

Call for Expressions of Interest to Partner with Aurora College on Education Research to Support 21st Century Learning in the Northwest Territories

Aurora College (AC) was recently designated as an eligible institution for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) / Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) funding.

Aurora College's School of Education offers a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) program, through a partnership with the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) at University of Saskatchewan. This program uses Aboriginal and Western perspectives to prepare students to teach in NWT communities. Aurora Research Institute (ARI), the research division of the College, is working with the School of Education to develop a research program that will support Aboriginal learners and ensure that its program is aligned with progressive 21st century approaches. We are interested in developing partnerships with post-secondary institutions that will strengthen our capacity to carry out this research to support effective and innovative advances in northern education.

In the NWT, where roughly 50% of the population self-identifies as Aboriginal, there is a strong focus on developing supports to eliminate the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Indigenization, or incorporating Aboriginal perspectives, knowledge, and ways of knowing into the curriculum offers opportunities to help eliminate the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Indigenization can make institutions more welcoming, and lessons more relevant and engaging, both leading to greater success for all students. Aurora College has a number of on-going initiatives that support indigenization including culture camps, traditional arts, Elder visits, country food feasts, and extra-curricular activities; however, the extent of indigenization among programs and instructors varies. Traditional Aboriginal education approaches, including multi-generational, place-based, and on-the-land learning are also being explored. At the same time, the School of Education is shifting its focus to a 21st century model that relies less on content acquisition and more on relationships, student inquiry, trans-disciplinary approaches, and meaningful learning. From our experience, these approaches align well with traditional Aboriginal education approaches.

We are interested in research that will help us understand how the School of Education can best serve its learning community. This call for Expressions of Interest will help us identify potential research partners from postsecondary institutions across Canada that are interested in working with us to answer research questions related to the unique challenges and opportunities of teaching and learning in the NWT. These include, but are not limited to:

- How can the B.Ed program create learning opportunities that are supportive and engaging for Aboriginal learners?
- What does 21st century learning look like for northern students? Are students in our B.Ed program developing the 21st century skills they need to make them exceptional teachers and adaptable life-long learners?
- How does our current approach to indigenization support student success? How can our current approach to indigenization be improved?

Expressions of Interest Process

We are inviting Expressions of Interest through January 2015. Applicants whose previous work and research interests align with the ARI/AC 21st century - Aboriginal learners research initiative will be invited to work with us to develop a research proposal to SSHRC under its Community and College Social Innovation Fund (due March 2nd). This proposal would include means for building partnerships, including the funding of graduate student positions, as well as other expenses associated with the selected research projects. It is also expected that this work will help springboard a Partnership Grant application in the future.

Please send a brief description of your research interests and experiences to either Sarah Rosolen or Dave Porter by January 30, 2015. Please feel free to contact either of us with questions or for clarification:

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About Aurora College

Aurora College offers a broad range of trades and apprenticeship training and certificates, diplomas in business and environmental technology, and degree programs in nursing and education. The College also offers adult literacy and basic education as well as a variety of continuing education courses. We are connected through transfer agreements and partnerships to a wide network of technical schools, colleges and universities throughout Canada and the circumpolar world. Aurora College is focused on Student Success and is committed to supporting the development of our Northern society through excellence in education, training and research that is culturally sensitive and responsive to the people we serve. Building on over 40 years of experience, Aurora College is well-positioned to work with Northerners to prepare them to build a strong and vibrant society in the NWT.

About Aurora Research Institute (ARI)

As the research division of Aurora College, ARI's mandate is to improve the quality of life for NWT residents by applying scientific, technological and indigenous knowledge to solve northern problems and advance social and economic goals. ARI delivers on this mandate by:

- Licensing and coordinating research in accordance with the NWT Scientists Act;
- Promoting communication between researchers and the people of the communities in which they work;
- Promoting public awareness of the importance of science, technology and indigenous knowledge;
- Fostering a scientific community within the NWT which recognizes and uses the traditional knowledge of northern Aboriginal peoples;
- Making scientific and traditional knowledge available to people of the NWT; and
- Supporting or conducting research which contributes to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of the people of the NWT.