MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary Treasurers of School Authorities
Deans of the University of Ottawa and Queen’s University Faculties of Education

FROM: Monique Châteauvert
Regional Manager

DATE: Friday, December 1, 2006

SUBJECT: Summary report of September 14, 2006 consultation session on the Draft Aboriginal Education Policy Framework

On September 14, 2006 the Aboriginal Education Office conducted a regional consultation session at Kemptville College on the draft Aboriginal Education Policy Framework.

We were very impressed with the high level of participation and broad representation of school boards and faculties of education, and we appreciated the enthusiasm of participants and the feedback provided at the session.

As a follow up to the consultation session, the Aboriginal Education Office has prepared the attached summary report which provides an overview of the comments and recommendations made by the participants through the small group discussions. I would ask you to please share this report with the participants who attended from your school board or faculty of education.

The Aboriginal Education Office and the Ottawa Regional Office appreciates the efforts of all participants who were able to attend the session and provide input to the draft Framework. Thank you for your support in this important consultation process as we work together to create a better future for First Nation, Métis and Inuit children and youth.

Sincerely,

Monique Châteauvert,
Regional Manager

/Attachment

Cc: Alayne Bigwin, Director, Aboriginal Education Office
The Ministry of Education held a consultation session in September 2006 in Ottawa, Ontario seeking feedback on the Draft Aboriginal Education Policy Framework. The consultation session was very well attended. Overall feedback was positive and encouraging. The participants agreed in principle on the goals and strategies set out in the draft Framework with suggestions and recommendations on how to improve it further.

Participants felt that the wording of the Framework should be stronger. It was expressed that language around culture, heritage and language should be included in the proposed Vision and throughout the Framework as a whole. It was suggested that an awareness of the Global community should also be part of the Vision as we are essentially preparing students for success in the Global community- a community consisting of a wide variety of cultures and ways of being. Wording should reflect these elements and “strengthen Aboriginal language and culture within the global community”. Participants indicated that education about Aboriginal cultures must for all communities – not only those with significant numbers of Aboriginal students. In addition, it was suggested that language needs to be added to the Framework concerning equity and respect for diversity.

The significance of parental engagement was also stressed. Partnerships with parents was not only encouraged but seen as an essential component in the implementation of the Framework. There is a need to build capacity for meaningful partnerships with parents to build knowledge, communication and networks.

Implementation was seen as a key factor in ensuring the success of the Framework. In order to facilitate effective implementation it was suggested that resources should be allocated to support this initiative to ensure that it becomes imbedded in Ministry/Board/School practice in the future.

Participants expressed a wish for all students to benefit from good assessment evaluation and programming that reflects a diverse approach, different learning styles and cultural awareness. Learning materials should be developed by local Aboriginal communities, in partnership with the Ministry.

Participants indicated that the key results in the Framework need to be measurable. For instance – how will success be measured? What is a ‘significant increase’ exactly? How will self esteem be measured? Participants also stressed that the Ministry must be more assertive in moving self-identification forward and provide school boards with a framework.
Participants encouraged Aboriginal teacher education and felt it was a good step in increasing the presence of Aboriginal role models in schools. Specifically, they felt there is a great need for more Aboriginal teachers and other non-teaching staff. There is a need for more training opportunities and funding, as well as Board support in hiring these staff. Increased opportunities and alternative pathways also need to be created for Aboriginal people to receive their teaching qualifications. OCT should adopt an advocacy role and provide more information about alternative programs, cross certification etc. It was suggested that the Ministry should provide more resources and more research based strategies on how to work with Aboriginal students, along with more training for teachers.

Overall, participants were very supportive of the initiative and anxious to begin to move forward. In addition, many expressed interest in learning about specific learning styles and learning strategies that ‘work’ with Aboriginal students while also reminding us that there is great variation in terms of challenges and experiences of Aboriginal students. “Aboriginal students like all students are not a homogeneous entity with identical concerns and experiences”.