



# Truth and Reconciliation in Post-Secondary Settings: **Student Experience**



**Indspire**

Indigenous education, Canada's future. | L'éducation des autochtones, l'avenir du Canada.

**Indspire** - is Canada's only Indigenous-led national charity dedicated to advancing the educational outcomes of Indigenous peoples. We provide scholarships and bursaries for post-secondary education; promote, support and celebrate the achievements of Indigenous people through the Indspire Awards; and assist communities and educators in improving educational outcomes.

To ensure readers have a consistent reference point with some of the terms used in this report, we have provided a Key Terms reference resource at the end of the report (see Appendix 3)

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## CEO Message

Over the summer of 2018, Indspire asked Indigenous post-secondary students about their educational experience in these early years of reconciliation. What we heard has left me hopeful that through the passion and vision of Indigenous students, we can sustain the work that must be done to fulfill the promise of reconciliation.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis students need to know that their post-secondary settings also have the resources, vision and commitment needed to fulfill the spirit and reality of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

To all the students who participated in the survey, your courage, commitment, stories and time you took in filling out the survey will not go unheard or unseen. This report was created because you said what I have long believed - we all have a role to play in making the promise of reconciliation real. On behalf of all of us at Indspire, we are proud to say to all Indigenous post-secondary students, you are change makers, and your feedback is part of that change, creating Indigenous solutions within education.

You shared, we listened. This report demonstrates exactly that. Your words were and are powerful, that is why we have included as many of them as possible in this report. I know there is more we can do, part of that is working in partnership with educational settings to foster and create post-secondary spaces where Indigenous students feel welcomed and heard.

To those who will read this report, students shared the weight of being one of few Indigenous students in a post-secondary classroom. They addressed the emotional pressure of instructors and professors' expectations for them to be experts and speak on behalf of all Indigenous peoples; others spoke about a welcoming and supportive educational experience. Students expressed the importance of culture, identity and belonging in classrooms, on campus and within Indigenous student services. Many spoke about the impact of not having these things and the experience of feeling marginalized, isolated and at times, the sting of racism and discrimination in classes and on campus. In many cases, they expressed how the lack of Indigenous curriculum and knowledge of instructional staff contributed to many of the concerns they raised.

Finally, to all the students who made this report possible, thank you. You are change makers, you are part of building the nation that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission envisioned when creating the Calls to Action. This report is part of creating change and that change is because of your willingness to share your wisdom and experience with us, with post-secondary leaders, faculties, and decision makers.

Nia:wen,

**Roberta Jamieson**, President and CEO

November 2018

## Student Letter

Access and opportunity is something educators, policymakers, and institutions must think about when providing support to Indigenous learners. We live in a country where it continues to be fiscally justified for First Nation, Métis and Inuit to receive far less in educational funding than non-Indigenous people across the rest of the country. Indigenous students have a huge burden to carry when attending post-secondary settings. For many of us, we are the first in our immediate family to pursue college, or university. It can be a scary experience. The fact that many of us are the first to attend a post-secondary setting is a success. We want to be the change that is needed to carry our families, communities and nations forward; we want to inspire and motivate every First Nation, Inuit and Métis person to believe they can do more than dream about attending school.

Collectively, we must do better to ensure all Indigenous students have equitable access to funding and opportunities, as the future of Indigenous communities depend on it. We must transform how Indigenous students are supported. This means addressing their financial, emotional, and cultural needs so they can succeed in post-secondary education.

As Indigenous students we demand action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action. The Calls to Action are a road map that will ultimately benefit our future and the future of all people living in Canada. The Calls to Action give us hope and a sense that reconciliation is the path to all of us accomplishing our dreams.

We want to thank you for listening to what Indigenous students have shared about their post-secondary experience. In closing, like the Indigenous students who shared of themselves in this report, we honour the spirit of sharing of ourselves, and our lived experience with the readers of this report and offer the following:



“I was recently in Ottawa and had a chance to see the Supreme Court of Canada. There are two tall statues that stand next to the steps of the building” Veritas (Truth) to the west, and Ivstitia (Justice) to the east. We have yet to see truth and justice happen for my people and if we do not change the status quo of how we support Indigenous students like myself, Veritas (Truth) and Ivstitia (Justice) will always be in disrepute.”

**Elijah M Williams**  
Cayuga Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River  
Recipient of Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures:*  
*Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards*



“Education is the foundation in what many would call ‘reconciliation’, my community has taught me to instead use Miyo-Pimātsiwin, it means “the good life” in Cree. Indigenous students across the country seeking an education to better their futures deserve the right to the good life, we all do.”

**Tracie Lééost**  
2018 Indspire Award recipient for Youth - Métis



“As the first person in my family, and the first Inuk from Nunavut to become an MD, I’m an example of what Indigenous youth can achieve with equitable access to post-secondary education. I may be the first in my field, but I will not be the only- with judicious investment in our Indigenous students, we can allow for them to flourish in post-secondary institutions.”

