinces across Canada. With the provincial government as a designated lead for the DESD, there is also potential for Manitoba to assist in the development of a national strategy for First Nations education. This federal-level strategy may be modelled on the provincial success realized in Manitoba, and consist of provincial/territorial implementation schemes involving INAC's regional education sectors and provincial/territorial First Nations education bodies.

There are capacity limits within INAC and within the First Nations education system to meet existing commitments for the operations of First Nations schools. Developing strategies to support sustainability education in First Nations schools should not impose additional burdens on current staff and/or require deferring existing funding for First Nations education from other priority areas. Alternative mechanisms for funding sustainability education in First Nations schools should be explored with INAC and the federal leads for DESD (Environment Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO).

2. Manitoba Education should consider facilitating increased networking and dialogue between the lead agencies for DESD (CMEC, Environment Canada, CCUNESCO) and INAC.

Both INAC's education department and the First Nations Education stakeholders have had limited engagement with CMEC and other members of the national working group on ESD (Environment Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.) Manitoba's unique role in the DESD at a federal level, coupled with the existing support from key stakeholders in First Nations Education at a provincial level, has established a window of opportunity to connect key federal leads for the DESD with INAC's education department.

In addition, MFNERC with the support of Manitoba Education and the Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development Working Group (MESDWG) could look at exploring ways in which to involve ESD Canada and all the provincial working groups on ESD, to review progress on the Decade with respect to First Nations and aboriginal education for sustainable development, leading possibly to an international conference on Indigenous peoples and sustainability education. Manitoba Education and MFNERC should work together to encourage all provincial and territorial working groups on ESD to undertake a similar exploration of the state of ESD in First Nations schools in their regions, with a view to strengthening support for the lead agencies and INAC to consider ESD strategies for First Nations schools.

One such opportunity for dialogue and joint action among these stakeholders might be an exploration of how other countries are promoting and implementing ESD with Indigenous populations. Further research may be required to prepare an initial scan of such initiatives, together with consultations with experts in comparable jurisdictions such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States. There is scope here for hosting an international conference on Indigenous peoples and sustainability education as a major contribution to the second half of the DESD.

3. Manitoba Education should consider working with CMEC and its Working Group on ESD to include provisions where possible, for collaboration with INAC and First Nations schools in the Pan-Canadian ESD Framework for Collaboration and Action.

Given that the First Nations schools follow provincial curriculum standards and use provincially certified teachers, understanding how the Pan-Canadian Framework may impact or support First Nations schools is important. Some consideration should therefore be given as to how INAC and other stakeholders in First Nations education might contribute to or participate in the working group.

4. MFNERC should consider examining existing sustainable development resources from Manitoba Education to determine whether they need to develop more culturally relevant materials for First Nations Schools.

Manitoba Education has a number of sustainable development resources available. MFNERC should consider whether and how Manitoba's ESD learning resources, programs and initiatives are relevant to First Nations Schools. This could in turn, lead to MFNERC and Manitoba Education working to develop more culturally-relevant sustainability education programming and initiatives for all K–12 schools.

5. MFNERC should offer professional development and training workshops for First Nations education staff.

The interest and support for sustainability education in Manitoba's First Nations education community clearly exists but support for educators is needed. MFNERC should consider working with Manitoba Education to host workshops and/or provide other means to: a) share information related to sustainability education with First Nations school staff and administrators and b) build capacity for First Nations school sustainability policy and implementation.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview and rationale

In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 57/254 and designated UNESCO to lead the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), spanning from 2005 to 2014. Focused on reorienting education on the long-term future of the economy, ecology and equity, the basic vision of the DESD is of a world in which everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. One of the overarching goals of the DESD is to reorient curricula, from preschool to university, reforming education as a vehicle of knowledge, thought patterns and values needed to build a sustainable world.

In response to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) request for reports from member states on implementation of the DESD in formal, non-formal and informal settings, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), Environment Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO collaborated to prepare a summary of activities for the period from 2005–2007. This report highlighted successes within policy; regulation and operational frameworks; formal, non-formal and informal learning; teacher training; educational materials; and inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges. No mention was made within this report about activities within schools managed by First Nations. In addition to this, although the value of Indigenous Knowledges and their contributions to sustainable development has been well-documented (Clarkson, Morrissette & Régallet, 1992), the Canadian report noted that greatly enhanced inclusion of indigenous perspectives of sustainability was needed.

The Province of Manitoba has taken a leadership position in supporting the DESD and has been active in all aspects of education for sustainable development (ESD). Working collaboratively with other organizations, Manitoba Education has developed materials for senior education officials and educators to build awareness and support for ESD. However, to date, much of the progress made by Manitoba Education has primarily focused on Kindergarten to Grade 12 in the public school system. In Manitoba and throughout Canada, the management and financing structure for First Nations schools lies outside the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial education departments. This study was therefore undertaken to explore and develop an understanding of what progress has been made towards encouraging and supporting First Nations schools in Manitoba to undertake sustainability programming and initiatives. The overarching goal with this research was to identify successes as well as challenges, while developing recommendations for future changes where needed and strategies to overcome any existing gaps.

The research scope, methodology and design were developed in consultation with Manitoba Education and Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC). The final research report, findings and recommendations were developed primarily to serve audiences involved in First Nations education (e.g., MFNERC, INAC, First Nations education directors) and/or sustainability education (e.g., ESD Canada, Manitoba Education). As a result of this broad target audience, sections of this report will be more relevant to some and less relevant to others. For example, audiences involved primarily in sustainability education, such as Manitoba Education, will appreciate the contextual information on First Nations education (sections 2.1–2.3), while other audiences familiar with the latter, such as INAC, will benefit more from background on the DESD (sections 2.4–2.5).

1.2 Research objectives and methods

This research focused primarily on sustainability education in First Nations schools in Manitoba. However, given that First Nations each have their own elected band councils, and federal, provincial and band jurisdictions overlap within small community settings, this work required collecting and summarizing contextual background of structural issues related to education within First Nations schools in Canada more broadly. Compiling this background, along with information about the DESD implementation process within Canada, assisted in providing a more holistic understanding of key issues and possible gaps towards encouraging and supporting First Nations schools in Manitoba to undertake sustainability programming and initiatives.

Following this, an online survey for relevant individuals was implemented, along with a series of telephone interviews to assess their awareness levels of the DESD and sustainability education, and steps that have been taken to encourage and support sustainability education in First Nations schools. Participants in the survey and interview process included Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) employees, Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) staff, and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba. One survey instrument (see Appendix A) was designed to collect information from all respondents pertaining to: a) the nature of education policy development, communication, enforcement and monitoring in First Nations schools; b) awareness levels of the DESD and principles of sustainability education; c) current support to sustainability education programming and initiatives in First Nations schools; d) interest in sustainability education; and e) recommended means to support and sustain sustainability education programming and initiatives in First Nations schools.

The background review, surveys and interviews collectively sought to answer the following questions:

- How is Canada's First Nations education managed and financed?
- How has the DESD been implemented in Canada?
- What is the awareness level of the DESD and sustainability education within the senior education administration and leadership for First Nations schools in Canada and Manitoba?
- What steps have been taken to encourage and support First Nations schools to undertake sustainability programming and initiatives? Are there existing gaps in policy or programs to initiate or sustain school progress?

1.2.1 Education for sustainable development

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. One of the key objectives of the DESD is to reorient educational programs from preschool through university to include a clear focus on the development of knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) offers learners a context for developing active citizenship and participation, embracing the complexity of the interdependencies of ecological, societal, and economic systems. ESD also supports flexibility, creativity and critical reflection, and fosters a sense of personal responsibility for the planet. It is about respecting and preserving our histories, valuing culture and community, caring for others and the environment and taking action to create a fair, healthy and safe world for all.

Some of the key characteristics of education for sustainable development are:

- **Interdisciplinary and holistic:** Sustainable development should be embedded in the whole curriculum, not as a separate subject.
- **Values driven:** The assumed norms—that is, the shared values and principles underpinning sustainability—are made explicit.
- **Critical thinking and problem solving:** Development of these skills leads to confidence in addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainability.
- **Multi-methods:** A variety of pedagogies should be used (word, art, drama, debate, experience, and so forth). Teaching that is geared simply to passing on knowledge should be recast into an approach in which teachers and learners work together to acquire knowledge and play a role in shaping the environment in their educational institutions.
- **Participatory decision-making:** Learners should participate in decisions on how they are to learn.
- **Locally relevant:** Education for sustainable development should address local as well as global issues, and use the language(s) that learners most commonly use.

2.0 Background on roles and responsibilities for First Nations education and education for sustainable development in Canada

2.1 First Nations education in Canada

Governments and aboriginal organizations are recognizing the importance of making decisions and developing policies that reflect a better understanding and awareness of an indigenous perspective. In Canada, First Nations, Inuit and Métis people have long understood the role that learning plays in building healthy, thriving communities and share a vision of learning as a holistic, lifelong process. Improving First Nations education outcomes has been identified as a priority of the Canadian government.

