

Quarterly Newsletter

Indigenous Advanced Education & Skills Council



HIGHLIGHTS

Alumna Feature
Pg. 3

IIQAB Approvals
Pg. 6

New MOU
Pg. 8



Welcome!

In this issue we share updates from the IAESC team and celebrate important milestones and achievements across the Indigenous postsecondary education sector.

Seasonal Reflections

Autumn | Dagwaagi | Takwakin | Kanenna'ké:ne

As with any season in life, this can be a great time to pause, reflect, and give thanks for all of Creation. As the trees begin to change, they remind us just how good it can feel to embrace change, let go, and create space for what comes next.

We hope your summer was filled with fresh berries, fishing, and plenty of sunshine. Some of you may be preparing for your annual harvest and time away at camp, while many of you are already deep into your studies and looking forward to reading week. As you move through this season, we wish you well and hope this season brings you moments of reflection, renewal, and connection.



Wacheya, Shé:kon, Aaniin, Greetings!

As we move into the fall season, I would like to begin by acknowledging the many accomplishments of the Indigenous Institutes, IAESC staff, the Indigenous Quality Assessment Board (IIQAB) and the IAESC Board of Directors. The past few months have been filled with important milestones, good news stories for many, and meaningful moments that reflect our shared commitment to the advancement of Indigenous postsecondary education.

In late August, the IAESC Board of Directors, staff, and IIQAB came together in ceremony to honour our bundle and connect in person - which meant a lot as much of our work takes place virtually. This was a very special gathering, as part of the ceremony included the exchange of gifts between the IAESC Board of Directors and IIQAB. It was the first time that these two groups have come together in this way, in the spirit of their shared commitment and dedication to this important work. We were honoured to have Darrell Boissonneau lead us in ceremony, and we were pleased to welcome back the Smoke Trail drum group to share in this ceremony.

At the August IIQAB meeting, the Anishinabek Educational Institute (AEI) received approval for their organization review. This is a significant achievement, and I extend my sincerest congratulations to AEI and their team on successfully completing this process. With AEI's approval, all nine Indigenous Institutes have now completed the organization review process, another major milestone in the continued growth of this sector.

As we look ahead, IAESC remains busy as ever, with no plans of slowing down. We continue to make progress on the priorities identified within our strategic plan and remain committed to the important work ahead. I am incredibly grateful for our dedicated team, for the passion and care that they bring to this work each day.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the learners at each Indigenous Institutes. Beginning or continuing your learning journey takes courage, dedication, and perseverance. I wish you all success and I hope that you continue to find strength in your culture, communities, and yourselves as you move forward on this journey.

Miigwech,

Sean Monteith
Executive Director

Indigenous Institute Alumni

Where are they now?



IAESC had the opportunity to meet with FNTI Alumna **Hannah Iserhoff**, a graduate of the Social Service Worker Program and the Mental Health and Addictions Worker Program. When she isn't at the arena cheering on her grandson's hockey game, or fishing along the river, you will find Hannah fulfilling her role as a helper in community.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and what you do today?

I am a member of Moose Cree First Nation, I live in Cochrane, Ontario on Treaty 9. I am a proud mother of three children, stepmother of two, and nanny to ten grandchildren. Today, I work for Taykwa Tagamou Nation (TTN) as the Director of the Social Services department. I began my journey with FNTI in 2019 when I enrolled in the Social Service Worker Program, following completion of that, I enrolled in the Mental Health and Addictions Worker Program.

The knowledge gained from each of those programs have helped me to support community, transition into different roles and grow professionally. Continued growth and learning as a helper working in community is very important.

What led you to choose to study at an Indigenous Institute? Why is education important to you?

I chose to pursue my studies at FNTI because I wanted the opportunity to receive an education that is grounded in Indigenous perspective. The program's flexibility also enabled me to balance my academic commitments with my work schedule as I continued to work fulltime throughout my studies.

Education is important to me because, in today's world, it provides the knowledge and skills necessary to build a stable and sustainable future. There is a significant need for compassionate and qualified helpers who can support individuals, families, and communities and I strive to provide that in the work that I do.

Indigenous Institute Alumni

Where are they now?

How has your education helped you with your work in community?

My education has been very instrumental in advancing the service and support that I provide and have provided in my roles at TTN. After completing a student placement with the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) with the community, I stepped into the NNADAP Worker position and later served as a TTN Band Representative for child welfare for a few years.