**Dr. Donna May Kimmaliardjuk**  
2018 Indspire Award recipient for Youth – Inuit

## INTRODUCTION

In releasing the final findings in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) made 94 Calls to Action “in order to redress the legacy of residential Schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation”.<sup>1</sup>

Nineteen of these Calls to Action have direct implications for post-secondary settings and those working within these settings. Indspire is working to gather and report on the experiences of Indigenous post-secondary students and ensure that the process of reconciliation is made real in their educational journey. Of the nineteen Calls to Action (Appendix 1) some were made directly to post-secondary settings across Canada. They address the education of students and the implementation of course content on Indigenous people and their pre and post-contact history, including the process of colonization and the impacts of the Indian Residential School system. The Calls to Action focused on key program streams within post-secondary education, specifically, education, social work, health care, law and journalism programs.

The survey conducted by Indspire focused on students’ experiences on campuses across the country post-Truth and Reconciliation. This report reflects the feedback students provided and is structured in a way that moves between the very personal lived experience of “I” tied to the words of individual students to a more collaborative “we” in the body of each section. This represents Indspire’s commitment to ensure the power of student voice resonates in a way that individual perspectives feed into a broader, collaborative and inclusive reflection of the Indigenous students who were part of this conversation.

As we learned, the report is tied to a deeply personal conversation, one that Indigenous students are having across the country; a conversation tied to Truth and Reconciliation. Indspire knows that Truth and Reconciliation is still in its early days and is a critical conversation shaping the landscape of this country. For many readers there may be a need to clarify what Truth and Reconciliation and the Calls to Action. We have included an overview of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Calls to the Action in (Appendix 1).

For Indigenous people, before any story telling can begin, the landscape of the journey must be the first words shared. With that we want to begin with the words of Senator Murray Sinclair and Roberta Jamieson as both are pivotal in shaping the questions that were developed and shared with the two thousand Indigenous post-secondary students Indspire sent the survey to.

“Education got us into this mess, and it will be education that gets us out”.

Justice Murray Sinclair, CBC Radio, 2015.

It is this space of synergy, the space of education and reconciliation that is at the heart of the work of Indspire - a point reinforced by Indspire’s President and CEO:

“We are doing our best at Indspire to bring those Calls to Action into reality”.

Roberta Jamieson, Universities Canada, 2017

<sup>1</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015. “Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.” [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

This report is our first step towards attaining those goals. There is a need for partnership between First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, governments, Indigenous and non-Indigenous post-secondary settings to transform current realities so that together we dispel the illusion of Indigenous peoples as artifacts of the past, to a view of peoples who are a valued and integral part of the future - that every Indigenous student is part of creating Indigenous solutions, that they are the change makers. There is a need to address the sub-standard realities of Indigenous education and their underlying causes. The Calls to Action are about taking action.

Indigenous students must see and have affirmed, the importance of the role and histories of their peoples in curriculum, in texts, in the articulated knowledge of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous instructors throughout their educational and post-secondary experience.

We hope this report is part of that validation process. Indigenous post-secondary students directly informed the content of this report and it is our intention to reflect their hope, their belief that change is achievable, and that post-secondary education must bring together healing and reconciliation as part of valuing them and their desires to contribute to the two worlds they walk in.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Post-secondary education fuels the dreams and hopes of students. This is especially true for Indigenous students as they pursue their aspirations in this post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission landscape. But, at the same time, they are wondering whether Canada's policy makers and post-secondary settings will deliver on the promises that have been made.

In July and August of 2018, Indspire sent a survey to 2,000 First Nation, Inuit and Métis post-secondary students across Canada who had received Building Brighter Futures (BBF) scholarships and bursaries from Indspire during the previous three years. They were asked for their insights and perspectives on how the TRC's Calls to Action had affected their educational experience. Indspire received responses from 290 of the students canvassed, a response rate of 15 per cent.

Students told Indspire that there is a need to align funding decisions tied to scholarship and bursary programs, and those of their home communities with timelines and processes of post-secondary settings. They feel that a large part of their financial needs go unmet and they require funding that helps with housing, food and childcare. As some students travel from fly in communities and geographically distant places, they said this support is needed to help them deal with the impacts of not having their community, family and cultural supports close at hand.

Students said post-secondary settings needed to incorporate Indigenous content in program and course work requirements and have Indigenous role models at the front of the classroom. Many said post-secondary settings needed to provide mandatory Indigenous history training for all employees and instructional staff. Students also called for an increase in Indigenous teaching and mentorship resources to support them throughout their educational journey.

Students shared some of their positive experiences in post-secondary spaces. They noted the value of having access to Indigenous student services and spaces on campus that provide them with a sense of community and support. They repeatedly said this gave them strength and a desire to become a role model and mentor to other Indigenous students. They also saw a need for Indigenous narratives in mental health, counselling and law programs.

Our hope in releasing this report is to demonstrate to policy makers, funders and post-secondary settings that Indigenous students are conscious of walking in two worlds. They want a post-secondary experience that honours and responds to the needs of the Indigenous world they live in. They also believe the TRC's Calls to Action are a critical road map for ensuring the realities of Indigenous history are included in the programs and course work of which they form a part.

For the TRC's Calls to Action to be fulfilled in post-secondary spaces, Indigenous students identified a critical need for increased funding for both Indigenous students and Indigenous services. They said a lack of funding played a critical role in their ability to be ready to learn and succeed in their programs. In some cases, students said colleges and universities provided insufficient resources for Indigenous student services.

Respondents valued access to Indigenous student services and spaces that provide them with a sense of community and support on campus. They repeatedly said it is important to know their culture, speak their language and have access to cultural practices and knowledge specific to their people.



