PART 3: EDUCATING ADULTS IN THE CREE SCHOOL BOARD

Part 3 provides our analysis of adult education in the Board.[a] Chapter 8 deals with continuing education, which is the equivalent of adult education in other school boards in Québec. Unlike other schools boards, the CSB also provides post-secondary education services to students from its communities. Our analysis of this part of adult education in the CSB is presented in Chapter 9.

In the past, adult education may have been regarded as an auxiliary service but today, this is no longer the case. It is now rightly regarded as an essential component of an education system that promotes a continuum of life-long learning from childhood through adulthood:

> Many aspects of individual success depend on one's ability and readiness to learn throughout life. [For society]... that opportunity to learn has a positive impact on social cohesion, equity and overall quality of life.[150]

As stated in the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning: "Adult education [is] ... more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century."

> Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.[151]

The idea of life-long learning may be new to some people but not to First Nations (see text box),[152] who have long regarded it as one of the key

> - ➢ Learning is holistic.
> - ➢ Learning is a lifelong process.
> - ➢ Learning is experiential in nature.
> - ➢ Learning is rooted in Aboriginal languages and cultures.
> - ➢ Learning is spiritually oriented.
> - ➢ Learning is a communal activity, involving family, community and Elders.
> - ➢ Learning is an integration of Aboriginal and Western knowledge.

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[a]   All parts of the CAFSI report can be found on the CSB Educational Review website in English and French: **http://www.cscree.qc.ca/Edreview/ed_review.htm**, **http://www.cscree.qc.ca/Edreview/Fr/Etude_Ed.htm**.

These parts are not written as 'stand-alone' texts. They are published separately because the report is too large to be downloaded as a single text. Thus, for example, the Reference List for all works cited in this Review can be found at the end of Part 5.

attributes of their learning.[a]

Adult education, as understood internationally, encompasses general education, and technical and vocational training, as well as informal learning. For some, it provides an opportunity to build on the 'foundation' education they received in school. For others, it provides a 'second chance' to acquire qualifications that they do not have because they never had the opportunity to obtain them or that they missed by dropping out of school. For all these students, adult education provides a chance to narrow the gap between their aspirations and their possibilities, a gap that would otherwise widen with time (see text box).[153]

> "In addition to the emerging risk of a 'digital divide',[b] a 'vicious circle' operates, as those individuals who have good foundation education are also the ones who benefit more from learning opportunities in later life."

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[a]   The report from which the quotation in the text box was taken is part of an initiative sponsored by the Canadian Council on Learning and its Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre: http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/.

[b]   The expression, 'digital divide' refers to the gap between those who have knowledge of and access to computers and other technology, and those who do not.

8.0   CONTINUING EDUCATION IN THE CSB

This chapter presents our findings, conclusions and recommendations,[a] relating to **Sabtuan** continuing education for adults,[b] offered in the nine continuing education centres of the CSB, as well as the Sabtuan Regional Vocational Training Centre [SRVTC] (see definition of adult students that follows on page 164).

It therefore deals with all the top five levels of the performance pyramid introduced in Part 1, as they apply to adults. We begin at the top of the pyramid with students, and then deal with successive layers of support from the classroom to the community. The bottom layer of the pyramid, School Board Support, will de dealt with in Part 4.

This chapter is concerned with centre performance as much as School Board performance; however, we do not attempt to present a separate analysis of each centre. Each section and sub-section introduces the object being evaluated, and then presents our analysis and recommendations.

The number of adult students has fluctuated over the years.[154] Between 1994-95 and 2006-07 an average of 297 were enrolled each year, varying from a minimum of 215 in 1999-2000 to a maximum of 437 in 2004-05. Overall, 41% of these students were enrolled in vocational courses and programs, the other 59% in general education.[c] We were unable to obtain any data that showed the number of students in each of the ten centres. Data about student enrolment by community of residence reflect the relative size of each community, with the exception of Waswanipi, where the SRVTC is located. The following provides a summary of the data collection activities.

EXHIBIT 3-1: DATA COLLECTION IN CENTRES

Source	Method	Number*	
		Act	Par
Current Students	Questionnaire	10	107
	Focus Group	1	18
Classroom Instruction	Observation	1	
Centre Director	Interview	1	1
Centre Consultants	Interview	6	6
Other Staff	Questionnaire	10	30
Local Education Committee	Interview	1	1
All Sources		**30**	**163**

*   This columns displays the number of separate data collection activities (Act) and participants (Par); the 'Act' number also reflects the number of centres involved in each type of activity.

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[a]   In this report, all recommendations are numbered consecutively, starting in Part 1. The last recommendation in Part 2 was numbered R63; therefore, the first recommendation on adult education is numbered R64.

[b]   This logo features the **sabtuan**, the traditional Cree dwelling with two doors. One door symbolizes and respects our traditions, including the traditional knowledge we have learned at the feet of our elders - the things we bring with us when we come to learn. The other door represents new kinds of learning, and how the learning opens up the future for people - and the knowledge we take with us out into the world.

[c]   These summary data were taken from the Sabtuan Clientele Study done by Econotech Inc. (see endnote 154).

As shown in this exhibit, 30 data collection activities were carried out in ten centres,[a] involving more than 160 participants.[b] When the small size of most centres is considered, the only serious gap in data reflected in this exhibit is the absence of one consultant responsible for the day-to-day operation of two continuing education centres.[c] The collection of records and documents was another story, however. These gaps will be identified in the sections that follow.

In other school boards in Québec, adult students are defined by their aged-based entitlement to educational services: persons above the age of compulsory school attendance[d] have a right to the educational services provided for by the *Basic Adult General Edcation Regulation* or the *Basic Vocational Training Regulation*. The *Education Act* that applies to the CSB does not include any such provisions. Using the Ministry's Budgetary Rules as a guide,[155] we define **adult students** as persons eligible for admission, 18 years of age or older, who are not registered as a youth student and who are enrolled in a centre of the CSB.

In the Québec education system, vocational education constitutes a separate sector, distinct from the youth and adult education sectors. In the CSB, only two sectors operate: youth and adult. The latter provides all vocational education, including limited places for youth students. This chapter therefore also deals with the provision of vocational education to any youth of the CSB enrolled in one of its centres.

Adult education also creates opportunities to improve secondary education for youth by:

- applying the lessons learned in adult education to make secondary education more meaningful and motivating for students;

- introducing vocational training to secondary students by exploring various vocational fields, creating opportunities for work-based learning, as well as offering vocational courses and programs.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, adult education is an essential component in the **continuum** of **life-long learning**. Keeping this continuum in mind is especially important in the CSB. In our analysis of youth education, we were naturally struck by the extremely high rate of drop-outs and the important role of adult education in providing an alternative path to success for many of these students. However, this requires that adult education be accorded the same priority of attention as youth education. Judging by the statement cited in the text box, this is not happening. Like so many other issues, we have uncovered in this

> *The School Board's commitment to Sabtuan is weak and this impacts the level of our services. Focus is on the youth, but many of these youth end up in the adult sector. We're unprepared for these youth* (Continuing Education).

Review, making this happen will require a change in the organizational culture of the Board.

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[a]	Following the convention established in Part 1, continuing education centres are identified by the number assigned to their community: C01 Whapmagoostui; C02 Chisasibi; C03 Wemindji; C04 Eastmain; C05 Nemaska; C06 Waskaganish; C07 Mistissini; C08 Oujé-Bougoumou; C09 Waswanipi; C10 designates the SRVTC.

[b]	The one focus group with students and the one classroom observation were conducted at the SRVTC. Questionnaires were supposed to be made available to all teachers and other staff members, though this did not always happen. Interviews were envisaged for all administrators and consultants.

[c]	The number of consultant interviews reported (6) includes one consultant from the SRVTC.

[d]	According to the *Public Education Act*, s. 14, compulsory school attendance begins at 6 years of age and continues until the end of the school year in which the student turns 16 or graduates, whichever occurs first.

8.1   Student Results

In this performance theme, we posed the following question:

- What results does the centre expect for its students and how effective is it in achieving them?

This theme comprises three evaluative objects:

- student engagement;
- curricular learning; and
- employment.

The standards used to evaluate each object are provided in each of the sub-sections that follow; a summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found in section 8.1.4.

8.1.1 Student Engagement

The meaning of 'engagement' is the same for all students, youth or adult. "Engagement stands for active involvement, commitment, and concentrated attention, in contrast to superficial participation, apathy, or lack of interest."[156] However, before a student can be truly engaged, he or she must be present in school: you cannot be *actively* involved in something you are not even doing.

Student absences from school for perfectly legitimate reasons such as illness do not signify that they are less engaged. However, when attendance levels are generally poor, this usually indicates a lower level of engagement. When absenteeism becomes permanent, the student has dropped out of school and has totally disengaged.

In adult education, the rules of compulsory school attendance do not apply. Adult students choose to attend school thereby exhibiting some level of engagement; however, if they are largely motivated by the payment of training allowances, their level of engagement may be quite superficial. While a vote of 'non-confidence' in school by youth students may be manifested by staying in school but simply 'tuning out,' adult students tend to 'vote with their feet' - when they become disengaged, they leave.

Performance Standard

- Students attend centre regularly and take an active part in learning and related activities.

With one exception, we were not able to obtain any data from Continuing Education that enabled us to measure or even estimate either student attendance or the drop-out rates in adult courses and programs. The exception comes from data from the Sabtuan Clientele Study which shows the number of courses excluded from their dataset of course results. The reason given for these exclusions are cases where students did not have a grade recorded, other than 'withdrawn', for at least one course during that year.[157]

Based on the **Econotech** report, these registrations account for 9% of the total number. However, it appears that an additional 6% of course registrations do not end in a recorded exam mark and 14% of exams are blank. When these numbers are added, the percentage of cases where courses are not completed rises to 28%. This adjusted percentage accounts for almost all of the students who do not receive a passing mark,[a] suggesting that the prospect of failure causes students to simply disengage from learning.

In one interview at Continuing Education we were told that attendance was problematic, that when students found a job, they simply quit the course. The written submission from the Department was even more revealing (see text box). This statement is a sad comment both on student engagement and the attitude of the Department.

Q: *To what extent do students take an active part in learning and related activities?*

A: *Is this a joke? No, they don't* **(Continuing Education)***.*

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with three statements about student engagement. The following provides their responses across all centres.

EXHIBIT 3-2: CENTRE STAFF RATING OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Items	N	Rating*			
		1	2	3	4
1. Students are motivated to succeed.	26	0%	35%	54%	12%
2. Students complete work assigned to them.	23	0%	48%	35%	17%
3. Students are able to work independently.	25	4%	32%	60%	4%

*   Each item was rated on a four-point Likert scale, where **1=**Strongly Disagree; **2**=Disagree; **3**=Agree; **4**=Strongly Agree; **N**=number of respondents. Percentages may not total to 100% because of rounding.

As shown in this exhibit, most responses were in the middle. A small majority agree that students are motivated and can work independently, while only a minority claim that students complete assigned work.[b] Given the small number of respondents and the preponderance of mid-range scores, nothing definitive can be concluded from these data.

We collected some qualitative data from students, consultants, teachers and other staff:

Q: *How is student attendance?*

A: *They have good intentions but they don't follow through* **(Centre consultant)***.*

> Q: *Do you have good attendance? Are they engaged in their learning?*

> A: *I don't think so. For the majority, attendance is not very good. I find that there are a lot that register at the beginning of the year. Classes are usually full for a while but then they drop out or sometimes they don't even show up to the class. They have good intentions but they don't follow through* (Centre consultant)*.*

> *Attendance is a big problem in this centre* (Centre consultant)*.*

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a   See discussion on curricular learning beginning on page 169.

b   The average response to these three items (max=4) was: #1:2.77 ; #2: 2.70; #3: 2.64.

> **As an adult learner, I learn more than I did in regular school. I'm really interested in what I'm taking now (Adult student).**

I made my own plans to go to school and I am pleased when I finish at the end of the day. I follow my schedule that I was given (Adult student).

As an adult learner, I think I learn more than I did in regular school. I'm really interested in what I'm taking now. I want to learn more (Adult student).

This year has been a big improvement from the past years. Students are serious about their studies and they are attending classes on a consistent basis (Centre consultant).

In the absence of any quantitative data and the small number of interviewees and respondents to questionnaires, it is not possible to say to what extent attendance or true engagement in learning is a serious problem. There are obviously cases where students are motivated, attend regularly and make the most of the opportunities provided by Continuing Education. However, the anecdotal evidence we did manage to collect leads us to conclude that problems relating to attendance and engagement in learning are widespread.