First Nations education must be considered within the historical and political context of aboriginal policy in Canada. Given the negative history of the school experiences of many Aboriginal People, former aggressive efforts to de-culturalize indigenous children through residential schools, and subjection to intensive assimilation into the European value-system and lifestyle, policy for education continues to be a contentious issue (Mendelson, 2008; CEA, 2007; Clarkson, Morrisette & Régallet, 1992). But even with the closure of residential schools, and new government priorities to improve education, First Nations youth have the highest rates of school dropout, suicide, incarceration, infant mortality and family social problems, and perform far below the achievement and employment rates of average Canadians. The aboriginal population is the fastest-growing demographic in Canada and could form a larger percentage of the nation's future workforce than it does today; and therefore these issues, learning gaps and current challenges must be addressed (Battiste, 2005).

Although the residential school system no longer exists, education of on-reserve First Nations residents remains problematic. A process of repatriation of education back to First Nations control began with the National Indian Brotherhood publication of *Indian Control of Indian Education* (Matthews, 2001; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). First Nations education was federal jurisdiction, guided by provisions in the Indian Act and under the government's constitutional responsibility for "Indians and Lands reserved for the Indian" (CEA, 2007). Beginning in 1972, a devolution of administrative powers for education on reserves from the federal government to aboriginal education authorities has occurred. In 1974, the federal government started to fund band-operated schools, and the number of federal directly-operated schools began to decline. The National Indian Brotherhood (1972), now the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) published the *Indian Control Over Indian Education*, a document demanding federally-funded aboriginal self-governance over education. In 1973, the federal government's Department of Indian Affairs and

Northern Development (INAC) made an explicit reversal of previous policy and accepted the principle of *Indian Control of Indian Education*. However, a number of legal and jurisdictional barriers have made full implementation of *Indian Control Over Indian Education* problematic (CEA, 2007).

The education sections (114 through 122) of *Indian Act*, passed in 1876, remain the statute legally governing education on most reserves today. Although the provisions of this Act permit the federal government to enter into agreements with provinces or other organizations to run First Nations schools, there are no provisions to enter into an agreement with First Nations organizations to enable them to run their own schools. It has been argued that this absence of a legal framework for First Nations-run education is reflective of an ongoing vacuum in federal policy, a “policy vacuum” that has its origins in the historical evolution of federal policy on education for on-reserve residents (Mendelson, 2008).

The Government of Canada currently supports education of all Canadians through the Canada Social Transfer to provinces and territories for education, and funds the majority of First Nations education through First Nations-operated schools on reserves, provincially administered schools off reserves, and federal schools operated by INAC on reserves (CMEC, 2005). In the case of band-operated or federal schools, the Band Council ensures that programs comparable to provincially recognized programs of study are provided, and that only provincially certified teachers are employed. The Band Council also ensures that education standards allow students to transfer without penalty to an equivalent grade in another school within the school system of the province in which the school is located. An internal audit report also found that “the tendency has been to apply provincial comparability as a prescriptive rule that provincial curricula and provincially certified teachers be employed by band operated schools, rather than as a description of education outcomes such as literacy and numeracy skills and cultural competency” (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2005, p. 51).

Challenges in the present management structure and financing process have been noted. It has been argued that recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over education requires a financing mechanism based on a clearly defined principle and process that provides funding parity with the public school system (Clarkson, Morrisette & Régallet, 1992). It has also been argued that the process of devolution to create a First Nations-controlled education system out of multiple, smaller band schools has led to challenges in sustaining the necessary educational infrastructure to support them and the institutional capacity to ensure high-quality, culturally-appropriate and continuously improving education. Unlike the public school system in Canada, with its provincial ministries of education, most on-reserve schools are managed by individual First Nations that have authority for one or two schools. First Nations institutions are challenged to play the role filled by provincial ministries of education (tertiary services, related to broader education issues such as regulations, standards, certification, codes of conduct, professional development and the setting [and altering] of

the provincial curriculum) and school boards (secondary services, involving school governance) in addition to providing primary services within schools (i.e., teaching) (McCue, 2006; Mendelson, 2008). Without additional levels of support, First Nations schools require a mix of luck and leadership to become successful. “How can bands, the majority of them with fewer than 1,000 residents and situated in rural and remote locations, manage effectively an education program with limited and inexperienced internal resources in the absence of anything even remotely resembling a system of education? Elsewhere in Canada, there are whole Departments or Ministries of Education plus school boards, faculties of education and a variety of commissions and committees to plan, evaluate and oversee the status and future of Canadian education” (McCue, 2006).

Currently, there is little First Nations influence on education at any level, especially among urban populations. Even in reserve communities under local control conditions, the level of control exercised does not facilitate the delivery of indigenous education so much as it gives community control of mainstream education programs. Regaining control over the education system is critical to breaking the cycle of dependency that perpetuates poverty, and inhibits the full development of sustainable societies (Clarkson, Morrissette & Régallet, 1992). The present non-system of education for First Nations children living on reserves is failing, and the overall results for Canada show no improvement over the last decade; the “process of devolution of education is incomplete, as it has not included a plan to build and finance a new First Nations education *system*. A First Nations education system will not build itself and it will not arise for many generations to come if building it is limited to one-off developments with no overall plan” (Mendelson, 2008). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognized the problem of the “missing system” and recommended a four-level organizational structure for a First Nations education system, in which the Indian Act be revised to:

- a) recognize and empower aboriginal school boards similar to those in provincial/territorial systems;
- b) provide sufficient funding to develop and support a level of educational infrastructure and services equivalent to those provided by provinces and territories; and
- c) articulate an accountability framework that defines the relationships and responsibilities of educational stakeholders for the provision of educational equity and excellence for all Aboriginal students (Bell et al., 2004, p. 323).

However, in some cases, older educational delivery models are yielding to a variety of local and regional approaches benefiting from aboriginal community visions, and federal, provincial and territorial participation within co-governance relationships (CEA, 2007; McCue, 2006). Many First Nations communities have recognized the gap in these secondary and tertiary levels of support, and many First Nations educational coalitions are being organized, with varying degrees of recognition

and authority, for example, the B.C. First Nations Education Steering Committee, Indigenous Education Coalition and the New Brunswick Education Initiative (McCue, 2006).

2.2 The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is one of the federal government departments responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and for fulfilling the federal government's constitutional responsibilities in the North. INAC's responsibilities are largely determined by numerous statutes, negotiated agreements and relevant legal decisions. Most of the department's programs, representing a majority of its spending, are delivered through partnerships with aboriginal communities and federal-provincial or federal-territorial agreements. INAC's responsibilities and its partnerships with First Nations people and communities range from negotiating land claims and self-government agreements to providing social services, education and economic development. INAC's mandate and wide-ranging responsibilities are shaped by centuries of history, and unique demographic and geographic challenges. Its mandate is to support Aboriginal Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) and northerners in their efforts to:

- a) Improve social well-being and economic prosperity;
- b) Develop healthier, more sustainable communities; and
- c) Participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development—to the benefit of all Canadians.

2.2.1 Role in education

Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships is one of INAC's nine sectors, and the department has primary responsibility for the education of First Nations people on reserves. For First Nations (Status Indians), the Indian Act sets out the powers of the Minister of INAC to arrange for their education. The department's mandate and responsibilities stem from exercising its authority and fulfilling its obligations under various statutes, treaties, agreements and government policy (INAC, 2009). Provincial and territorial governments have also developed policies, plans and initiatives (including curriculum) specific to aboriginal education. INAC provides funding to band councils and First Nations education authorities for the education of children in Kindergarten to Grade 12 who attend schools on reserves or who pay tuition to attend provincially-run schools off reserve (INAC, 2009). This includes student support services such as transportation, counselling, accommodation and financial assistance, as well as school administration and evaluation. Funding is through several different types of agreements, with varying degrees of autonomy for First Nations communities. Many of the public school boards with large numbers of tuition-paying First Nations

students have formal or informal arrangements to involve First Nations representatives in decision-making (CMEC, 2008).

Education programming has evolved over time as a result of government policy and is operated under the broad authorities in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act. In 2006–07, INAC’s Elementary/Secondary Education Program supported approximately 120,000 students and 515 schools with a budget of CDN\$1.2 billion. The program pays for: instructional services in on-reserve schools, operated by the First Nations or by the federal government; the reimbursement to provinces for tuition costs of students who attend provincial schools off-reserve; and support services such as transportation, counselling, accommodation and financial assistance (INAC, 2009). A number of project-based initiatives (CDN\$65 million in 2006–07) provide additional education services designed to support improved educational outcomes, such as professional development for teaching staff, teacher recruitment and retention, and greater parent and community engagement in education. To set the foundation for long-term reform of First Nations education, INAC’s Reforming First Nations Education Initiative, launched in 2008, supports improved educational outcomes for First Nations students through investments in additional programs (INAC, 2009).