At the same time, they want to feel part of the post-secondary spaces they are in. Indigenous students want to find balance by feeling equally comfortable and welcome as they walk in two worlds. They talked about the pain of being in a post-secondary setting that did not value their culture, identity and belonging.

Students attending Indigenous post-secondary settings spoke more positively about their experience than those attending a non-Indigenous post-secondary setting. An important source of this reflection came from having Indigenous peers and having their culture treated as a priority rather than an accommodation.

Students said post-secondary instructors and professors need to be culturally respectful when they work with Indigenous students. They felt devalued when their professors and instructors lacked knowledge of Indigenous history.

Many said post-secondary settings needed to provide mandatory training in Indigenous history for all employees. Students also called for an increase in Indigenous teaching and mentorship resources to support them throughout their educational journey.

The impacts are not limited to students. Respondents felt there was undue pressure on existing Indigenous staff who must take on extra responsibilities when professors and instructors lack the background and skill required to teach Indigenous content.

Students were clear. The lack of and quality of Indigenous content was a significant problem in their post-secondary experience.

**“For myself, I received my acceptance into my program... in August of 2017 but the deadline to apply for funding from my band was in June 2017. Because I did not want to lose my spot, I took out a student loan to attend my program. Due to health and financial problems I ended up withdrawing from university in January 2018 to return to work.”**

They specifically saw a need for Indigenous narratives in social work, nursing, medicine and law. This content must include Indigenous literature and research on the impacts that colonialism, the Indian Residential School system and intergenerational trauma. This content would reflect the legacy each has on the physical and mental health of current generations of Indigenous people.

The lack of Indigenous course content also limited the professional development of Indigenous students. Some students said there was inconsistent Indigenous content within the same post-secondary setting.

Students noted the quality of Indigenous language programs in Indigenous post-secondary settings and spoke about the need for immersive programs and for language credits in more Indigenous languages.

While the majority of Indigenous students did not encounter racism, isolation or marginalization of Indigenous student knowledge in the post-secondary world, 45 per cent said they did. Sadly, students also reported these problems in the broader community, beyond their post-secondary environment. Indigenous students need champions and allies to stand with them when they are faced with barriers to inclusion.

For some Indigenous students, it was noted that they felt most uncomfortable “in class”. This was where they were most likely to have exchanges with non-Indigenous instructors and students, where they would be placed in the difficult place of being the spokesperson or defender of all Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous students felt that, as part of the healing and reconciliation process, post-secondary settings expected them to bear some of the responsibility for transforming the post-secondary system. Students felt that it is up to them to ease the way for the change in attitudes in non-Indigenous students and staff.

Students also felt a pressure to acknowledge they had a role in implementing the TRC’s Calls to Action. In some cases, students felt they could not opt out of participating, that it was something that the post-secondary space expected of them.

Indigenous students said they felt the absence of Indigenous educators in the classroom, in Indigenous student services and on campus. In another instance, the role of Indigenous mentorship was noted and was reflected on as a positive experience, saying it encouraged them to do the same for other indigenous students.

A number of post-secondary initiatives have been launched since the release of the TRC Calls to Action in June 2015, and the six-volume final TRC report in December 2015. The impact of change brought about by the Calls to Action is largely undocumented, as there is no baseline tied to implementation within education, and this is Indspire’s first survey specifically on the topic.

As a result of the survey, we have begun a conversation and students are reporting that progress in Indigenous post-secondary settings and programs appears to be further along than in non-Indigenous ones. But non-Indigenous post-secondary settings are having an impact as well.

Some students said work should be focused on the disciplines cited in the Calls to Action, such as law and medicine, where they felt there had been no significant movement. Others wanted more language programs to be offered because they benefited from taking them in their post-secondary settings.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the feedback received from Indigenous post-secondary students Indspire presents three critical recommendations to government and post-secondary settings;

1. Core funding for Indigenous students, to pursue post-secondary education and a strengthening of funding for on campus Indigenous student service resources:
  - a) Indspire recommends that increased and sustainable funding be provided for the staffing and provision of Indigenous student services, so the post-secondary educational system can benefit all Indigenous students.
  - b) Indspire recommends that increased and sustainable funding for Indigenous students be committed by the Government of Canada in Budget 2019
2. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the TRC Calls to Action in post-secondary spaces.
3. The strengthening of Indigenous culture, identity and belonging through mentorship on campus and beyond.



## STUDENT PROFILE

Indspire surveyed 2,000 First Nation, Inuit and Métis students enrolled in post-secondary programs across Canada. We sought their insights and perspectives on how the Calls to Action had affected their educational experience. All survey recipients had received Indspire's Building Brighter Futures (BBF) scholarships and bursaries between 2015 and 2018. These years were chosen because they followed the release of the the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and Final Report. We asked students for their insight on how the Calls to Action had affected their post-secondary educational experience.

The voices and reflections of students in this report are drawn from the 290 students who responded to the survey, a response rate of 15 per cent (Appendix 2).

Sixty-nine per cent were First Nations, 4 per cent were Inuit and 26 per cent were Métis. Seventy three per cent were female, 25 per cent were male and 1 per cent identified as non-binary. While 36 per cent had lived almost all their lives in their communities, this percentage grows to 50 per cent for Inuit students. A significant portion of non-status and First Nations, 24 per cent, had never resided in their home community.