We have been told, for example, that student attendance is sporadic and that there is a reluctance on the part of the Centre/Board administrators/consultants to do anything about it. In many courses, attendance drops so low that the course is not viable but it is not cancelled. Obviously if this drop occurs late in the course then it is unfair to those students who have persisted to cancel the course. However, one is left wondering: How many courses are allowed to start and continue where it is obvious from the beginning that the course is not viable?

We were informed that in the past the allowances students received from Cree Human Resources Development [CHRD] were not affected by absences. If motivation is tied to money then such policy and practice are extremely counter-productive. We understand that this policy has changed but again, in the absence of data, we cannot say to what extent.

It would be gratifying to think that adult students return to school for the love of learning. Experience in other jurisdictions tells us that opportunities for employment is a more usual motivating factor. Unfortunately, immediate employment opportunities compete with those that take longer to achieve, even if the latter are potentially better. Some students in the CSB thus abandon their studies when they find a job that pays more than the allowance they receive. In many cases, it seems, the prospect of a better job in the future loses out to a higher wage now.

It also appears as if the culture of dependency that we discussed in Part 1,[a] has a role to play in explaining low levels of attendance and engagement among adults:

> **Students rely on the system; there is a mentality of dependence (Centre consultant).**

Students view adult education as a last resort. They realize they need education but in the Cree world you don't always need an education to move ahead (Board administrator).

Students here are always dependent on the system. They are always sure that the system will to come to their assistance. They have been conditioned to this attitude since childhood. Their parents depend on the Band Office. If they don't pay an invoice, the Band Office will pay it for them. They are never evicted from their houses, even if they do not pay the rent. The situation is

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[a]   See section 2.1.1 in *Part 1, Overview, Context & Mission*.

serious; they are on social assistance. The system will always support them. This is where the problem truly resides; there is a mentality of dependence (Centre consultant).

EXHIBIT 3-3: INCREASES IN GRADUATION RATES
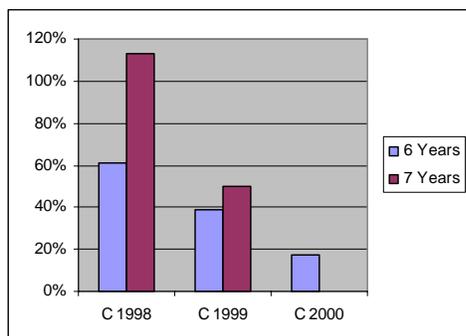
In our analysis of student results in the youth sector,[a] we looked at data on graduation rates which are normally measured five years after a group of students (called a 'cohort') enters secondary school. We observed that in the past, the graduation rate in the CSB was much higher when measured after six or seven years. As shown in Exhibit 3-3, the graduation rate of the 1998 cohort (C1998) increased by approximately 60% after six years and by almost 120% after seven years.[b]

Therefore, some students unable to obtain a diploma in five years, were successful given an additional year or two. Many of these students found that path to success in continuing education.

Unfortunately, according to the data we have, this tendency to take longer but persevere until a diploma is obtained seems to have almost disappeared in recent years. As shown in Exhibit 3-3, the graduation rate of the 1999 cohort (C1999) increased by less than 40% after six years and by approximately 50% after seven years. Even more discouraging is the fact that the increase after six years for the 2000 cohort (C2000) has dropped to less than 20%.[c]

In other words, rather than taking longer to complete high school, students are now simply dropping out - and staying out. As we stated in our analysis in Part 2, additional time to complete secondary schooling is most likely to be advantageous when:

- students are motivated to continue or return to school;
- conditions provided by the School Board are supportive for such continued study; or
- some combination of the two.

We cannot say with certainty what factors are actually at play here. However, our working hypothesis is that adult students are less motivated, and supportive conditions in continuing education have deteriorated. Further study is required to determine why this is happening and what should be done to reverse this trend.

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[a]   See section 4.2.1 in **Part 2, Educating Youth in the CSB**.

[b]   These rates of increase are calculated by comparing the graduation rates after 5 years and 6 or more years. Thus, for C1998, the rate after 5 years was 17.9%; the rate after 6 years was 28.8%, for a difference of 10.9% (28.8-17.9). To determine the 'percentage increase' as used in Exhibit 3-3, one simply divides the increase (10.9) by the original rate (17.9) multiplied by 100: (10.9÷17.9) x 100=60.9%.

[c]   The data for the increase after 7 years are not yet available.

8.1.2 Curricular Learning

Curricular learning for adults, as for youth students,[a] consists in mastering the competencies envisaged by the curriculum for general or vocational education. Enhanced literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills figure high among the goals of adult learners:

- **Prose literacy** – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

- **Document literacy** – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and charts.

- **Numeracy** – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

- **Problem solving** – problem solving involves goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist....[158]

Adult students often discover that what passed for literacy or numeracy when they were in school is no longer sufficient. Expectations of society in general and employers in particular have risen in recent years and will no doubt continue to rise, hence the need for life-long learning.
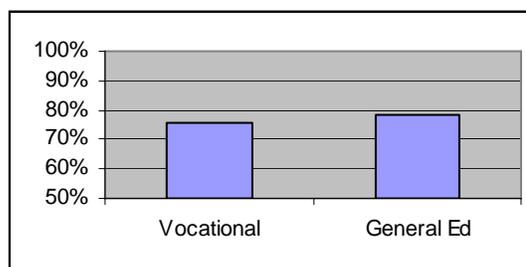

Performance Standard

- Students demonstrate mastery of the required competencies specified in the curriculum for their training program or course.

The Sabtuan Clientele Study compiled data on adult student success for a thirteen year period: 1994-95 to 2006-07. They report an average success rate of 75% for vocational courses, 78% for general education courses and 76% overall.[b] However, there is considerable variance in the pass rate from year to year, from a high of 96% in 1996-97 to 17% in 2006-07.

It is interesting to note that of the remaining percentage (24% overall) only 2% is accounted

EXHIBIT 3-4: SUCCESS RATES IN VOCATIONAL & GENERAL EDUCATION, 1995-2007

for by failing grades. The remainder are either blank or 'other' which we surmise reflect withdrawals of students who wrote at least one exam. When other withdrawals are included (students who wrote no exams), the pass rate drops to 70%; the 2% failure rate remains constant and blanks and presumed withdrawals rise to 28%.[c]

The Sabtuan Clientele Study includes pass rates by subject (e.g. French) but does not indicate the level (e.g. secondary IV). No data on course marks are provided so no other quantitative analysis on student results was possible.

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[a] See section 3.2 in *Part 2, Educating Youth in the CSB*.

[b] These figures drop to 70% in each case, when registrations excluded from the dataset are included (see discussion in previous section on the **Econotech** report).

[c] Details about these data are included in Exhibits C-34 to C-36, Appendix C.

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about student learning: "Students successfully complete the courses and programs in which they are enrolled." Respondents are less optimistic about this item than they were about student engagement, with only 42% agreeing that students would successfully complete their courses.[a]

We attempted to collect qualitative data from students, consultants, teachers and other staff about student learning but did not receive any input on this theme.

8.1.3 Employment

Although employment is usually considered a longer term goal of youth education, it is often an immediate outcome sought by adult students. UNESCO and the International Labour Organization [ILO] state that technical and vocational education should provide the foundation for employment; more specifically it should:

> lead to the acquisition of broad knowledge and generic skills applicable to a number of occupations within a given field so that the individual is not limited in his/her choice of occupation and is able to transfer from one field to another during his/her working life;

> at the same time offer both a thorough and specialized preparation for initial employment, including self-employment, and also training within employment; [and]

> provide the background in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes for continuing education at any point in the individual's working.[159]

In accordance with this vision, although adult education is directly linked to specific employment opportunities, it always has a 'wider agenda' to prepare students for further learning and changes in employment over a lifetime. The link between learning and employment also reflects the importance of adult education in local and regional development,[160] a linkage that is well recognized in Québec.[b]

Performance Standard
- Students seeking employment in a chosen field obtain such a post within two years of graduation.

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about student learning: "Upon completion of their studies, students are prepared for further education and employment." Respondents are slightly more optimistic about employment than they were about course completion, with 54% agreeing and 27% strongly agreeing with this statement.[c]

Once again, the qualitative data collected from students, consultants, teachers and other staff did not provide any insights on this theme beyond vague generalities. When we asked one Board administrator about the level of results students had in finding employment, the reply was: *Yes, it's very good.*

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[a] The average response to this item (max=4) was 2.38.

[b] Government policy on regionalization - increased decision-making authority to local and regional bodies - fosters the collaboration of educational institutions with employers and various regional agencies. A recent brief of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation entitled, *Adult Education: A Partner in Local and Regional Development* (see endnote 160), provides a thorough discussion of the linkages between education and development, including eleven specific recommendations for policy and practice.

[c] The average response to this item (max=4) was 3.00.

8.1.4 Key Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

Returning to the performance standard stated at the beginning of this section, we must now ask to what extent the data that we have collected and analyzed permit us to determine whether adult student learning meets the stated standards:

➢ Students attend centre regularly and take an active part in learning and related activities.

➢ Students demonstrate mastery of the required competencies specified in the curriculum for their training program or course.

➢ Students seeking employment in a chosen field obtain such a post within two years of graduation.

We know from anecdotal comments that student attendance is very problematic: *They have good intentions but they don't follow through*, said one consultant. Unfortunately, the Continuing Education Department was unable to produce any data about attendance or other student results, except for those found in the preliminary version of one external study.

The data we had gathered from the youth sector showed the importance of additional time for students to obtain a secondary school diploma, time that is often spent in continuing education. Unfortunately, this analysis also showed that increased graduation rates after six and seven years (as opposed to the standard five years to complete secondary school) has been diminishing. To us, this means that adult students are less motivated, and supportive conditions in continuing education have deteriorated.

The only data we were able to collect on student success in continuing education came from the Sabtuan Clientele Study. It reports an average success rate of 76% for general and vocational courses. However, these rates vary considerably over time, from a high of 96% in 1996-97 to a low of 17% in 2006-07. We have no data on employment.

Anecdotal comments from students, administrators, consultants and other staff provided limited data about student results. However, they tended to suggest that adult students are not highly motivated and are more interested in the immediate benefits of attending school, especially a training allowance, than investing time and effort in their own futures. It has been stated that this is due to a culture of dependence and an expectation that the system will look after them, whether they expend any effort or not.

The only conclusion we can draw on the basis of the data we collected is the need for accurate data on and subsequent analysis of student results in relation to student engagement; curricular learning; and employment. The fact that Continuing Education does not possess such data will be dealt with under monitoring and evaluation in section 10.3.4. Accordingly, we recommend:

> **R64** **THAT** the Board undertake a thorough analysis of adult student results in relation to student engagement; curricular learning; and employment.
>
> **R65** **THAT** the findings of the study referred to in recommendation 64, as well as the input arising from other recommendations of this report, be used to develop and implement an action plan to build the capacity and performance of adult education centres to achieve high levels of student results.

8.2   Training & Other Services

In this performance theme, we posed the following question:

- How successful is the centre in providing quality training and other services to its students?

This theme comprises four evaluative objects:

- curriculum;
- teaching;
- instructional resources; and
- student services.

The standards used to evaluate each object are provided in each of the sub-sections that follow; a summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found in section 8.2.5.

8.2.1 Curriculum

The purpose of the final strand of *A New Direction for Success*, the ministerial plan for the reform of education in Québec, was to provide better access to continuing education.[161] This policy strand was taken forward in the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*,[162] and the accompanying plan of action.[163]

The policy is clearly inspired by the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education*, referred to earlier in this report. Four policy directions are identified:

- providing basic education for adults;
- continual upgrading of adults' competencies;
- recognizing prior learning; and
- removing obstacles to access and perseverance.

Overall, the policy emphasizes the importance of coordinated and concerted action.[a]

Basic education no longer refers to simple literacy and numeracy but to the completion of secondary studies in general education or vocational training. The *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* that applies to youth also applies to adult education.[164]

Courses of study for adult general education include a basic literacy and numeracy program and the individual courses of study leading to secondary school diploma. Details on course offerings can be found in *The Basics of the Basic Regulation*, an information document published by MELS.[165] The curriculum for adult general education courses is undergoing a major reform, for which a provisional framework has been published.[166] Ministerial courses of study are complemented by local programs for adult education.[167]

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[a]   "Adult education and continuing education and training in Québec, viewed as a broad system, is characterized by a complex set of mechanisms and subsystems that respond to diverse learning situations, make it possible to attain a variety of objectives, and comprise a multitude of different players. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of the players intersect and often overlap, even within a single organization. This diversity has certain advantages; however, coherence, synergy and complementarity in the actions of different partners are essential conditions for meeting some crucial challenges in adult education and continuing education and training" (endnote 162, p. 31).

