

Evaluation of the Government of Canada Endowment Fund

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of an independent evaluation of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation's activities, projects and performance in relation to the Government of Canada Endowment Fund as it relates to the Conditional Grant Agreement (CGA) between the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) and the Government of Canada as represented by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The purpose of this Evaluation – the Endowment Fund's first – is to assess the Foundation's overall performance in achieving the expected outcomes and planned results of the CGA. It is also intended to identify areas for improvement, inform the development of performance indicators, and offer any additional suggestions for the next evaluation period. This Evaluation takes into consideration NAAF's activities and projects as they relate to the CGA from 2005 to 2008 as outlined in the Evaluation Framework.

The report is divided into five sections. Section 1 introduces the purpose of the evaluation as well the context for the CGA. Section 2 includes the evaluation requirements (as outlined in an evaluation framework agreed upon by NAAF and Canadian Heritage), approach and methodology. Section 3 provides an overview of NAAF's Education Program and the Endowment Fund; Section 4 includes the review findings by issue and topic guiding the evaluation. Finally, Section 5 outlines conclusions, recommendations and draft performance indicators for expected outcomes for consideration by NAAF and Canadian Heritage.

1.2 Background

Established in 1985, the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation¹ (NAAF) promotes the professional development and education of Aboriginal peoples by providing the tools necessary for Aboriginal youth to achieve brighter futures. To recognize and encourage Aboriginal achievement, NAAF has implemented initiatives such as the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, *Taking Pulse* (Industry in the Classroom), *Blueprint for the Future* career fairs and *Building Brighter Futures* bursary and scholarship awards. The Foundation's programs are made possible through the support of many corporate and government partners as well as individuals.

Outside of the Government of Canada, NAAF is the largest non-governmental agency for funding First Nations (Status and Non-Status), Inuit and Métis post secondary students across Canada. Through the support of its partners, the Foundation is able to provide financial assistance annually to hundreds of First Nations, Inuit and Métis post-secondary students. Last year alone the Foundation disbursed \$3.3 million in bursary and scholarship awards to over 950 Aboriginal students across diverse fields of study.

¹ NAAF is a registered charity.

In 2003, recognizing the extraordinary work of the Foundation in this area the Government of Canada provided a \$12 million conditional grant to support post-secondary studies and expand NAAF's well-established Education Program. As of March 2007, a further \$10 million was added to increase the total amount granted by the Minister of Canadian Heritage to \$22 million. The Foundation has established a separately managed fund for the \$22 million: *Government of Canada Endowment Fund*. A Conditional Grant Agreement (CGA) with the Government of Canada provides the terms that govern the purpose, management, and investment of, and reporting on the Endowment Fund.

1.3 Purpose of the Endowment Fund

As part of NAAF's broader Education Program, the \$22 million federal Endowment Fund is intended to enhance the Foundation's capacity to provide scholarships and bursaries to Aboriginal students. The Endowment Fund assists First Nations, Inuit, and Métis post-secondary students, wherever they live in Canada, who are engaged in fields of study that support and contribute to Aboriginal self-government and economic self-reliance. The aim is to support and encourage the achievement of higher levels of education by Aboriginal students, thereby:

- contributing to the long term development of Aboriginal communities;
- improving productive potential; and
- facilitating the participation of Aboriginal people in Canadian society.

NAAF's Post Secondary Education and Fine Arts Bursary Program is the vehicle by which awards from the Endowment are disbursed. The Endowment Program supports Aboriginal post-secondary students across Canada enrolled in programs that are two or more academic years in length and are in disciplines that support and contribute to Aboriginal economic self-reliance.

1.4 NAAF Activities in Relation to the CGA

The Foundation has implemented a number of activities that support its overarching Education Program, which in turn support the activities and projects under Section 2 of the CGA. The Foundation has:

1. Developed a scholarship program that is open to all Aboriginal students who are Canadian citizens and are enrolled in community college including CEGEP, diploma programs, university undergraduate programs, professional degree programs or university graduate programs.
2. Established criteria for selecting the fields of study and disciplines for which bursaries will be awarded under the Fund that respond to Aboriginal self-government and self-reliance goals.
3. Developed selection criteria for awarding bursaries under the Fund that are based on academic merit and financial need, as well as community connection, commitment to field of study and talent (Fine Arts) of the Aboriginal students.

4. Developed a process for the verification of the information provided by the applicant.
5. Promoted the scholarship program to ensure that Aboriginal students are aware of and can take advantage of the potential education support.
6. Provided for an open and transparent juried review process for the selection of recipients that includes Aboriginal professionals in related fields of study.

As part of the ongoing administration of its bursary and scholarship awards programs, the Foundation undertakes to:

7. Announce and profile successful bursary recipients annually;
8. Profile the Endowment Program along with its other bursary and scholarship awards programs in its annual report, website and other relevant communication activities; and
9. Seek advice from Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community, from time to time, to ensure that their programs, including the Endowment Program, continue to meet the evolving needs.

1.5 Expected Outcomes of the CGA

Section 8 of the CGA established three key expected outcomes as a result of the above activities:

- Aboriginal youth have access to culturally relevant programs (NAAF) that help them improve their skills, knowledge and leadership;
- Aboriginal youth enhance their cultural identity; and
- Aboriginal youth improve their skills knowledge and leadership.

The CGA requires NAAF, in consultation with the Government of Canada, to develop appropriate performance indicators for these outcomes. NAAF may also establish additional outcomes with indicators. NAAF is required to review and refresh the performance indicators, and any additional outcomes, every five years. The periodic five-year evaluation by an independent third party will measure NAAF's performance in relation to these planned results under the CGA. While three outcomes are set out in the CGA, NAAF and Canadian Heritage have agreed that the findings of this initial evaluation should form the basis for the establishment of appropriate performance indicators for the next evaluation period.

2 Evaluation Objectives, Issues & Methodology

2.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

As required under the CGA for the Endowment Fund, the objectives outlined in the Evaluation Framework are to:

- Determine if the criteria and processes have fully met the purpose and aims of the CGA;
- Assess what has been accomplished with the revenues generated towards achieving the aims for which the fund was created and how this has helped NAAF improve the results towards its own goals;
- Assess the cost-effectiveness of the Endowment Program in achieving the purpose and aims of the CGA; and
- Identify what is working well (success factors) and what needs improvement, as well as any unintended outcomes in order to facilitate the design of measures to improve reach and ensure that the respective needs of these Aboriginal students are met.

2.2 Evaluation Issues

Key issues guiding this report relate to: the relevance of the Endowment Program; results of the Endowment Program; cost-effectiveness of the Endowment Program; and identification of the Endowment Program success factors and areas needing improvement. While not included in the Evaluation Framework, this evaluation takes into consideration a preliminary assessment of the management of the Endowment Program and performance of the Endowment Fund and makes recommendations around these issues for future evaluations.

2.3 Approach, Roles and Responsibilities

Following an RFP process, KTA Inc, a Toronto-based consulting group was contracted by NAAF to complete the independent third-party evaluation as required by the CGA. KTA was responsible for managing all aspects of the evaluation process, including:

- (1) developing an approach based on the evaluation framework jointly accepted by NAAF and Canadian Heritage;
- (2) designing evaluation tools, guided by key issues in the evaluation framework, including questionnaires and surveys;
- (3) carrying out and completing the evaluation; and
- (4) producing an Evaluation Report to reflect the findings.

The Foundation's role in the evaluation process was three-part:

- (1) NAAF officials reviewed and approved KTA's approach and methodology;
- (2) NAAF staff compiled key documentation and data requests for KTA, including NAAF reports, summaries and documents, existing student data and

financial reports, and contact details for key informants (notified in advance by NAAF); and

(3) On June 24, 2008, the NAAF Board reviewed the draft evaluation findings and approved in principle the Evaluation Report subject to Board distribution prior to it becoming publicly available.

The Foundation is responsible for making the evaluation report public and sending a copy to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

2.4 Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation had five components:

- A review of background materials and files on NAAF, its Education Program, the CGA, and other documentation to address key questions brought forward in the evaluation framework.
- A review of existing Endowment Program data from NAAF's student database, including information on both successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- An online survey to all recipients of the Government of Canada Endowment Fund to assess students' perception of NAAF's activities and projects around the CGA and NAAF's broader Education Program.
- Interviews with key informants to better understand perceptions of the NAAF's Education Program, NAAF's role in the providing awards to Aboriginal post-secondary students; and NAAF's activities and projects in relation to the CGA.
- Focus groups and interviews with jury members and youth representatives to better understand administrative process around the delivery and awarding of NAAF scholarships and bursaries.

2.4.1 Documentation and File Review

Sources for the documentation and file review included:

- NAAF administration and communications files related to the CGA activities and projects;
- Statistics Canada 2001 and 2006 Census data;
- NAAF website;
- Previous NAAF Program evaluations;
- NAAF Bursary & Scholarships Policy;
- NAAF application and assessment forms;
- NAAF Reports: Final Report from the Aboriginal Youth Round Table; Report from the Suncor Luncheon; Monitoring and Tracking Reports; Jury Book documents; Testimonial letters from bursary recipients; applicant's Letters of Personal Introduction; Report from Aboriginal Health Career Session; Annual Reports; Financial Statements & Audit;
- NAAF communication and outreach materials, including website and brochures.

KTA also conducted a web search to learn about funding sources, including scholarship and bursary awards programs available to Aboriginal post-secondary students across Canada.

2.4.2 NAAF Student Database

NAAF maintains a comprehensive database with information about successful and unsuccessful bursary recipients. NAAF provided this information to KTA in a spreadsheet format, for analysis of the:

- Number of applications received and number of awards allocated;
- Amount of funding requested and amount allocated;
- Number of awards allocated across programs (Fine Arts, Post Secondary Education);
- Number of awards allocated across disciplines, fields of concentrations and degree (undergraduate, graduate, diploma/certificate); and
- Number of awards allocated by: Aboriginal identity age; gender; province; year of study; college or university

for Endowment award recipients from 2005-2008 academic years; and unsuccessful applicants from 2007-08.

To address confidentiality issues associated with student data, NAAF excluded names, mailing address, email, phone number or any other possible “identifier” in the student information provided to KTA.

2.4.3 Key Informant Interviews

NAAF Officials

Interviews were conducted with 5 NAAF officials over the course of the evaluation, including the President and CEO and the Director of Finance, as well as the Education Department officials: the Director of Education and two Education Analysts.

NAAF Board Members

Three NAAF Board Members participated in one-on-one telephone interviews for the purpose of the evaluation.

National Aboriginal Organizations

Four National Aboriginal Organizations (NAOs) were targeted for participation as key informants. Representatives from two NAOs made themselves available for the purpose of the evaluation, as well as one representative of the organization’s Youth Council.

Aboriginal Educators

Of four select Aboriginal educators that were selected as potential informants, two participated in one-on-one interviews.

Canadian Heritage Officials

Three Canadian Heritage officials participated in a telephone interview for the purpose of the Evaluation.

2.4.4 Focus groups/Interviews

Jury Members

Jury member informants were selected for participation in a telephone focus group from a list of 12. Of those, four were available for the purpose of the Evaluation. Two participated in a small focus group; the remaining two participated in one-on-one interviews.

Aboriginal Youth

Eight Aboriginal youth (2 males and 6 females) who were awarded an Endowment bursary at some point during their academic career participated in telephone focus groups. First Nation², Inuit and Métis were represented in the session, and regional representation included: the North (1); the Atlantic (1); the West (3); and Ontario (3).

2.4.5 Online survey

An anonymous and confidential online student survey was sent electronically by NAAF to 437 recipients of the Endowment award. The survey reached 408 recipients (with the remaining 29 e-mails returned). With an acceptable response rate of 28%, 115 responded to the survey in its entirety. Tracking indicates an additional 23 visited the survey but did not complete it.

The respondents to the survey generally mirrored the characteristics of the recipient population by gender, ancestry, regional breakdown, and type of program. The student responses from the youth interviews and focus group were generally reflected in the survey findings.

2.4.6 Limitations of the methodology

Aboriginal post-secondary students who were unsuccessful in receiving NAAF funding support or those who have never applied for NAAF funding support did not participate in the online survey or Youth Focus Group. Although unsuccessful applicants were not engaged, the reasons they were unsuccessful have been reviewed for 2007-08.

Key informants from two NAO's did not participate in the Evaluation, thereby limiting our understanding of perceptions of NAAF's activities around the CGA and their perceptions of NAAF's role in the providing awards to their constituents.

² It is not known if the First Nations participants were Status or Non-Status Indians.

3 Context for NAAF's CGA with the Government of Canada

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation operates four major programs reflecting its commitment to promoting achievement and recognizing excellence in the Aboriginal community:

- The *National Aboriginal Achievement Awards* annually recognize the career achievements of outstanding men and women. The presentation is produced by NAAF and televised nationwide by Global and APTN.
- *Blueprint for the Future* is a series of one-day career fairs across Canada that introduce high school students to a diverse range of career opportunities.
- *Taking Pulse* (and *Industry in the Classroom*) is a program designed to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in Canada's work force.
- The Education Program *Building Brighter Futures* awards scholarships and bursaries to students for post-secondary education in all areas of study.

The Department of Canadian Heritage has been providing funding to NAAF since 1985.³ Federal support also comes from departments other than Canadian Heritage including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Human Resource Skills Development Canada, and Health Canada.