Almost half the respondents were enrolled in an undergraduate program. Nearly a quarter were studying at the diploma level, with an additional 11 per cent studying at the certificate level. Sixteen per cent were studying at the master's or doctoral level.

Overall, 21 per cent of students were in a program or setting specifically for Indigenous learners.



## SURVEY FINDINGS

Students had a great deal to say. As one student reflected:

“Every support and initiative are a valuable resource, but there is still lots of work to be done and I look forward to a day when educational institutions are filled with Indigenous people and perspectives in such a way that their input is a recognized and valued asset to the academy.”

This was a common point of connection made by Indigenous students when it came to the relationship between post-secondary education and reconciliation. They hoped that educational settings will do what is required so students feel that post-secondary spaces see their contributions as needed, and a valued part of creating Indigenous solutions that advance reconciliation within education.

It is in this space of hope and inspiration, that we now share what we heard from Indigenous post-secondary students.

### EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

Students told Indspire there was a general lack of financial resources for Indigenous post-secondary education and for on-campus services for Indigenous students. They pointed to several reasons for the shortfall. For some, it started with a conflict between deadlines for applications, a conflict that crippled their ability to successfully enter post-secondary and complete their studies.

“It was horrible, they need centers in every campus. They need to have better communication between band offices as well. My funding got messed up just before exams when I was living 2 hours away, but fixed right before my last exam. I missed most and failed every class. If there was better communication between the financial services and the band office, this would not have happened, and I could have finished the year.”

This is not to say that gains have not been made. We heard that Indigenous post-secondary settings are doing well in providing increased funding to provide services for Indigenous students, ensuring more of a wrap-around experience for post-secondary students.

“There is an effort taking place at my university but still the Inuit experience is sometimes left out. Having supports for entering and continuing studies would help Indigenous students tremendously.”

In other cases, students said there appeared to be differences in the resources that colleges and universities dedicated to departments offering Indigenous Services. Again, this marred their experience as Indigenous learners.

“My experience has been very positive at the university level, however when I attended college the year before and my experience was very poor, and I felt the Aboriginal Department was way underfunded.”

Most significantly, Indigenous students identified a critical need for funding that looks at the needs of Indigenous students in a holistic way. Indspire heard from at least one student who was homeless, struggling to feed and clothe them self while still attending classes. We heard from students who were parents but did not have family and friends to help them with childcare or the financial resources to purchase child care. As a result, they went to class with their children, because there was no other option.

There was also a call for base funding for students.

**“PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE increase PSSSP (Post-Secondary Student Support Program) funding and make a minimum floor of per-student funding possible!”**

**“That post-secondary debt is crushing. Although these bursaries helped, I am still suffocating with debt. Make more awards accessible and help indigenous students thrive. A massive part of why so few of us go to school is the debt. I will question whether it was worth it for a long time.”**

Indigenous students said funding played a critical role in the success of their post-secondary experience. If the TRC’s Calls are to be fulfilled in post-secondary spaces, it is important to increase funding for both Indigenous students and Indigenous services in post-secondary settings. Students said both play a critical role in their ability to be ready to learn and succeed in their programs.

**“I am forever grateful for the financial help I received from Indspire. It was thanks to their financial help that I was able to focus on academics and worry less about finances. I appreciate the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education and I will use the education I received to help guide future generations towards achieving their fullest potential in their academics. Meegwetch”**

## **CULTURE, IDENTITY AND BELONGING**

**“Indigenous people are definitely a minority throughout my post-secondary education. I feel apart of something “more” in the sense that I am helping pave the way to rid others of Indigenous stereotypes. As someone who is not super familiar with all the cultural aspects of my ancestry, it was welcoming and comforting to know there were supports for people like me. Cultural events, such as soup and bannock or pow wows, were held throughout my school year and that shows we are a part of this world.”**

If there is one overarching theme in the Calls to Action, it is the need to make Indigenous culture, identity and belonging part of the reconciliation process. Together, these three items offer a framework, a source of strength and protective factors for Indigenous students. Students felt it is important to know their culture, speak their language and have access to elders, cultural practices and knowledge specific to their people. There is a hunger to know who they are and a need to claim the language, ceremony and practices that are part of their people, their communities.

**“I believe that there should be more “ schools” that utilize the Elders that teach those of us who have no or very little knowledge of Indigenous ways ... this helps with the healing (that so many need including myself) ... we have an Elder 2 times a week and an Elder helper however it would be great to have an Elder more often. Elders are essential in supporting the students with issues that they be facing ... being a student is extremely hard however being a student, single mother and a residential school survivor is extremely difficult and there needs to be a lot of healing ...”**

“Post-secondary is a great place to learn about people and for you to tell people who you are. I am becoming myself more every day and I am proud to be an Indigenous person.”

They also want to belong, not only to their families, people and their communities but to the post-secondary spaces they are entering. Indigenous students want to find balance by feeling equally comfortable and welcome in both worlds. Many felt that post-secondary settings have not taken the time to incorporate Indigenous students, their history and their culture into post-secondary courses, systems and supports.

“There must be safe spaces for indigenous students to partake in spiritual and cultural practices - it is unacceptable, for example, that in my Indigenous spirituality classes, the professor was not allowed to smudge in the classroom (of course we broke this rule).”