INAC has ten regional offices, each of which focuses on the priority issues and needs of that region. As noted in an INAC interview:

“Each regional body of INAC is different and has unique circumstances. In Manitoba, four staff (all with a background in education either as former teachers or administrators) report to INAC’s the Regional Manager of Operations for Education with INAC.” (INAC representative commentary)

2.2.2 Focus on sustainable development and environmental stewardship

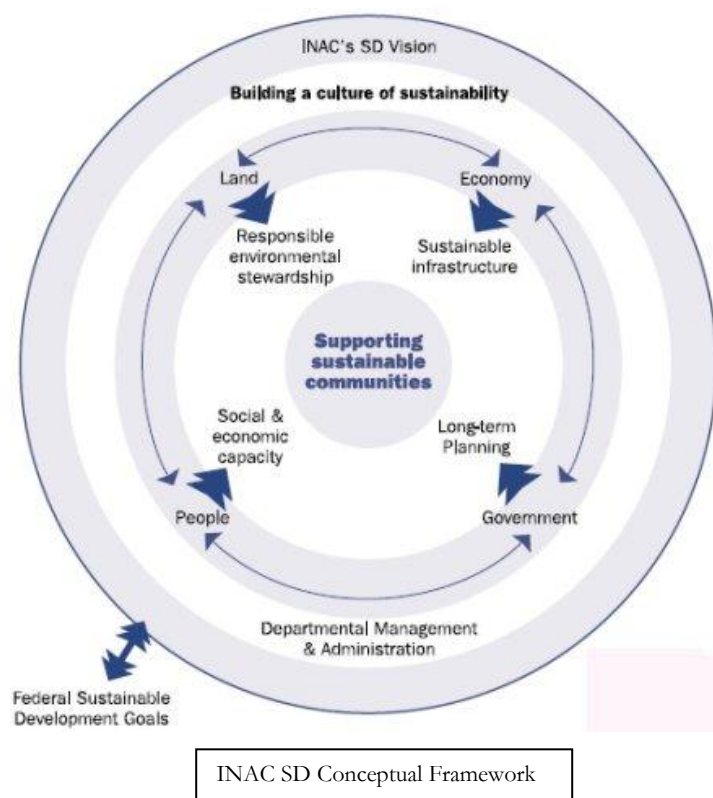
Acknowledging that aboriginal and northern Canadians have a fundamental relationship with the land and its resources, INAC has committed to building a culture of sustainability within the department and the First Nations and Inuit communities it serves. For years, aboriginal and northern Canadians have been calling attention to the effects of climate change and demanding a broader, more sustainable approach to how all Canadians relate to the land. Each First Nation, Inuit and Métis community is unique and the definition of sustainable development varies from one group to another. INAC has defined its own sustainable development vision in order to guide the department in the creation of policies, programs and tools that support communities effectively (INAC, 2009). INAC’s Sustainable Development Division created a National Sustainable Development Working Group that involves every sector and region in the department in the

implementation of the departmental sustainable development strategy (SDS). The strategy commitments are integrated in the departmental reporting process so that the sustainable development (SD) activities become embedded in daily operations. The Working Group advances sustainable development through events such as Environment Week and Aboriginal Awareness Week and the distribution of promotional material. The Working Group is also developing a long-term communications plan based on surveys that probed current levels of awareness about sustainable development (CMEC, 2008).

The vision of INAC's 2007–2010 SDS is that:

“Within two generations, many First Nations and Inuit communities will be healthy and safe models of sustainability. They will have housing, infrastructure and support services comparable to those of similar size and function elsewhere in Canada. Within a protected environment, they will have effective transportation and communications links to the rest of the country and ample affordable, clean sources of energy. A majority of First Nations and Inuit communities will effectively manage their own institutions with strong governance structures. Community members, especially women and youth, will have acceptable opportunities for education, will participate in the economy, and will be able to get involved in local governance.” (INAC, 2009)

INAC's 2007–2010 plan has two strategic directions: one focused on INAC community programs and one focused on INAC internal operations. The department is accountable for set targets within the strategy and reports on them annually through the Departmental Performance Report. The first set of SD commitments addresses the cornerstones of supporting sustainability at the community level. INAC's programs for First Nations, Inuit and northern communities are the core of its commitment to supporting sustainable communities. The second set of commitments focuses on the more subtle operational and behavioural changes required from within the INAC—building a culture of sustainability within INAC to enable the department to develop and deliver programs that lead to sustainable communities while effectively integrating sustainability into the way the department does business, equipping decision-makers with the proper knowledge, tools, structures and processes, and minimizing the ecological footprint of its operations. INAC's 2007–2010 strategic directions, as well as their integration with the larger federal SD goals, are illustrated in the following conceptual framework.



INAC's conceptual framework for its SDS portrays a holistic, integrated process¹. At the centre of the diagram is its strategic direction: supporting sustainable communities. To support this strategic direction, four long-term commitment areas of focus have been established for the 2007–2010 period: Long-term Planning, Socioeconomic Development, Sustainable Infrastructure, and Responsible Environmental Stewardship.

2.3 First Nations education in Manitoba

Education has been identified as a main priority by First Nations leaders in Manitoba, who recognized that education is a foundation in ensuring the well-being of future generations. Manitoba is one of the few regions in Canada that has established means for key stakeholders in First Nations education to work together to identify education issues, present updates and to solicit feedback and input on regional and national developments. While there have been numerous challenges associated with the joint relationship with the federal government, First Nations remain hopeful that the process may lead to increased resourcing for all aspects of lifelong learning tied to a rapidly increasing youth population and greater need for student support and institutional development.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), with the support of First Nations education directors in Manitoba, continues to participate in discussions on the federal treasury board authority renewal process for the band-operated school funding formula. This includes ensuring comparable teacher salaries, adequate supports for special education, technology, language and culture, second- and third-level supports and other aspects of a comprehensive education support system.

¹Diagram downloaded from <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/enr/sd/pubs/sd0710/sd0710-eng.pdf> p11

The working relationship between First Nations schools in Manitoba and Manitoba Education has also evolved over the years, and is important to understand in the context of opportunities to engage First Nations schools in ESD policy, planning and practice. All of the First Nation schools use Manitoba curriculum and guidelines to obtain credits and a Manitoba diploma; and ESD learning outcomes are already established in science, social studies, health and physical education. Many First Nation schools do choose to enhance the provincial curriculum through the addition of compulsory courses based on their community priorities – and these priorities can touch on many aspects of sustainability, such as preservation of culture and traditional stewardship of the environment. The schools also use provincially certified teachers, who are increasingly exposed to ESD through in-service workshops and associations such as the Science Teachers Association of Manitoba.

Thirteen First Nation schools have a special agreement with Frontier School Division to operate their schools. The Frontier School division has a strong divisional ESD emphasis. This type of agreement with associated First Nations Schools presents a real opportunity for those schools to participate more directly in ESD.

Finally, it should be noted that there are many First Nations students attending Manitoba public schools both in rural and urban areas, particularly in situations where there are no high schools in First Nations communities or First Nations students need to access special education services (eg, deaf and hearing impaired students who attend the Manitoba School for the Deaf). These students are more directly exposed to a range of ESD activities beyond the curriculum, including those activities related to “whole school” approaches, such as environmental management of school buildings, grounds, and transportation.

Manitoba’s First Nations education directors meet regularly to discuss common issues, including planning for changes and improvements in educational outcomes. The education directors continue to provide direction and input for the regional and national processes. To ensure ongoing communication and sharing of information, regular mail-outs and e-mail announcements continue to be distributed to education directors and other First Nations representatives at the local, tribal council and First Nations political organizational level. Some education directors have also shared regular updates with their local and regional political leadership at the band and tribal council levels.

The Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC), established in 1999, provides support services to 55 First Nations schools in Manitoba. The MFNERC is committed to working with Manitoba First Nations in the development of partnerships to ensure the highest standards of education are achieved in First Nations schools. The MFNERC: a) facilitates a community education process based on First Nations needs, priorities and education plans; b) is actively involved in

promoting community development by providing training and coordinating opportunities for families and other community members; and c) provides professional development training for school board members, administrators, teachers and teaching assistants. The MFNERC has established partnerships and working relationships with various education institutions and organizations in Manitoba and in other provinces and states. The organization is strongly supported among Manitoba First Nations with consistently high satisfaction ratings from education authorities, principals and teachers, and continues to work closely with First Nations education directors on its mandate and role in supporting First Nations education authorities at the local level. A Joint AMC/Manitoba Education Working Group continues to have discussions on education issues impacting on First Nations students in the province, including professional development training, First Nations education research, and ensuring First Nations representation on curriculum development.

2.4 The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) within Canada

The United Nations declared 2005–14 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, (www.desd.org) with UNESCO as the lead organization. Since its international launch, the DESD has made considerable progress in both institutional and programmatic areas at international, regional and national levels. The DESD has brought together a broad spectrum of educators working on ESD, environmental education (EE) and environmental education for sustainable development (EESD). DESD implementation depends on the strength of stakeholder commitment and cooperation at local (sub-national), national, regional and international levels. Networks and alliances have been the crucial element, forging a common agenda in relevant forums. ESD hubs at national levels bring energy to promotion and implementation and provide opportunities for regular input from multiple ESD stakeholders. At the regional and international levels, ESD caucuses and DESD inter-agency committees push the ESD agendas and a high-profile international group of ESD champions serves to spearhead the movement. The DESD is also being linked to other UN initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Commission for Sustainable Development, Education for All, the UN Literacy Decade (2003–2012), and the UN International Decade of the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001–2010) (Farthing, 2005).