Performance Standard

▪ The curriculum being taught fulfills the requirements mandated for the training program or course and is appropriate for students at that level.

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about course offerings: "The centre provides an appropriate offering of courses and programs to meet student needs." Respondents gave their highest rating to the appropriateness of course offerings, with 50% agreeing and 32% strongly agreeing with this statement.[a]

As a general rule, feedback from students, consultants, teachers and other staff did not deal with curriculum. However, a teacher in one community whom we met, was quite concerned that various courses of study in the area of personal and social development, namely the PRS series of courses, were no longer available. In his words:

These programs of study are most essential and beneficial to the Cree community of adult learners and all efforts should be taken to provide them from [the Ministry] that has them in its archives.

We did not have the opportunity to follow up on this query with Ministry officials. However, we did examine the Ministry information document on adult education courses. It makes no reference to these particular courses (past or present); however, such courses would appear to be treated under Social Integration Services. These services are intended for adults who have limitations of a social nature or related to learning; or who have intellectual, sensory, physical, psychological or emotional impairments. Any such courses "do not involve attending a class and no credits are assigned to them."[168]

Another teacher suggested that there was a need for curriculum that would be relevant and stimulating to adult Cree students. This comment came in a written questionnaire without any elaboration. However, we assume that it reflects the fact that provincial courses and programs are used without, it seems, any attempt on the part of the CSB, to adapt them for their students.

It was beyond the scope of this Review to analyze Ministry curriculum documents. However, with two reservations, it does not seem to be a major issue. The reservations concern the apparent inability of Continuing Education to keep up with changes in Ministry courses, and the allocation of course offerings in each community. Both issues will be discussed in section 8.2.3.

8.2.2 Teaching

The general notions about effective classroom instruction are the same for youth and adult education - good teaching is good teaching. As we stated in Part 2, the two essential dimensions of teaching are the personal and the professional. The personal relationships between teachers and students create the conditions of trust and respect that are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for learning. As professionals, teachers are expected to be knowledgeable about their subject areas as well as the art and science of teaching.

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[a] The average response to this item (max=4) was 3.11.

However, the above generalizations about teaching are not meant to detract from the important characteristics of adult learning, often termed andragogy in Québec.[a] The andragogical approach is intended to help adults:

- set their priorities;

- develop occupational objectives based on their limitations, abilities and the socioeconomic context, and to make the required compromises and choices;

- become aware of their personal, educational and occupational achievements;

- gain a better understanding of themselves in terms of their current and future employment opportunities and of their social and cultural roles; and

- assume responsibility for their training process.[169]

Performance Standard

- Teaching meets the following criteria:

  ◊ teaching reflects teacher mastery of subject area and planning of lessons;

  ◊ teaching methods and organizational strategies match curricular objectives and needs of students; and

  ◊ student work is assessed thoroughly, constructively and consistently.

We were not able to observe classroom instruction and saw only one shop class in progress at the SRVTC, where we did see a teacher working with students individually on their projects. However, we did get glimpses of what went on in classrooms.

As is often the practice in adult education, the CSB employs a modular teaching approach that relies on students working through course content independently. In theory, this allows students to work at their own pace and allows for a mixture of students at different levels in one class. It requires considerable individualized assistance on the part of the teacher.

> Adult students have very poor reading skills, yet Continuing Education expects them to work through course material on their own.

This approach may not be appropriate for those who have experienced considerable difficulty in school and do not have the study skills and self-discipline required to succeed. Based on our analysis of youth education we would suggest that the vast majority of continuing education students have very low levels of literacy. We very much doubt that they can easily read or adequately understand the material in the modules. They are written for those able to function in English (or French) as a language of instruction, not for second-language learners. Simply allowing students to proceed on their own seems like a recipe for failure.

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[a] Andragogy has been defined as: "The science and practice dealing with educational activities for adults, both in school and related environments (e.g. community, workplace). The learning processes and the content of the training are a function of the adult's development, the elements that characterize him or her, as well as his or her social, family, economic, occupational and personal situation" (see endnote 165).

In such cases, teachers must adapt their teaching strategies and promote students' acquiring increasing levels of autonomy and responsibility for their own learning.[170] Adult students recognize this. In response to being asked to list three main ways the centre helped them to achieve their goals as an adult learner, several responded:

My instructor is always there to help me with my school work.

To have a teacher who put his Students first even if it means going beyond his contract.

There are always teachers to help.

> *Teachers need to devote 100% of their time and energy to teaching and motivation. If we are to keep our students we must be animated and enthusiastic on a daily basis so our students will want to continue attending classes* (Teacher)*.*

Not surprisingly, some anecdotal comments from centre consultants indicated that not all teaching was up to standard. We cannot say to what extent teachers are engaged in their teaching, or the extent to which students are left on their own. Given the small number of students in each community and the extensive use of self-directed learning materials, the Board would be well-advised to determine whether their current model of classroom teaching is the most effective way of providing instructional services.

On the one extreme, consider a situation where a teacher has 15 students who attend regularly, and he or she provides individual help to each of these students every class. On the other extreme, imagine a situation where a teacher has 5 students who attend sporadically, and he or she provides little individual help to even these few students. In the first case, the model would seem to be an efficient use of resources. In the second hypothetical example, the students might as well be working at home.

Continuing Education is aware of this situation, as evidenced by the following exchange with one consultant:

Q: *Do you ever get to go and observe teachers teach in these Centres?*

A: *Sometimes but when you go in the class, students are doing their own thing.*

Q: *They're just sitting there working on their own?*

A: *Yes because it's individualized learning.*

Q: *There's no teaching that you can observe?*

A: *That's right.*

We asked another consultant about the quality of classroom teaching:

Well, I'd say that, out of the 8 programs that we've done so far, maybe 5 are doing very well. Maybe there's one that's doing average and one or two that could do with a lot of improvement. In one classroom, I found that the teacher doesn't teach. He or she does work mostly in the corner and the students are here in the shop [mechanics course].

We regret not having had the time to spend observing classroom instruction. Unless teachers are helping students to learn, then there is little point in providing on-site classes. Clearly, this is another area which requires detailed follow-up.

One alternative that should be considered is **distance education**, with on-line tutoring, complemented by on-site services. This approach may enable the Board to reach more students more efficiently. However, if the tutoring and other services are not adequate, then students will simply relive the frustration they experienced as youth in school and drop out again.

8.2.3 Instructional Resources

Once again, parallels between adult and youth education are obvious, each requiring human, financial and other resources to provide the education that students are seeking.

Performance Standard

- Instructional resources meet the following criteria:

  ◊   teachers and other human resources have appropriate qualifications, experience and aptitudes;

  ◊   classrooms and other instructional facilities are adequate in terms of size, furnishings and environment;

  ◊   textbooks and other teaching materials as required for the curriculum are provided;

  ◊   other resources to enhance instruction are provided.

We gathered feedback from students, consultants, teachers and other staff about instructional resources. We received some input on teachers to which we have already made reference in the previous section. Most of the input focused on facilities and course materials.

Although we speak of 'centres' in this report as if they were the continuing education equivalent of a school, with one exception, this is not an accurate image. Other than the SRVTC, which we will discuss below, the continuing education 'centres' of the Board generally designate a point of service rather than a distinct facility.

In some communities, continuing education has an office in the local school; in others there is an office in a separate building that does not belong to the Board. In most cases, classes are offered in classrooms of the local school but some continuing education classes are offered in trailers stationed on school property. Some specialized shop courses are offered in other facilities in the community.

In no community, is there a facility that continuing education can truly call its own. Because of

> *We don't have our own building. We don't have access to the library. We don't have access to the computer room* (Student)*.*

the size of the operation in each community, it is simply not feasible to have such a facility. Continuing education is therefore forced to 'scrounge' for classroom space, office space, storage space, and so forth.

This situation is not unique to the CSB. Fully constituted adult education centres can be found in some school boards in Québec, especially urban Francophone boards. They are also more common now that vocational education operates as a separate sector for both youth and adult students together. However, in many boards, especially small, rural Anglophone boards, adult education is usually housed in secondary schools and other rented facilities.

Almost everyone we spoke to about continuing education talked about the lack of appropriate facilities, as well as the lack of sufficient facilities, appropriate or otherwise. Each centre faces two perennial problems that are found in every jurisdiction: first, the uncertainty of requirements for facilities; and second, the time during which they are required.

Although program offerings change from time to time in secondary schools, they are relatively stable over time. In continuing education, they vary a great deal, as they depend on fluctuating demands for one type of course for another. Not only do these demands vary from one year to the next but they are often not known long in advance. When continuing education can offer courses in the evening, the use of secondary school facilities seems to be an obvious solution. Unfortunately, this does not always work as well as one might expect.

We have feedback about some schools where this sharing of facilities works well and others where it does not. In some cases, the problem is simply that there is not enough space to accommodate both youth and adults. In others, the school seems unwilling to cooperate. In these situations, continuing education rightly feels like a 'poor cousin' with no real status within the local educational community. We have also heard from students that they are regularly displaced from the facilities they are using to make way for school events. The message is clear: continuing education comes last, if at all.

> *If we had facilities then I wouldn't be scrambling all over the place to find a location. Just to get classrooms at the school, I have to get permission from the Principal and the teachers* **(Centre consultant)***.*

The second issue raised above - time - refers first to the fact that continuing education courses often need to be scheduled during the day. Classrooms and other facilities are not generally available at this time. Second, the time span of adult courses does not coincide with the school year. They might start and end at any time during the year. Moreover, some schools, understandably, are very reluctant to have adult students in the school when youth students, especially younger ones are present.

The problem of facilities extends beyond the school, namely to residential facilities. In some cases, continuing education can find instructors locally. In many cases, however, it must import them from outside the community. This, in turn, requires accommodations for the teacher. We witnessed this problem first hand in one community where a teacher arrived only to find she had no place to stay:

> *The CEA refused to provide housing, saying it was being held for a youth sector teacher and here we had the secretarial studies teacher who was living at the hotel.*

> *The priority is to provide housing to the youth sector teachers and then we are given whatever's left and most of the time, the housing I'm left with is substandard. And if they don't have any and the youth sector occupies all the Cree School Board units, I have to go to the Band. Most of the time, the Band says we don't have any and even if they do, again, they are substandard units. So there are times when I have to delay a teacher's arrival because of that. I've actually had a teacher who, although he didn't say so, I strongly believe that he quit as a result of substandard housing.*

We recognize both the depth of the problems regarding facilities and the difficulty in dealing with them. This is clearly not a case where one could say to the Board - 'Just do it. ' However, we do conclude that not enough serious attention has been paid to the issue of centre and residential facilities for continuing education and that this shortcoming needs to be properly addressed. We also conclude that while some solutions may take time to develop and implement, there are some that could be done immediately.

The most obvious one is ensuring that, under present administrative arrangements,[a] the CEA is made to realize that continuing education is a part of the Board's mainstream operation, not a sideline that is only considered if convenient.

We mentioned at the beginning of this section that the SRVTC was an exception to the situation prevailing in other communities with regard to instructional facilities. This centre is the only self-contained facility for adult education in the Board. It is well equipped; in fact, we were told that the facilities are not a problem but the capacity to use them is:

> *The classrooms and facilities and equipment here are really up-to-date. They're modern. It's just that somebody has to come in here and show the teachers exactly how to use this up-to-date machinery. It's used at times but not to it's full capacity.*

We were not able to do any detailed analysis of this facility. However, the one obvious problem that we did see was its location. As with the location of the Educational Services Department in Chisasibi, we could discover no pedagogical or administrative reason for locating the SRVTC in Waswanipi. The community is small and isolated, with no infrastructure. As we were told:

> Q: *What's it like having the SRVTC here in Waswanipi?*
>
> A: *Waswanipi is not an ideal location for a vocational centre. There are no facilities here: no hotel, no restaurant, no hardware store. You can't even buy a hammer or a paint brush. Half the time there is no gasoline.*
>
> Q: *This sounds like a strange place to have chosen.*
>
> A: *Yes it's a strange place but a beautiful place - beautiful for hunting moose.*

Once again, we are forced to conclude that politics, not the best interests of students, dictated the choice of this community. It is unfortunate when bad decisions are made for good reasons. It is tragic when they are made for bad reasons, especially when they cannot, for all practical purposes, be changed. As will be discussed in section 8.3.2 (p. 189) under leadership and planning, the SRVTC ought to be playing a major role in vocational education in the Board, a role that is rendered extremely difficult in its present location.