Indigenous students talked about the isolation they felt and the guidance they needed when feeling overwhelmed and alone. It is in these moments access to Indigenous student services can anchor the students' connection to their culture identity. This is what gives them a sense of belonging, acting like a life-line away from home, a healing place where they can recharge and have access to what many describe as a cultural, spiritual safe space.

“My experience in post-secondary has not been easy, but I have been successful in achieving my educational goals because of the relational approach and cultural supports that have been made available. Dealing with heavy course content, the elders provided gentle guidance and insight to enhance my understanding and connection to the material. They were also there as a support when life challenges presented and I felt like I couldn't continue with my education. I had faculty and staff who had a strong understanding of the importance of elders and cultural connections who, when I would go to them to share that I felt like I needed to withdraw, would redirect me to the elders and other supports. I think that at this time it is critically important that post-secondary institutions commit to increasing understanding of indigenous/colonial history and establish an environment founded on cultural humility that encourages individuals to reflect on their own bias and lived experience and how that influences their interactions with others. This is particularly important as many indigenous students are coming from small communities or isolated/rural/remote settings and removed from their natural support networks in their pursuit for higher education.”

Students who attended Indigenous post-secondary settings spoke more positively about their experience than those at non-Indigenous post-secondary settings. An important source of their positive experiences came from having Indigenous peers and having their culture treated as a priority rather than an accommodation.

“I loved my experience in a First Nations run school, being able to see Indigenous culture everywhere around the school and be surrounded by other Indigenous people and not confined to a designated room or “house” like most schools was amazing.”

Indigenous students talked about the pain of being in a post-secondary setting that did not value their culture and Indigenous identity. Many felt their needs were marginalized, and some felt they were unwelcome and alone. The inaccurate reflections of their culture and their people often placed Indigenous students in a position where they had to address the misinformation and course content presented by non-Indigenous staff.

“That it is not only about our history that is important to be represented. But we NEED to see faculty that represents us. In 2018 we do not need non-Indigenous peoples speaking about us. Make space, move over. In my field of study, it was very hard to describe how not only are we still here but everything we do in our programs is through a western lens. That there are indigenous ways of reaching decisions, creation of policy etc. It never gets recognized in my program.”

“Since I started going to school down south far from my reserve, there was a great cultural shock that I had experienced and that is why I could not succeed in the beginning, knowing that I left my reserve that is far away from family and community events. The feeling of being alone in the city at first can be overwhelming to Aboriginal people leaving their community to go to school and learning a new cultural way of living.”

Some students travel over 3,250 kilometers between their home community and school. Significant travel is a reality faced by many students across Canada. The impact of this travel is compounded for many Indigenous students who enter post-secondary spaces that are grappling with implementation of the Calls to Action. Students feel the added burden, when entering post-secondary settings that have histories that are not welcoming, or inclusive of their people, indigenous history or indigenous knowledge. In these spaces they feel the distance from home, community and their people in a way that speaks to the core of who they are.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR POST-SECONDARY STAFF**

Students said post-secondary instructors and professors need to be active participants in the reconciliation journey and most importantly, be culturally respectful when they work with Indigenous students. They said they felt devalued when their professors and instructors lacked a knowledge of the history of Indigenous peoples. The impacts are not limited to them. Indigenous students felt it also placed an undue pressure on Indigenous student services and instructional staff who must take on extra responsibilities when professors and instructors teach content they do not have the required background and skill to teach.

“Courses..... specifically [on] intergenerational trauma and history of colonialism should be made mandatory in every program to educate everyone and attempt to decrease ignorance leading to racism.”



“I’m in a teacher Education program. I would like more courses with an First Nations, Métis, Inuit (FNMI) focus to be MANDATORY. The indigenous population of Canada is growing four times faster than any other segment of the Canadian population. Future teachers need to be better prepared to address the needs of FNMI students. All teacher candidates should be required to take a MINIMUM of 1 course on indigenous histories and cultures. More than 1 mandatory course would be ideal.”

Students talked of being triggered emotionally by teachers who lacked the skills or knowledge to sensitively work through difficult points in Indigenous history.

#### INDIGENOUS CONTENT / LANGUAGES FOR CREDIT

While reviewing feedback, we heard interesting word choices. Sometimes students would talk about Indigenous their post-secondary spaces, creating welcoming reference points within the post-secondary space. In other situations, students were clear in talking about themselves as Indigenous and the importance they placed on Indigenous content.

The distinction being Indigenous content is not tied to softening of or supplementing existing course content. Indigenous content, is inclusive of contributions made by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, provides factual information about the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, treaty relationships, colonialism, the *British North America Act*, the *Indian Act*, the Indian Residential School System, the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

“Indigenous history and practices need to be clearly represented in all schools. Each field/discipline in a post-secondary institution should contain some form of Indigenous representation. This is particularly true of the humanities and human sciences. Arts, Language, Anthropology, Political Science and History programs at all schools should undoubtedly represent Indigenous cultures. Education often avoids the topics of Indigenous people and their history as the treatment of Indigenous people by colonists has been and continues to be the extremes of marginalization and disregard. These atrocities will continue unless they are taught at all levels of education. Facing them is the only way we can overcome and move forward in a respectful and collaborative fashion”.

Students felt the damaging impacts when Indigenous content was not consistently provided across all campuses and programs. They also felt that students and staff at times assumed that they would be able to speak to all things Indigenous, when they self-identified as an Indigenous person.