According to the UN General Assembly resolution instituting the DESD, Canada, along with other governments, was invited to “consider the inclusion of measures to implement the Decade in their respective educational strategies and action plans by 2005,” taking into account the current scheme of implementation. This stressed the importance of having nationally-set parameters, with full support from governments for effective cooperation and action in ESD and emphasized the responsibility of government to initiate consultation and ownership of vision. Canada has a federal

constitutional and political structure in which education is a provincial and territorial responsibility. Although the federal government does not have jurisdiction in the area of education, it does nevertheless have a strong interest in promoting and supporting ESD (Farthing, 2005).

As ESD is also a cross-sectoral initiative, it requires multistakeholder cooperation and partnership and support from many government ministries and departments, in addition to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are involved in ESD-related activities. “The main actors include governments and local authorities, the education and scientific sectors, the health sector, the private sector, industry, transport and agriculture, trade and labour unions, the mass media, non-governmental organizations, various communities, indigenous peoples and international organizations” (Wals, 2009). In Canada, as in other countries, local governments and community organizations, stakeholders from many sectors, and many NGOs are actively promoting and supporting ESD. The challenge is to find ways to coordinate these activities to ensure a coherent and connected pan-Canadian view and approach to implementation (Farthing, 2005). This can result in challenges in seeking to coordinate ESD activities among the various ministries, departments and sectors. Although regional strategies for the development and implementation of the DESD have been developed, lack of inter-ministerial coordination has been noted to result in limited or uncoordinated political leadership and this political support is essential to implement new programs, concepts and ideas (Wals, 2009; UNECE, 2005; Farthing, 2005).

Creating national policies and frameworks that support the development of ESD in all educational sectors as well as in society at large is seen as crucial for engaging the private sector and the donor community. Countries are now beginning to take into account financing and budgeting for ESD across ministries by determining how ESD aligns with key documents across sectors in order to coordinate funding and programming at the national level. This includes creation of national coordinating bodies for ESD, development of ESD policies and/or the inclusion of ESD in existing policies, and creation of interdepartmental cooperation with regards to ESD development and implementation, and allocation of specific budgets for supporting ESD.

Although some countries have established a structure for the implementation of an ESD national strategy that may consist of a combination of interdepartmental commissions, cooperation between different ministries (namely Ministries of Education and Environment), and/or ESD working groups or Sustainability Centres, in most parts of the world, a structure for interdepartmental governmental cooperation on ESD is lacking. ESD is mainly integrated in national educational policies and curriculum statements, especially in primary and secondary education. In some cases, SD and ESD are both part of a country’s environmental strategies. The Ministries of Education and Environment are mainly involved in the establishment of such policies and National Action Plans. In some cases, other stakeholders are also involved (NGOs and representatives from business and

industry) (Wals, 2009). Inter-ministerial cooperation with regard to ESD is reported by many countries but remains problematic as there is little experience in cross-boundary thinking among policy-makers who tend to be responsible for specific resource or service sectors. In formal education, there are now good examples of Ministries of Education creating frameworks for the integration of ESD into formal education. This is mostly the case in primary and secondary education. The same trend is not apparent in early childhood education, technical and vocational education and higher education (Wals, 2009; Farthing, 2005).

In Canada, a large variety of partners have joined efforts to make ESD a reality. These efforts build on many initiatives since the Earth Summit in 1992 to build a culture of environmental awareness and SD through education. For example, as a community of environmental educators and communicators, the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM) has continued to play a fundamental role in building capacity for environmental learning, and Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF) is working with others to lead the Canadian response to the UN DESD through the implementation of a series of initiatives, including coordinating ESD Canada. York University (Canada) was designated as the UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Teacher Education towards Sustainability in 1999.

The DESD has provided an important catalyst to increase these efforts. Canada has identified three primary focal points for DESD implementation:

- The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) is a mechanism through which ministers consult and act on matters of mutual interest, consult and cooperate with national education organizations and the federal government, and represent the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally.
- The Federal Department of Environment (Environment Canada), which aims to reflect the national interest regarding questions of the environment and share public information and awareness strategies, works with the LSF and the Ministry of Education Manitoba to identify sustainable development-focused teacher and student resources.
- The Canadian Commission for UNESCO engages and consults with civil society.

The Canadian Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) has committed to incorporating sustainable development themes into formal, non-formal and informal education, and to report on this implementation. Efforts have been made across Canada to integrate ESD into policies and legislation targeting primary and secondary education. ESD educational policies tend to integrate ESD by connecting it to existing curriculum topics and also requiring an integrated or interdisciplinary approach and/or creating space for schools to have ESD projects and extra-curricular ESD-related activities (Wals, 2009; UNECE, 2005).

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) has included ESD as one of the key activity areas in *Learn Canada 2020*, its framework to enhance Canada's education systems, learning opportunities and overall education outcomes at all levels. The specific goal for ESD is to raise students' awareness and encourage them to become actively engaged in working for a sustainable society. To achieve this goal, a CMEC Education for Sustainable Development Working Group was created in 2008 to coordinate action to support and strengthen the implementation of ESD in all provinces and territories, and develop a pan-Canadian ESD Framework for Collaboration and Action that builds on current activities for enhanced collaboration at the jurisdictional level. The CMEC ESD Working Group serves as an ESD network for collaboration for further implementation of ESD beyond the end of the UN Decade in 2014 (CMEC, 2008).

While considerable work is underway through provincial governments, multistakeholder groups are also playing a major role. The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, Environment Canada, Manitoba Education and LSF initiated the Education for Sustainable Development Expert Group, ESD Canada, and are supporting the establishment of Education for Sustainable Development Working Groups in Canada's provinces and territories. The purpose of these groups are to support coordinated, coherent and systemic change within the formal, non-formal and informal education systems aimed at helping citizens acquire the knowledge, skills and values needed to contribute to the development of a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable society for generations to come (Farthing, 2005). ESD Canada has members from the Provincial/Territorial ESD Working Groups, as well as experts from the formal education, government, business and community sectors. ESD Canada encourages the integration of ESD into formal, non-formal and informal education and the development of activities such as sustainable literacy, research, communication and sharing best practices. ESD Canada also provides advice to the Provincial/Territorial ESD Working Groups on program direction and constitutes a networking forum for stakeholders (CMEC, 2008). The Provincial/Territorial Education for Sustainable Development Working Groups support and foster a culture of education for sustainable development in each province and territory by bringing together senior leaders from provincial ministries, the federal government, NGOs, and the formal, informal and non-formal education sectors to support regional coordination, development and implementation of ESD policies, curricula, materials/resources and teacher education.

At the international level, Canada serves on the UNECE ESD Steering Committee, which has completed the preparation of Education for Sustainable Development Indicators and is now concentrating on the identification of teacher competencies for ESD implementation (CMEC, 2008).

2.5 The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and sustainability education in Manitoba

In 2004, Manitoba Education declared ESD to be one of the Ministry's top priorities. The position of Sustainable Development Coordinator was created to work with Manitoba Education to provide support and leadership to departmental sustainable development initiatives.. The ESD initiative in Manitoba is linked to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and built around the vision of students experiencing and learning about what it means to live in a sustainable manner. Manitoba Education also developed a provincial Education for Sustainability Action Plan (2004–2008) that directed the first steps in fostering teaching and learning for sustainability in elementary and secondary classrooms. Since this first action plan, Manitoba Schools and School divisions have made considerable progress towards the implementation of ESD.

In particular, Manitoba Education has been working in four key areas to advance ESD:

- 1) **Integrating ESD into the provincial curricula** - ESD is being embedded in the K-12 curriculum with specific outcomes established in science, social studies, health and physical education, as well as new curriculum being developed and curriculum being analyzed, including in technical and vocational education, to determine where SD concepts can be introduced. In addition to integrating ESD into the curriculum, Manitoba Education is rewriting its grade 12 World Issues course to be a Global Citizenship and Sustainability Course with a strong emphasis on sustainability.
- 2) **Identifying and promoting learning resources to support ESD** - Supporting these curriculum-wide elements, Manitoba Education has created information materials for parents, posters for schools, and has established a Web site for education for sustainable development. The purpose of the site is to assist Manitoba teachers in integrating sustainability – whether as a subject of learning, as an issue of discussion and debate, or as an approach to learning – into their classroom activities.
- 3) **Building ESD capacity through professional learning** – Manitoba Education has been conducting ESD sessions throughout the province, providing educators with information, activities and initiatives they can adapt and use in their individual schools.
- 4) **Providing support and guidance for ESD system wide** – Manitoba Education provides ESD grants and recognition to schools and school divisions to support ESD activity. In 2007, Manitoba Education partnered with IISD to develop the *Sustainable School and Campus Policy Bank*. The policy bank provides models of institutional sustainable development

policies for K-12 and post secondary education. Since 2008, Manitoba Education has partnered with Schulich School of Business, York University to deliver the Sustainability and Education Academy (SEdA) in Manitoba. SEdA offers senior education officials from school divisions the opportunity to be trained in incorporating sustainable development into policies, operations, and school programs and to develop education for sustainable development (ESD) action plans. Having school division leaders participate in this program has been instrumental in advancing ESD within and among school divisions in Manitoba.