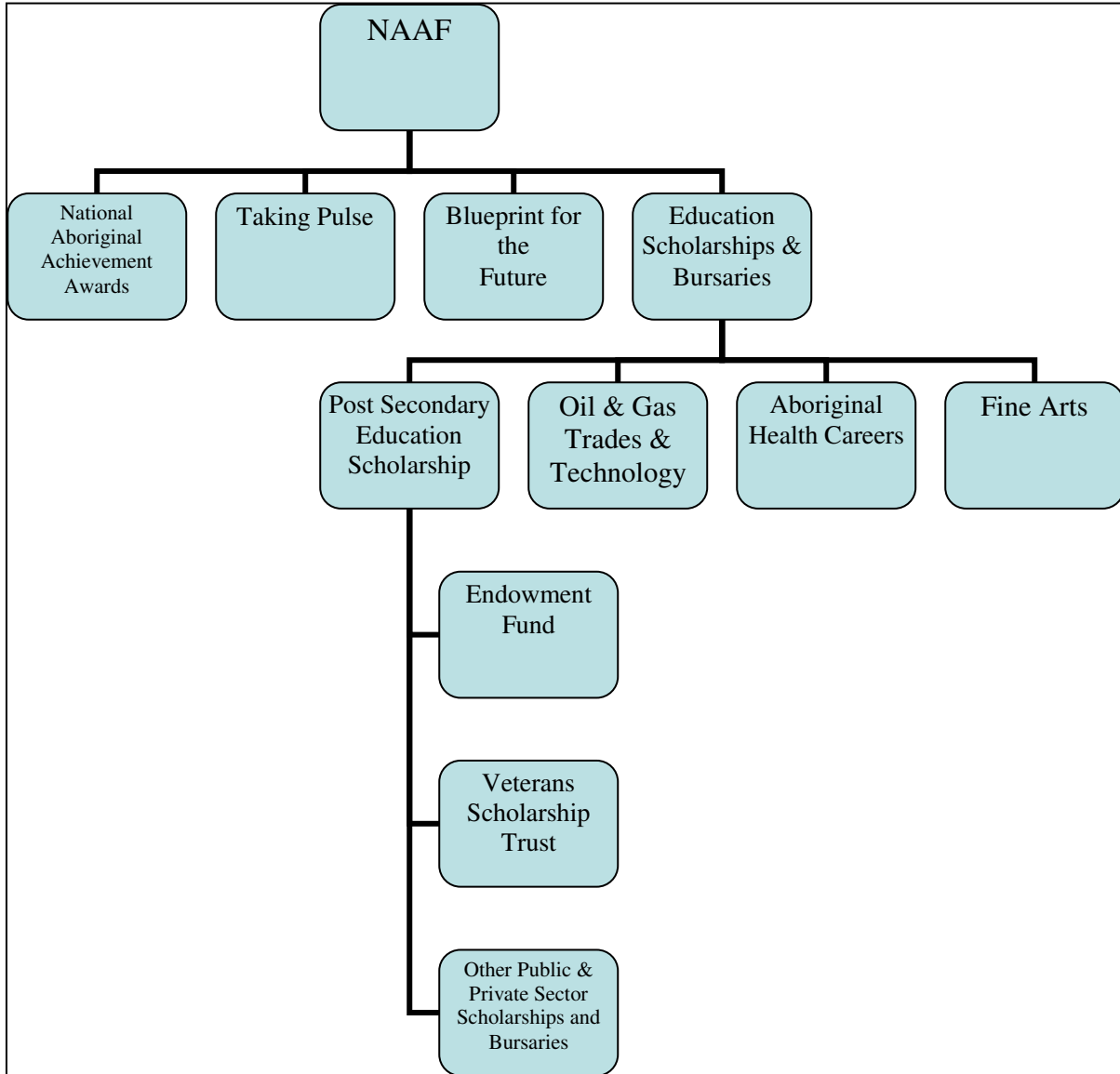
The Foundation is also an Aboriginal lead in generating corporate support for its programs. Some of NAAF's private sector sponsors include CIBC, Diavik, EDS, IBM, Imperial Oil, Investors Group, Suncor Energy Foundation, Petro-Canada, Shell Canada, DeBeers Canada and TD, to name a few.⁴ In addition, NAAF's Trust and Endowment sponsors include Aboriginal Veterans Scholarship Fund, the Ontario Aboriginal Partnerships Recognition Scholarship, and many other organizational and private sponsors.

³ Canadian Heritage Press Release, *Government of Canada Announces Endowment Fund for National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation*, 2003.

http://www.pch.gc.ca/newsroom/index_e.cfm?fuseaction=displayDocument&DocIDCd=3N0137

⁴ NAAF sponsors are listed on the organization's website (www.naaf.ca) and in their Annual Reports. Education partners can be found in NAAF's *Building Brighter Futures* brochures.

NAAF Education Program Structure



3.1 Building Brighter Futures: NAAF's Education Program

Through *Building Brighter Futures*, NAAF invests in Aboriginal students attending post-secondary institutions, and assists in opening the doors for Aboriginal young people to enter Canada's workforce with the skills and training to succeed while maintaining a connection to their cultural identity. It offers financial assistance through the following major categories:

- Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Bursary Awards Program for post secondary studies in business, science, law, engineering, technical studies, computer science, education, social work and social sciences.
- Fine Arts Bursary Awards Program for post-secondary studies, personal development, training with a professional or at a non- accredited arts

- organization, in fields such as visual, performing, media, theatre, production, graphic and literary arts.
- Aboriginal Health Careers Bursary and Scholarship Program for studies in medicine, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy, pharmacy, lab research, lab technology, dietetics, nutrition, health administration, public health policy and other health fields.
 - Oil and Gas Aboriginal Trades and Technology Bursary Awards Program for study in oil and gas trades and technology fields in Alberta colleges, universities and technical institutes.

3.1.1 Outreach and Communications

Communication activities for NAAF's Education Programs are incorporated into the organization's broad efforts to promote its programs and services through NAAF's websites, brochures, career fairs, the awards show, CEO tours, CEO and Board member appearances, and so on. The Foundation also undertakes outreach programs designed to promote its bursaries and scholarship award programs. For example, the CEO's two recent Northern tours⁵ were intended to raise the profile of NAAF Education Program to the Inuit and in remote northern communities. Promotional activities for the Government of Canada Endowment Fund are supported by these broad and far-reaching activities.

3.1.2 Overview of Education Program Administrative Process

Application Process

A student who is interested in applying for a NAAF scholarship or bursary award selects which is applicable to their specific field of study from NAAF's major program categories. Students complete an application package in accordance with specified guidelines.

The application packages must be received by the NAAF office by the specified deadline date, which for PSE is June 1st of each year and May 1st for Fine Arts. Applicants must provide the following documents:

- A completed Application Form
- Proof of Aboriginal Ancestry
- Official Transcripts
- Two completed Applicant Assessment Forums
- Letter of Personal Introduction
- An update Resume or CV
- A recent photograph
- Letter confirming admission into a program, or proof of continuing enrollment
- Letter from Band/PSE Education Office or Support Organization if funding is not available
- Verification of Tuition and Fees
- Financial Report Form

⁵ The eastern and western Arctic tours were in partnership with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

- Sample of Work (for Fine Art Applicants only).

Applications are reviewed for eligibility by NAAF Education staff, and applicants are contacted if there are any questions about the information submitted, or if the application is incomplete. Applicants are also encouraged to contact Education staff by phone or email if they need assistance at any point in the application process.

Jury Selection Process

To ensure a fair and transparent selection process, NAAF coordinates a Jury process which includes Jury members who are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis academics, professionals and individuals in the respective fields of study being considered. NAAF's policy is also to ensure that the 4 member Juries are also representative of gender and geography.

Generally, there is no set amount for individual bursaries or scholarships; rather, applicants are assessed individually, and the level of financial assistance varies according to assessed financial need, the number of successful applicants, and the availability of funds for allocation. Each successful applicant is awarded an amount based on equally weighted established criteria that includes:

- academic performance;
- financial need;
- connection to the Aboriginal community;
- commitment to the field of study;
- and in the case of Fine Arts, talent (based on a sample of work).

After the Jury selects successful recipients, the NAAF Director of Education links each recipient with the appropriate sponsor based on the sponsor's selection criteria for awards. Successful applicants from PSE and Fine Arts are typically streamed to receive the Endowment Fund based on the type of institution they are attending (typically university or colleges), the length of program (2 years or more), and the type of program (diploma or degree).

Notification Process

Shortly after the completion of the Jury process (approximately 2 -3 weeks), the names of all successful applicants and sponsors are posted on NAAF's website at the end of the award process. All applicants receive a letter whether they are successful or unsuccessful. Successful applicants will receive their award along with a letter that indicates the source of the award (ie. "This award has been made possible by the generous support of the Government of Canada) by early September of the academic year.

NAAF's Education Department manages and maintains a comprehensive student database for all successful and unsuccessful applicants. The database contains all information submitted by a student at time of application, as well as information used by the Jury to evaluate the application, financial information to assess need, type of award, category of award (ie. PSE, Fine Arts, Health, Oil & Gas), and so on, and, if applicable, reasons the application was unsuccessful.

In keeping with the terms and conditions in sponsor agreements, NAAF provides donors with a list of the names and addresses of the students that are supported through their specific bursary or scholarship award.

3.1.3 The Endowment Program within the NAAF Environment

Many NAAF scholarships and bursary awards are designated to specific Aboriginal groups, specific disciplines and so on, some of which rely on rigid eligibility criteria established by the donor. For example, a youth studying in Ontario would not be eligible for NAAF's ED Canada Inc bursary, which is only available to students enrolled in a program in Manitoba. Or, if a NAAF bursary or scholarship has been designated First Nation specific, an Inuit and Métis student would not be eligible.

By comparison, the Endowment Fund Program is more general in its approach and functions in a way that provides support to those post-secondary applicants who are not eligible for other NAAF awards that have more specific eligibility criteria. For this reason, a much larger pool of applicants benefit from the accessibility and flexibility of the Endowment Program. It is important to keep this in mind when assessing the reach and impact of the Endowment Program which is an integrated component NAAF's scholarship and bursary awards programs.

3.1.4 Endowment Performance Expectations

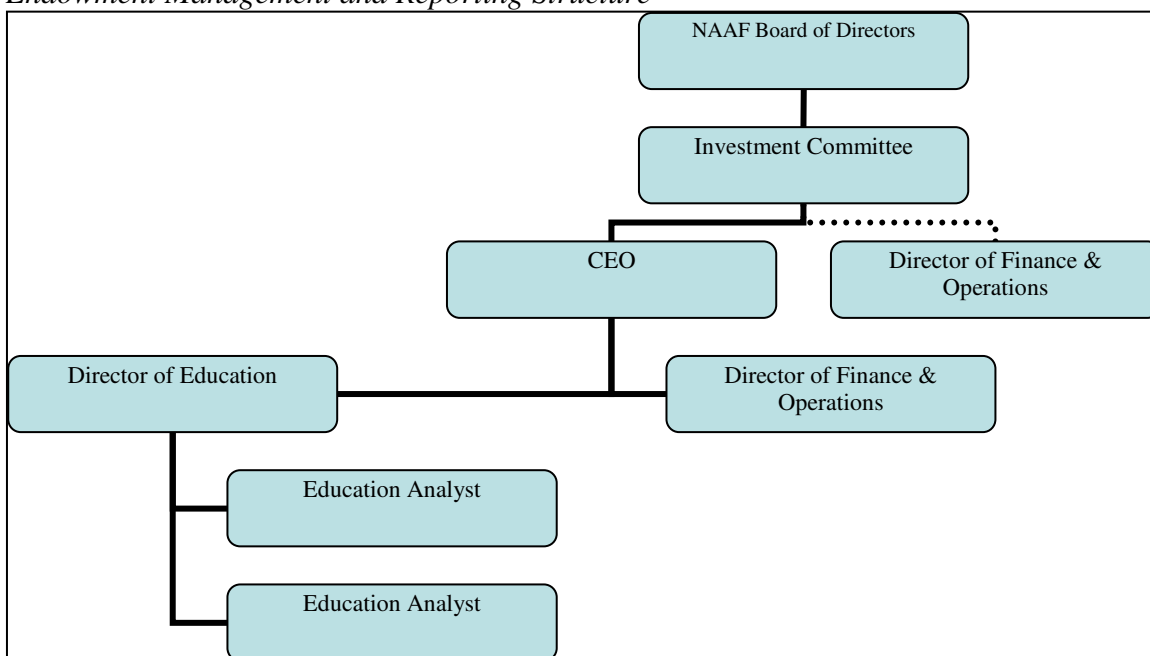
The Endowment is expected to ensure Aboriginal youth have access to culturally relevant programs that help them improve their skills knowledge and leadership, and to enhance their cultural identity. Revenues from the Endowment Fund are expected to be spent on scholarships and bursaries, with 15% of revenues generated passed on to NAAF in any given fiscal year for administration costs related to activities and projects associated with the purposes of the grant.

3.1.5 Endowment Fund Financial Overview

Total Funding:	\$22 million <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$12 million at start date (2003-04) ○ Additional \$10 million in 2006-07
Academic year	Generated Revenues (for scholarship disbursements and administrative costs)
▪ 2007-08	\$582,000
▪ 2006-07	\$547,000
▪ 2005-06	\$481,000
NAAF forecast	(proposed per academic year)
▪ 2008-09 Approved by NAAF Board	\$775,000
▪ 2009-10	\$750,000 (anticipated rate of return, CIBC Wood Gundy)
▪ 2010-11	\$750,000 (anticipated rate of return, CIBC Wood Gundy)

3.1.6 Management and Oversight

Endowment Management and Reporting Structure



NAAF's management of the Endowment Program is executed within the context of the broader Education Program as described in the section above. There are three full time employees working with bursaries and scholarships in the Education Program. The Director of Education reports directly to the President & CEO. The Director of Finance is responsible for the Endowment Fund administration and reporting, along with all other Education contributions and investments. The daily management of the investments is performed by CIBC Wood Gundy.

The Foundation has established an *Investment Committee* to oversee the investment and management of the Endowment Fund, in addition to other NAAF investments. Members of the Committee are financially literate and currently include six Board members and as required by the CGA at least three Directors who are not officers or employees of the Foundation. The Committee makes its investment decisions on a Statement of Investment Policy that is approved by the NAAF Board annually.

The investment policy sets out investment objectives, asset allocations and performance benchmarks. In the case of the Endowment, the investment policy is guided by NAAF's CGA with Canadian Heritage which prescribes certain standards and limitations on the investment of Endowment funds.