“People I know have been caught in situations where they have been discriminated against by professors or have been given the responsibility of being the “Indigenous point of view” in course content.”

“I would want them to know that there is a long way to go and so much more that can be done. I am Inuk away from my home community and I now live on the traditional territory of the Hul’qu’me’num treaty group and their culture is not represented at my place of study. As an indigenous person I have done my best to bring culture into everything I write or present about, and if I did not, my classmates may not have experience any indigenous perspectives.”

Students were clear. The lack of and poor quality of Indigenous content was a significant problem in their post-secondary experience.

“Schools such as [my university] incorporate minimal Indigenous history into our education. Professors often discuss residential schools in extremely limited ways; non-Indigenous professors can come across as though they do not want to teach about this or think it is pointless. There are occasionally options for papers on Aboriginal issues, but this is the extent of it. It is discouraging to see the people that are paid to talk about the trauma my ancestors face, that my community still faces today, with such contempt, all while I pay for this education. We need to better represent the Indigenous communities specific to each school to improve and enhance those unique experiences. We also need to educate the rest of the student population and staff at these schools, as I feel the most amount of stigma from faculty such as professors and my student peers. As a First Nations student, I feel lost within my own education.”

The lack of Indigenous course content limited the professional development of Indigenous students. In the case of social work, nursing, medicine and law programs, course content did not include texts, Indigenous literature and research on the impacts of colonialism, the Indian Residential School system and intergenerational trauma on the physical and mental health of Indigenous people. There is a need for course content that speaks to the realities of working with and for Indigenous people and communities. Students noted outdated western world views dominated their course texts and content.

“Much of what I learned about Aboriginal mental health realities and counselling treatment approaches were in text books and empirical research written not from an Aboriginal perspective.”

In some cases, students wanted to play an active role in the content they would like to see added to their programs. This would provide departments with an opportunity to bring students and instructional staff together to develop new course curriculum, adding content that Indigenous students feel is important to tap into.

“Check in with your students to see what they’re experience has been and what they would like to see, talk to lots of them and ensure you’re getting a wide variety of indigenous peoples including First Nations, Métis and Inuit. As a Métis our cultural needs and representation often gets overlooked.”

“...It is discouraging to see the people that are paid to talk about the trauma my ancestors face, that my community still faces today, with such contempt, all while I pay for this education.”

## PROGRAM SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

In this section, we review the program specific information students provided on their classroom experience and the representation of:

- Indigenous ways of knowing
- Indigenous teaching methods
- the history of Indigenous peoples
- the history of colonialism and residential schools
- intercultural understanding and
- recognition of cultural protocols

Throughout this report, percentages have been rounded to whole numbers. Due to this, values may not equal 100 per cent.

One of the limitations of reporting is the limited number of responses from post-secondary students in some areas. Our commitment to honouring anonymity for survey respondents limits our ability to reflect focused feedback within journalism programs. The broader feedback provided from journalism students specific to their experience has been incorporated into the comments and reflections contained throughout the report.

## Education

Students enrolled in programs to become teachers, early childhood educators and those studying Indigenous education were included in this group. Over half of the education majors said Indigenous ways of knowing were often, if not always, in their courses. However, a quarter of the students in education programs said that Indigenous ways of knowing were rarely or never represented.

When asked about the use of Indigenous teaching methods, education majors reported that this Call to Action was less well-represented. Nearly 40 per cent of respondents stated this was rarely or never something they received in class. One-third reported that Indigenous teaching methods were often or completely represented in their classes (Figure 1).