Manitoba believes in fostering the development of partnerships in delivering ESD programming to build and enhance a culture of ESD in Manitoba. One of the most important of these relationships is the partnership between Environment Canada, Manitoba Education and LSF, to establish an ESD provincial working group in Manitoba. The Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development Working Group (MESDWG) was established as a pilot in December 2005 which has served as a model for the other groups set up across the country. The MESDWG is comprised of stakeholders from formal, non-formal and informal education, governments, NGOs, industry and community groups. Its role is to support regional coordination and the development and implementation of ESD across Manitoba. The working group hosted an international ESD Conference in November 2008. In 2010, five committees have been established to help continue to guide their work: Youth engagement, Aboriginal education, Public sustainability education, ESD measurement and ESD partnerships.

Manitoba has taken on a leadership role in strengthening cooperation on ESD regionally, nationally, and internationally. On the national front, Manitoba is leading the Council of Ministers of Education Canada's (CMEC) working group on Education for Sustainable Development. Internationally, the Deputy Minister of Education, Gerald Farthing, is the Canadian member of the United Nations Economic Council for Europe (UNECE) Steering Committee on ESD and Dr. Léonard Rivard Dean of the Faculty of Education at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, represents Canada on the Expert Group on UNECE Competencies in Education for Sustainable Development, which has been mandated to prepare general recommendations for policy-makers and a range of competencies in ESD for educators.

3.0 Views on education policy for First Nations schools

Although this research focused primarily on sustainability education in First Nations schools in Manitoba, education policy in general for First Nations schools is distinctly different than that of the public school system. A more holistic understanding of key issues, barriers and opportunities to encouraging and supporting sustainability education in First Nations Schools in Manitoba was deemed necessary. Therefore, the online survey and telephone interviews with the key informant groups (INAC, MFNERC and Education Directors of First Nations schools) included questions related to education policy and structural issues related to education within First Nations schools. These results are described below.

3.1 INAC education policies

A total of five representatives and/or employees of INAC responded to the online survey. Respondents included both education specialists and operational specialists. The results of this survey, as well as relevant interview comments are summarized below.

3.1.1 Education policy types

Participants in the survey were asked to select all types of policies they were involved in. Options provided were curriculum, funding and facilities management. All respondents indicated that their role in education policy was directly related to funding. The following commentary emphasizes this finding:

“INAC staff review proposals for funding that come from Bands related to Education. Funding is available for targeted programs that INAC has such as special education.” (INAC representative commentary)

3.1.2 Policy development process

3.1.2.1 Organizations consulted

When asked to list which organizations are consulted when developing INAC education policy, all of the respondents listed the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), most listed provincial First Nations educational bodies (such as MFNERC) and one respondent listed the Canadian Councils of Ministers of Education (CMEC). Considering that CMEC is one of the designated lead organizations for the DESD, the limited INAC-CMEC dialogue related to education policy development is worth noting.

Most of the respondents agreed that when developing education policies, other levels of government (e.g. local, provincial) are involved or consulted. This is a promising finding considering that much success has been made within the formal education systems in Manitoba and other regions through support from provincial/territorial governments.

All of the respondents agreed that structures for internal and interdepartmental cooperation exist. A majority of the respondents agreed that policies within other sectors of the department influence education policy for First Nations schools. Again, this finding is promising and worth noting in light of: a) the progress made within other sectors of INAC towards SD integration and strategy development; b) the opportunity for information transfer from Environment Canada as one the designated federal lead organizations for the DESD.

3.1.2.2 Role of provincial curriculum

Half of the respondents agreed that provincial curricula and/or pan-Canadian protocols influence the organization's education policies for First Nations schools. This is a promising finding in light of successes within the public education system in Manitoba and other provinces/territories through support from provincial/territorial governments, and Manitoba Education's progress towards ESD integration within the curriculum. The following commentary expands upon this finding and the importance of dialogue with provincial/territorial education departments:

"INAC staff have the ability to provide recommendations and guidance for new directions with INAC federally, based on regional perspectives. For example, this can come from outcomes of interdepartmental dialogue and meetings within the province, internal work, from meetings with Provincial Education Directors, or work with organization such as MFNERC" (INAC representative commentary)

3.1.3 Communications structures related to education policy

Most of the respondents agreed that communications structures exist between INAC and individual First Nations schools related to education policy. Most of the respondents also agreed that communication structures exist between the department and provincial First Nations educational bodies (such as MFNERC) related to education policy. When asked to describe this process, responses included: mail, e-mail, phone calls, letters, face-to-face meetings, funding guidelines, on-site visits/compliance review teams and funding agreements. These responses reflect INAC's primary role in providing funding for First Nations education, and ensuring compliance with established guidelines.

3.1.4 Policy enforcement and monitoring

All of the respondents agreed that the organization's education policies are enforced and the majority of the respondents agreed that the organization's education policies are monitored. Again, these responses are reflective of INAC's primary role in funding for education, and role in ensuring compliance with established funding guidelines.

3.2 Education policy for First Nations schools in Manitoba

The same survey instrument was used with Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre and education directors of First Nations schools in the province. A total of 44 responses were received.

3.2.1 Education policy types

When asked to list which education policy types they were involved with, 93 per cent of the respondents listed curriculum, 43 per cent listed funding, and 43 per cent listed school facilities management. The following commentaries clarify the roles of MFNERC and education directors related to education policy:

“MFNERC work(s) with teachers and administrators [...] but does not administer funding or capital projects. We have no mandate over First Nations schools.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“Mandates come from the First Nations themselves—created through resolutions of the Chiefs (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs) who work with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in partnership; policies are the jurisdictions of AFN not MFNERC; MFNERC is not involved in policy just providing support services.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“Manitoba is unique—the chiefs and education directors decided to pool funding to create MFNERC so MFNERC is funded through INAC. MFNERC [was] incorporated as a separate agency and now deals directly with INAC though our board. INAC provides funding guidelines for our approaches and approves what we do. There are a lot of things we would like to do but INAC needs to approve it.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

3.2.2 Policy development process

3.2.2.1 Role of provincial curriculum

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba, 61.8 per cent of respondents agreed and 26.5 per cent strongly agreed that provincial curricula and/or pan-Canadian protocols influence education policies for First Nations schools. This finding is encouraging, considering that much success has been made within the public education systems in Manitoba and other regions through support from provincial and territorial governments, and in light of Manitoba Education's progress towards integrating sustainability education within the curriculum.

3.2.2.2 Organizations consulted

When asked to list which organizations are consulted when developing education policy, 83 per cent of the MFNERC employees and Education Directors of First Nations Schools in Manitoba respondents listed provincial First Nations educational bodies (such as MFNERC), 52 per cent listed the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), 6 per cent listed Canadian Councils of Ministers of Education (CMEC). Fifty-eight per cent agreed that when developing education policies, other levels of government (e.g. local, federal) are involved or consulted; 30 per cent agreed that communication structures exist with INAC related to developing education policy. Other organizations identified included Labour Canada, school divisions, the Provincial Department of Education and local communities. Considering that CMEC is one of the designated lead organizations for the DESD, the limited dialogue with CMEC related to education policy development is worth noting. However, the indication of dialogue with Manitoba Education is encouraging considering the department's leadership on the DESD.

The following commentaries clarify the process of education policy development and the role of education directors:

“Our mandate comes from our board. We don't have direct interaction with the provincial government Department of Education but we follow the curriculum and modify it to suit local needs. We work with MFNERC a lot and tend to take new direction based on their recommendations and resources, e.g., our outdoor education programs.” (education director commentary)

“Organizing and developing educational policies in our Education Authority is just in its infancy. Education was under the control of the Chief and Council for a number of years and they are just beginning to think about turning it over to the school as per policies provided under our Education Authority. We still have a lot of work to do before we could implement the provisions of our Educational Policies.” (education director commentary)

The following commentaries clarify the role of MFNERC staff related to education policy development.

“MFNERC must adhere to INAC policy and ‘encourages’ policy adherence, but MFNERC has no mandate over First Nations Education. INAC monitors all policies for First Nations.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is funded through INAC. INAC does consult with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) working on policy development but at the end it is still INAC’s decisions—flows from the Indian Act.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

3.2.3 Communications structures related to education policy

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba responding, 43.8 per cent agreed and 31.3 per cent strongly agreed that structures exist to communicate with individual First Nations schools related to education policy. When asked to describe this process, responses included: policy manuals, in-person presentations and consultations, community visits, phone, e-mail, fax, and those based on individual schools requests.

