



FACTSHEET: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

October 2021

Note on Terminology: In this document, the term “Indigenous” is used to describe persons of First Nations, Inuit and Métis origin.

Post Secondary Education and Treaty Rights

Post-secondary education (PSE) is a treaty right guaranteed by so-called Canada to the Indigenous peoples of this land. This was first asserted in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and re-affirmed as a constitutional right in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. In addition, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that Indigenous people have a right to education. However, the legacy of colonialism, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, the millennial scoop, and rampant racism continue to impose significant barriers for Indigenous peoples to access post-secondary education. Further, removing children from their homes, lands, communities, cultures and mother tongues is an act of genocide¹. As such, the Federal and Ontario provincial governments have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure Indigenous people have access to quality education.

State of Indigenous Education

Post Secondary Funding for Indigenous Students

Metis students are excluded

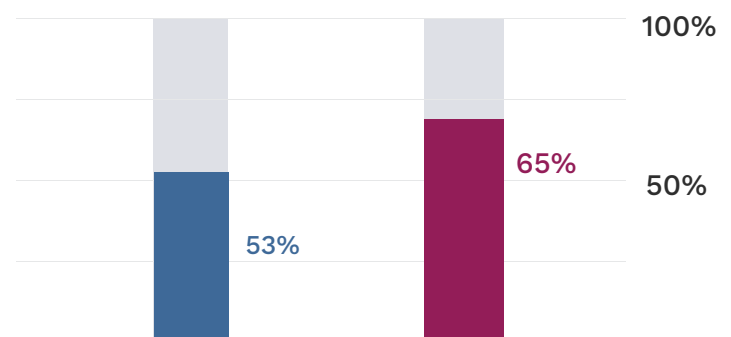
from receiving the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP), which provide funding to eligible First Nations and Inuit students.

More than 16,000 Indigenous students attend Ontario’s public colleges and universities— this accounts for half of the Indigenous post-secondary students in Canada, and ~1.7% of Ontario’s post-secondary student population². However, post-secondary funding for Indigenous

education in Ontario is insufficient, difficult to access, and difficult to use.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is responsible for providing funding mechanisms to help Indigenous students pay for the cost of post-secondary education. The ISC administers the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP), which provide funding to eligible First Nations and Inuit post-secondary students— Métis students are excluded from this funding. In the 2021 Budget, the Federal government devoted \$150.6 million over the next two years to the PSSSP, as well as the Inuit and Métis Post Secondary Education Strategies. This is an inadequate amount to account for the roughly 32,000 Indigenous students currently attending post-secondary education in Canada. In fact, ISC indicates that funding is limited, and not all students will be funded³. As such, Indigenous communities face a significant financial barrier to accessing post-secondary education, and limited funding has only made the situation worse.

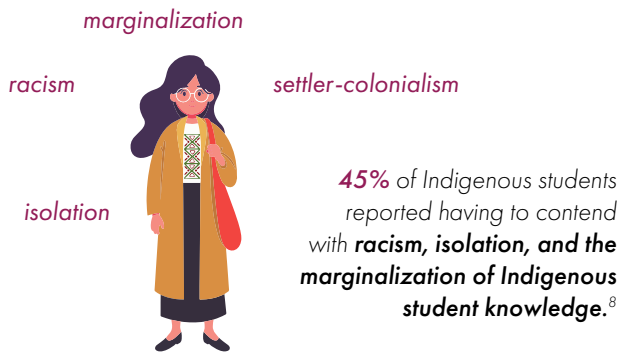
Post secondary education between the ages of 24-65



Only **53%** of the **Indigenous population** has some sort of post-secondary education.

65% of the **non-Indigenous population** has some form of post-secondary education.

The lack of adequate funding to Indigenous education has significant impacts on Indigenous communities. There is a serious gap in educational attainment between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Ontario. 65% of the non-Indigenous population has some form of post-secondary education, compared to only 53% of the Indigenous population (ages 24-65)⁴. It cannot be emphasized enough that Indigenous students need better access to publicly funded, high quality education. Support must be culturally appropriate, correct systemic underfunding and address historic and contemporary barriers.