### All Education Programs

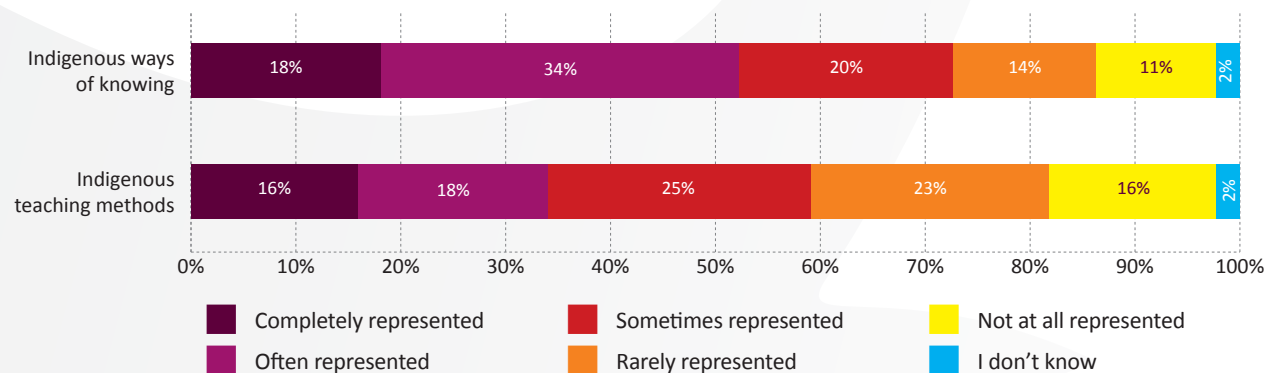


Figure 1: Classroom experience of Indigenous students in education programs

## Education Programs at Indigenous Post Secondary Settings

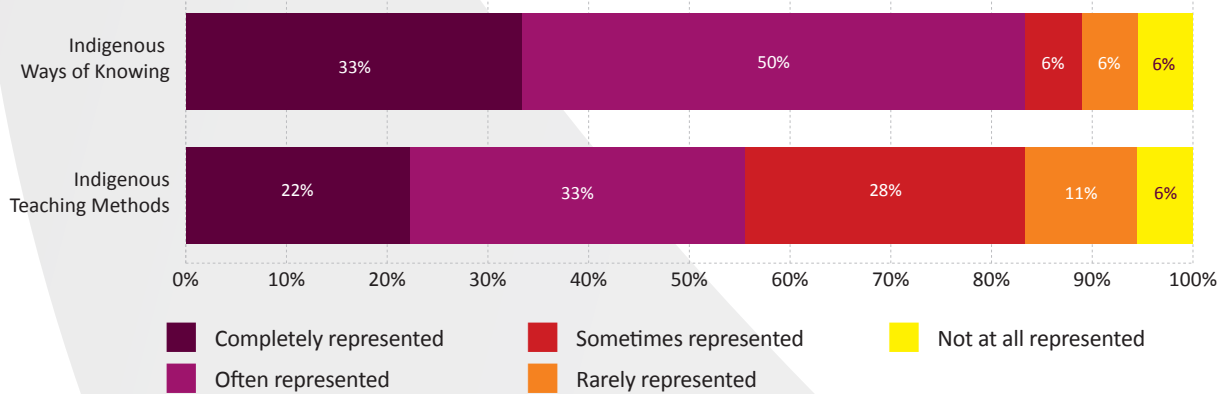


Figure 2: Indigenous Education Programs

There are numerous post-secondary settings and programs that, primarily or exclusively, serve Indigenous learners across Canada. These students were more likely to say that Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous teaching methods were often or completely represented (Figure 2).

While this group of Indigenous students was small, their messages were instructive and valuable:

“My experience with [the education program specific to Indigenous learners] was the best post secondary education that I got. That they ensured the best way to help and guide all the new teachers as they begin their own path in education.”

“I think we are on the right track to having people get a better understanding of Indigenous peoples and our history. However, a lot of things that are being done from the Truth and Reconciliation document, are only becoming a check list and sometimes lip service. More education needs to happen with people understanding the historical violence and intergenerational trauma. More education needs to happen to when people are making those connections to the TRC (for example Land Acknowledgement). Create more inclusion throughout the University between different groups, stop segregating people into ethnic groups.”

A different story emerges when we examine the responses from Indigenous students in non-Indigenous post-secondary settings. About 40 per cent said Indigenous ways of knowing were rarely or never represented in their educational program, while about 30 per cent of them said they were often or completely represented. Over half of Indigenous students reported that Indigenous teaching methods were rarely or never represented. Indigenous teaching methods were represented only 20 per cent of the time (Figure 3).

## Non-Indigenous Post-Secondary Education Programs

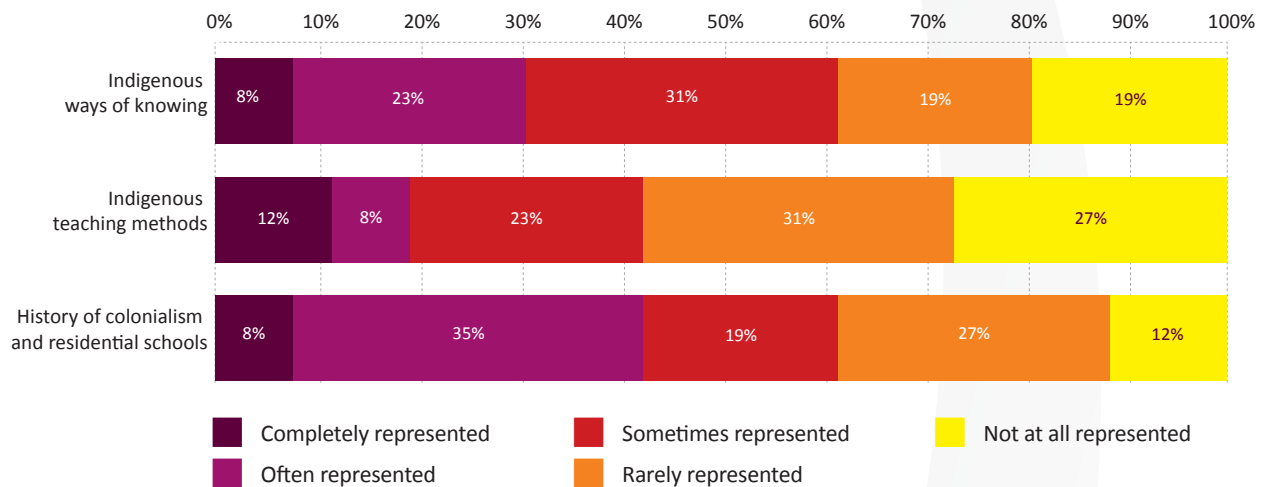


Figure 3: Classroom experience of Indigenous students in education in non-Indigenous post-secondary programs

The responses indicate that the majority of non-Indigenous education students are not getting sufficient knowledge in Indigenous ways of knowing or teaching methods. This consideration can be extended to course content specific to the legacy of colonialism and residential schools. Nearly 40 per cent of the Indigenous students in non-Indigenous education programs said that the impacts of colonialism and residential schools were rarely or not represented at all in their studies (Figure 3). Many students said faculty and peers needed to be better trained, so that they have a fundamental understanding of Indigenous peoples:

“I feel it should be mandatory for all teachers, instructors, and professors at all levels to have completed and passed an Introduction to Indigenous Studies at a post secondary level before being granted a certificate to teach at any level. Many of the people teaching us are not educated properly in the true history of North America or the worlds Indigenous cultures.”