The following interview commentary clarifies the role of education directors as it is related to communicating education policy:

“Our First Nation is presently working with the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) with our Educational Plan. We hope to establish our Educational policies with the help of MFNERC. Within a year or two, we are hoping that we will have our own Education Authority along with its policies. There is very little we can do until we have our own entity established and operating as a separated body.” (education director commentary)

The following commentary clarifies the role of MFNERC as it is related to communicating education policy:

“MFNERC provides support to local school authorities in developing their policies. We do not set policy for them.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

3.2.4 Policy enforcement and monitoring

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba responding, 45.5 per cent agreed and 12.1 per cent strongly agreed that education policies are

enforced. Of the respondents, 39.4 per cent agreed and 18.2 per cent strongly agreed that education policies are monitored. The following commentaries clarify the role of MFNERC and education directors related to education policy enforcement and monitoring:

“MFNERC staff are advisors to an extent. Our policies are not designed to be enforceable. It is up to the communities to determine.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“MFNERC has no authority. We are a support agency so we can encourage and recommend but not enforce.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“INAC monitors all policies and although there is some local control, the overall directions for policy comes from INAC. Schools are evaluated every five years and must submit annual reports.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

4.0 Views on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and Sustainability Education in First Nations Schools

4.1 DESD and sustainability education awareness

4.1.1 INAC representatives and/or employees

Based on the survey responses from INAC representatives and/or employees, DESD awareness levels were mixed, with equal numbers across all response categories from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing that they were aware of the DESD or sustainability education. The following commentary helps to clarify these mixed results:

“We don’t participate in international networks related to sustainability education. I became aware of (the DESD) from my regional work, not through top-down communication within INAC. To the best of my knowledge there hasn’t been any contact made with INAC at a federal level about the DESD, from any international bodies such as UNESCO. INAC might be aware of the concept of sustainability at a federal level as reflected in other Departmental policies such as the SDS, but I haven’t heard any discussion of sustainability within the federal INAC Education Sector. However, INAC federally has seen the proposal put forward from Manitoba for ESD which was based on interdepartmental dialogue, work with the Manitoba’s Department of Education Minister and MFNERC [...]. I was involved in facilitating this and can continue bring updates and recommendations forward to INAC federally.” (INAC representative commentary)

4.1.2 MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba

Only 12 per cent of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had been consulted about the DESD. Despite this, 65 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with the DESD, and 71 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with the concept of sustainability education. The following commentaries help to explain and expand upon these results.

“I have very limited knowledge of what the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development is all about, but whatever it does, I am quite interested in being involved in its program.” (education director commentary)

“I am aware, due to my own curiosity and research, but as an organization, we were not informed about the decade.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“I first learned about ESD by attending a MFNERC presentation and I know they are supportive of it.” (education director commentary)

“The connections came from my own interest. I attended a workshop presented by the provincial working group and became aware of the movement and wanted to learn more. Workshops also helped convince the leadership of MFNERC and from there the interest has built. [...] we now have a partnership proposal with the province, which includes ESD.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

4.2 Sustainability education policy, programs and initiatives

4.2.1 Current status in Manitoba

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba responding, 30 per cent agreed that sustainability principles are reflected in education policies and 30 per cent agreed that sustainability principles are reflected in First Nations schools programming. The following interview commentaries help to explain and clarify these results.

“The action of schools is sporadic and depends on the will of educators. There is no concerted effort across the province to implement ESD in all First Nations schools.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“Sometimes but sometimes not [...] this process is just beginning.” (Education director commentary)

“First Nations schools in each community are an entity by themselves and so whether they target these principles will depend on their specific community. First Nations education does not have an Education Department or Minister and therefore there are no directives or overall policies specifically to these principles. The result being sporadic and differing levels of engagement.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

4.2.2 Interest in sustainability programming and initiatives

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba, 37 per cent strongly agreed and 52 per cent agreed that First Nations schools should be encouraged to undertake sustainability education programs and initiatives. The following commentary confirms this interest in sustainability education:

“It is the plan of this school and its board of directors to implement the principles. [...]. We will diligently work to have our Educational Policies to reflect our own values and beliefs based on our traditional way of life. Education should reflect the culture of the people it serves and represents.”
(education director commentary)

4.2.3 Funding and other incentives

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba responding, 31 per cent disagreed that budgets and financial supports currently exist to support First Nations schools to undertake sustainability education programs and initiatives. Of the respondents, 33 per cent strongly agreed and 41 per cent agreed that such incentives would support First Nations schools to undertake sustainability education programs and initiatives. The following commentaries help to explain and expand upon the interest in funding support and incentives First Nations schools to undertake sustainability education programs and initiatives:

“(The) perception is there is no support to First Nations schools, only support to MFNERC.”
(Education director commentary)

“Currently the Federal government does not provide direct and distinct support to First Nations schools for ESD specifically there is no direct support by INAC for ESD in First Nations schools. This is needed to inform and engage the people within these communities. It can happen but we need funding opportunity and policy to ensure schools are supported. It is INAC’s role to do this, as they are the only source of funding for First Nations schools[...] (more) would happen if there was funding support and a clear mandate.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

4.2.4 Value of policy

All of the INAC respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that federal policy is needed to empower First Nations schools to undertake sustainability programming and initiatives. Similarly, all of the respondents also either agreed or strongly agreed that federal policy is needed to sustain these programs and initiatives. However, the following commentary suggests that although INAC may feel there is need for federal policy, potential impeding issues in terms of INAC’s overall staffing and funding capacity are worth noting:

“INAC does have its own ministry but even at the federal level the Education Department has limited capacity in terms of staffing. There are dedicated staff, but they have heavy workloads already [...] the organization is overwhelmed. This has roots in the process of devolution of education for First Nations schools, with INAC now providing primarily a funding role, but still dealing with capacity challenges.” (INAC representative commentary)

Of the MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba responding, 37 per cent strongly agreed and 41 per cent agreed that federal policy is needed to empower and sustain sustainability education programs and initiatives in First Nations schools. The following commentaries confirm this interest in federal policy and suggest strategies for policy development:

“Federal policy would support funding of projects. INAC, as a major funding department of education for First Nations schools and should be more committed to provide First Nations schools with adequate funding including support for initiatives.” (education director commentary)

“Although this study is for Manitoba, INAC has a responsibility across the country so if there is a policy change it needs to happen at a national level—the gap is relevant across the country as I found out since becoming involved in the National ESD Working Group. [...] It should be included in (INAC) Sustainable Development strategies and they should considered looking at the CMEC and aligning with their mandates.” (MFNERC staff commentary)

“It might be best for support for ESD implementation in our schools to come from MFNERC rather than from INAC because this would allow it to be more customized to local needs. INAC could provide more support to the regional bodies.” (education director commentary)

5.0 Early progress on ESD through Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre

5.1 MFNERC efforts to encourage and support First Nations schools to undertake sustainability programming and initiatives.

Prior to the establishment of MFNERC, First Nations locally controlled schools in Manitoba had no centralized support system to draw expertise and assistance in support of delivering a quality education program. MFNERC now works to fill that gap. While not necessarily embedded in an ESD framework, numerous education projects have been established which have targeted all areas of sustainability: environmental, economic and social. Some of these have included land-based initiatives that support a traditional sustenance way of life (e.g., trapping, fishing); school gardens; cultural and traditional knowledge youth camps; First Nations language immersion; astronomy from an indigenous perspective; community traditional names mapping; infusion of First Nations knowledge and culture into the curriculum. In essence the work of MFNERC to provide curriculum and project support for a quality education grounded in the local environment and community is an advancement of ESD in First Nations schools.

5.2 MFNERC and DESD initiatives in the province

MFNERC's direct involvement in ESD began through a single staff member attending an ESD workshop hosted by Manitoba Education. Information about Manitoba's ESD initiatives and the existence of the MESDWG was provided at that time. Stemming from that workshop, MFNERC, with the support of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, has become very active in the MESDWG. Within MFNERC, the focus on ESD has been conducted through the Research and Development Unit (RDU), led by the RDU Coordinator, a former Manitoba Education consultant and the writer of the first ESD curriculum development guide for the province. RDU research revealed that the support for First Nations education in the area of ESD was very limited (as this report also confirms). This suggests that international efforts to infuse ESD in every educational system in the world have not reached the First Nations. Realizing the opportunity, MFNERC supported a partnership with Manitoba Education and other relevant organizations to raise the awareness of the need to close the gap in ESD knowledge in First Nations schools. Since then, MFNERC has been instrumental in advancing the participation of First Nations education stakeholders within the provincial ESD movement.

In an effort to provide further awareness and knowledge of ESD within First Nations education, MFNERC sent a team of nine people, which included MFNERC's Executive Director, to the 2009

Sustainable Education Academy. The experience at the session was informative, enlightening and compelled the organization toward further action. During the drafting of this research report, the MFNERC team met with the Deputy Minister of Manitoba Education and provided a briefing on the limitations facing First Nations in ESD. As a result of that meeting, the Deputy Minister and the Executive Director brought the issue forward to the department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). As a result, a proposal for the inclusion of ESD within the INAC Education Partnership Program (EPP) was submitted and approved. The EPP - ESD pilot will provide an opportunity for Manitoba Education to share its knowledge and experience in delivering the Manitoba ESD program with MFNERC and offer support to First Nations to become engaged in ESD on a similar foundation as the provincial schools.