The other issue on instructional resources on which we received considerable comment was course materials, namely having appropriate materials provided in a timely fashion. Several **students**, when asked to list the main barriers that get in their way, or make it more difficult to achieve their goals, said:

> *Not enough books.*
>
> *Not having the material when we start the course.*

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about resources: "The centre has

> *In my years as an Education Consultant for Sabtuan, not one community-based vocational courses has started with adequate materials at the beginning of the program* (Centre consultant)*.*

adequate facilities and other resources for the courses and programs it offers." The average respondent rating of resources was lower that their rating of course offerings but higher than that given for other services. A total of 32% agreed and 29% strongly agreed that the centre had

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[a]   As presented in sections 6.2.1 and 6.3 in Part 2, the CEA and the principal have shared responsibility for the administration of the school. In particular, the CEA is responsible for much of the management of resources, including school and residential facilities.

adequate facilities and other resources.[a] The comments provided by staff voiced similar concerns to those raised by students.

Consultants talked about the problems with the Board office in Mistissini for processing orders. By contrast, the Board office stated that it was not uncommon for continuing education to order supplies at the last minute:
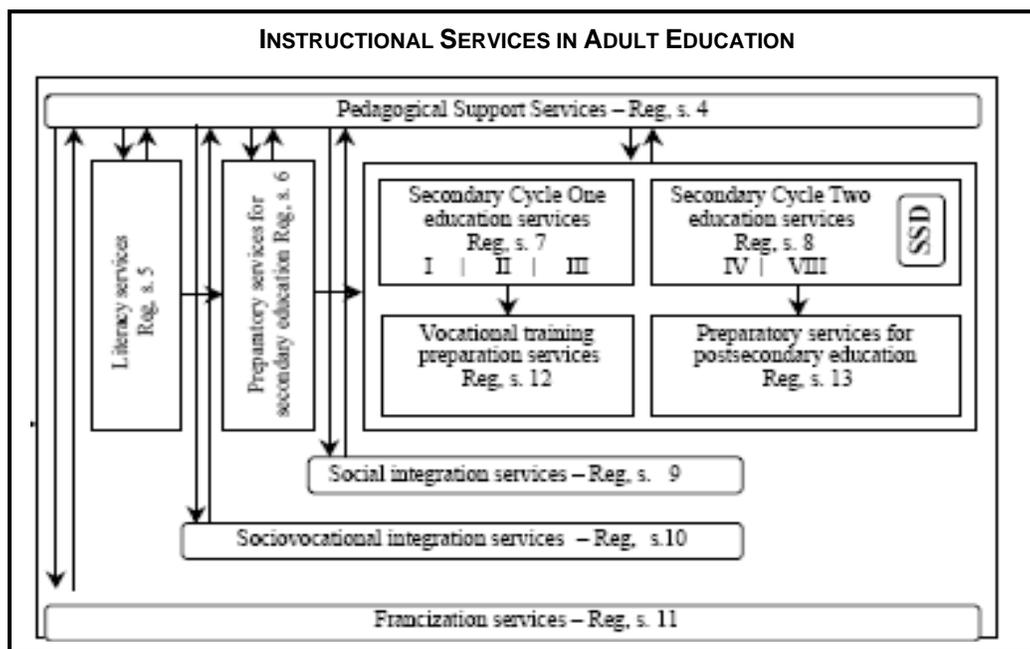
> *Continuing Education came to see me one day, it was 4:00 pm, and I was told – buy me $37,000 worth of wood for a carpentry course – for tomorrow morning – all that for the supply and delivery - or the course will be cancelled.*

> *Many requisitions come from centres to Material Resources to order things, but they have no money in their budget. They don't even check.*

We encountered similar stories in the youth sector, with the schools and Administrative Services blaming each other for problems, delays, etc.[b] We do not pretend to have got to the bottom of these problems, let alone been able to identify causes and solutions. However, we can safely conclude that the problem is real and must be addressed.

8.2.4 Complementary Services

The *Basic Adult General Education Regulation* subdivides educational services into three categories: training, complementary services and popular education (which does not concern us in this report). Training is subdivided into instructional and orientation services. We omit any mention of 'training' and include orientation services with complementary services. However, although some adult instructional services might appear to the reader to belong under complementary services, they are treated as instructional services as defined in the *Basic Adult General Education Regulation*, to reflect the realities of adult versus youth education, as illustrated in this text box.[171]

INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Pedagogical Support Services – Reg. s. 4

Literacy services Reg. s. 5

Preparatory services for secondary education Reg. s. 6

Secondary Cycle One education services Reg. s. 7
I | II | III

Secondary Cycle Two education services Reg. s. 8
IV | VIII

SSD

Vocational training preparation services Reg. s. 12

Preparatory services for postsecondary education Reg. s. 13

Social integration services – Reg. s. 9

Sociovocational integration services – Reg. s.10

Francization services – Reg. s. 11

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[a]   The average response to this item (max=4) was 2.82.

[b]   See sections 4.2 in Part 2 and chapter 11 in Part 4.

Complementary services contribute to the overall mission of adult education.[a] They are framed in terms of three types of services each with its own purpose:

- **Reception and referral services**, in addition to admission and enrolment procedures, provide the gateway to adult education services, other agencies and job market opportunities.

- **Orientation services** enable adults to establish a learning plan following reception and referral services, taking into account their personal and work experience and their goals; and explore the paths and resources available in order to carry out their *learning plan* in keeping with their *learning profile*;

- **Student services** are designed to provide adults in training programs with support regarding their personal and social conditions; they include services that provide information about community.

Performance Standard

- Complementary services are designed to provide students with conditions that support their learning and personal development.

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about complementary services: "The centre provides other services that meet student needs." In contrast to the appropriateness of course offerings, respondents gave their lowest rating to the level of other services provided to adult students with only 36% agreeing and 11% strongly agreeing with this statement.[b]

Even this level of agreement was surprising because when we asked centre consultants about complementary services, the response everywhere was the same: There are none. We therefore conclude that the positive responses mentioned above refer to assistance provided by teachers or the centre consultant.

In the written submission from Continuing Education, we were informed of the following:

> *The Board passed a resolution that would guarantee Sabtuan's student clientele access to youth sector guidance counsellors. The reality is that few students have successfully accessed these services, because the youth sector students are first priority.*

Our people have been accustomed to this welfare way of thinking. My father used to tell me when I was a kid, don't rely on anybody to survive. He used to tell me, gain the skills that you need to survive but dependence is like a sickness **(External stakeholder).**

Given this *reality*, it is not surprising that we had heard nothing about this possibility when visiting schools and centres. This appears to be another example of good intentions leading nowhere because there is no communication, accountability or follow-up.

Given the integral importance of complementary services in the overall framework for adult learning, this situation needs to be remedied as quickly as possible. It is here that the

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[a] This mission, stated in *Basic Adult General Education Regulation*, s. 1, is to enable adults to become increasingly autonomous; to facilitate the social and vocational integration of adults; to help adults enter and remain in the job market; to enable adults to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of their community; and to enable adults to acquire learning that is certified by the Minister.

[b] The average response to this item (max=4) was 2.50.

disappearance of courses for social and personal learning raised by the teacher cited earlier could be addressed.

The SRVTC provides a residence and a cafeteria for students and their dependents, all at no cost. However, for some students, even this provision is not enough. For example, one complained that there were not enough activities for their children, that they had to entertain them. Another complained that there was no provision to get children to and from day care. There are rules for students to follow in the residences, including no alcohol or smoking but enforcement is problematic. We have been told that when the administration attempts to enforce the rules they are countermanded by Continuing Education at head office. This happens, even though the rules originate in Board policy.

In addition to services associated with its residence, the SRVTC provides limited complementary services:

> *We have our Student Affairs Technician, our SAT, and she provides counselling to students who have problems with their attendance, their school work, or, sometimes, with their personal lives, budgets, whatever it is. She's the one that usually counsels them. She meets them on a private basis and they sit down and talk about it.*

Apparently, the SAT also helps organize extra-curricular activities for students after-school and on weekends. The SRVTC would like to see other services provided, such as psychological counselling, but there are no plans to do so.

8.2.5 Key Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

Returning to the performance standard stated at the beginning of this section, we must now ask to what extent the data that we have collected and analyzed permit us to determine whether training and other services for adult students meet the stated standards:

➢ The curriculum being taught fulfills the requirements mandated for the training program or course and is appropriate for students at that level.

➢ Teaching meets the following criteria:

 ♦ teaching reflects teacher mastery of subject area and planning of lessons;

 ♦ teaching methods and organizational strategies match curricular objectives and needs of students; and

 ♦ student work is assessed thoroughly, constructively and consistently.

➢ Instructional resources meet the following criteria:

 ♦ teachers and other human resources have appropriate qualifications, experience and aptitudes;

 ♦ classrooms and other instructional facilities are adequate in terms of size, furnishings and environment;

 ♦ textbooks and other teaching materials as required for the curriculum are provided; and

 ♦ other resources to enhance instruction are provided.

> ➢ Complementary services are designed to provide students with conditions that support their learning and personal development.

Curriculum does not seem to be a major issue. However, one teacher suggested that there was a need for curriculum that would be relevant and stimulating to adult Cree students.

As is often done in adult education, the CSB uses modular teaching where students work

> Adult students have very poor reading skills, yet Continuing Education expects them to work through course material on their own.

through course content independently. We have questioned the desirability of this approach. First, based on our analysis of youth education we would suggest that the vast majority of continuing education students have very low levels of reading skills. We doubt that they can easily read or adequately understand the material in the modules, which are for first, not second, language learners. Simply allowing students to proceed on their own seems like a recipe for failure. Second, distance education may be a preferable alternative, if teachers are providing little actual assistance during class. We have some anecdotal evidence that suggest this may well be the case in many classes. However, **for students to succeed, distance education must include tutoring and other support services**.

Although we treat centres as the equivalent of schools in the youth sector, they are better thought of as a point of service rather than a distinct facility. With the exception of the SRVTC, facilities are a major issue in every centre. There is a lack of space for classrooms, shops, offices and storage. Furthermore, the lack of residential facilities for staff is a serious impediment to the capacity of centres to offer a range of courses.

By contrast, the facilities of the SRVTC are state-of-the-art. However, there is a lack of capacity to make complete use of them. The most serious problem is the location of the SRVTC in a small and isolated community, with no infrastructure. It seems that, as with the location of the Educational Services Department in Chisasibi, politics, not pedagogy, decided the location.

The other instructional resource issue on which we received considerable comment was course materials, namely having appropriate materials provided in a timely fashion. As observed in the youth sector, Administrative Services and the centres have very different views on the cause of the problem. The one thing we are sure of is that the problem is real and must be addressed.

Complementary services are minimal in the SRVTC and non-existent elsewhere. Given the integral importance of these services in the overall framework for adult learning, this situation needs to be remedied as quickly as possible. Such services could also deal with the disappearance of courses for social and personal learning raised by one teacher.

Based on the foregoing analysis, we recommend:

R66 **THAT** the Board thoroughly review current teaching practice in every one of its centres with a view to determining whether students are receiving the level of instructional services they need.

R67 **THAT** the Board investigate the use of distance education as an alternative means for delivering some continuing education courses, provided that tutoring and other support services are offered.

R68 **THAT** the Board, in collaboration with centre consultants, teachers and others, undertake a thorough needs assessment of both instructional and residential facilities for continuing education, with a view to developing a comprehensive improvement plan.

R69 **THAT** the Board, in collaboration with centre consultants, teachers and others, complete a needs assessment of the instructional resources required to meet the needs of students in different upgrading and vocational programs.

R70 **THAT** the Board, in collaboration with centre consultants, teachers and others, undertake a thorough needs assessment of complementary services, determine what must be done to meet these needs, and implement an action plan to do so.

R71 **THAT** the Board develop and implement an action plan to build the capacity and performance of adult education centres to deliver quality services to their students.

8.3   Centre Support for Learning

In this performance theme, we posed the following question:

- How successful is the centre in providing other means to support learning?

In our work plan, this theme comprised five evaluative objects:

- centre climate & organization;
- centre leadership & strategic planning;
- allocation & management of resources;
- monitoring & evaluation; and
- centre linkages to outside bodies.

We deliberately chose these five objects and defining standards to parallel those used in the analysis of school support for learning in the youth sector, even though we realized that, with the exception of the SRVTC, adult education centres in the CSB did not compare to schools in terms of facilities or infrastructure. We did so because these centres serve a parallel purpose - to support adult learning. We hoped that using the same framework would enable us to determine to what extent these centres fulfill that purpose in their context.

Two factors prevented us from using this framework to evaluate centre support for learning. First, the size of all centres, except the SRVTC, and the way they operate made this framework too detailed to be useful. Second, the time we had in each centre was extremely limited and the information supplied by Continuing Education did not compensate for this deficiency, leaving us with only a small amount of data on this theme.