The Committee ensures that the NAAF Board is regularly made aware of its work through reporting at quarterly meetings and an annual audit. The Board approves recommendations from the Committee regarding Proposed Scholarships for each academic year from revenues generated by NAAF's investments, including those derived from the Endowment Fund.

4 Evaluation Findings

The Evaluation findings in this section are over the period 2005-08, and are based on the four issues outlined in the Evaluation Framework:

- Relevance
- Results / Effectiveness
- Cost-effectiveness
- Success Factors and Areas for Improvement.

Because of the integrative nature of NAAF's Education Program, some of the findings around the activities and projects under the CGA are relevant to both the Endowment Fund and NAAF's broader Post-Secondary Education and, on occasion, Fine Arts streams. The Evaluation findings draw these distinctions when necessary and integrate them where appropriate.

4.1 *Evaluation of Program Relevance*

For the Evaluation, Program Relevance was assessed from three perspectives:

- I. federal government priority for Aboriginal education and its alignment with NAAF policies and goals;
- II. the role of the Program in the context of funding supports available to Aboriginal post-secondary students across Canada; and
- III. the activities and projects of the CGA and their relevance to Aboriginal students and communities.

4.1.1 **Aboriginal Education: A Priority**

There is a broad consensus among federal and provincial/territorial governments and Aboriginal Canadians that closing the socio-economic gap between Canada's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations requires investment in the education and development of Aboriginal young people. Furthermore, the federal government recognizes that targeted measures are needed to address the gap between academic achievement and access to post-secondary education for the Aboriginal population. As a result, the Government of Canada has made Aboriginal post-secondary education a priority.

In 2003, then Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Coops announced the establishment of the Government of Canada Endowment Fund as an investment in part "to help increase the number of Aboriginal students graduating from post-secondary institutions."⁶ The expansion of that Endowment Fund in 2007 signaled the Government's ongoing commitment to sustainable programming that targets assistance and support to Aboriginal people wishing to attend post-secondary education.

⁶ Canadian Heritage Press Release, 2003.

At the same time, this commitment is echoed in the federal government's commitment to improving the lives of Canada's Aboriginal people with educational opportunities:

“... our Government will continue to foster partnerships that help Aboriginal people get the skills and training to take advantage of these job prospects in the North and across Canada.” (Speech from Throne, *Strong Leadership. A Better Canada*, October 2007).

Although the education profile of Aboriginal populations is steadily improving, Aboriginal people continue to be under-represented in Canadian colleges, universities and other post secondary institutions (Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Peoples Survey*, 2001). Aboriginal post-secondary students also face significant barriers in comparison to mainstream post-secondary populations, ranging from socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and racism to more subtle issues that may include low self-esteem and lack of Aboriginal support services at post-secondary institutions (R.A. Malatest and Associates, *Aboriginal Peoples and Post Secondary Education*, 2004).

In 1998-99, NAAF further expanded its education scholarship and bursary mandate to provide financial assistance for studies in all academic areas for post-secondary education. The purpose was to meet the increasing need of Aboriginal post-secondary students for financial support and to assist them in the pursuit of excellence in every discipline (NAAF *Building Brighter Futures*). Since that time, the Foundation has disbursed over \$27.7 million to over 7,000 recipients.

In realizing the potential of Aboriginal students, NAAF has made itself relevant to public and corporate sponsors from across Canada - businesses see investment in Aboriginal youth, connections are made through NAAF's scholarship and bursary award programs, and doorways are opened. The number of NAAF scholarships and bursaries supported by the public and private sectors, corporations, foundations and individuals continues to grow, and the NAAF Board and staff report that the Government of Canada Endowment Fund has helped make NAAF an organization of choice for channeling financial support to Aboriginal students.

NAAF realizes that this potential and these connections are not limited to post-secondary education. One of the Foundation priorities identified in the 2008 – 2013 NAAF Strategic Plan is to branch into new areas of education and scholarships. According to the Strategic Plan: “There is consensus that NAAF should expand their activities in the field of education, ensure that the concept of education is inclusive, and make certain that financial supports are provided for a broad range of Aboriginal learners.” One aspect of this focus is to determine how NAAF can best help those people who leave the education system (“drop outs”) and keep Aboriginal youth in school by capitalizing on tools and capacities currently available. By helping students succeed, NAAF is strengthening the importance of education and building a base of potential Aboriginal post-secondary achievers. The next step for many of these “at risk” students is college or university, and NAAF could play a role in supporting them.

Some key informants to the evaluation felt that Aboriginal people are more likely to access Aboriginal organizations for support than mainstream ones, and for this reason almost all informants saw NAAF as playing an important role in providing financial assistance and support to Aboriginal post-secondary students. According to their responses, NAAF has a reputation as a non political entity that focuses on Aboriginal achievement, and has established a high level of trust with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders in the delivery of its educational scholarships and bursaries. Some informants viewed the Endowment Program as a federal endorsement of a direction already set by Aboriginal communities and leadership, therefore highly relevant.

4.1.2 Funding Supports for Aboriginal PSE Students: NAAF's Role

Aboriginal post-secondary students have opportunity to apply for a range of funding supports - from federal and provincial sources to private and university/college programs that target Aboriginal students to Aboriginal organizations such as NAAF. NAAF's Education Program plays a key role in helping some of these students meet these needs, while in many cases reducing the burden of student debt.

While Aboriginal PSE graduation at community colleges is almost at the same level as that of the general population, there are fewer university graduates. Also, the high school dropout rates among the Aboriginal population are disproportionately high. For example, approximately 70 percent of Aboriginals in Manitoba aged 20-24 did not complete high school, compared to 16 percent in the same age group in the general population.⁷ According to the 2008 NAAF Strategic Plan: "To date the Foundation has been extremely successful in its focus on Post Secondary Education. However, by definition this is only reaching 4% of Aboriginal learners."

Government Post Secondary Funding Supports

The bulk of targeted funding available to Aboriginal post-secondary students is directed through mandated programs, namely Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Program. The PSE Program is available to Status Indian students living on and off reserve, Inuit and Innu students and consists of three parts:

- The Post Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP)– to improve access to post secondary education;
- The University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP) – for those enrolled in entrance programs; and
- Indian Studies Support Program – to support the delivery of college and university programs specifically designed for First Nation and Inuit students.

Almost 100% of funding for the PSSSP and UCEPP programs are delivered by First Nations or their administering organizations. In 2005-2006, departmental expenditures on the PSE Program amounted to about \$305 million, with approximately 23,000 students

⁷ Michael Mendelson, *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, July, 2006.

receiving financial support through the program.⁸ INAC's PSE Program is not accessible to Métis and Non-Status Indian students.

The Government of Canada also provides funding support to Aboriginal post-secondary students through the Millennium Scholarship Foundation.⁹ The Millennium Foundation has invested \$13 million over four years in experimental projects involving Aboriginal students.¹⁰

Other Aboriginal Scholarships and Bursary Programs in Canada

INAC maintains an electronic Aboriginal Bursary System¹¹ for the purpose of providing Aboriginal students with a tool to facilitate the pursuit of post secondary studies. The awards are made available by various organizations, and on INAC's website bursaries may be searched for by discipline, provider, or key words. Many universities also maintain comprehensive lists of Aboriginal scholarships and bursary awards.

An initial scan yielded that there are upwards of 500 scholarships and bursaries available to Aboriginal post secondary students through a variety of sources. For example, there are many scholarships and bursaries offered by Métis organizations. Of the 500, many of these awards appear to be limited and range in amounts from \$1,000 to \$4,000 (including the Millennium Access Bursaries). In addition, most seem to be targeted to specific disciplines, regions and so on.

NAAF's Role

NAAF is the largest supporter of Aboriginal post-secondary education outside the Government of Canada. While its programs may serve as supplemental funding for some, for others (as we will see later in this section) it means the difference between going to university or not.

By comparison to other Aboriginal scholarship and bursary programs, NAAF's bursaries and awards are national in scope, generally not limited in scale, available to all Aboriginal groups, and reach across broad range of post-secondary fields of study. By supporting a non political entity such as NAAF, the Government of Canada is able to support all Aboriginal groups - First Nation (Status and Non Status), Inuit and Métis students - studying at university and college campuses across Canada in a range of disciplines. This is particularly important to Métis and Non-Status students as there are fewer programs targeted to supporting them in their efforts to attend college and university.

⁸ <http://www.turtleisland.org/education/abed07.pdf>. Report on the Standing Committee on Northern Affairs and Northern Development, *No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, February 2007.

⁹ Each year, the Foundation distributes \$340 million in bursaries and scholarships to students across Canada. In its 2008 budget, the Government of Canada declared its intention not to renew the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation after its initial mandate is complete. As a result, the Foundation's ability to make awards to students will expire in January 2010.

¹⁰ <http://millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/mrn-changing-course-en.pdf>

¹¹ <http://pse-esd.ainc-inac.gc.ca/abs/main.asp?lang=E>. Last updated: 2003/05/10

Two key informants did express concerns about NAAF's role in disbursing scholarship and bursaries funded by the Government of Canada. The informants felt that decisions around post-secondary funding should be organized by individual communities and accountable to the people it is intended to reach.

On the other hand, according to another informant there is a place for NAAF because it “pays attention and responds to [funding] needs in a discerning way.” Responses from other key informants echoed this sentiment with several citing these distinctions:

- NAAF's Education Program's broad eligibility components – such as the fact it is open to all Aboriginal identity groups – makes the Endowment Program *accessible*.
- The interactive nature of the applications process ensures *openness*.
- The acumen of juries, coupled with jury discretion and discernment, makes it both *fair and flexible*.

The perception from key informants is that the Government of Canada Endowment Fund is supporting Aboriginal learners who might otherwise “fall through the crack”, and thereby plays a role increasing the number of Aboriginal post-secondary students.

4.1.3 Students' Perspective on Program Relevance

Aboriginal post-secondary students have also commented on the relevancy of NAAF's Education Program for them. For Aboriginal students the Endowment Program is relevant on two fronts:

- (1) it provides the financial support necessary to achieve their goals;
- (2) as an Aboriginal organization, NAAF provides additional tools and personal support necessary to help Aboriginal post-secondary students succeed.

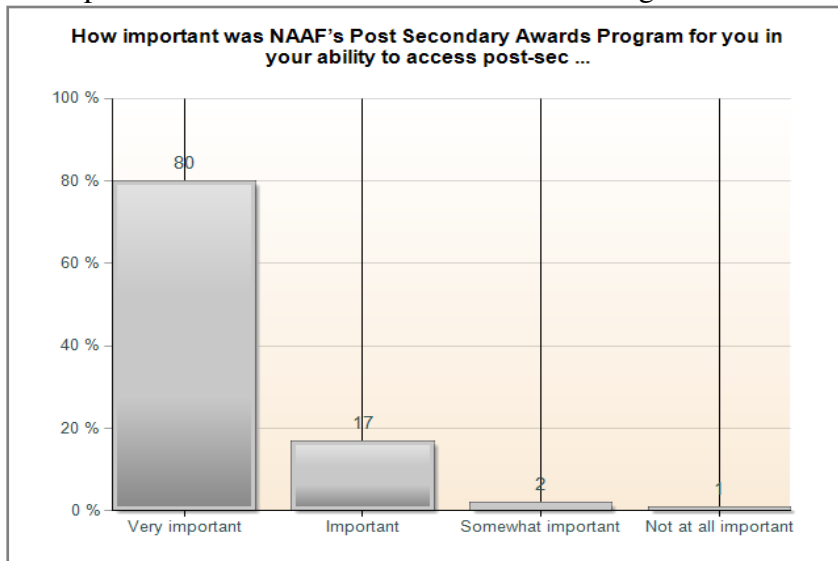
In a brainstorming session at a NAAF Aboriginal Youth Roundtable in March 2007, Aboriginal post-secondary students from across Canada selected Bursaries and Scholarships as a NAAF program that works well in meeting the needs of First Nation, Inuit and Métis youth.

Through the online survey, the Government of Canada Endowment Fund award recipients were asked:

- How important was NAAF's Post-Secondary Education Program for you in your ability to access post-secondary education?, and
- Was it essential to your decision to pursue post-secondary studies?

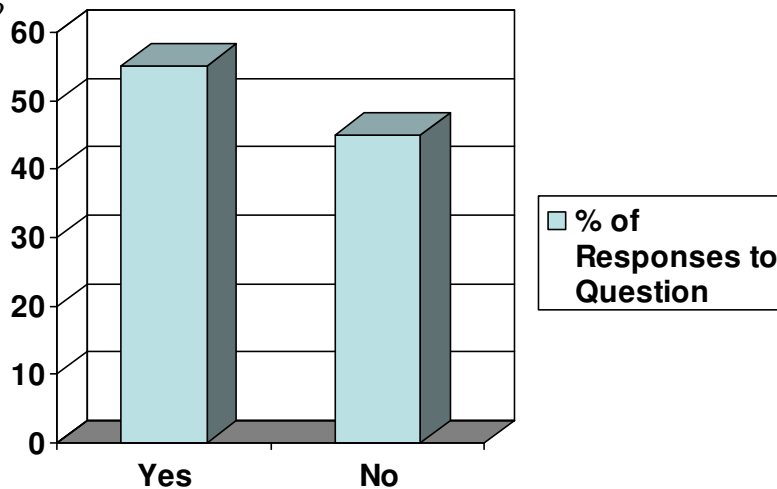
In response to the first question, 97% of respondents indicated that it was “important” or “very important” to them in accessing post secondary education.

Chart 1: Importance of NAAF PSE Award in Accessing Post-Secondary Education



Perhaps the strongest statement of relevance is found in 55% of students responding that the awards made through the Endowment were “essential” in their pursuit of post-secondary studies.

Chart 2: Was the Endowment Award essential in decision to pursue post-secondary studies?



These views were further confirmed in the Aboriginal Youth Focus Group. Students overwhelmingly saw NAAF as having a role not in only increasing accessibility for post-secondary education, but also an “advocate” for youth.