The First Nations education system in Manitoba will now have the opportunity to build capacity and become knowledgeable about ESD and engage as an active agent for ESD on a provincial and local level. As program and financial support for ESD within the INAC system has yet to be established nationally, the MFNERC pilot is a first and could have implications for further support to First Nations through Canada. MFNERC plans to host professional development sessions for First Nations educators, develop a funding grant program to host local ESD projects, and develop curriculum. The project is ambitious; however, with the support of Manitoba Education and other partnerships, the pilot is expected to have a positive outcome.

6.0 Key Findings

While exploring the progress that has been made to date towards encouraging and supporting sustainability education in Manitoba's First Nations schools, successes as well as challenges have been identified. Key findings based on the online survey, telephone interviews and literature searches include:

6.1 Capacity issues and a complex management process and financing structure for First Nations education

Although the residential school system no longer exists, education of on-reserve First Nations residents remains problematic. Challenges in sustaining educational infrastructure and institutional capacity are coupled with demands for a financing mechanism that provides funding parity with the public school system. Unlike public schools in Canada, with provincial/territorial Ministries of Education, most on-reserve schools, managed by individual First Nations, are challenged to play the roles of both provincial/territorial Department of Education and school board.

“We are so focused on trying to have sufficient services to support the essential core subjects and focused on literacy and numeracy—we need funding support for this as the first priority. ESD seems to be just another add-on when there are other priorities [...] this is why we would need support to increase awareness of ESD and what it is about first—this would help get the buy-in from our staff, teachers, administrators—there’s already so many demands so we would need support. e.g. more presentations from MFNERC, etc.” (Education director commentary)

First Nations education, comprised of different lead organizations at federal, provincial/territorial and local levels than in the public system, is federally funded by INAC. INAC's primary role relates to funding for education, and review of proposals for funding received from band councils and First Nations education authorities for targeted INAC programs. INAC priorities include improving graduation rates and building partnerships with the provinces. In each of INAC's Regional Education Bodies, unique circumstances are faced. In Manitoba, four staff (all with backgrounds in education, either as former teachers or administrators) report to INAC's Regional Manager of Operations for Education. INAC's education sector reports heavy workloads and limited staffing. In developing strategies to support sustainability education, consideration of the issues of capacity in the First Nations education system is needed.

6.2 Limited contact with INAC about the DESD at the federal level

INAC has primary responsibility for First Nations education at the federal level, but responses from the survey and interviews indicate that, at a federal level, INAC has not been consulted about the DESD. More direct engagement or dialogue with INAC from Canada's federal leads for the DESD such as the Council of Ministers of Education, CMEC, the Federal Department of Environment (Environment Canada), and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO is warranted.

6.3 The gap in the DESD implementation scheme at the federal level for First Nations education alleviated by provincial and local leadership—a “bottom-up” approach for the DESD implementation scheme

In Canada, as in other countries, local governments and community organizations, stakeholders from many sectors, as well as non-governmental organizations are actively promoting and supporting ESD. With a designated provincial lead government, established provincial Working Group, and local “champions” within the First Nations education community, in the province of Manitoba, support for sustainability education in First Nations schools clearly exists. Given Manitoba Education's leadership position and role at the federal level in the DESD, the potential exists for the province to lead advancements at a national level, providing direction for development of federal policy and strategy supporting sustainability education in First Nations schools.

“We don't participate in international networks related to Sustainability Education. I became aware of (the DESD) from my regional work, not through top-down communication within INAC. To the best of my knowledge there hasn't been any contact made at a federal level about the DESD from any International bodies such as UNESCO. INAC might be aware of the concept of sustainability at a federal level as reflected in other policy, but I haven't heard any discussion of sustainability within the federal INAC education department. However, INAC federally has seen the proposal put forward from Manitoba based on interdepartmental dialogue, work with the Manitoba's Department of Education Minister and MFNERC [...]. I was involved in facilitating this dialogue. I can continue bring updates and recommendations forward to INAC federally.” (INAC representative commentary)

6.4 Strong interest in sustainability education

INAC does not have policies or funding programs supporting sustainability education. However, extensive work has been done to develop the department's sustainable development strategy and structures exist for internal and interdepartmental cooperation. In Manitoba, INAC representatives are interested in sustainability education. Awareness has emerged due to individual interests,

networking, lead individuals within key organizations and established means of communicating with Manitoba Education on issues of policy, curriculum, communications with local “champions” for sustainability education and work with provincial organizations taking a lead on the DESD, including MFNERC and Manitoba Education. From the outcomes of meetings within Manitoba Education, internal work, meetings with provincial education directors or work with organization such as MFNERC, the potential and willingness exist for recommendations and guidance for new national directions for INAC to be brought forward based on perspectives from INAC’s regional education body.

6.5 Sporadic existence of sustainability education policy, programs and initiatives in First Nations schools in Manitoba

Based on the survey responses and interviews with MFNERC employees and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba, sustainability principles are beginning to be reflected in education policies and in First Nations schools programming. However, there are no province-wide directives or overall policies specifically related to sustainability education set by any of the stakeholders in First Nations education. Without this concerted effort and supporting structure across the province, the existence of sustainability education programming and initiatives is currently only sporadic and there are differing levels of engagement and capacity within individual First Nation communities.

6.6 Federal policy and funding called for—unique approach required

INAC employees, MFNERC staff and education directors of First Nations schools in Manitoba confirmed that that federal policy and funding are needed to encourage and sustain sustainability education in First Nations schools. Policy and funding to support reducing ecological footprints in schools, developing additional programming and sustaining current initiatives is needed. In Manitoba, the Department of Education plays a unique role in the DESD and there are individual champions for sustainability education within MFNERC, but the noted absence of INAC policy and funding support is problematic. A broad federal strategy would facilitate coordinated support in Manitoba and for other provinces and territories. However, when developing strategies to support sustainability education, consideration of the noted capacity issues in the First Nations education “system” is needed.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 MFNERC and INAC should consider the development of a federal strategy, funding approach and implementation process for Education for Sustainable Development in First Nations Schools across Canada.

The interest and support for sustainability education in Manitoba's First Nations education community clearly exists and has led to interest at a federal level in INAC. In 2010, INAC provided financial support to MFNERC for ESD initiatives in First Nation Schools in Manitoba. INAC should consider Manitoba as a pilot province for ESD in First Nations Schools. Once the results of the pilot phase are measured, there is potential to roll this out in other provinces across Canada. With the provincial government as a designated lead for the DESD, there is also potential for Manitoba to assist in the development of a national strategy for First Nations education. This federal-level strategy may be modelled on the provincial success realized in Manitoba, and consist of provincial/territorial implementation schemes involving INAC's regional education sectors and provincial/territorial First Nations education bodies.

There are capacity limits within INAC and within the First Nations education system to meet existing commitments for the operations of First Nations schools. Developing strategies to support sustainability education in First Nations schools should not impose additional burdens on current staff and/or require deferring existing funding for First Nations education from other priority areas. Alternative mechanisms for funding sustainability education in First Nations schools should be explored with INAC and the federal leads for DESD (Environment Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO).

7.2 Manitoba Education should consider facilitating increased networking and dialogue between the lead agencies for DESD (CMEC, Environment Canada, CCUNESCO) and INAC.

Both INAC's education department and the First Nations Education stakeholders have had limited engagement with CMEC and other members of the national working group on ESD (Environment Canada and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.) Manitoba's unique role in the DESD at a federal level, coupled with the existing support from key stakeholders in First Nations Education at a provincial level, has established a window of opportunity to connect key federal leads for the DESD with INAC's education department.

In addition, MFNERC with the support of Manitoba Education and the Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development Working Group (MESD WG) could look at exploring ways in which to involve ESD Canada and all the provincial working groups on ESD, to review progress on the Decade with respect to First Nations and aboriginal education for sustainable development, leading possibly to an international conference on Indigenous peoples and sustainability education. Manitoba Education and MFNERC should work together to encourage all provincial and territorial working groups on ESD to undertake a similar exploration of the state of ESD in First Nations schools in their regions, with a view to strengthening support for the lead agencies and INAC to consider ESD strategies for First Nations schools.

One such opportunity for dialogue and joint action among these stakeholders might be an exploration of how other countries are promoting and implementing ESD with Indigenous populations. Further research may be required to prepare an initial scan of such initiatives, together with consultations with experts in comparable jurisdictions such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States. There is scope here for hosting an international conference on Indigenous peoples and sustainability education as a major contribution to the second half of the DESD.

7.3 Manitoba Education should consider working with CMEC and its Working Group on ESD to include provisions where possible, for collaboration with INAC and First Nations schools in the Pan-Canadian ESD Framework for Collaboration and Action.

Given that the First Nations schools follow provincial curriculum standards and use provincially certified teachers, understanding how the Pan-Canadian Framework may impact or support First Nations schools is important. Some consideration should therefore be given as to how INAC and other stakeholders in First Nations education might contribute to or participate in the working group.

7.4 MFNERC should consider examining existing sustainable development resources from Manitoba Education to determine whether they need to develop more culturally relevant materials for First Nations Schools.

Manitoba Education has a number of sustainable development resources available. MFNERC should consider whether and how Manitoba's ESD learning resources, programs and initiatives are relevant to First Nations Schools. This could in turn, lead to MFNERC and Manitoba Education

working to develop more culturally-relevant sustainability education programming and initiatives for all K–12 schools.