I am currently fulfilling the role of Interim Director of the Social Services Department. These experiences have equipped me to support individuals affected by mental health and addictions, advocate for children, youth, and families involved in child welfare, and ensure the mandate of our department is being met.

“My time at FNTI taught me that determination and perseverance can make challenging goals attainable.”

If you could go back and give yourself one piece of advice to help you through your studies, what would it be?

I would tell myself to start a consistent routine from the outset. Balancing work, family responsibilities, and academic commitments was often challenging, and a structured schedule would have helped me manage assignments more effectively and reduce periods of feeling overwhelmed.

What is one lesson or experience from your time at FNTI that you still carry with you today?

A lesson that I learned from my time at FNTI and still carry with me today was learning more about the impacts of intergenerational trauma and how this has affected my own personal life.

In gaining this understanding, it allowed me to work on areas of my own life, which now leaves me fostered with a sense of personal strength and a deeper empathy for others.

Share your Story

We would love to hear about your experience learning at an Indigenous Institute and where your journey has led you today.



Get in Touch

August Gathering

In August, the IAESC Board of Directors, the Indigenous Institutes Quality Assessment Board (IIQAB), and IAESC staff, came together for two days of meetings, ceremony, and the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

We came together in ceremony, as we do each August, to honour our bundle and start the new year in a good way.

During the Board meeting, we took a moment to recognize and honour Bob Watts as he concluded his service with the IAESC Board of Directors. As one of the founding Board members, Bob has been a valued part of the organization since 2018, contributing his knowledge, experience, and leadership to the advancement of IAESC's work.

Bob is a respected First Nation leader, advocate, and policy expert. Bob is a true trailblazer in the areas of First Nation policy, legislation, and truth and reconciliation.

Bob played a key role in the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and previously served as Chief of Staff for the Assembly of First Nations, where he provided essential guidance and expertise during the negotiations for the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

Bob's contributions to education and public policy also extend into academia. He is a Fellow at Harvard Law School and an Emeritus Fellow at Queen's University, where he taught for several years.



Lora Tisi, Board Chair and Bob Watts

We extend our sincerest gratitude to Bob for his many years of service to IAESC, and for the time, knowledge, and wisdom he has so generously shared. His commitment to IAESC and to the advancement of Indigenous postsecondary education has left a lasting impact, and we are grateful to have had the benefit of his leadership and guidance since IAESC's early days.

We wish Bob all the very best in his retirement and look forward to celebrating the continued impact of his work and leadership.

IIQAB Updates

Approvals

At the August 25, 2026, Indigenous Institutes Quality Assessment Board (IIQAB) meeting, IIQAB reviewed and approved the following applications:

Organization Review

Anishinabek Educational Institute

Program Review

Social Service Worker (Indigenous Specialization) Diploma, Six Nations Polytechnic

Program Handbook

New Master's Degree Program Handbook

SNP Social Service Worker Program

Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP) was granted approval for its Social Service Worker (Indigenous Specialization) Diploma program review.

This program approval includes a joint pathway approval with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW).

This approval marks an important milestone for SNP, and we look forward to seeing the success of the program.

Master's Degree Program Handbook

This is the first graduate-level Program Handbook to be developed for Indigenous Institutes.

With the approval of the Master's Degree Program Handbook, Indigenous Institutes can now submit program review applications to offer standalone Master's Degree programs.

This work marks an important milestone in the advancement of Indigenous postsecondary education. With 6 Program Handbooks developed, Indigenous Institutes can offer programs at all levels of study, from Certificate and Diploma to Post-Diploma, Bachelor's Degree, Bachelor's Degree with Honours, and now, Master's Degree programs.

We wish to acknowledge the work of the Research Steering Committee for their guidance, discussion, assessment, and support of the development of the standards and benchmarks outlined in the Program Handbook.

With the new Master's Degree Program Handbook now available to Indigenous Institutes, the Research Working Group will be shifting its focus to the development of a PhD Program Handbook. More information on this development will be available in the new year.



Next IIQAB Meeting

2027 Meeting Dates

- November 27, 2026
- February 26, 2027
- May 21, 2027
- August 24, 2027

Indigenous Institute Spotlight:

Anishinabek Educational Institute



Located on Nipissing First Nation, the Anishinabek Educational Institute (AEI) believes that all First Nation children have the potential to achieve each of their academic and employment goals. AEI offers culturally grounded education in response to the needs of the communities that it serves. AEI has an additional campus in Munsee offering both on-campus and community-based programs.