Furthermore, one student commented that NAAF’s philosophy of success and setting goals encourages these same values (of success and achieving goals) among its bursary and scholarship recipients. As stated by another student, “*the financial support and personal encouragement that I received from NAAF were essential in helping me achieve my goals.*”

4.2 Evaluation of Program Results / Effectiveness

To determine the impact of the Endowment Program and its effectiveness, the evaluation considered the extent to which the purpose, aims and expected results of the CGA have been achieved by looking at:

- how successful NAAF's activities and projects under the CGA have been in reaching a broad range of eligible students; and
- the effectiveness of NAAF's criteria, outreach and communications activities, and administrative processes.

This section has three parts:

- (1) Overall results of the Endowment Program;
- (2) Effectiveness of the process;
- (3) Extent to which the purpose, aims and outcomes of the CGA have been met.

Due to the nature of NAAF's Education Program – and the situation of the Endowment Program within it, whereby applicants are first streamed into other categories of awards - care must be given in interpreting results and trends, as they relate to the CGA specifically. To illustrate, while not reflected in this Evaluation, in 2007 NAAF awarded 247 health careers bursaries. Thus, when looking at trends in program disciplines for example, health career bursaries awarded by NAAF to doctors and dentists etc. have not been taken into account.

4.2.1 Overall Results

To determine the results of the activities and projects under the CGA, this section answers three questions:

- How is funding support distributed among recipients?
 - Includes a general overview of applications, recipients and award amounts
- What areas are being supported?
 - Includes a breakdown across program area, type and discipline
- Who does the support reach?
 - Includes a profile of recipients by Aboriginal ancestry, region and gender.

How is Endowment Funding Support Distributed?

As we have noted, Endowment Fund awards need to be seen in the context of NAAF's overall PSE program as it draws its applicants from this pool. With the exception of 2006-07 when PSE applications dipped by 34%, the application pool for PSE awards has risen between 2005-06 and 2007-08. The upward trend has continued with 673 applications in 2008-09, which represents about a 16% increase in applications since 2005-06.

In the three years of the evaluation period (2005 – 2008), nearly 80% or higher of all NAAF's PSE applicants received an award (see Table 1 below). Year 2006-07 is an

anomaly in that almost everyone who applied received a PSE award.¹² The amount students have received in relation to their request through the PSE has ranged for a low of 20.4% in 2007-08 to a high of 34.7% in 2006-07.

Table 1: Overview of NAAF PSE Bursary Awards Program

Academic Year	# of Applicants	Total \$ Amount Requested	Total # of Recipients	Amount Awarded	% of Applicants Receiving Award	% Received of Amount Requested
2007-08	618	\$6,379,550	486	\$1,307,100	78.6%	20.4%
2006-07	380	\$3,642,398	371	\$1,264,400	97.6%	34.7%
2005-06	580	\$4,294,371	495	\$1,484,16	85.3%	26.7%

While the number of PSE recipients did not grow significantly between 2005 and 2008, the number of Endowment award recipients grew by more than 10% over this period¹³ (see Table 2 below). Awards from the Endowment account for roughly 30% of all PSE awards and about 35% of total amount of funding awarded under NAAF's PSE Program.

Since applicants do not apply directly for a Government of Canada Endowment Fund award, it cannot be determined what percentage of applicants were unsuccessful in receiving an Endowment specific bursary.

Table 2: Government of Canada Endowment Fund Awards Funding Results

Academic Year	Total # of PSE Recipients	# of Recipients	% of Recipients Receiving Endowment	Total \$ Amount Requested	Amount Awarded	% Received of Amount Requested
2007-08	486	185	38.1%	\$2,298,738	\$550,400	23.9%
2006-07	371	97	26.2%	\$ 920,805	\$ 398,000	43.2%
2005-06	495	168	33.9%	\$1,367,260	\$ 405,057	29.6%

Furthermore, since Endowment recipients have received about 24% to 43% of total funding requested, the Fund appears somewhat more responsive to financial support

¹² The anomaly highlights program risks and calls for further explanation: NAAF was delayed in circulating its Education Program brochure in 2006-07 due to staff turn-over, thereby contributing to the drop in applications received

¹³ The anomaly in Year 2006-07 corresponds with a drop in Endowment award recipients for that year as well.

requested when compared to PSE awards generally. As a matter of practice, NAAF and the Juries have made efforts to provide some level of financial support to all worthy applicants. NAAF has in fact distributed the funds in a way that maximizes the impact of available funding by supporting as many worthy applicants as possible. In other words, NAAF provides some funds requested to all eligible applicants as opposed to fully funding some and not others.

Recipients of the Endowment are generally older students, with an average age between 27 and 28 (see Table 3 below). As one respondent put it, NAAF is able to meet the needs of mature adult learners, some of whom would otherwise “fall through the cracks.” The older average age of award recipients is consistent with the older age pattern of Aboriginal PSE students when compared to the general PSE student population.¹⁴

While individual Endowment award amounts have ranged from \$500 to over \$13,000, the average value of the award ranges between \$2,400 in 2005-06 to over \$4,000 in 2007-08 (Table 3). The later level of awards highlights the availability of funds to be distributed among a smaller number of applicants that year. The average award for the three year evaluation period was \$3163.

Table 3: Average age of Endowment recipients and average value of award

Academic Year	Average Age	Average \$ Value of Award
2007-08	27.9	\$2,975.14
2006-07	28.8	\$4,103.09
2005-06	27.2	\$2,411.05

Note: Recipients are only eligible for one NAAF bursary or scholarship per academic year. We have not tracked recipients of multiple Government of Canada Endowment Fund awards or NAAF awards over the 2005-08 periods.

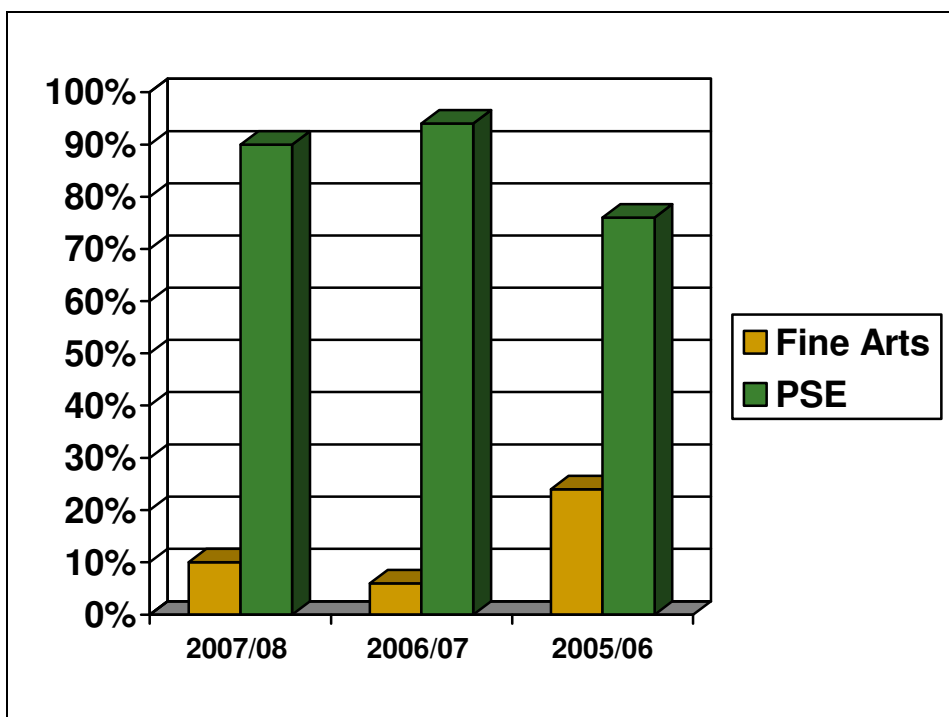
What Areas are being Supported?

The activities and projects under the CGA are intended to achieve higher levels of education among Aboriginal students by supporting Aboriginal students enrolled in community colleges (including CEGEP) and universities in fields of study that respond to Aboriginal self-reliance goals (CGA Section 2.3.1).

As mentioned earlier, the Endowment supports awards for PSE and Fine Arts. As one can see in Chart 3 below, the number of PSE awards is much higher than for Fine Arts. It should be noted that NAAF has other scholarship and bursary awards that are tapped into for Fine Arts students.

¹⁴ Mendelson, Michael. *Aboriginal Peoples and PSE in Canada*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2006.

Chart 3: Endowment awards allocated across PSE and Fine Arts streams



Endowment awards are supporting students at different levels of their program (see Table 4). Given that the Endowment is supporting college students in two year programs it is not surprising that the number of students being supported begins slope downwards after this point. The relatively few number of 4th year plus reflects the lower number of students in graduate programs.

Table 4: Total # of Government of Endowment Recipients by Year of Study

Year	<1 st Year of Study	1 st Year of Study	2 nd Year of Study	3 rd Year of Study	4 th Year of Study	> 4 th Year of Study	Total
2007-08	1	76	53	31	23	1	185
2006-07	0	29	34	21	11	2	97
2005-06	3	54	57	33	18	3	168

The Endowment Program awards primarily assist university undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, with the largest proportion (55% - 59%) studying undergraduate programs (see Table 5 below). Since university attainment is the biggest PSE gap for Aboriginal people, the activities under the CGA are contributing to reducing this gap. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase from 2005-06 to 2007-08 in the

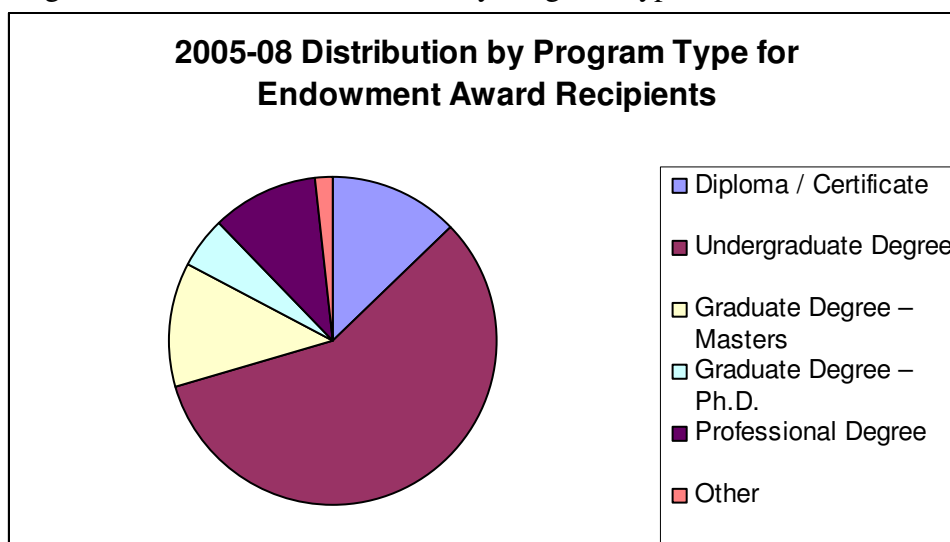
number of graduate students (both Masters and PhD) being supported, which is a very positive result.

Table 5: Endowment Awards by Type of Diploma/Degree

Year	2007-08		2006-07		2005-06	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Diploma / Certificate	29	15.7%	5	5.2%	24	14.2%
Undergraduate Degree	110	59.5%	53	54.6%	97	57.8%
Graduate Degree – Masters	25	13.5%	11	11.3%	19	11.3%
Graduate Degree – PhD	11	5.9%	8	8.2%	3	1.8%
Professional Degree	8	4.3%	19	19.6%	20	11.9%
Other	2	1%	1	1%	5	3%
Total	185	~100	97	~100	168	100

The following diagram tracks the overall distribution of program types for Endowment award recipients for the period of this Evaluation.

Diagram 1: 2005-2008 Distribution by Program Type for Endowment Award Recipients



The distribution of Endowment awards across Program Disciplines (see Table 6 below) reflects choices students make in terms of fields of study, but also the impact of other NAAF awards programs, which successful applicants are matched with before being allocated an Endowment award.

Table 6: Endowment Award across Program Discipline

Program Discipline	2007-08		2006-07		2005-06	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Arts	1	0.5%	0	0%	0	0%
Business	2	1.1%	1	1%	3	1.8%
Education	23	12.4%	4	4%	24	14.3%
Engineering	0	0%	2	2.1%	0	0.00%
Law	6	3.2%	21	21.7%	16	9.5%
Performance	1	0.5%	5	5.2%	7	4.2%
Science	0	0	13	13.4%	7	4.2%
Social Science	116	62.7%	40	41.2%	68	40.5%
Social Work	5	2.7%	5	5.2%	9	5.5%
Technical Studies	14	7.6%	5	5.2%	2	1.2%
Visual Arts	17	9.2%	1	1%	32	19%
Total	185	~100%	97	100%	168	~100%

The discipline of Social Sciences draws the largest percentage of Endowment recipients, a percentage which increased quite dramatically in 2007-08. Professions, such as education and law, which have traditionally drawn Aboriginal students, also constitute a sizeable percentage, while areas such as engineering, science and business have comparatively low representation in terms of fields of study. Noteworthy, awards for technical studies are a growing proportion of the total.

One has to be careful in interpreting these results because, as has been pointed out earlier, applications may also be streamed to other scholarship and awards programs. So for example, a large number of students enrolled in engineering programs receive support from other NAAF awards. Health professions have their own awards stream and therefore do not show up as one of the professional fields of study.

Most key informants were aware of the focus on social sciences and the arts within the Endowment program. There was a mixed reaction to this pattern and questions about whether more effort was needed to promote other areas that may appear under-represented within the numbers. While some informants felt that Aboriginal students would benefit more from studying business (“where there are jobs”), others felt that academic programs such as social science are “portals for discovering new possibilities,” thereby improving Aboriginal youths’ skills knowledge and leadership, (CGA Expected Outcome Section 8). It was also said that social science and other university arts programs give Aboriginal students the skills necessary to “*move and change with the times.*”

Who is the Support Reaching?

