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APRIL 27-29, 2010 • WESTIN HARBOUR CASTLE • TORONTO, ON



Aboriginal Human
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Three Aboriginal Cyber Schools

Sunchild, Credenda and K.I.H.S.

Sunchild E-Learning Community

www.sccyber.net

Launched in 2000 by the Sunchild First Nation in Alberta, the Sunchild E-Learning Community is a private school for grades 7-12, accredited in Alberta. The Sunchild model is based on teachers using synchronous technology to teach and interact with students. Sunchild is designed to meet the needs of marginalized students because it is accessible, responsive, flexible and respectful of cultural differences.

As its website announces: “Our definition of a true cyber school is an instructional model where direct student-teacher instruction takes place.” At Sunchild, students are expected to be logged into a computer during class time and can speak with the teacher at any time via text messaging or microphone. In almost all cases, students work from a classroom environment where a Key Teacher addresses technical concerns and ensures student participation.

Many students who had “given up” on education have been lured back by the Sunchild approach. Students can work at their own pace. They have access to archived classes and private channels of communication between student and teacher. In 2006, the average age of students in the program was 21. Recipient of many awards, Sunchild is the focus of an excellent 2005 Conference Board study.

Credenda

www.credenda.net

In 2004, determined to break “the tyranny of geography” that kept remote communities from quality education, particularly in sciences and math, Saskatchewan’s Prince Albert Grand Council launched the distance-ed program, Credenda. Named for the three language groups in the PAGC -- Cree + Dene + Dakota – Credenda became a unique experiment in synchronous or real-time distance ed.

Credenda stresses a high degree of interaction. Its synchronous classroom, Elluminate Live! offers a real-time online meeting room with live audio, interactive whiteboard, chat, web tours, breakout rooms, and other features. “I think Elluminate Live! is great because it allows us to stay caught up without having to come in to make classes up,” said sophomore Sam Hunt, who used the program for a business law class. “Rather than just listen to a lecture, we still have the ability to ask our teacher questions.” Likewise, Credenda’s learning management system, Desire2Learn, offers advanced communications features and access to previous courses and discussions. In early 2010, Credenda received \$2 million in funding from the Cameco Corporation.

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Keewaytinook Okimakinak Internet High School

(K.I.H.S.) <http://www.kihs.knet.ca/>

Based in Balmerton and Sioux Lookout, Ontario, K.I.H.S. serves 11 communities in remote regions of northern Ontario, from Fort William as far north as Fort Severn. K.I.H.S. is a distance ed program that enables students to remain in their home communities while taking a rich variety of courses approved and overseen by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

K.I.H.S. represents a hybrid of face-to-face and distance ed models of learning. Students can access all courses required for grades 9 and 10 from their home communities over the Internet. However, those enrolled in KIHS “attend” the school on their reserve, at which they are provided with support and mentoring from an accredited teacher.

Now in its 11th year of operation, K.I.H.S. offers a full roster of Grade 9 and Grade 10 curriculum, including academic, applied, and locally developed courses, including those required for university admission. For some students, locally developed courses in grade 9 math, science and English can help them build the skills for more challenging courses.