Consequently, we revised the performance themes for centre support to deal separately with continuing education centres and the SRVTC, as presented below. The standards used to evaluate each object are provided in each of these sub-sections; a summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found in section 8.3.3.
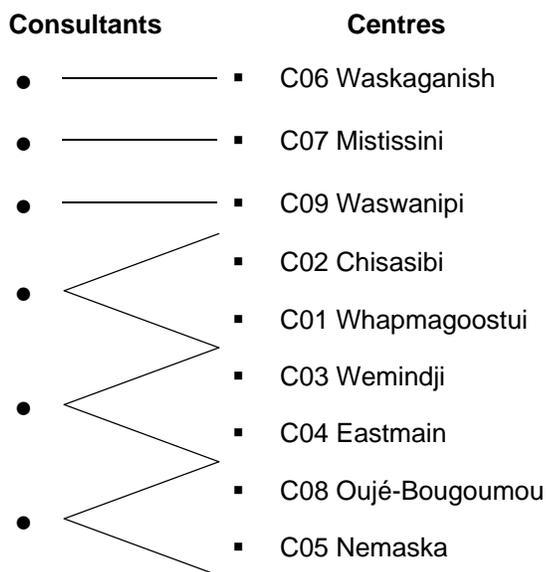
8.3.1 Continuing Education Centres

Any adult education centre, regardless of size, is the administrative focus of service delivery. Its functions will vary depending on the degree to which authority is delegated by the School Board. This variance will depend on Board policy and the size of the centre. As a general rule, larger centres will have greater administrative capacity and delegation will be correspondingly greater. Small centres typically exercise less authority but play a vital role in keeping operations on track. However, when communities are a long way from the central office, the person responsible for the centre is often called upon to do much more.

Performance Standard

- The operation of the Continuing Education Centre meets expected performance standards for planning, managing, delivering and evaluating the services it provides.

In the CSB, each continuing education centre is administered by a consultant, although this appears to be a contradiction in terms, as consultants are not administrators. We asked about job descriptions. One consultant thought there was one somewhere, probably in a Board administrative manual, but could not produce it. Others simply said there was none. At the present time, there are six consultants for nine centres; three consultants are responsible for

one centre; three for two centres, as shown below (the first centre listed in each of the three pairs of centres is the home-base of the consultant).

Consultants	Centres
	C06 Waskaganish
	C07 Mistissini
	C09 Waswanipi
	C02 Chisasibi
	C01 Whapmagoostui
	C03 Wemindji
	C04 Eastmain
	C08 Oujé-Bougoumou
	C05 Nemaska

We were puzzled by the fact that these centres were administered by persons who are not designated as administrators. One consultant stated:

> *The Education Consultants who work for Sabtuan Continuing Education at the community levels are not given the proper recognition or support they deserve. We are expected to complete all of the tasks that are required for these places to function. We do the same work as a Centre Director. We supervise teachers, liaise with parents, follow up on attendance, meet with community leaders and administrators. We sit on Continuing Education Committees and are expected to ensure that everything is functioning. Each time this issue is brought up at department meetings it is always brushed aside with the excuse of the lack of financial resources. With all the waste I have witnessed I find this hard to believe. We are constantly being referred to as centres even though the Cree School Board does not officially acknowledge us as such.*

We do not have an explanation for this ambiguity or why centre consultants are not classified as centre directors. Judging from what we have observed and our experience in other jurisdictions, the present arrangement does not appear to make much sense.

What we, and apparently everyone else,[a] call a 'centre' in the CSB, reflects the reality that in each local community, with one exception, this entity is the site of service delivery for all continuing education activities. The exception is of course Waswanipi where the SRVTC is also located. The person the Board designates as a consultant has all the attributes of a centre director, except the title, and the remuneration that goes with it. Perhaps the Organizational Review has considered this structural issue in its report and can shed light on this situation. Subject to its analysis or a convincing argument in support of the present arrangement, we conclude that both the status of each centre and the title of the person responsible for it should be revised to reflect reality. Such a change would also serve to send a strong message: ***Continuing education matters***.

> Consultants should be recognized as centre directors for that is the function they perform.

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[a] Even the newsletter circulated by Continuing Education, **Sabtuan Dabaajimoon**, refers to "our education centres in the nine Cree communities" (Vol. 1, Issue 3, Fall, 2007, p. 1).

As noted previously, continuing education centres in the CSB are not set up in a distinct facility like a school. Some have an office in the local school, some in a trailer, others in rented space in an outside building. The six consultants are full time but, as a general rule, they do not have any regular secretarial assistance, full or part time. The exception is the office in Chisasibi which has a small number of office staff. From the data collected, this staff feels isolated and ignored by Continuing Education.

As presented in the previous section on training and other services, each centre makes use of classrooms in the local school and other facilities in the community. Permanent instructional staff is an aspiration rather than a reality, as centres rely on part-time staff hired as courses are approved.[a] Similarly, students, even when they attend full-time, do not have the same affiliation to the centre that students have to their schools. Under these circumstances, developing a centre culture is an all but impossible task. It is difficult to imagine how a centre could provide a welcoming environment when the centre, as an identifiable place of teaching and learning, cannot be found.

Like any educational institution, centres must plan courses and programs, manage the delivery of these services, monitor their progress and evaluate the results. Our main source of data for understanding how these functions are performed were obtained from interviews with four consultants and the written submission from one consultant. We received no input from one consultant. These data were supplemented by questionnaire data from students and centre staff, as well as interview data and documents from Continuing Education.

Course and program planning appear to vary considerably, depending on how the 'demand' for the service originates. Incoming demand may come individually, with prospective students indicating that they want a particular course. The Band Council might express the need for a certain program or the demand might come from the regional level. The role of the consultant varies as well. In some cases, he or she is the catalyst in getting a course off the ground. In others, the preparation is external and his or her role really begins when the course starts.

In some cases, consultants are involved in finding teachers for courses; in others, the Board assumes this responsibility. However, recruitment of students is normally done by the consultants. In any event, subject to the limited data we were able to gather, there does not appear to be a systematic planning process for determining needs for courses and programs. The process seems to be much more *ad hoc*, where consultants respond to situations as they arise. In other words, the process is more reactive than proactive.

Consultants are 'fixers.' When a course is set, they find a facility, perhaps a teacher. They may order supplies but this may be decided by Continuing Education.[b] They act as a go-between with the school administration and other agencies such as the Band Council. As such, they provide the liaison with the community (discussed below under Local Continuing Education Committee).

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about centre leadership: "The centre provides appropriate leadership to support teaching and learning." Respondents were generally positive about centre leadership with 52% agreeing and 32% strongly agreeing with this statement.[c]

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[a]   Such staff may teach a full schedule every week for an extended period of time. However, they are considered part-time, as full-time teachers teach a full schedule every week for a complete academic year.

[b]   Issues related to instructional resources have already been discussed in section 8.2.3.

[c]   The average response to this item (max=4) was 3.12.

> When problems arise, the consultant often does not have the authority or the capacity to respond, and Continuing Education provides little or no help.

Once the course has started, their role appears to be minimal. If there are problems, they are there to fix them. However, when we asked about the supervision of teaching, it seems as if their role is almost non-existent.

For example, one consultant talked to us about a vocational course but only referred to a classroom setting. When we asked about the shop facility, it became evident there was none. We were then told that the teacher did some practical work with students in the community but it was obvious that the consultant did not really know anything about this aspect of the course.

If there is a problem, for example, complaints from students, they try to intervene. However, from all indications we could gather, they receive no support from Continuing Education in this regard. There is undoubtedly good teaching occurring in many courses. However, in cases where instruction is problematic, little or nothing is done about it. The consultant has neither the authority nor the capacity to respond to the problem and Continuing Education seems to sit back and hope that the problem will disappear - more **wishful thinking**.[a]

Given this input, we were not surprised that when we asked about the level of support centres received from Continuing Education, the responses were short and to the point:

> *I do not receive the support I need.*

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about Board-level support: "The Continuing Education Department provides appropriate and sufficient support for your centre." Staff were somewhat more positive than the consultants but we suspect that their responses reflected their attitude toward the centre more than the Board, with which they have no direct contact.[b]

We were not surprised to find that there is no form of evaluation of courses, programs or services. Like everyone else in managerial and professional roles in the CSB, consultants attend lots of meetings, often in Montréal. However, these meetings serve to keep continuing education rolling along rather than reflecting on how it is doing, let alone how it might improve.

Local Continuing Education Committee

In theory, community liaison should be facilitated by a Local Continuing Education Committee [LCEC]. According to the Board By-Law,[c] the Council may, by resolution, establish an LCEC in any community where adult education services are provided on a regular basis.

The LCEC consists of three to five persons, including one member of or person appointed by the Band Council; the school commissioner; and other members appointed by the Director of Continuing Education. The CEA and a Continuing Education staff member (whom we presume would be the consultant) are non-voting members. The LCEC has the following functions:

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[a]   We introduced the notion of 'wishful thinking' ("pensée magique") in the Preface to Part 1, the fallacy that believing something will happen will make it happen. This type of thinking seems to be widespread in the CSB, and continuing education is no exception.

[b]   The average response to this item (max=4) was 2.96. The responses of staff on the nine centres were much more positive about centre leadership than the staff at the SRVTC. The responses of centre staff were correspondingly more positive about Board support, while SRVTC staff were correspondingly more negative.

[c]   General By-Law, art. 9.

- to promote participation by the community in the planning and improvement of continuing education services in the community;

- to review the continuing education needs of the community and to make recommendations to the Board;

- to recommend to the Board any measure likely to improve the administration, management and delivery of continuing education services in the community; and

- such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Director of Continuing Education.

For a *local* committee, it seems to be oriented to the Board, not the community.[a] Perhaps, this is one reason why the LCEC does not seem to have caught on. In most communities, it either does not exist or it exists on paper but it is not functional. Waswanipi was the only community where we were able to meet with the LCEC, and this was limited to the consultant and one member from the Band Council. However, they provided very helpful insights into what the LCEC did in this community and what it could do in others.

A good example of the collaboration that the LCEC can foster is found in the Job Placement Program that ran last year in Waswanipi. Designed for students wishing to complete secondary school, the Program provides them with a 'work-study' combination: half-time in school, half-time in a particular job placement in the community. Students are paid by the employer for the work they do and the employer is reimbursed by the Program. Students must attend school or they cannot go to work, the first ***reality check*** that the Program provides.

> *It gives them a reality check on what it takes to survive out there and what the demands are, which are not a lot different than going to school. In school, you have to be on time. You have to do certain work and you're expected to pass exams. There are certain expectations when you are taking a program. The same thing with a job. In a job, when you're given a task, you're expected to complete that task within a certain amount of time and so forth. And, you're not working all alone in that job, you know. Other people are depending on your output.*

There was no funding for this Program this year but they are hopeful to find funds for next year. This group not only understands the talk about community collaboration, they ***walk the talk***. They also have a clear perspective on the disconnectedness of the CSB and the communities it is meant to serve. In their own words:

> ***If we tried to run by the strict rules of Adult Ed. and the Cree School Board, we would look like a 'mission trailer' somewhere that had nothing to do with the community.***

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[a]   We encountered a similar problem in our analysis of school committees; see section 7.1.2 (p. 146) in Part 2.

They explained this statement with an example where the Board tries to solve a problem such as student attendance with rules. Their approach, by contrast, is to find out what students' needs are and then to motivate them to persevere and succeed. Again, in their words:

> *We have to be more people-oriented, more sensitive to the needs of, not only the students, but of the community. So, that's where the difference is. That's the direction that our Committee took.*

> **I find we're more well-advanced in terms of partnerships within our community. Perhaps we lack in some other areas but, at least we all have a vision of the education we want. At the community level, young and old see that we're going somewhere. With that being said, I think that we've achieved some of our goals but there's a lot more to do. We're just warming up (LCEC member).**

In our analysis of youth education, we stressed the importance of community support for schools, something that is generally lacking. We talked about an initiative that is taking place in several school communities in Québec called the Community Learning Centre, or CLC.[a] One of the key principles of this endeavour is 'reciprocity,' that both the school or centre and the community must benefit from this relationship. In other words, "the CLC is not a one-way street."[172]

The type of collaboration that this LCEC is promoting illustrates this type of reciprocity. It should serve as an example to all communities in the CSB.

Given the high number of drop-outs in the CSB, these centres represent the Board's best hope at recuperating these students. They should also figure prominently in efforts to build community support for education in a collaborative partnership of the school, the centre, the Band Council and other community agencies and groups.