Aboriginal Ancestry

First and foremost, NAAF’s activities and projects as they relate to the CGA are intended to support all Aboriginal students – Status Indian¹⁵, Non Status Indian, Inuit and Métis (Section 2.2). Table 7 below shows that the Endowment is indeed supporting all Aboriginal groups.

Table 7: Total # Endowment Fund Award Recipients by Academic Year Awarded by Aboriginal Ancestry

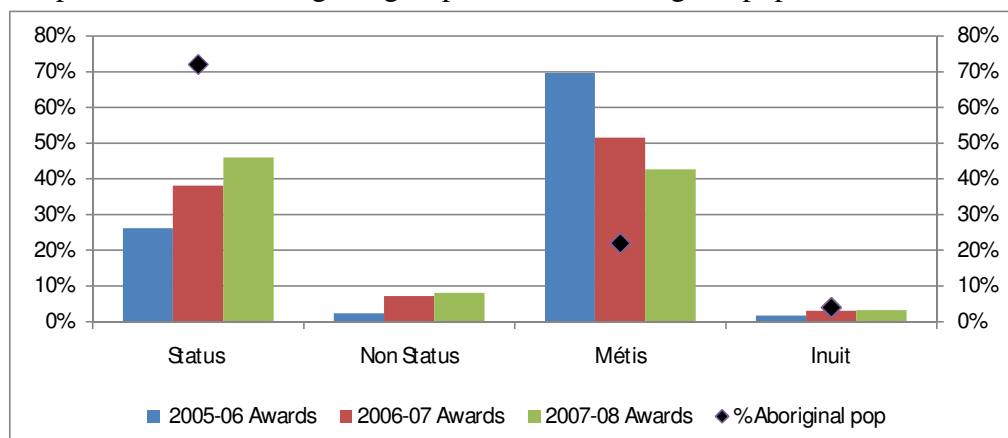
Year	Status First Nations	Non Status First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Total
2007-08	85	15	79	6	185
2006-07	37	7	50	3	97
2005-06	44	4	117	3	168

The above table also indicates that supports for Status First Nation, Non Status First Nation and Inuit have been increasing, while support for Métis has dropped considerable since 2005-06.

The charts below compares the percentage of Endowment recipients by Aboriginal ancestry compared to the percentage of Aboriginal group in the overall Aboriginal population in 2006.

¹⁵ For its own tracking purposes NAAF refers to Status and Non Status Indians as First Nation.

Chart 4: % of Endowment Fund Award Recipients Awarded by Aboriginal Ancestry compared to % of Aboriginal group in overall Aboriginal population 2006¹⁶



The data show that Métis are over-represented in Endowment awards compared to their share of the Aboriginal population. This is not entirely surprising as Status Indian and Inuit post-secondary students have access to other funding supports (through INAC PSE) that Métis and Non-Status Indians typically cannot access (See earlier section on Program Relevance). What the data are showing us is that NAAF is able to fill a gap in the funding sources available among Aboriginal groups.

These findings were confirmed by the online survey. According to these results, only 16% of Métis respondents to a question about organization funding have in fact accessed this source to help meet their post-secondary financial needs. Even more strikingly, zero percent (0%) of Non Status students accessed organization funding. By comparison, 74% Status First Nation respondents were able to access band or organization funding to help meet their post-secondary financial needs. Interestingly, even though Inuit have access to INAC's PSE program, only 10% of Inuit students receiving awards were able to access organization funding to help meet their post-secondary financial needs.

The Endowment appears to be an important source of financial support for Inuit within NAAF's overall PSE Program offerings however. In 2007-08, 8 Inuit were awarded PSE awards, 7 of which were from the Endowment. Having said this, based on the 2006 census the percentage of awards for Inuit students is only at about half their representative population.

Geographic regions

As an initial observation, the general geographical distribution of the Endowment Awards generally reflects those across the NAAF's whole PSE program. Table 8 below breakdowns the distribution of Endowment Fund awards by region in terms of numbers and percentages.

¹⁶ Census data does not track self-identified Non-Status Indians.

Table 8: # and % of Endowment Award Recipients across Regions

Province / Territory	2007-08		2006-07		2005-06	
	Total	%	Total #	%	Total #	%
British Columbia	32	17.3%	18	18.6%	34	20.2%
Alberta	17	9.2%	21	21.6%	32	19.0%
Saskatchewan	19	10.3%	12	12.4%	16	9.5%
Manitoba	22	11.9%	8	8.2%	22	13.2%
Ontario	63	34.1%	18	18.6%	42	25.0%
Quebec	8	4.3%	6	6.2%	8	4.8%
New Brunswick	3	1.6%	0	0%	1	0.6%
Nova Scotia	4	2.2%	2	2.1%	3	1.8%
Prince Edward Island	1	0.5%	1	1.0%	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	7	3.8%	6	6.2%	6	3.6%
Yukon	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Northwest Territories	7	3.9%	3	3.1%	3	1.8%
Nunavut	2	1.1%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	0	0%	2	2.1%	1	0.6%
Total	185	100.00%	97	~100%	168	~100%

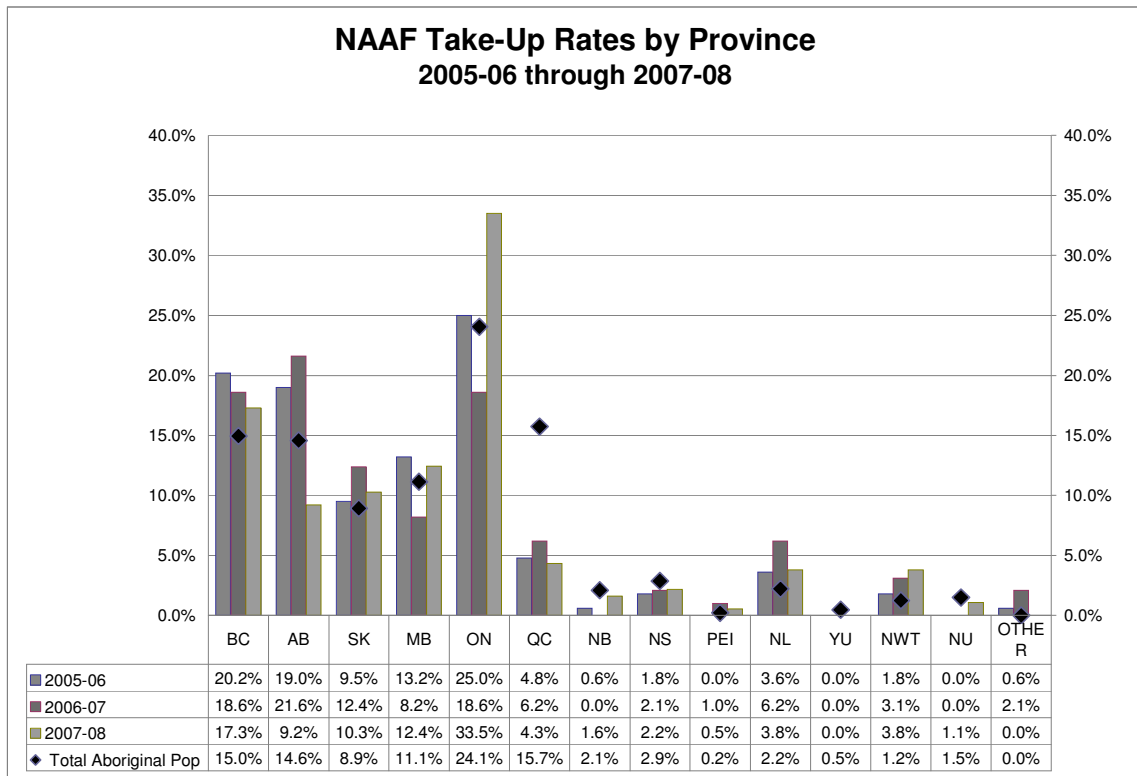
Note: Geographical representations of PSE 2007-08 have been included for comparative purposes only in that academic year of the program.

- "Other" refers to those recipients who indicated that their "Home Province" was not in Canada. In the cases above the recipients "Home" was in the US.

These numbers are illuminating when analyzing provincial uptake of the Endowment Program in comparison to the overall province/territory Aboriginal population as is done in Chart 5¹⁷.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada Census 2006.

Chart 5 Comparisons of Endowment Awards and Aboriginal Population by Region



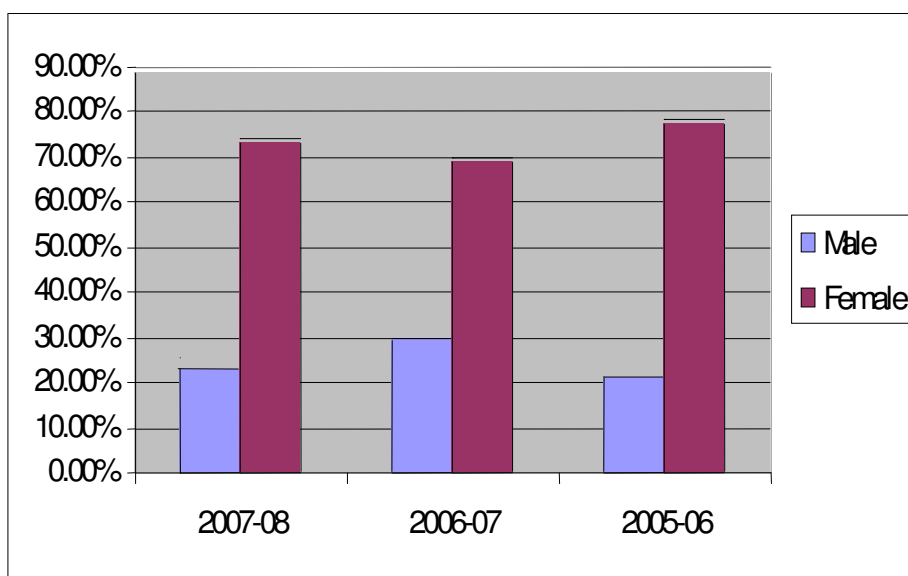
What can be observed is that BC is consistently over-represented in terms of uptake of the Endowment Program; with the western provinces generally doing well in relation to their share of the national Aboriginal population. Similarly over the evaluation period the percentage of awards going to Ontario roughly compares to their percentage of the Aboriginal population. By contrast, Quebec is significantly under-presented, as is the North. The Yukon, in particular, has not had one Endowment Fund recipient or recipient of any other PSE award in the period 2005-08; however they have had awards from the Health Careers program.

As a final note, while the evaluation has not analyzed urban/rural/Northern breakdown by home community, interview informants indicated that the program is not reaching Aboriginal students living in northern and remote communities and in larger urban centres to the extent that it should.

Awards by Gender

The number of Endowment awards for Aboriginal women is on average three times that of men (see Chart 6 below). This is reflective of a general pattern in Aboriginal PSE participation. According to a recent report *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Post-Secondary Enrolment Rates*¹⁸, Aboriginal women make up a “disproportionately large percentage of Aboriginal students.” The same study also indicates that women have a harder time getting funding. While there are few formal strategies in place to deal with the distinct needs of women,¹⁹ it does appear that NAAF is responding very effectively to these needs. What does emerge is a question about how greater male participation in PSE might be promoted through NAAF’s awards program.

Chart 6: % of Male/Recipient of the Endowment Award



¹⁸ Prepared by R.A. Malatest and Associates for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, May 2002.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Summary Conclusion

In sum, through the CGA NAAF has been able to facilitate the achievement of higher levels of education by providing funding support over the evaluation period to 450 Aboriginal post secondary students in universities and colleges across Canada in a range of disciplines that support economic self-reliance. For the most part, the Endowment is reaching all Aboriginal groups across the country, although more can be done to better ensure regional representation of recipients, and is responding well to differences in access to other available PSE funding support available to different Aboriginal groups.

4.2.2 Effectiveness

To determine the effectiveness of the activities and projects under the CGA, this section looks at four issues:

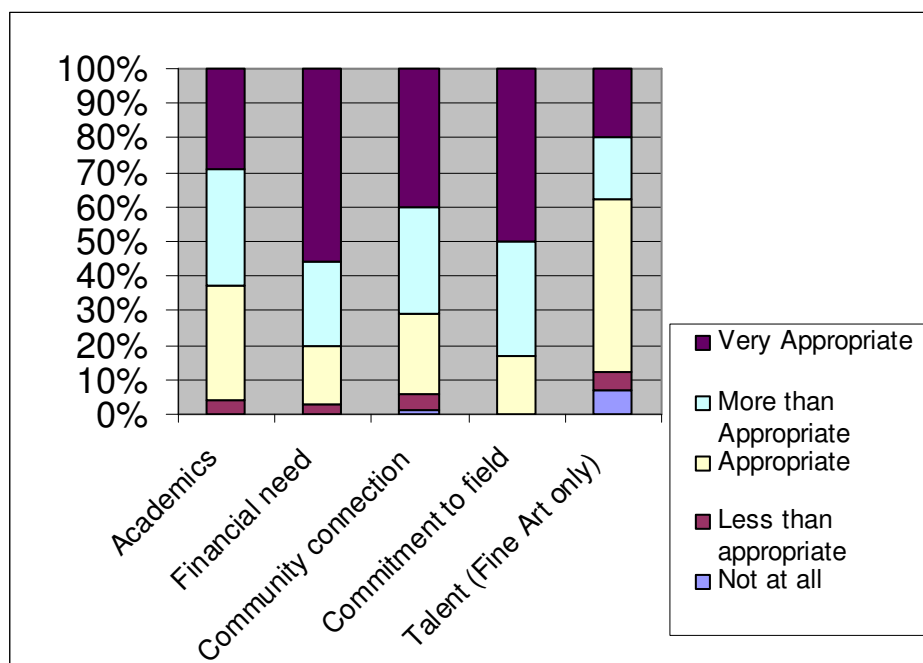
- Criteria and awards selection process
- Administrative processes
- Promotion and outreach activities
- Expected outcomes (including fund performance)

Criteria & Awards Selection

As with NAAF's other PSE and Fine Arts awards, selection criteria for the Government of Canada Endowment Fund are equally weighed and include academic merit, financial need, connection to the Aboriginal community; commitment to the field of study; and in the case of Fine Arts, talent (CGA Section 2.3.3).