Indigenous Institutes

In addition to the students enrolled in Ontario colleges and universities, there are more than 1,200 students enrolled in the nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario. Indigenous Institutes provide Indigenous-centred education rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and living⁵, and are considered the 'third pillar' of the Ontario post-secondary education system. Surveys have shown that students of Indigenous Institutes excel, due in part to a greater sense of community and belonging⁶. Although Indigenous Institutes provide a welcome alternative for Indigenous students to learn in a culturally relevant environment, non-Indigenous institutions must still improve their structures and practices in order to better serve Indigenous students.

In contrast, Indigenous students enrolled in non-Indigenous institutions have reported that post-secondary courses, systems, and supports in Ontario do not adequately incorporate Indigenous students, history, or cultures⁷. Students called for greater presence of Indigenous role models leading classrooms, and mandatory Indigenous history training for faculty and staff. Students also indicated that a Western worldview dominates their course content. 45% of

Indigenous students reported having to contend with racism, isolation, and the marginalization of Indigenous student knowledge⁸. Scholarship on Indigeneity remains excluded from non-Indigenous institutions, such that many non-Indigenous students graduate from these institutions with little understanding of racism and decolonization⁹. Indigenous students face discrimination from students and faculty, and attest that the administration has not taken sufficient action to implement institutional change¹⁰. Non-Indigenous institutions must do more than simply increase the 'diversity' of their classrooms and faculty— they must prioritize decolonizing their institutions as a whole.

Despite the value Indigenous Institutes contribute to Ontario's post-secondary education, they are vastly underfunded. While Indigenous Institutes rely on government funding for 90% of their operations, they receive insufficient funding of \$4 million a year from the Ontario government¹¹— this works out to an average of ~\$444,400 for each institute. In 2019, Ontario devoted a one-time extra funding of \$22.8 million.

However, Indigenous Institutes cannot rely on one-time funding to run their programs. Ongoing programs cannot be supported with funding that will not be renewed. Staff and services cannot be reliably retained if the funding to pay for them is unreliable. One-time funding does not effectively improve sustainable and equitable access to post-secondary education for Indigenous students. As a result, Indigenous Institutes specifically operate with minimal full-time staff, and almost no full-time faculty. As a result, their programs and services are not able to develop or run consistently¹².

Insufficient funding of Indigenous Institutes

Indigenous Institutes rely on government funding for **90% of their operations**.



Yet they receive only **\$4 million** a year from the Ontario government¹¹— mere average of **~\$444,400 for each institute**.

Compared to non-Indigenous institutions, Indigenous Institutes lag behind in terms of basic education infrastructure. For instance, only 15% of Indigenous Institutes have dedicated study spaces, 15% have off-campus housing assistance, 35% have counselling services, and 35% have cafeterias—100% of colleges and universities in Ontario offer all of these services¹³. In fact, Indigenous Institutes estimate that they require double the amount of funding the Ontario government currently offers to reliably improve their services and infrastructure¹⁴. Failure to fund Indigenous Institutes is a failure to fund access to equitable, culturally relevant post-secondary education for Indigenous students.

Student services at Indigenous Institutes

15% only 15% of Indigenous Institutes have dedicated study spaces.

only 15% of Indigenous Institutes have off-campus housing assistance. **15%**

35% only 35% of Indigenous Institutes have counselling services.

only 15% of Indigenous Institutes have on campus cafeterias. **35%**

¹ Carr-Stewart, S. (Ed.). (2019). *Knowing the past, Facing the future: Indigenous education in Canada*. Purich Books.

² Statistics Canada. "Postsecondary enrolments, by field of study, registration status, program type, credential type and gender." 2020.

³ Indigenous Services Canada. *Post-Secondary Student Support Program and University and College Entrance Preparation Program: National Program Guidelines 2018-2019*.

⁴ *In the Spirit of Reconciliation: Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation's first 10 years*. Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. 2020.

⁵ Indigenous Institutes Consortium. *Programs and Services: A Comparative Analysis*. 2020.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Indspire. *Truth and Reconciliation in Post Secondary Settings: Student Experience*. 2018.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Henry, Frances, et al. "Race, racialization and Indigeneity in Canadian universities." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 20.3 (2017): 300-314.

¹⁰ Bailey, Kerry A. "Racism within the Canadian university: Indigenous students' experiences." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39.7 (2016): 1261-1279.

¹¹ Indigenous Institutes Consortium. *Programs and Services: A Comparative Analysis*. 2020.

¹² Indigenous Institutes Consortium. *Programs and Services: A Comparative Analysis*. 2020.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Indigenous Institutes Consortium. *Developing a Funding Strategy for Indigenous Institutes*. 2019