8.3.2 SRVTC

The SRVTC began operations in September 2005. It contains facilities for a number of vocational programs, including four major shop areas: mechanics (for small engines, auto mechanics, heavy equipment); building construction (construction electricity, pre-fab housing, etc...); industrial maintenance workshop (welding, refrigeration, air conditioning and electricity); and a mechanics room. It has a residence that will accommodate approximately 50 students, including quarters for married students with children.

It is the one centre in the CSB with a facility solely dedicated to adult education. As its name implies, it is a regional centre, intended to provide vocational education to students from all communities of the CSB.

Performance Standard

- Support provided by the SRVTC meets the following criteria:
   ◊   the culture of the centre encourages learning;
   ◊   there is leadership and planning for learning;
   ◊   available resources are managed appropriately;
   ◊   resources, activities and results are monitored and evaluated;
   ◊   there are ongoing linkages with external bodies to support learning.

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[a]   See section 7.2.2 (p. 156) in Part 2.

Centre Culture

Unlike the nine continuing education centres, the SRVTC has the possibility of creating an environment for adult learning. The rationale for building the centre was to have a dedicated Cree facility in the Cree Nation for vocational education. We were therefore surprised by the response we received from students in two focus groups we conducted, when we asked:

Q: *Does Cree Culture and tradition play any part in what you are learning?*

A: *No, there is nothing about our culture in the centre.*

We tried to build an image of what the centre was like for students and whether it created an

> There is a weak culture of learning in the SRVTC; students seem more interested in their living conditions than their learning conditions.

atmosphere that was supportive of learning and encouraged success. For the most part students were preoccupied with their living conditions.[a] It seems that no matter what is provided, they want more. For example, when asked about changes they would like to see, suggestions included someone paid to clean up their kitchen in the residence and make them fresh tea, centre computer lab opened to their children, a student lounge with comfy chairs.

However, we did gain some insights to the educational climate of the centre. Several students talked about the need for more access to computer facilities outside of school hours and the lack of a library and study room. (Apparently, there was a library but it was converted into an office.) Students also talked about the need for a code of ethics. As one explained:

> *It is not good for your motivation when only some students show up for classes.*

We understood this input to mean that students who take their learning seriously object to the laissez-faire attitude of the SRVTC toward those who do not. For example, we reported in section 8.1.1 that attendance in many adult courses is problematic but we were surprised to learn that the same is true at the SRVTC. Although they live on site and are paid an allowance, students are missing classes because they are asleep in the residence. We were told that when the administration tries to confront these students, it gets no support from Continuing Education. The concern in head office is with student numbers, not student engagement.

Besides reflecting badly on Continuing Education, this problem reflects a weak culture for learning at the SRVTC. However, as suggested by the input reported by the LCEC in Waswanipi (see section 8.3.1), strengthening a culture for learning cannot be done simply by 'getting tough' on attendance. Rules have their place but other positive steps need to be taken to change the attitudes of students toward learning.

Leadership & Planning

The SRVTC is administered by a director, the equivalent of a school principal, assisted by a consultant, and other administrative staff. The director is responsible for the administration, management and evaluation of the educational and non-educational program activities and resources of the centre. [b] The director's duties include the following:

- the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the Centre's education plan;
- the delivery of education programs and services, including the calendar;

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[a]   See discussion on facilities in section 8.2.3.

[b]   See General By-Law, art. 17.13A.

- in collaboration with the Director of Continuing Education, the preparation of the proposed annual budget of the Centre and transmission to the Director of Finance for review and submission to the Council;
- subject to the budget approved by the Council, the authorization of expenses and contracts up to $25,000;
- approval of travel expenses, advances and warrants for Centre staff;
- authorization of all salary modification and absence forms and other administrative documents for all staff;
- allocation and management of the housing units for Centre staff;
- subject to the budget approved by the Council, approval of the purchase of moveable property up to $25,000;
- subject to the budget approved by the Council, approval of the rental of housing units in Waswanipi for up to ten months up to $25,000;
- subject to the budget approved by the Council, approval of the acquisition of supplies for the Centre;
- approval of expenses relating to storage and transportation of personal effects of eligible Centre staff;
- supervision of student transportation, cafeteria services and study incentives;
- administration of moveable and immoveable property;
- approval of regulations respecting health and safety in the Centre subject to policies of local government and the Council;
- preparation of the proposed personnel plan relating to all Centre staff, transmission to the Director of Continuing Education for review and submission to the Council;
- subject to the budget approved by the Council, to hire short term non contractual substitute teachers for the Centre;
- supervision and evaluation of all Centre staff;
- subject to the personnel plan and the budget approved by the Council, to approve the appointment and engagement of support staff of the Centre;
- administration of the collective agreements for teachers, non-teaching professionals and support staff employees.

There is no job description for the Consultant, who appears to fulfill the role of deputy director. We tried to ascertain the respective roles of the Director and the Consultant. As best as we could determine, the Director is in charge of everything but the Consultant has direct responsibility for all programs and the associated resources, including teachers. He is the 'point person' for all educational services in the SRVTC. In fact, it appears as if the consultant fulfills the role played by a school principal, while the director plays the role of a CEA.

As discussed in the previous section with respect to centre consultants, we do not understand why the consultant of the SRVTC is not classified as an administrator. Once again, perhaps the Organizational Review has considered this structural issue in its report and can shed light on this situation. Subject to its analysis or a convincing argument in support of the present arrangement, we conclude that the status of the consultant here should be revised to reflect reality.

Exercising leadership in an adult centre such as the SRVTC is no different from that generally observed in schools: "building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modelling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions."[173]

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about centre leadership: "The centre provides appropriate leadership to support teaching and learning." Only four staff members responded to this question and they were divided with

> **Nothing is being done to encourage youth to enrol in vocational courses.**

50% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement, and 50% strongly disagreeing.[a] The qualitative data we collected from students, teachers and other staff did not shed any further light on leadership in the centre. However, in the interviews we conducted, we did probe several issues that relate to leadership, notably the role of the SRVTC in vocational education in the Board.

We have noted in Part 2 that, in our view, vocational education ought to be an important part of the course offerings for youth. In the past, vocational education was often "undervalued and viewed as a track for the 'less able' and those who were not 'academically inclined'."[174] In 1986, the Ministry carried out a major reform of vocational education. The aim was to ensure that vocational graduates had the skills that employers were seeking, in both core subjects (language arts and mathematics), as well as technical or trades subjects.[175] The underlying message was that vocational education was a first class, not a second class, alternative to the general education path offered in secondary schools.

We were informed that there is a Board policy that reserves three places for youth sector students in each vocational program. To the best of our knowledge, none of these places has ever been filled in any programs offered in the nine continuing education centres. The same is true at the SRVTC. It seemed to us that, as a regional centre, the SRVTC ought to be taking a leadership role to remedy this situation. Unfortunately, this is not happening. One interview included the following exchange:

> Q: *There are lots of people for whom academic education or further education is not what they want or what they need but they would greatly benefit from vocational training. Why aren't they getting it?*

> A: *Why they're not getting it, I'm not sure. It's there for them. They can go in and take it if they want but for some reason, they'd rather drop out than attend.*

> **The SRVTC ought to be the hub of vocational education for all the communities.**

This response does not demonstrate leadership. However, we were also told that some time ago the centre had planned a tour of all the communities to promote vocational education, until the Board quashed the project. Perhaps, therefore, the response to our question cited above reflects an attitude that there is little use in coming up with ideas that won't go anywhere (see discussion below about support from Continuing Education).

In another interview, we were told that offering an 'exploratory' vocational course that enables students to be introduced to various vocational options, was considered but was never acted upon. We asked about the level of contact between the SRVTC and school guidance services. The response was predictable but disappointing nonetheless: there isn't any. In this same interview, the assertion was made that the SRVTC should be regarded as the principal resource for vocational education throughout the Board, not just a physical centre, but the hub of vocational education for all the communities. We agree with this notion but it will never be anything more than an idea until there is leadership to make it happen.

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[a]   The average response to this item (max=4) was 2.25.

We asked about planning, specifically, the extent to which the Administration engaged in strategic and operational planning for both current academic year and beyond. We discovered that there was no equivalent to the school's local education plan. Naturally, each year the centre must prepare a personnel plan and budget but planning does not extend beyond this level.

We saw no evidence of any attempt to think long term, set strategic goals or chart a course for future development. We were told that the centre would like to expand its facilities and offer more courses and programs. However, this expansion was not grounded in any vision of what the centre could or should do in the future. We conclude that the SRVTC will never realize its potential without strategic and operational planning based on a clear vision of its mission. And that will never occur without leadership.

As alluded to above, problems with leadership in the SRVTC may be due in part to the level of support from Continuing Education. When we asked abut head office support the first response we received was: *It's OK.* However, when we probed we discovered that this meant that requests for supplies were usually approved and that the Director of Continuing Education dropped in periodically. There was no evidence that these visits were anything more than a 'courtesy call' but they were appreciated, in contrast to the non-visits of other senior managers of the Board. Our second input on support from Continuing Education was more frank:

> *With the exception of one individual who helps as much as possible, especially in terms of liaison with the Ministry, there isn't any.*

The questionnaire completed by centre staff asked respondents to state their level of agreement with the following statement about Board-level support: "The Continuing Education Department provides appropriate and sufficient support for your centre." Only three staff members answered this question and, as observed earlier for staff in the nine continuing education centres, their responses reflected their attitude toward support from the SRVTC more than the Board, with which they have no direct contact.[a]

Allocation & Management of Resources

The major input we received on the management of resources was about the assignment of teachers and the workload in the collective agreement.[b] We will not attempt to describe the details of the problem. Suffice it to say that it involves the amount of time teachers teach in relation to program needs for teaching time. The problem arose when the last collective agreement was negotiated. It is not uncommon for provincial collective agreements to be concluded without due consideration to their impact on programs. Nor is it unusual for new provincial agreements to bring new headaches to local school/centre administrators. This case seems to be an example of this phenomenon. However, because the CSB is directly involved in these negotiations, it is also an example of the general problems we have observed in the management of human resources at the Board level and the lack of communication between the Board and its schools and centres.

Other input regarding resources dealt with the desire of the SRVTC for more resources of every kind. Simply put, their answer to the question: What does the SRVTC need? was *More. More, facilities, more staff, more materials and more supplies.*

Monitoring & Evaluation

In terms of monitoring, we asked specifically about teacher supervision. It seems, as in other centres, it is minimal, where it exists at all. There were no data to collect about evaluation

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[a]   The average response to this item (max=4) was 2.33 which, like the rating of centre leadership, is low.

[b]   Issues regarding instructional resources were dealt with in section 8.2.3 (p. 176).

because the SRVTC does not engage in any form of self-evaluation and no evaluation is done by the Board.

Centre Linkages to Outside Bodies

Although adult centres share many of the concerns discussed with respect to schools, linkages to outside bodies have particular characteristics. Adult education, especially vocational education, is closely related to local and regional economic development and employment.

> Developing a relationship with a community requires familiarity with the community in question, its players and organizations, and the geographical distribution of the different population groups in the territory. This makes it possible to make a well-informed choice of target populations, to concentrate on these populations and to identify the players in the community who can help reach them (e.g. businesses, adults in precarious positions, organizations).[176]

It is difficult to imagine adult education without reference to outside bodies. Thus, for example, the Ministry plan of action for adult education provides for an implementation committee to monitor its progress,[177] that is co-chaired by the Ministry and the MESSF, and includes representatives of the Commission des partenaires, the Office des professions, the MCC and the MRCI.[a] Similarly, Ministry policy provides for the regional offices of the Ministry, the MESSF, Emploi-Québec, and the MRCI to develop a structure for cooperation with school boards, local employment centres, the regional offices of the MRCI and others. New arrangements for independent community action groups are foreseen in the plan, with partnerships among school boards, local employment centres, and other groups such as CLSCs.[178] The collaborative directions only become reality when implemented by individual centres and local service agencies and employers.

We did not get much feedback on this theme. There is some contact with outside agencies such as CHRD but liaison with external bodies is mostly left up to Continuing Education.

8.3.3 Key Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

Returning to the performance standard stated at the beginning of this section, we must now ask to what extent the data that we have collected and analyzed permit us to determine whether centre support for learning meets the stated criteria:

➢ The operation of the Continuing Education Centre meets expected performance standards for planning, managing, delivering and evaluating the services it provides.

➢ Support provided by the SRVTC meets the following criteria:

♦ the culture of the centre encourages learning;

♦ there is leadership and planning for learning;

♦ available resources are managed appropriately;

♦ resources, activities and results are monitored and evaluated;

♦ there are ongoing linkages with external bodies to support learning.