7.5 MFNERC should offer professional development and training workshops for First Nations education staff

The interest and support for sustainability education in Manitoba's First Nations education community clearly exists but support for educators is needed. MFNERC should consider working with Manitoba Education to host workshops and/or provide other means to: a) share information related to sustainability education with First Nations school staff and administrators and b) build capacity for First Nations school sustainability policy and implementation.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Sustainability Education in First Nation Schools						
Welcome						
<p>Thank you for participating in this survey.</p> <p>The purpose of this online survey is to gather information from key stakeholders in order to develop a better understanding of the supports available to encourage and assist First Nations schools to plan and undertake suitable actions for sustainability. This brief electronic questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes to complete and your responses will remain strictly confidential.</p> <p>If you have any questions, concerns or problems in responding to this questionnaire, please contact Natalie Swayze, nswayze@iisd.ca</p>						
PART A - General Information						
What organization do you work for?						
How long have you worked with your organization?						
What is your job title?						
PART B – Role in Education Policy for First Nations Schools						
What type of education policy for First Nations Schools is your organization involved with?						
Curriculum	School Facilities Management	Funding	Other (please specify)			
When developing your education policies, which of the following organizations are involved or consulted?						
The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)	Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF)	Provincial First Nations Educational bodies e.g. B.C. First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), MB First Nations Resource Centre (MFNERC)	Canadian Education Association (CEA)	Assembly of First Nations (AFN)	Other (please specify)	
For each sentence below, please indicate, in the space provided, whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A

When developing education policies, other levels of government (e.g. local, Federal) involved or consulted.						
Provincial curricula and/or pan-Canadian protocols influence our organization's education policies for First Nation schools.						
Policies within other sectors/departments of our organization influence our education policy for First Nations schools.						
Communications structures exist between our organization and individual First Nations schools related to education policy.						
Communication structures exist between our organization and other bodies involved in First Nations education (e.g. MFNERC, INAC) related to education policy.						
Our organization's education policies are enforced.						
Our organization's education policies are monitored.						
Comment:						
How are your organization's education policies communicated to individual First Nations schools?						
How is your organization involved with other federal First Nations educational bodies e.g. INAC, MFNERC?						

PART C – Sustainability Education in First Nations Schools

Background

In December 2002, the United Nations announced a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) [<http://www.desd.org/>] from 2005 to 2014 to be lead by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). During the Decade, UNESCO has been assisting governments, educators and all relevant stakeholders to develop innovative and culturally-relevant strategies for ESD. The United Nations DESD seeks to encourage changes in behaviour towards sustainable development. Work is underway around the world to integrate sustainability concepts and values into the learning process.

For each sentence below, please indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Our organization has been consulted about the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD).						
I am familiar with the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD).						
I am familiar with the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD).						

Comment:

Background

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. One of the key objectives of the DESD is to reorient educational programs from nursery school through university to include a clear focus on the development of knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability.

Sustainability education offers learners a context for developing active citizenship and participation, embracing the complexity of the interdependencies of ecological, societal and economic systems. Sustainability education also supports flexibility, creativity, critical reflection and fosters a sense of personal responsibility for the planet. It is about respecting and preserving our histories, valuing culture and community, caring for others and the environment, and taking action to create a fair, healthy, and safe world for all.

Some of the key characteristics of sustainability education are:

- Interdisciplinary and holistic: embedded in the whole curriculum, not as a separate subject
- Values driven: it is critical that the assumed norms—the shared values and principles—underpinning sustainability are made explicit
- Critical thinking and problem solving: leading to confidence in addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainability;
- Multi-methods: using word, art, drama, debate, experience and different pedagogies that model the process. Teaching that is geared simply to passing on knowledge should be recast into an approach in which teachers and learners work together to acquire knowledge and play a role in shaping the environment in their educational institutions;
- Participatory decision-making: learners participate in decisions on how they are to learn;
- Locally relevant: addressing local as well as global issues, and using the language(s) that learners most commonly use.

For each sentence below, please reflect on these principles and indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
These principles are reflected in our organization's education policies.						

These principles are considered when developing our organization's education policies.						
Our organization is directly involved in encouraging First Nations schools to adopt these principles.						
These principles are reflected in First Nations schools' programs and activities.						
Learning targets that support these principles are addressed explicitly in the curriculum/program of study in First Nation schools.						
Comment:						
For each sentence below, please reflect on these principles and indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
These principles are part of First Nations school educators' in-service training.						
These principles are a part of training of leaders and administrators of First Nations schools.						
First Nations schools should be encouraged to adopt these principles.						
Support is available to First Nations schools to incorporate these principles into their programs and activities.						
Budgets and/or economic incentives are available to First Nations schools to undertake sustainability initiatives.						

Incentives (guidelines, award scheme, funding, technical support) for First Nations schools to support sustainability initiatives.						
Initiatives that have proven successful in the public system (grants, policy, curriculum etc) would be useful to support First Nations schools to adopt/sustain use of these principles.						
Comment:						
For each sentence below, please reflect on these principles and indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
These principles are reflected in First Nations school curricula and/or education standards through existing subjects only.						
These principles are reflected in First Nations school curricula and/or education standards using cross-curriculum approaches.						
These principles are reflected in First Nations school curricula and/or education standards through provision of specific subject programs and courses.						
These principles are reflected in First Nations school curricula and/or education standards as stand-alone projects.						
Comment:						

PART D – School Actions Supporting SustainabilityBackground

Within Canada’s public school system, despite a noticeable lack of policies implemented at the school division or district level, there does seem to be a real movement within many individual schools to promote strategies and processes for creating more sustainable schools. Individual schools appear to be taking their own initiative in the absence of formalized mandates or policies, and these initiatives are either driven by the principal, teacher, students or a combination of the above and do not appear to require a division or district mandate to move forward. For example, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, École Secondaire Sisler High School has started “Environmental Science and Sustainable Development,” a project where Grade 11 students will develop a unit designed to reduce the school’s environmental footprint. Students will also investigate the potential reduction in electricity demand by the building by placing a wind turbine on the school.

For each sentence below, please reflect on these principles and indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don’t know.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
First Nations schools undertake sustainability projects.						
First Nations schools develop strategies and processes for being more sustainable						
Comment:						
If possible, please provide an example of a sustainability project or strategy undertaken by a First Nation school:						

PART E – Relevance of Policy to Sustaining School Actions

Background

In Canada's public school system, there appears to be a discrepancy between: a) the existence/development of sustainability policies and b) practices and programming actually being implemented at the individual school level.

In many cases, despite a lack of formal policies, individual schools within the are actively involved in sustainability projects and programs. There is a concern, however, that without policy commitments, some schools will be left behind if there are no internal champions to support sustainability initiatives, and that without operational policies in place, the longevity of these initiatives is compromised.

For each sentence below, please reflect on these principles and indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Federal policy is needed to empower individual First Nations schools to undertake sustainability initiatives.						
Federal policy is needed to sustain initiatives in individual First Nations schools.						

Comment:

PART F – School Actions Supporting Sustainability

Background

A growing number of schools have placed sustainability at the heart of their ethos. Another way of thinking about this is in terms of how well the school demonstrates its commitment to care—care for ourselves, for each other and for the earth. Where this happens, participatory decision-making reflects the particular ecological, social and economic context of each individual school.

Sustainability offers opportunities for innovation in schools and for schools to enhance their roles in the community. It can help to place goals as diverse as healthy living, green travel and social inclusion within a broader canvas. This enables school leaders to present a more coherent picture to pupils and the school community, and to emphasize school improvement priorities while showing how they are advancing the broader school and community agenda.

For each sentence below, please reflect on these principles and indicate whether you: strongly agree / agree / are undecided / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Sustainability is a distinctive characteristic or feature of First Nations schools.						
Sustainability enables learners to adopt healthy lifestyles.						
Sustainability enables learners to feel safe and adopt safe Practices.						
Sustainability enables learners to adopt good behavior practices.						
Sustainability enables learners to make a positive contribution in First Nations Communities.						
Sustainability improves the quality of teaching and learning in First Nations schools.						
Sustainability improves the effectiveness and efficiency of the leadership and management of First Nations schools.						

The views of learners influence work on Sustainability education in First Nations schools.						
The views of parents and guardians influence work on sustainability in First Nations schools.						
The views of community members influence work on sustainability in First Nations schools.						
First Nations schools integrate healthy and sustainable food and drinks.						
Comment:						

Another key objective of the DESD partnerships and creating synergies among the initiatives and programs is that no institution, even at a global scale, can manage to achieve the goals of sustainable development on its own. Several Canadian organizations have been actively involved in the DESD.		
Does your organization participate in networks related to sustainability education?		
Yes	No	Not Sure
Comment:		
Which of the following has your organization worked with?		
National ESD Expert Council	Learning for a Sustainable Future	UNESCO
Other (please specify):		
May we contact you to schedule a 10-15 minute phone interview to discuss your responses?		
Yes	No	
Name:		
Email:		
Phone Number:		
Would you like to receive a copy of the report on this research?		
Yes	No	