Over the course of the last year, AEI has undergone IAESC's organization review process to become an approved Indigenous Institute, eligible to offer standalone programs recognized by the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security.

We are incredibly proud and excited to share that AEI achieved its organization review approval at our most recent Indigenous Institutes Quality Assessment Board (IIQAB) meeting.

AEI has offered Indigenous led, culturally grounded postsecondary education since 1994. AEI offers several Certificate and Diploma programs such as the Binoojiingyag Kinoomaadwin; Early Childhood Education Diploma program, and the First Nation Child Welfare Advocate Certificate program.

“One of the biggest steps forward that a postsecondary institution can take, is to go through the rigorous process of quality assurance holding itself to the highest standards of accreditation. First Nation learners deserve nothing but the best and the highest standards; and throughout its accreditation review, AEI has never lost sight of this commitment to the highest standards, and equally never lost sight of who their students are. This is just a tremendous accomplishment for AEI and very well deserved.”

**Sean Monteith, Executive Director
IAESC**

IAESC and OACETT Sign Memorandum of Understanding

IAESC and the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT) are proud to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The signing of this MOU signifies as a shared commitment for the advancement of Indigenous environmental technician programs to be delivered by the Indigenous Institutes.

As the certifying authority for practicing environmental technologists and technicians in Ontario, OACETT will work collaboratively with IAESC to develop a recognition protocol and process for the quality assurance of Indigenous environmental technician programs and create a pathway to certification for graduates.

“ IAESC continues to prioritize strengthening new and existing relationships with organizations and regulatory bodies such as the OACETT; We are very pleased that the leadership of the OACETT recognizes the impact that this MOU will have on many Indigenous students and future graduates. This MOU will not only support Indigenous graduates and professionals, but their communities as well for future generations to come.

**Sean Monteith, Executive Director
IAESC**

“ This partnership reflects OACETT’s commitment to supporting inclusive pathways into Ontario’s engineering technology profession. By working with IAESC and Indigenous Institutes, we can help support the quality and consistency of Indigenous environmental technician programs and ensure graduates of those programs have clear, recognized routes to certification, strengthening career opportunities for learners and their contribution to the communities they will serve.

**Cheryl Farrow, Chief Executive Officer
OACETT**

OACETT was incorporated in 1962 as a nonprofit, self-governing regulatory body and professional association. OACETT is legislated by the OACETT Act, 1998.

OACETT is Ontario's independent certifying body for engineering and applied science technicians and technologists and confers the certifications C.Tech. (Certified Technician) and C.E.T. (Certified Engineering Technologist). These certifications are recognized across Canada by employers and other engineering professionals. OACETT promotes the interests of engineering and applied science technicians and technologists in industry, educational institutions, the public and government.

For more information about the MOU, please contact
communications@iaesc.ca.

Community Outreach

Research Symposium

In August, our research team hosted its first mini research symposium. This event brought staff and faculty from the Indigenous Institutes and IAESC together to discuss relevant research matters for the sector, and to present the IAESC research strategy.



Rama Pow Wow

IAESC had the pleasure of attending the Rama Pow Wow this summer. *Did you know that the IAESC office is located on Rama First Nation?*



CreeFest

In July, members of the IAESC team attended CreeFest, an annual celebration for Mushkegowuk communities.



Orange Shirt Day Design Contest for Indigenous Youth

In July, we announced Kastoslote Elijah as the winner of our orange shirt day design contest. Kastoslote is turtle clan, and from Oneida of the Thames. To learn more about Kastoslote and their work, we encourage you to visit their [website](#).

Latest News

News Highlights

Several Indigenous Institutes Featured in the Indigenous Top Ten from the Academica Group

Indigenous Living Classroom Brings Culturally Informed Healthcare (SNP)

Celebrating Milestones and Looking Ahead to a New Academic Year

Historic \$50M Funding Commitment for SGEI

FNTI Steps Up to Help Wildfire Evacuees

Celebrating the Successful Accreditation of the Anishinabek Educational Institute

IAESC Latest News



Career Opportunities

- [FNTI](#)
- [Six Nations Polytechnic](#)
- [Kenjgewin Teg](#)
- [Oshki-Pimache-O-Win](#)
- [SGEI](#)

Get in Touch

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