There are nine continuing education centres in the Board. All of them are small and none of them has a facility of its own. By contrast, the SRVTC has a complete 'stand-alone' facility that

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[a]   MESSF: Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille; MCC: Ministère de la Culture et de la Condition féminine; MRCI: Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration.

resembles secondary school plus a residence. We therefore decided to divide this theme in two, treating the continuing education centres and the SRVTC separately.

CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTRES In the CSB, each of the nine centres is administered by a consultant. At the present time, there are six consultants; three are each responsible for one centre; three for two centres, each. We do not have any explanation why persons who have all the attributes of a centre director are classified as consultants. We have also been told that the centres are not even officially recognized by the Board as centres.

Subject to any analysis provided by the Organizational Review or a convincing argument in support of the present arrangement, we conclude that both the status of each centre and the title of the person responsible for it should be revised to reflect reality. Such a change would also serve to send a strong message: ***Continuing education matters***.

Like any educational institution, centres must plan courses and programs, manage the delivery of these services, monitor their progress and evaluate the results. Course and program planning appear to vary considerably, depending on whether the 'demand' for the service originates from individuals or an outside agency such as the Band Council. Essentially, consultants are 'fixers.' When a course is set, they find a facility, perhaps a teacher. They may order supplies but this may be done by Continuing Education. They act as a go-between with the school administration and other agencies such as the Band Council. As such, they provide the liaison with the community.

Many tasks are assumed by Continuing Education, which is understandable, given the size of the centres and their lack of staff. (With the exception of Chisasibi, they have no administrative staff at all.) However, when it comes to providing support to the centres, none is forthcoming. Not surprisingly, there is no form of evaluation of courses, programs or services. Like everyone else in managerial and professional roles in the CSB, consultants attend lots of meetings, often in Montréal.

Community liaison seems weak in most communities, as evidenced by the general lack of a functioning local committee, the LCEC. Despite its name, this committee has a distinct Board-level flavour. It seems to have been designed more to provide input to the Board than promote adult education in the community. The only community where we saw a functioning LCEC was in Waswanipi. It appears to be quite active and may well serve as a model for other communities.

SRVTC The one truly adult education facility in the CSB is the SRVTC. We tried to build an image of what the centre was like for students and whether it created an atmosphere that was supportive of learning and encouraged success. There appears to be a weak culture for learning at the SRVTC. For the most part students were more interested in their living conditions than their learning conditions. The administration does not appear to have the capacity to deal with this phenomenon and it gets no support from Continuing Education.

The SRVTC is administered by a director and a consultant. As with the continuing education centres, we could find no reasonable explanation for the latter not being classified as an administrator. In fact, it appears as if the consultant fulfills the role played by a school principal, while the director plays the role of a CEA. Subject to any analysis provided by the Organizational Review or a convincing argument in support of the present arrangement, we conclude that the status of the consultant here should be revised to reflect reality.

> In the SRVTC, the consultant seems to fulfill the role played by a school principal, while the director plays the role of a CEA.

The SRVTC ought to provide leadership, not only for its own students and staff but for vocational education throughout the Board. We saw no evidence of such leadership though we heard about some attempts at 'outreach' by the centre that were abandoned because of a lack of Board support.

The SRVTC does not engage in any strategic or operational planning and does not evaluate its services. It has some contact with outside agencies such as CHRD. However, it appears that liaison with external bodies is mostly left up to Continuing Education.

Based on our analysis of the nine continuing education centres and the SRVTC, we make the following recommendations:

R72 **THAT** the Board clarify the status of the nine continuing education centres and, subject to any analysis provided by the Organizational Review, recognize the role played by consultants by reclassifying them as centre directors.

R73 **THAT**, in accordance with recommendations 90 and 91 (Continuing Education) and any analysis provided by the Organizational Review, the Board undertake a detailed review of the operation of continuing education centres, with a view to developing and implementing an appropriate plan of action for the planning, management and evaluation of services in these centres.

R74 **THAT** the Board review the composition and mandate off the LCEC and, in collaboration with centre and community leaders, help support the development of centre-community collaboration that the LCEC was meant to foster.

R75 **THAT**, subject to any analysis provided by the Organizational Review, the Board recognize the role played by the consultant of the SRVTC by reclassifying this position as a centre deputy director.

R76 **THAT**, in accordance with recommendations 90 and 91 (Continuing Education) and any analysis provided by the Organizational Review, the Board undertake a detailed review of the operation of the SRVTC, with a view to developing and implementing an appropriate plan of action for the planning, management and evaluation of services in this centre.

R77 **THAT** the SRVTC assume a leadership role for the promotion of vocational education in the CSB.

R78 **THAT** the Board develop and implement an action plan to build the capacity and performance of adult education centres to plan, manage and evaluate the services they provide.

9.0 POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN THE CSB

Its involvement in post-secondary education distinguishes the CSB from other school boards in Québec or elsewhere. Although it does not provide post-secondary level courses, it has an active role in promoting access to and success from education in colleges and universities for members of its communities. In an era where higher and higher levels of education are required in various occupational fields, post-secondary education can be regarded as an essential component for the development of First Nations in Canada (see text box).[a] It is for this reason that Blair Stonechild has coined

> "As we walk the path into the 21st century, now more than ever we find hope in education which has a relevant connection to our cultural identity, that it might maintain and enhance our ways of knowing and guide us in our goal of self-determination."

the phrase, 'the new buffalo,' to describe its importance:

> In the past, the buffalo met virtually every need of the North American Indian, from food to shelter; this animal was considered a gift from the Creator intended to provide for the peoples' needs. Today, elders say that education, rather than the bison, needs to be relied upon for survival.[179]

Although this metaphor may be better suited to the Plains Cree of western Canada, it captures the evolution of the context in which all First Nations find themselves. INAC provides support to First Nations students through its Post-Secondary Student Support Program.[b] According to INAC, several colleges and universities now offer Aboriginal studies programs and actively recruit Aboriginal high-school graduates and mature students who may not meet regular entrance requirements. They also provide support programs, including counselling and pre-entrance preparation courses to ease students' transition to campus life. According to the most recent survey conducted by the Canadian Council on Learning: "participation and attainment rates for Aboriginal people have risen steadily since 1986, but are still well below the rates for non-Aboriginal Canadians."[180] A 2002 report prepared for the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC] summarizes the barriers to high participation rates as follows:

- A legacy of distrust in the Aboriginal community of the education system due to residential schools and other historic practices seen as having a negative and assimilative effect on Aboriginal communities;
- a lack of preparation for university or college at the secondary education level;
- feelings of social discrimination, isolation, and loneliness at postsecondary institutions;
- unemployment and poverty in Aboriginal communities, which can make the financial obligations of postsecondary education difficult to meet;
- a lack of respect for Aboriginal culture and cultural differences at the postsecondary level;
- significant family demands that act as financial and time restraints to postsecondary education.[181]

All of these issues are relevant to the CSB, largely in relation to its post-secondary program. However, the third issue, lack of preparation for university or college education, speaks to the need to ensure that the education offered in its elementary and secondary schools, as well as its continuing education centres, provide a basis for success at these higher levels.

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[a]   From the First Nations Adult & Higher Education Consortium: http://www.fnahec.org/.

[b]   According to the INAC website (http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/): "The PSSSP has removed many of the financial barriers to post-secondary education that Status Indian and Inuit students encountered in the past." The program offers students three types of support for tuition, travel and living expenses.

This chapter presents our analysis relating to post-secondary education services provided by two 'field offices,' one located in Montréal, the other in Gatineau. Like the previous chapter, It deals with the levels of the performance pyramid above the base layer (School Board support for learning), which is dealt with in Part 4.

These two field offices come under the authority of the Post Secondary Student Services Office [PSSS Office], which is located in Montréal. Not only is the Montréal field office housed in the same facility, it is part of the structure of the PSSS Office.

For purposes of this report, we decided to divide our analysis in two parts. In this Part, we present our analysis of the services provided directly to students. In Part 4, we will deal with the Board level aspects of this Office. We realize that this division is somewhat artificial but we felt that it was important to recognize the two levels at which this Office operates. To avoid confusion as to which *office* we are referring in the text, we use the expression 'field office,'[a] to designate the office in Gatineau and the section of the Montréal office that provides services to students in this city.

This section begins at the top of the performance pyramid with students, and then deals with the support provided by the two field offices. Each section introduces the object being evaluated, and then presents our findings, analysis and recommendations.

> *What I see is that a lot of students take advantage of the fact that you can move out of the community, get your education paid, live in a city and have a good time. They have this way of thinking. There are a few that are very serious about their education and they want to succeed (External stakeholder).*

The Montréal office includes a guidance counsellor, a student affairs technician, an administrative officer (vacant when data were collected) and seven administrative staff. The Gatineau office consists of a guidance counsellor, a student affairs technician and one administrative staff member. The primary sources of data on post-secondary education services were site visits to each of the two field offices, as summarized below.

EXHIBIT 3-5: DATA COLLECTION IN CENTRES

Source	Method	Number*	
		Act	Par
Current Students	Focus Group	1	**2**
Director	Interview	1	**1**
Guidance Counsellors	Interview	2	**2**
Other Staff	Questionnaire	2	**5**
All Sources		**6**	**10**

*   This columns displays the number of separate data collection activities (Act) and participants (Par); the 'Act' number also reflects the number of field offices involved in each type of activity.

As shown in this exhibit, data collection activities were limited, involving only ten participants. The most serious gaps in these data were the small number of participants in the student focus group in Montréal (2) and the absence of any participants in the student focus group in Gatineau. Moreover, as will be seen in the section that follows, we were unable to collect sufficient documentary data as requested.

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[a]   However, it should be noted that this expression is our creation and is not used in the CSB.

9.1   Student Results

In this performance theme, we posed the following question:

- What results does the office expect for its students and how effective is it in achieving them?

This theme comprises two evaluative objects:

- access to post-secondary education; and
- success in post-secondary education.

Performance Standard

▪ Graduates from secondary school seek and obtain admission to post-secondary institutions.

▪ Community students are successful in their post-secondary studies.

Access to post-secondary education is concerned with the threshold of learning at this level - obtaining admission to colleges and universities. This theme is analogous to the struggle of students with disabilities to gain access to elementary and secondary schooling in Canada.

The lack of access can occur for a variety of reasons, as summarized in the Iitroduction to this chapter. Understanding access only begins, therefore, with data about the number and percentage of students from Cree communities who attend post-secondary institutions. Real understanding unfolds as we discover the reasons behind the numbers.

The CSB Annual Report for 2006-07 states that there were 429 post-secondary students that year,[a] enrolled in various programs, and originating from the nine communities shown in the graph.[182]

Given the relative size of these communities, it is apparent that the number of post-secondary students from each community is not strictly a function of its size. Nor is it obviously related to the number of graduates from each community, as presented previously in this report.[b]

EXHIBIT 3-6: ORIGINS OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS, 2006-07

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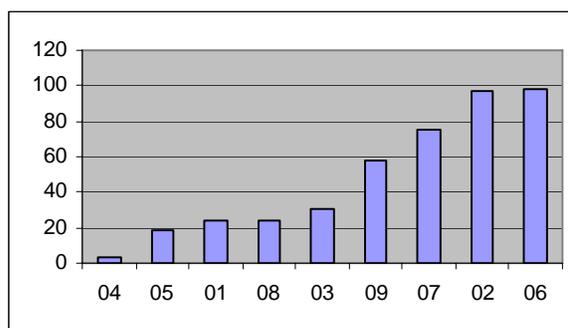
[a]   At the very end of the Review, we were given a paper copy of a draft version of a memo containing more recent, but not more detailed, data on enrolment. We did not receive the promised follow-up from the Post-Secondary Education Office on this document. Considering the lack of follow-up, the fact that the memo was only a draft version, we have not attempted to deal with its content in this report.

[b]   See Exhibit 2-11 (p. 54) in Part 2; see also data on post-secondary enrolment in Exhibit C-39 in Appendix C.

Post-secondary student enrolment by program is shown below in Exhibit 3-7.[a]

EXHIBIT 3-7: POST-SECONDARY STUDENT ENROLMENT, 2006-07

Level	Program	Number	Percent
University 129 (30%)	Doctorate	5	1%
	Masters	6	1%
	Bachelors	97	23%
	Certificate, Other	21	5%
College 275 (64%)	Preparatory programs	94	22%
	Career programs	144	34%
	Pre-university programs	37	9%
Other	Vocational, trades	25	6%

We had hoped to do more extensive analysis of student enrolment in various programs over time. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to a lack of data. It seems that the PSSS Office suffers from the same disability we found in its elementary-secondary counterparts. We did try and complement this meagre analysis with qualitative data, but these too were quite limited. However, we got some insights into the problems students faced in gaining access to colleges and universities.