Students responding to a question in the online survey about these criteria overwhelmingly felt that they were "appropriate" or "very appropriate" selection criteria (see Table 9 below). When looking at the level of appropriateness, financial need and commitment to the field of study stand out, while responses around academic performance and talent (Fine Arts) are more circumspect. Interestingly, students believe that connections to community is a very important criteria, which augurs well for the CGA's goals of promoting Aboriginal identify, self-governance and self-reliance through the Endowment Fund.

Table 9: Appropriateness of Eligibility Criteria



	Not at all	Less than appropriate	Appropriate	More than Appropriate	Very Appropriate
Academics	0%	4%	33%	34%	29%
Financial need	0%	3%	17%	24%	56%
Community connection	1%	5%	23%	30%	40%
Commitment to field	0%	0%	17%	33%	50%
Talent (Fine Art only)	7%	5%	50%	18%	20%

Key informants and the focus groups also generally agreed that these criteria were “right”, though in some cases there was a caveat around the equal weighting of criteria.

A number of issues, however, were raised both by key informants and students about the criteria, most notably academic performance, which was considered potentially problematic because it might limit access or create barriers. If the overall goal is to get more Aboriginal students into colleges and universities, informants deemed that the Program should ensure flexibility for this purpose. The underlying premise is that there is a direct correlation between higher education, higher participation in work force and higher economic prosperity. In other words, those with lower grades are future work force participants and therefore should be receiving “equal opportunity”.

For example, one respondent felt that some students would be disadvantaged if they came from a high school which did not prepare them as well as other high schools for post-secondary. Another: some students find the transition to post-secondary more difficult, and as a consequence their academic performance may suffer. These students would therefore be “penalized” for not adjusting as well as others. Another: some post-secondary institutions lack support services for Aboriginal students, which may inhibit

academic potential. And finally, “grading systems” across the country or across disciplines are not consistent, therefore someone studying in a more difficult program or at a more rigorous college or university may not have the same level of success as other students.

Some interview respondents felt that the community involvement criterion may disenfranchise too many people, in particular urban Aboriginal youth. Yet some participants in the Youth Focus Group suggested that the very process of reflecting on their community involvement as part of the application process has enhanced the connection to their community, and in some instances has made them want to “give back.”

While all respondents agreed that financial need was an important criterion, it was suggested that more recognition be given to the fact that expenses vary across the country and across academic programs. That said, NAAF application process allows for students to include all expenses to be encountered in the academic year, and takes into consideration that tuition for a Law program, for example, is more than a general Arts and Science program; and that cost for rent for a student attending York University (in Toronto) would be more expensive than at the University of Regina.

Students and other key respondents noted that life experience should be a valid criterion, especially for mature students.

Effectiveness of Administrative Process

Application Process

Overall, 88% of student respondents found the PSE Award Program application process easy. Of the 12% that said the process was not easy, issues flagged included: process was “long and time consuming”; it was “difficult to get all of the required documentation.” These issues were confirmed at the Youth Focus Group, although many felt that the process needed this kind of “rigour” to maintain the integrity of the program.

NAAF has a verification process in place: Education staff screen incoming applications to make sure they are complete and accurate before forwarding them on to the Jury process (CGA Section 2.3.4).

NAAF is continually making improvements to its processes. For example, application forms are available online, a change that took place in response to student feedback. The ongoing changes have not gone unnoticed – almost everyone in the Youth Focus Group comments on NAAF’s ability to improve its application process. NAAF’s efforts are therefore paying off.

That said, NAAF should bear in mind other student comments around the application process, and the difficulties associated with it. Over a two year period, about 20% of the applicants were unsuccessful. Overwhelmingly, the primary reasons for this were:

- Incomplete application due to lack of appropriate documentation;
- Proof of Aboriginal ancestry.

While NAAF makes huge efforts in following up with all applicants, NAAF should nonetheless evaluate whether the process itself is a barrier to access for some applicants.

Jury Process

Generally, respondents – both key informants and students – were very confident in NAAF’s Jury process and felt that it was fair and consistent with best practices (CGA Section 2.3.6). While there is no formal selection process policy in place; in practice NAAF ensures that the Jury composition is representative of all Aboriginal groups, across geographic location and with a gender balance. Jury members also represent a variety of professions and disciplines.

With regard to the administrative process itself, Jury members generally felt that the system was effective, and that the orientation, training and tools were adequate in helping them fulfill their roles as Jurors. They also appreciated that the process allows for feedback at the end of each Jury session so that the process can be improved from year to year. As a possible improvement, it was suggested that Jury members participate in a pre-Jury teleconference to review and develop common understanding around the application of the criteria.

Notification Process

As mentioned earlier in the report, the names of successful applicants are posted on NAAF’s website at the end of the Jury selection process, and their names are linked to their sponsor, in this case the Government of Canada Endowment Fund (CGA Section 2.3.6). All applicants receive a letter, regardless of whether they are successful not. The letter to successful applicants also includes the sponsor’s name. For those receiving an Endowment award, the letter states: “This award is made possible by the generous support of the Government of Canada Endowment Fund.” Names of award recipients are also printed in NAAF’s annual reports (CGA Section 2.3.7/8)

Although the notification process specifically names the federal government as a sponsor, only 37% of recipients replying to the online survey indicated that they were aware that they had been awarded a bursary from the Government of Canada.

Of those surveyed online, 91% of students were satisfied with the notification process, noting timeliness in the notification process and receipt of the funds – 69% received the money before the start of the course. This overall assessment was confirmed in the Youth Focus Group.

Promotion & Outreach Activities

Because communications and outreach activities as they relate to the CGA are part of promotion for NAAF’s broader Education Program, Canadian Heritage and the Government of Canada have the advantage of being attached to the NAAF brand, associated with other major NAAF donors (including other federal sponsors such as INAC and Health Canada), and cross-promoted through all of NAAF’s communication and outreach activities (CGA Section 2.3.5).

The website and *Building Brighter Futures* bursary and scholarship brochures are the primary tools used in specifically promoting the Endowment Fund program. NAAF's website and the Annual Report list all NAAF bursary and scholarship recipients and links them directly to the "Government of Canada Endowment Fund" (CGA Section 2.3.8).

Throughout the Evaluation period, NAAF has undertaken a number of outreach activities to reach Aboriginal students (secondary and post-secondary) and respond to the areas of under-representation. These include:

- Northern Tours. Since the inception of the Endowment Fund Program, NAAF's President and CEO has toured both the Eastern Arctic and Western Arctic to raise the profile of NAAF's awards programs in Inuit and remote northern communities.²⁰
- *Blueprint for the Future* Career Fairs. NAAF offers a series of national career fairs in Canadian cities designed to attract Aboriginal secondary students to a wide array of potential careers. For many of these students, access to these employment opportunities may require post-secondary education. As a result, NAAF post-secondary scholarships and bursaries are promoted at these events. NAAF's most recent efforts have targeted cities in areas that have the evaluation has found to be under-represented: Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Quebec, and Halifax.²¹
- National Aboriginal Achievement Awards. Annually, NAAF recognizes the achievement of outstanding Aboriginal individuals in a diverse range of occupations. The award ceremony is broadcast nationally on Global and APTN, and during the course of its broadcast NAAF promotes its scholarships and bursary programs.

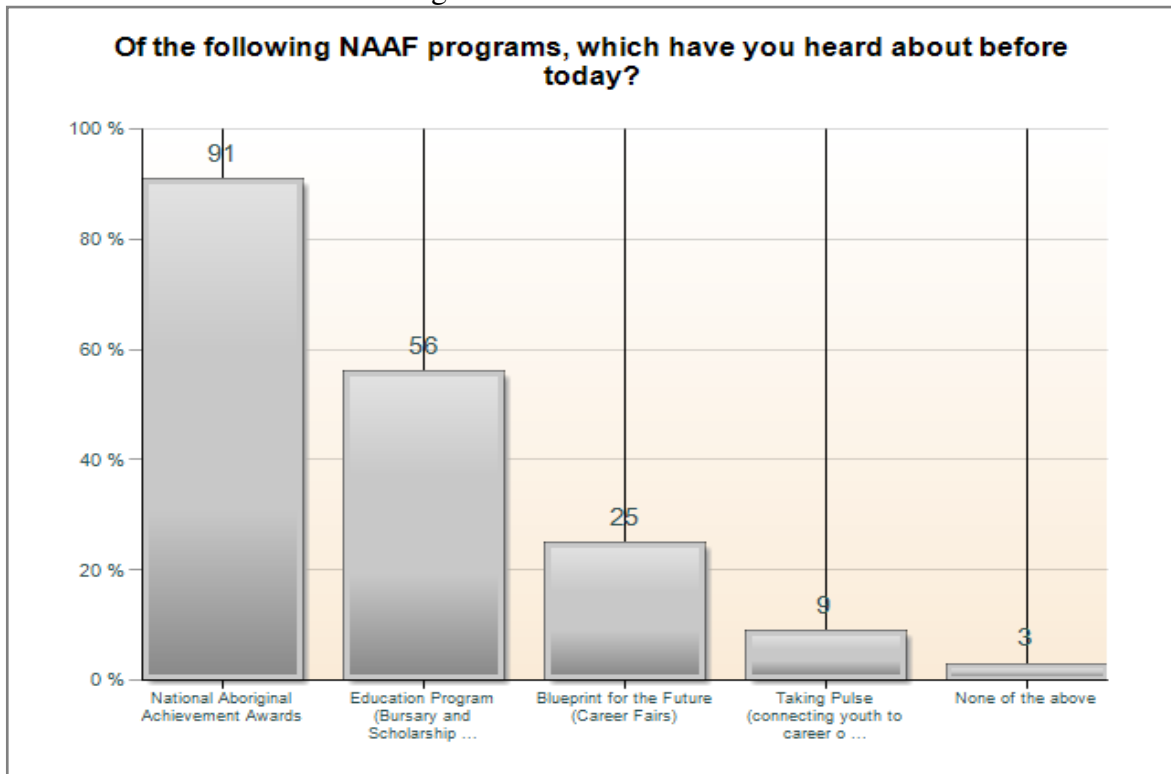
In addition to the above activities NAAF's President and CEO regularly makes appearance and speeches in communities across Canada to promote Aboriginal achievement and to raise awareness of NAAF and its programs, including Canadian Heritage's support through the Endowment Fund Program.

The online survey indicates that a large majority of students (91%) responded were aware of NAAF's Achievement Awards before participating in the survey, and that a majority (58%) were also aware of the Education Program (see Chart 7 below). That there is not greater awareness of the Education Program is somewhat surprising given these are award recipients. This may suggest that more needs to be done by way of communication around NAAF PSE award offerings as lack of awareness is a barrier to access.

²⁰ It is too soon to track the impact of the Northern tours.

²¹ Since students participating in Career Fairs are typically in their sophomore and junior years of high school, it is too soon to track the impact of the recent events in the North, the Atlantic region and Quebec.

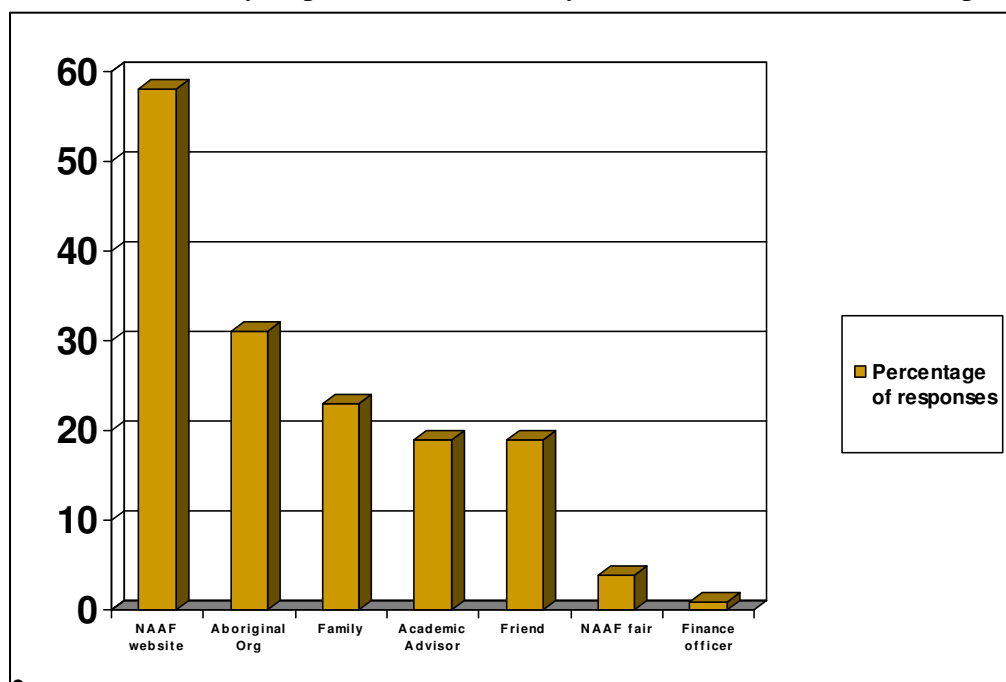
Chart 7 Awareness of NAAF Programs



To the extent that it can, NAAF tries to reach out to communities in a “real and readable” way. For example, when the President and CEO visited the North, NAAF documents were translated in Inuktitut, and she was accompanied by officials from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a national organization that represents and promotes the interests of Inuit. That said, all informants in the evaluation felt that NAAF could do more community outreach, and in particular take steps to raise its profile in Inuit, Northern and remote communities.

To gauge the effectiveness of NAAF’s communications tools, students through the online survey were asked how they learned about NAAF programs. Overwhelmingly, the website was the most far reaching tool with 58% of award recipients learning about NAAF programs through it (see Chart 8 below).

Chart 8: Online Survey Responses to “How did you learn about these [NAAF] programs?”



These findings correspond with the findings from NAAF’s 2006-2007 PSE and Fine Arts Bursary Award Programs *Monitoring and Tracking Report*, in which 38% of respondents (the highest %) indicated that that they learned about NAAF bursaries through its website.

That NAAF is able to create linkages and partnerships in the Aboriginal community also plays a big role in promoting its programs: over 30% of online survey respondents learned about NAAF programs through an Aboriginal organization.

“Word of mouth” also speaks to NAAF’s reach in to the community: 23% of online survey respondents heard about NAAF programs through a family member; 19% heard about it from a friend. NAAF’s *Monitoring and Tracking Report* posts similar numbers: over 14% indicated that they heard about the bursaries and scholarships from a family member; almost 13% from a friend; and over 10% from a former recipient.

Of the students surveyed online, 90% felt that NAAF effectively promotes its Education Program, and 97% said it was easy to find information on the PSE program. Participants in the Youth Focus Group overwhelmingly agreed with this finding, but some felt that NAAF could do more to reach northern communities.

What the Evaluation heard from other key respondents around outreach and communications was more of a mixed picture ranging from “well known and effective promotion” to “requires a more community-based approach”, particularly in northern and urban communities. A number of key informants said that NAAF could do more to promote its scholarship and bursary awards programs among university and college students in urban settings.

With regard to the Government of Canada Endowment Award specifically, according to the online survey 37% of recipients were aware that they had received a Government of Canada Endowment award, but the vast majority (89%) did not know about the Endowment before they applied for a PSE award.

While the number of bursary and award applicants have not substantially increased over the past 3 years (noting the anomaly in 2006-07), NAAF anticipates that these numbers will shift upwards over time. NAAF's 2008-09 PSE applications have increased to 673, about a 9% increase since over 2007-08.

4.2.3 Achieving the Purpose, Aims and Outcomes

The purpose of the Endowment Fund is to enable NAAF to undertake activities related to and supporting and encouraging the achievement of higher levels of education by Aboriginal students (CGA Section 2).

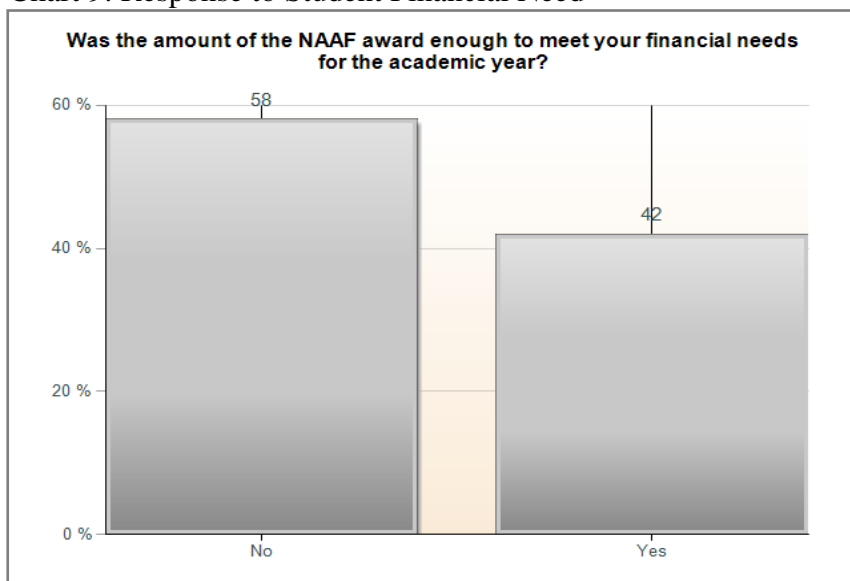
The following section is intended to further distill whether the aims and outcomes of activities related to the CGA have been achieved, and more specifically, what the benefits have been for recipients.

Meeting Financial Needs

A core purpose of the Endowment Fund is to help Aboriginal students access college and university by providing them with needed financial assistance. Recipients overwhelmingly in both the online survey and the Youth Focus Group reported that the Endowment award was important in their ability to access post-secondary education, with 55% of online survey respondents indicating that the support was essential in their decision to pursue post-secondary education. In other words, without the NAAF award, a number of Aboriginal students would likely not have attended a post-secondary institution, or would have delayed their entry.

Furthermore, a significant portion (42%) of these respondents indicated that the Endowment award met their financial need for the academic year (see chart 9 below). Anecdotally, the award was considered of greater financial help than other awards based on financial need – and as outlined earlier in the section, Endowment Fund awards appear to be more responsive in this area.

Chart 9: Response to Student Financial Need



Of the remaining 58%, the majority were able to access other financial resources to supplement their income, including other bursaries/scholarships; student loans; and band or organizational funding to meet their needs. About 30% of students worked during academic year to help cover their expenses. A majority of students said that the combined funding they were able to access met their financial needs, but 48% said it did not.

Achieving Outcomes

The CGA identifies the following three key outcomes for the Endowment Fund (CGA Section 8):

- Aboriginal youth have access to culturally relevant program that help them improve their skills, knowledge and leadership;
- Aboriginal youth enhance their cultural identity; and
- Aboriginal youth improve their skills, knowledge and leadership.

What we heard from all sources involved in the evaluation is that the Endowment Fund is achieving these results. It was noted by some key informants that NAAF has been achieving these outcomes from the beginning, and that NAAF fosters an additional sense of commitment and motivation to help achieve these ends. Many informants did note that how to “quantify” these outcomes was problematic, particularly in regard to the first two outcomes.

Overwhelmingly, respondents in the online survey felt that these outcomes could be achieved by the Endowment Fund, with 98 – 99% “somewhat agreeing” to “absolutely” agreeing (see Chart 10 below).

Chart 10

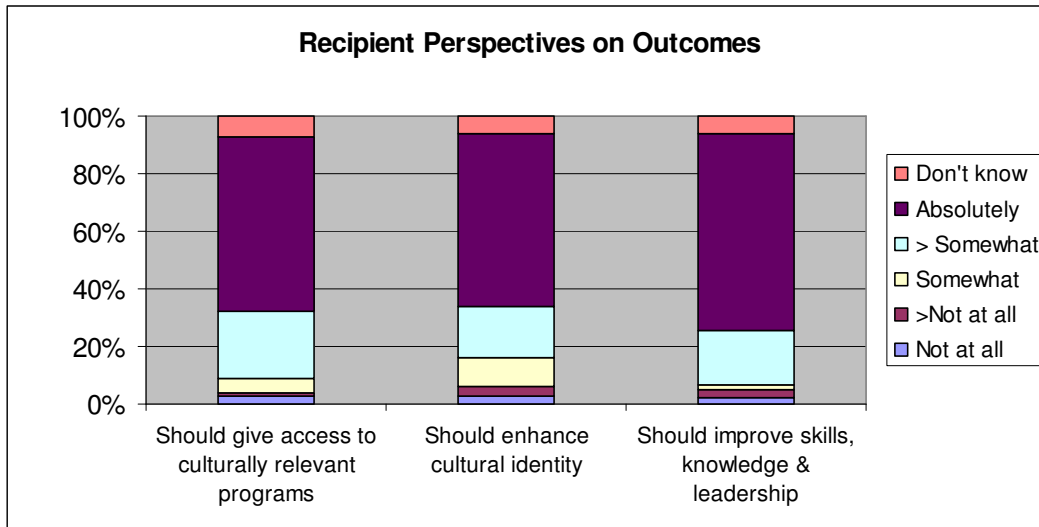
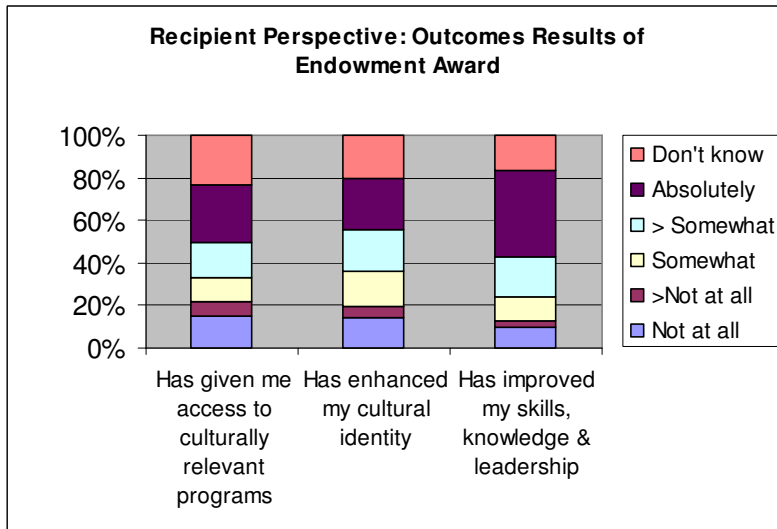


Chart 11 below reports on how Endowment award recipients who responded to the online survey judged how these awards specifically helped them in relation to the three CGA outcome objectives.

Chart 11: Achieving Endowment Fund Outcomes



	Not at all	>Not at all	Somewhat	> Somewhat	Absolutely	Don't know
Has given me access to culturally relevant programs	15%	7%	11%	17%	27%	23%
Has enhanced my cultural identity	14%	5%	17%	19%	24%	20%
Has improved my skills, knowledge & leadership	10%	3%	11%	19%	41%	17%

Access to culturally relevant program

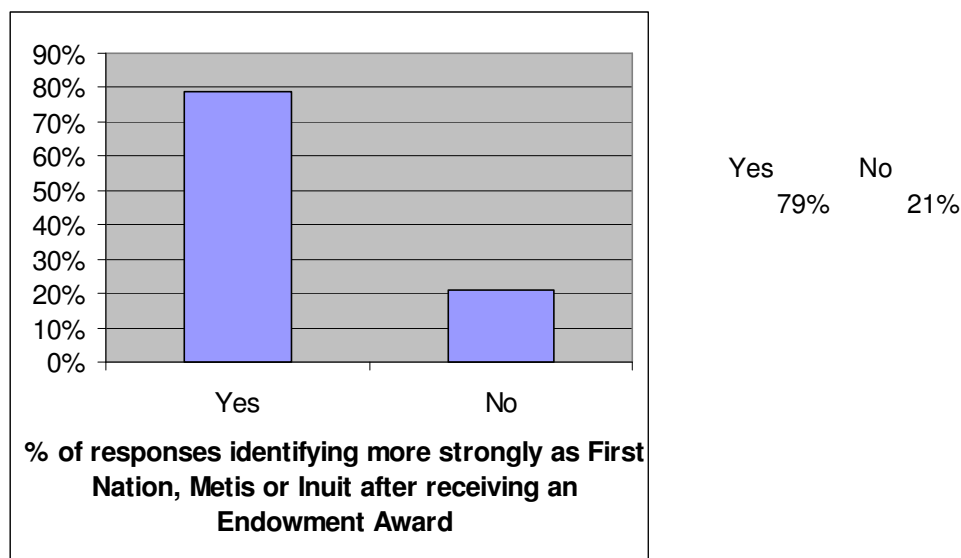
Almost 70% of survey respondents felt that the Endowment Fund had helped them access culturally relevant programs, with 31% saying that the Endowment award had “absolutely” given them access to culturally relevant programs.

The question of cultural relevance was explored with some key informants and in the recipient awards focus group. There was questioning as to intent of the “culturally relevant programs” outcome objective, and most did not think it was easily measured. For many informants, the most that could be said was that NAAF was a “culturally relevant” vehicle by which Aboriginal students can access post-secondary education. It was also noted that setting a “culturally relevant” outcome could be problematic in that not all Aboriginal people may have the same ideas about what this means.

Enhancing Cultural Identity

Again, almost 70% online survey respondents felt that the Endowment award had enhanced their cultural identity. Perhaps even more striking almost 80% of respondents said that they identify more strongly with their Aboriginal ancestry (Chart 12 below). In fact, many students in the Youth Focus Group attributed this to the Program criterion which requires a connection to their Aboriginal community. For them, as was mentioned earlier, the application process itself reinforces knowledge and cultural identity, and the many indicated that they want to “give back” to their community upon completion of their program of study.

Chart 12: Aboriginal Group Identification



It was further noted by a member of the Youth Focus Group that “*without the support from NAAF I wouldn’t have been able to stay connected to my community throughout the year. NAAF money helped me go home for smudging ceremonies and family events.*”

The importance of community connectedness came through as well in the online survey with 80% of respondents saying that staying connected to their community was important while they were pursuing their studies. Added to this, 54% of respondents indicated that the receiving the award and attending PSE has increased their self-confidence. So all told, the Endowment Fund can be seen as doing an effective job in enhancing the cultural identity of the students it supports.

Improving skills, knowledge and leadership

Overwhelmingly respondents agreed that the Endowment Fund awards helped them improve their skills, knowledge and leadership of Aboriginal youth, with 46% indicating that it had “absolutely” helped them achieve this outcome.

So in summary, the evidence from the online survey, interviews and focus groups indicates that the Endowment Fund measures up well in terms of its three primary outcome objectives.

Endowment Fund Performance

Although not a requirement, the Evaluation looked at the Fund’s performance. NAAF has established a comprehensive investment policy and preliminary analysis indicates that it is meeting its target with a 4 – 7% average rate of return over the 5-year period leading up to this evaluation. There is a quarterly review of the Fund’s performance by the Investment Committee and a 3rd party annual audit process in place.

The NAAF Board and management have indicated that if the goal is to optimize revenue from the Endowment, there should more flexibility in the CGA’s investment parameters to increase NAAF’s ability to invest in equity markets or consider consolidation with other funds.

4.3 Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness was assessed from a number of perspectives: is the Endowment getting a return for its investment in students; are the activities and projects under the CGA being delivered in a cost effective manner; and are resources being used efficiently.