Q: Are students from the CSB as well prepared to study in the south as they should be?

A: No. Far from it. From what I've seen over the years, they're very unprepared to enter post-secondary studies and it seems as that over the past few years it's just gotten increasingly worse. Students are not prepared to write essays, they don't have any language skills. For instance in English, they graduate from high school but they're functioning at a secondary 2 level. And sciences – forget about being prepared for sciences. They can never, never enter a science-based program in college or CEGEP. They always have to enter a preparatory program because they never have chemistry or the upper level math courses they need (Guidance counsellor).

We have anecdotal evidence that the situation is somewhat better for CSB students who attended secondary schools outside the community. The obvious implication of this finding is that the lack of preparation for post-secondary education is directly linked to the level of education provided in the schools of the CSB. While we believe that the CSB schools do not prepare students adequately for post-secondary education, we also assume that those who attend secondary schools outside the CSB are probably more able students.

Certainly the few students to whom we spoke did not feel that they were well prepared. Their comments reflected the low level of expectations in schools of the CSB:

- absence of advanced courses;
- low level course work in subjects that were offered;
- no homework;
- little or no guidance; and
- no help to develop independent study habits.

In addition to not being prepared for the majority of their courses, which are offered in

Somebody needs to show students what the world's really going to be like in college. And they need to do that when they're in secondary IV, not secondary V. If you haven't got your act together when you're going through secondary V, it's too late **(Post-secondary student).**

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[a]   Data from past years are included in Exhibit C-40 in Appendix C.

English, students also bemoaned their lack of French. Although they are pursuing their studies in English, they realize the importance of French once they graduate.

We were told that there are orientation trips in October or November for secondary V students that include visits to some colleges in Ontario and Québec and a visit to the field office in Montréal or Gatineau. The post-secondary guidance counsellor has a one-hour session with them. This may be complemented by information provided by counsellors in CSB secondary schools but there does not appear to be any liaison between the schools and the Post-Secondary Office 'built-in' to this orientation. We also think that the comment made by a student, cited in the above text box, is good advice. Prospective college students need orientation before secondary V.

We did not obtain sufficient details about these orientation trips to get a full picture of what they are like, especially from a student perspective. However, it seems as if they attempt to cram a considerable amount of activity into a short space of time. We were told that the students are tired and do not absorb a lot of what they are being shown or told. The two students to whom we spoke thought that students would benefit from spending a day with a college student to see what life as a post-secondary student was really like. That is undoubtedly a good idea but a costly one.

The only other input we received was the observation from a guidance counsellor that many more students applied to colleges in Ontario than Québec because the entrance requirements are lower than they are in Québec. We were not able to compare these requirements and cannot comment on the extent to which the preference many students exhibit for Ontario colleges relates to these requirements. It may, at least in part, be related to how they are treated in different colleges. Some may well do a better job at welcoming First Nations students.

We were not able to obtain any up-to-date reliable data from the PSSS Office on the success of students in post-secondary programs. The Annual Report for 2006-07 states that a total of 79 graduates were anticipated that year, 38 at the university level, 41 at the college level.[183] The *approximate*[a] number of graduates for previous years is shown in the graph.[184]

EXHIBIT 3-8: POST-SECONDARY GRADUATES, 1995 -2005
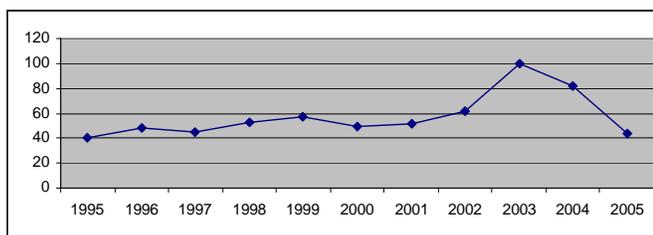
As presented earlier with respect to elementary-secondary education, education policy in Québec is focused, not on access to, but on success from schooling. This is due in part to a perception that access is no longer an issue but also to contemporary public management's focus on results. However, sometimes this focus underplays the importance of the links between access and success. Unfortunately, the lack of any data makes it impossible for us to explore these links.

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[a]   These numbers should only be considered as indicative of the number of graduates per year; see data and discussion under Post-Secondary Student Results in Appendix C.

Key Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

Returning to the performance standard stated at the beginning of this section, we must now ask to what extent the data that we have collected and analyzed permit us to determine whether post-secondary student results meet the stated standards:

> ➢ Graduates from secondary school seek and obtain admission to post-secondary institutions.

> ➢ Community students are successful in their post-secondary studies.

The initial task we set for ourselves in relation to post-secondary education, was to build a statistical portrait of student results in terms of access to and success from this level of education. We were not able to complete even an outline of such a portrait due to a lack of data.

We also wished to enrich this portrait with qualitative data, especially from students, to understand what this experience meant to them. Here again, we were blocked by a lack of data. Two students came to one focus group and none to the other. We received very little documentation and the interview data from post-secondary staff did not permit us to answer the question we posed regarding student results.

On the basis of the data we did collect, we suspect that the performance standards are not being met but we cannot say anything definitive. Accordingly, the only recommendation we feel we can make is the following:

> **R79 THAT** the Board undertake a thorough analysis of post-secondary student results in relation to access to and success from post-secondary education, including extensive feedback from current and former students.

9.2 Student Services

In this performance theme, we posed the following question:

- How successful is the office in providing quality services to its students?

This theme comprises two evaluative objects:

- financial assistance; and
- counselling & other student services.

Performance Standard

- Adequate financial assistance is provided to students in a timely manner.

- Counselling and other services provided to students are appropriate and helpful in supporting them in their studies.

Financial Assistance

When we asked the guidance counsellors about financial assistance provided to post-secondary students, we were not surprised at this response:

Q: *What about financial assistance to students?*

A: *I think it's excellent. Of course there are going to be a few students that complain but they are lucky to have this and not to have to work.*

Q: *It seems to us that for anyone who wants an education, the resources are there. They can go as far as they want.*

A: *Definitely. And so I have nothing to say regarding financial assistance.*

However, in another interview, we were told that the financial assistance was probably adequate for single students, if they managed their money well. It seems this is a skill that many lack, not unlike their counterparts from the south. We were also told that financial assistance was more generally problematic for married students. In some cases, the student goes south with his or her children and the spouse remains up north. In other cases, the whole family moves, and there is not sufficient funding to support them.

To us, the underlying questions are:

- What expenses should be subsidized, in whole or in part, and what is the rationale for these choices?
- What is an appropriate level of funding for the subsidies so decided?

Financial assistance is determined by Board policies which we will briefly consider in section 10.4 in Part 4. At this stage, all we can say on the basis of the limited data we have is that money does not seem to be a major issue. However, further investigation is required to determine if, as we found in schools, the capacity to spend money wisely is an issue.

Counselling & Other Services

Each field office provides counselling and other services to support students. As the discussion in section 9.1 reflects, guidance services are an important part of ensuring access to post-secondary education. The counsellors to whom we spoke are aware of this and see the need for liaison with their counterparts in CSB secondary schools. One counsellor said that there was a lack of cohesion among the various counsellors employed by the Board and there was an urgent need to improve communication and liaison, making use of existing technology such as video-conferencing. We could not agree more. This type of collaboration is an

> *It would help to have visits from an elder on a monthly basis for both staff and students. We need a 'buddy system' for new students and well organized orientation* **(Staff member).**

example of 'horizontal management,' which promotes the integration of services within an organization such as the CSB.[a] One counsellor stated that it was difficult to deal with the needs of prospective students as their role was limited to providing services to students enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions.

We also asked about services provided to whom we called 'transitional' students – those who have completed secondary studies and lack specific credits or those whose academic standing is too low for admittance. We learned that some counselling is available but we do not have a clear picture of the extent it responds to the needs of these students. However, we suspect that needs far exceed the present level of services. One counsellor estimated that only 5% of their post-secondary students come directly from secondary school, the route that down south would be assumed as the normal one. The overwhelming balance - 95% - consist of 'mature students.'

In theory, this group includes those who completed high school sometime in the past, those who never obtained a diploma, and those who have returned to do so through Continuing Education. In the absence of any hard data or more anecdotal testimony from students, we have no idea what the breakdown of this group is. However, one thing is clear: the need for a concerted effort to reach these students and coordinate efforts to support them. Once again, a more integrated management approach is needed to accomplish this.

> Communication needs to be improved, between the PSSS offices and students, with the Board and within the offices themselves.

The accessibility of services offered seems to be a problem for two reasons. First, the location of the two field offices in relation to the institutions which students are attending needs to be reconsidered.

For example, the Montréal office is the larger operation but serves the smaller number of students. The Gatineau office is inconvenient for the majority of students it serves, as they attend colleges and universities in Ottawa. We have heard it said that the office must be located in Québec but this does not seem to be a viable excuse. If the majority of students were in Sudbury, then that is where the office should be located. The second reason concerns hours of operations. The Montréal office has limited hours of service in the evening and the Gatineau office has none.

In addition, it seems as if the computers and software made available to students are in need of serious upgrading. Communication with students appears to be totally by mail, rather than email. Apparently, letters must be signed by the Director who is often away, further delaying communication. Among the feedback from office staff, we were also told that some students do

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[a]   See discussion in chapter 10 in Part 4 (p. 209).

not speak English and the office staff cannot communicate with them in French. This also means, of course, that the office will not be able to liaise with post-secondary institutions in French. We asked about the communication between the field offices and various post-secondary institutions and the impact these contacts has in supporting students. We were told that there were contacts and some positive results were being achieved. Certain institutions have made considerable efforts over the past several years to offer support services to First Nations students, which naturally benefit the students from Cree communities.

Key Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

Returning to the performance standard stated at the beginning of this section, we must now ask to what extent the data that we have collected and analyzed permit us to determine whether post-secondary student services meet the stated standards:

> ➢ Adequate financial assistance is provided to students in a timely manner.

> ➢ Counselling and other services provided to students are appropriate and helpful in supporting them in their studies.

From the limited input we received, financial assistance does not seem to be a major issue. The nature and level of this support are set by Board policies which are dealt with in section 10.4 in Part 4. Further investigation is required to determine if, as we found in schools, money is being spent wisely by the Board. Is the Board getting a good return on its investment? Are there any ways in which the assistance provides a disincentive for students?

We were also unable to obtain much information about student services. It appears that the counselling and support services are good but neither the range nor the accessibility of these services is adequate.

Counselling needs to encompass students in secondary school, in continuing education and others not in school, as well as those enrolled in post-secondary institutions. This cannot be done by the PSSS offices alone; it requires collaboration with many other units of the Board.

As we have stated before, a more integrated management approach is needed for this to happen. Much more information, especially from students, will have to be obtained before any firm conclusions can be drawn about post-secondary student services. Accordingly, the only recommendation we feel we can make is the following:

> **R80 THAT** the Board undertake a thorough analysis of post-secondary student services in relation to financial support, counselling and other services, including extensive feedback from current and former students.

NOTES TO PART 3

[150] Murray & Zeesman, 2001, p. 6.
[151] UNESCO, 1997, p. 21.
[152] Canadian Council on Learning, 2007b, p. 5.
[153] OECD, 2004, p. 4.
[154] Econotech, 2007.
[155] MEQ, DGFE, 2004.
[156] Newmann et al., 1992, p. 11.
[157] Econotech, 2007, p. 45.
[158] Statistics Canada, 2003, p. 13.
[159] UNESCO & ILO, 2002, p. 21.
[160] CSE, 2003a, 2003b.
[161] MEQ, 1997, p. 51.
[162] MEQ, 2002a.
[163] MEQ, 2002b.
[164] MEQ, 2003a.
[165] MELS, 2005a.
[166] MELS, 2005b.
[167] MELS, 2005c.
[168] MELS, 2005a, App. B, p. 20.2.
[169] MELS, 2005a, p.1.4.
[170] MEQ, 2004b, p. 19.
[171] MELS, 2005a, p. v; see also, MELS, 2006c.
[172] Smith, 2007a, p. 11.
[173] Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999, p. 9.
[174] Smith, Foster & Donahue, 2001, p. 8.
[175] MEQ, 1986.
[176] MELS, 2006c, p. 28.
[177] MEQ, 2002b.
[178] MEQ, 2002b, pp. 11-12.
[179] Stonechild, 2006, pp. 1-2.
[180] Canadian Council on Learning, 2007a, p. 15.
[181] R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2003, p. 1.
[182] CSB, 2007, p. 39.
[183] CSB, 2007, p. 39.
[184] Post Secondary Education Office, 2005, p. 1.