4.3.1 Assessment of the Investment in Students

As with the general population, better education outcomes translate into improved socioeconomic status for Aboriginal Canadians and greater prosperity and well being in Aboriginal communities. In his paper on *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Michael Mendelson highlights that “links among better education, better jobs and better income have been substantially documented,” and this extends to Aboriginal Canadians as well with higher educational attainment paying off for Aboriginal males and females in higher average lifetime earnings. He notes one study that estimates that an Aboriginal female can earn over \$1 million by obtaining a high school diploma and then attending university.

The question is therefore whether or not the Government's investment in students is "paying off" in terms of education attainment and employment opportunities. Over the Evaluation period NAAF was not tracking information on education attainment and post PSE employment of award recipients; however as of 2008-2009 this information will be included in NAAF's Monitor and Tracking Report. Clearly, however, as we have seen in earlier data, Endowment awards are encouraging Aboriginal students to attend university and college. The average award over the 3 years evaluation period is \$3,163, which if students are successful in their studies is a relatively small investment considering the potential benefits to the individuals involved and to society more generally.

We do have some indication from the online survey of how successful award recipients are or are likely to be. Recipients were asked: "Have you completed your program of study?" Of those who had received awards:

- 34% completed their program successfully
- Of the remaining 66%, all but 2 (nearly 100%) identified graduation dates.

This strongly indicates that whether recipients have already succeeded by completing their post-secondary studies or are planning to graduate, their direction is to succeed. NAAF's PSE and FINE Arts *Monitoring and Tracking* Report includes similar results – of those surveyed in PSE more broadly, almost 30% have graduated, and almost everyone currently enrolled in a program (at the time of the Tracking study) provided a graduation date. From this we can surmise that Canadian Heritage is investing in something that, according to online survey and Tracking respondents, is producing highly successful results with high potential economic and social pay offs.

4.3.2 Assessment of Cost Effectiveness of Administration

NAAF has an integrated approach to PSE administration, and the Endowment program clearly benefits from this. NAAF's administrative and promotional costs are spread amongst a broad range of programs and activities that include, among others:

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Infrastructure
- Communications
- Outreach

No revenues from the Endowment Fund are specifically earmarked for any of these purposes, so it is not easily possible to determine cost-effectiveness of NAAF's activities and projects in relation to the CGA. The number of outreach activities and communication venues, the strength and size of the overarching Education Team, and the physical infrastructure (both online and bricks and mortar) accessed by the Endowment indicates that the administration is very cost effective. The administrative costs of a stand alone Endowment Fund would be more substantial, which is one of the reasons NAAF was chosen to administer the Endowment program in the first instance. The perspective of key informants is that the Program is being administered in a cost-effective manner.

4.4 Success Factors & Areas for Improvement

“Because I had a NAAF bursary I was able to find balance in my life, which allowed me to move forward academically. I wouldn’t be pursuing my Masters without the support.”

[Student interview]

Within the Evaluation Framework provided by NAAF and Heritage Canada, Program Success was to be assessed on the basis of Aboriginal PSE students’ satisfaction with the results of the program as well as any additional unintended results realized through the activities and projects of the CGA. The evaluation also queried respondents as to what improvements could be made to the Program.

4.4.1 Program Satisfaction

The results of the online survey, focus groups and interviews all point to a high level of satisfaction with NAAF PSE program, and by extension the Endowment Fund component of the program. From all sources, as we have seen earlier, the strong indications are that the program is achieving its objectives and meeting expectations – there are good results right across the board from improving skills, knowledge and leadership to students accessing culturally relevant programs and enhancing their cultural identity. The students taking part in the focus groups and interviews all take pride in achieving these results.

We have also highlighted many of the measures coming through the online survey that point to high recipient satisfaction:

- 97% of respondents see NAAF’s PSE program as important or very important;
- 90% of students think that NAAF effectively promotes its PSE program;
- 88% said that the application process was easy;
- 100% of students who had contact with NAAF staff found them helpful;
- 96% found the awards criteria appropriate; and
- 91% were satisfied with how they were notified.

These results are not entirely unexpected given that these are award recipients. What we were not able to ascertain through the evaluation were the views of those who did not receive awards. What we do know is that, the primary reason for non-success was failure of applicants to properly complete the applications process.

The interviews and focus groups indicate that there were some interesting unexpected outcomes from the program. For example:

- Students have learned more about their Aboriginal identity through process of application;
- Students felt part of the NAAF community;

- The program is alleviating their debt burden which is a motivation to both go and continue studies.

Further, in keeping with NAAF's mandate statement of "inspiring confidence and empowering Aboriginal peoples", one respondent had this to say:

"I will admit, there have been bleak moments when I am unsure if things will work out and to know that your [NAAF] jury believes in my vision is completely empowering."²²

Another "unexpected result" has been the ability of NAAF to leverage the Endowment Fund. According to key informant interviews, NAAF has been able to use the Endowment to leverage additional funding from private sector and provincial governments. The federal investment in and support of NAAF inspires confidence, and, as one respondent said, "Our instinct is to partner with NAAF."

4.4.2 Success Factors

Key informants and focus groups were asked what they perceived as contributing to NAAF's success. The principal factors cited include:

- 1) Effectiveness of upfront process development and planning exercises. The effectiveness of the application and jury processes is enhanced by a practice of continuous improvement based on ongoing feedback.
- 2) Flexibility of the program. The fact that the program is national in nature, that it encompasses all Aboriginal groups, and that it is viewed as non-political were considered factors of its success.
- 3) Fair, open and well understood process. This is demonstrated by the student survey results, but is also an overarching observation of all respondents. Two key reasons cited is that NAAF staff actively work with students throughout application process, and that through the interview process, students have a voice which has led to increased successes and awards. Diversity in jury composition was one of the core factors cited for fairness of the process.
- 4) Finally, NAAF attempts to involve all Aboriginal groups in its activities, particularly in the composition of the Board and Juries.

4.4.3 Areas for Improvement

Two key areas were identified through the Evaluation for improvement. The first was outreach and promotion. Apart from addressing those areas that are under-represented, in meeting the aim of the Endowment Fund to increase the number of awards, NAAF will need to consider ways to increase the number of applicants in order to respond to increase

²² Anonymous letter from an award recipient to Roberta Jamieson and NAAF Board of Directors.

in awards funding, which is growing by 33% in 2008-09.²³ By comparison, 673 applications have been received for the 2008-2009 academic year which is a growth of about 9%. NAAF will need to consider how to balance increasing the number of awards and meeting the financial needs of students.

Reaching more students will require sustained outreach and targeting of efforts and resources. Consideration should be given to additional funding for promotion and outreach (as opposed to a reallocation of existing funds).

The second area requiring improvement falls within the category of program management and planning. According to the 2007 CGA, NAAF must report to Heritage on an annual basis by way of a Corporate Plan.

NAAF has not yet developed and submitted a Corporate Plan to Canadian Heritage and will need to do so to meet the requirement of the CGA. It should be said however that NAAF has submitted the following documents that speak to the requirements of such a plan, including:

- Investment Policy,
- Audited Fund Statements,
- 2007 Strategic Plan,
- NAAF Annual Reports, and
- NAAF Education's 5 year work plan, among other documentation.

Discussions are currently underway between Heritage officials and NAAF's Director of Finance and Operation to clarify the terms and any additional components that should be reflected in a Corporate Plan. In terms of general direction for the program moving forward, now that the processes and additional funds are in place, NAAF has committed to looking at future priorities for the Endowment.

4.4.4 Some Policy Issues Raised

One of the recognized challenges is to increase the pool of Aboriginal high school graduates that apply for PSE – there is a high rate of non-completion of high school. It is important to remove barriers among high school students, and this means starting early on.²⁴ According to the 2007 Strategic Plan, NAAF is beginning to address high school completion by expanding its Education Program to transitional programming and to 1-2 year accredited programs (the CGA however, is restricted to programs of more than 2 years). This is a positive step that in time may well yield many more future NAAF PSE award recipients.

Another policy related question that emerged through the evaluation was how to address fields of study where there is major under-representation (science, engineering, technologies) of Aboriginal people. In reviewing priorities for the Endowment, NAAF

²³ Some concern was raised that if applicants increased substantially, without substantive new funds NAAF would be put in the position of spreading the available funding thinly and thereby not be able to address the needs of students.

²⁴ According to a recent study by Michael Mendelson, almost 50% of Aboriginal working age people have not completed high school.

may consider responding to this issue by prioritizing certain fields of study or by giving additional incentives in those fields.

5 Future Evaluations

Due to the structure of NAAF's Education Program administration, promotion and outreach costs are spread amongst a broad range of programs and activities. For example, no funding is specifically earmarked for the Endowment or related activities, and although 15% of the revenues are available for that purpose, it is difficult to track actual costs of administration and the direct impact of promotion and outreach activities. As well, the NAAF application process is not streamed specifically towards the Endowment Fund. This makes it difficult to track unsuccessful applicants or have a clear picture of trends by way of field of study (for example) outside of the context of the entire Education program.

As we have indicated throughout the Evaluation, due to the integrated nature of the awards and scholarship programs it is difficult to single out results, impacts and trends pertaining specifically to the Endowment Program. Therefore, we recommend that future evaluations of the Endowment Fund be undertaken more explicitly in the context of the Education Program as a whole.

In addition, the Evaluation Framework jointly developed by Heritage and NAAF that formed the basis of our Evaluation methodology did not include the areas program management or performance of the Endowment Fund. We would recommend that these areas be subject to future evaluation and indicators should be developed for this purpose.

6 Conclusion

While it is early days for an evaluation of the Endowment Fund it is already evident that a lot has been accomplished over the three years of operation. Over the three years of the evaluation period more than \$1.3 million was awarded to 450 students through the Fund, with indications from survey recipients that many found the support essential to them pursuing college and university.

NAAF is a best practice organization with a philosophy of continuous improvement; demonstrating through both practices and efforts the benefits stemming from the Government of Canada's decision to create the Endowment Fund. This evaluation has found that the processes are in place to achieve and build on the goals of the CGA.

Sound administration of scholarship funds coupled with effective use of Endowment resources is increasing the number of Aboriginal people going to university and college. All the indications are that this investment is paying off by increasing education attainment rates, and, and helping to close the gap in Aboriginal PSE participation.

Now that the foundations of the Endowment program have been established, NAAF will need to focus its efforts more on planning and priorities and strengthening commitment to outreach including targeting its efforts and resources for this purpose.

7 Performance Indicators

As discussed in a previous section, Section 8 of the CGA established three key expected outcomes:

- (1) Aboriginal youth have access to culturally relevant programs that help them improve their skills, knowledge and leadership.
- (2) Aboriginal youth enhance their cultural identity.
- (3) Aboriginal youth improve their skills, knowledge and leadership.

The CGA requires NAAF, in consultation with the Government of Canada, to develop appropriate performance indicators for these outcomes. The periodic five-year evaluation by an independent third party will measure NAAF's performance in relation to these planned results under the CGA. It was agreed that the findings of this initial evaluation should form the basis for the establishment of appropriate performance indicators for the next evaluation period. NAAF may also use these findings to determine if it will establish additional outcomes and indicators for the next five year period.

It should be noted that this Evaluation has found that NAAF is collecting a good base data for many program indicators and they are planning to add information on academic and employment success. The evaluation has demonstrated the benefits from surveying award recipients and clearly periodic surveys of students should continue to supplement and deepen the assessment of performance. Questions related to levels of satisfaction should be included in future surveys. As well, there needs to be more systematic attention to non-successful recipients as their assessment is needed to adequately fill out any picture of performance.

7.1 Outcome based performance indicators

In accordance with the Conditional Grant Agreement, the evaluation measured NAAF's performance in achieving the key expected outcomes. For the purpose of joint development of indicators for future evaluations, we propose the following indicators:

- (1) Aboriginal PSE students have access to culturally relevant programs
 - # of applicants by Aboriginal ancestry
 - # of applicants by age
 - # of applicants by residency
 - Degree of communication with Aboriginal students and communities across Canada reflected by:
 - Increase in # of applicants
 - % response rate for communication tools used
 - Relationship between % of awards and % of total Aboriginal identity population
 - Level and reach of the promotion of the scholarship program across Canada:

- % change in applicants and awards by geographic location
 - % change in NAAF take-up rates by Province/Territory
 - Relationship between % of take-up rates per P/T and total % of P/T population
 - Level of participation of Aboriginal professionals in jury process
 - Level of satisfaction of applicants with NAAF's processes (application and awards)
- (2) Help Aboriginal PSE students enhance their cultural identity
- Level of connection of the recipients to Aboriginal community
 - % of recipients where connection to community has increased
 - Impact of award on recipients identity
 - Level of NAAF's relationship with Aboriginal communities and leaders
 - % of recipients that learned of the NAAF's PSE program through Aboriginal Organizations
- (3) Aboriginal PSE students improve their skills, knowledge and leadership
- # of number of recipients by Aboriginal ancestry
 - # of recipients by age
 - # of recipients by residence
 - # of awards by degree
 - # of awards by discipline
 - # of awards by year of study
 - Level of importance of award to ability to access PSE
 - % of recipients where financial need was met
 - % of recipients who have successfully completed program
 - % of recipients that have identified graduation rates
 - Recipients employment rate (new)

8 Additional Sources

In addition to the documents and files listed in Section 2 Evaluation Objectives, Issues and Methodology, the following sources were consulted in the Evaluation process.

Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca>.

Canadian Heritage Press Release, *Government of Canada Announces Endowment Fund for National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation*, 2003.

Government of Canada Speech from the Throne, *Strong Leadership. A Better Canada*, October 2007.

INAC *Aboriginal Bursary System* (last updated: 2003/05/10) <http://pse-esd.ainc-inac.gc.ca/abs/main.asp?lang=E>.

Mendelson, Michael. *Aboriginal Peoples and PSE in Canada*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2006.

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Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Well Being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population*, 2001.

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Report on the Standing Committee on Northern Affairs and Northern Development, *No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, February 2007.