“Sometimes in the classroom, we have professors who are uncomfortable, and make me uncomfortable with their comments or expectations that I would educate them.”

While many students in education and other programs acknowledged they had played a role in educating professors and peers on Indigenous histories, peoples, and cultural ways, a student majoring in education outlined the impact this has:

“A good deal of professors and staff are completely ignorant of basic indigenous principles like the treaties, history and human rights. There needs to be more [education] for the educators. Indigenous staff at these institutions are stretched with emotional labour to do this education and it takes from our capacity to perform our normal duties”.

Some students noted improvements:

“Continue the effort. Progress is being made. Many of my classmates (as future educators) were simply not aware of the history and treatment of Indigenous people and [were] open to learning. A minority may have felt very uncomfortable and were openly defiant to what was being shared with them, but I believe they will be better served experiencing [perspectives] outside their accepted world views.”

## Social work

In Social Work programs, the message is clear. Social workers need training about the history and impacts of residential schools, and understand that Indigenous communities and families are able to find solutions for healing. Social Work students noted that knowing the history of Indigenous peoples, having intercultural understanding and recognizing cultural protocols demonstrate a valuing and respecting of the abilities of Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

Again, there were very different responses between students in Indigenous and non-Indigenous post-secondary social work and counselling programs (Figure 4, 5, and 6). Over half of all students in all social work programs reported that the history of colonialism and residential schools was often or always reflected on in their courses. A quarter suggest they have rarely or never had the history of Indigenous peoples, colonialism or residential schools taught in their programs.

Similarly, 50 per cent of social work students felt that intercultural understanding was well represented in their classes, compared to 31 per cent who felt it was not. Thirty-seven per cent of students said cultural protocols were not well represented in their classes, while 40 per cent cultural protocols were well represented in their course work.

**“Over half of all students in all social work programs reported that the history of colonialism and residential schools was often or always reflected on in their courses.”**

## All Social Work and Counselling Programs

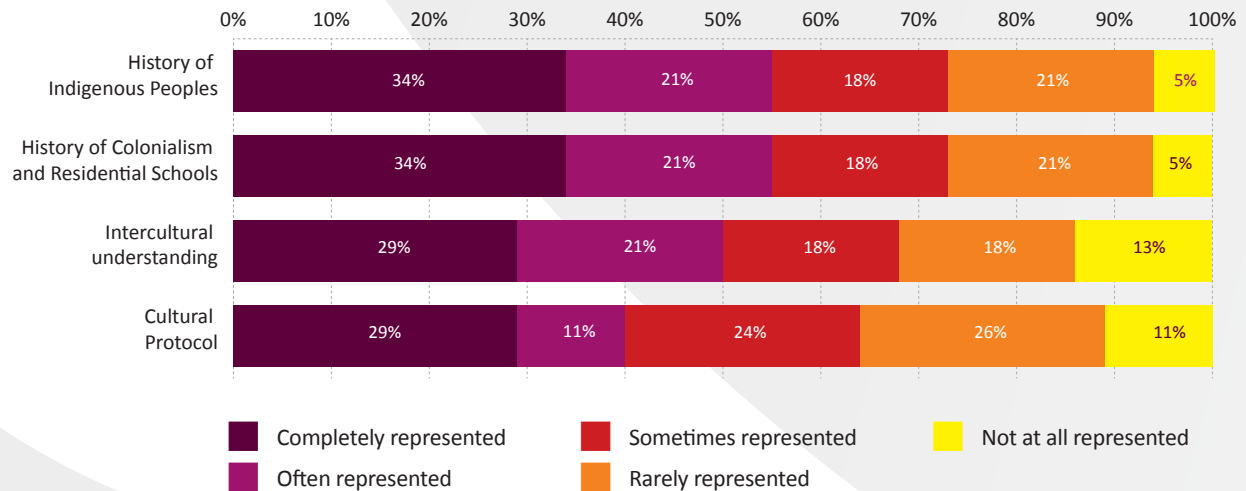


Figure 4: Classroom experience of Indigenous students in social work and counselling

Students enrolled in social work programs designed specifically for Indigenous students said their programs had a greater representation of their history and intercultural understanding and protocols. Almost two-thirds of students said the history of Indigenous peoples was completely represented in their programs. Over half said histories of colonialism and residential schools, as well as cultural protocol, were completely represented. When reflecting on intercultural understanding forty per cent of students said it was completely represented.

Nearly 60 per cent of students in non-Indigenous post-secondary settings noted that they rarely or never received content related to colonialism or residential schools in their classrooms. Considering they are in courses where the majority of students are non-Indigenous learners, it would be reasonable to assume that the majority of students in social work and counselling programs are not receiving content about Indigenous history, contact and colonialism, residential schools or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

### Social Work Majors in Post-Secondary Settings / Programs Specific to Indigenous Learners

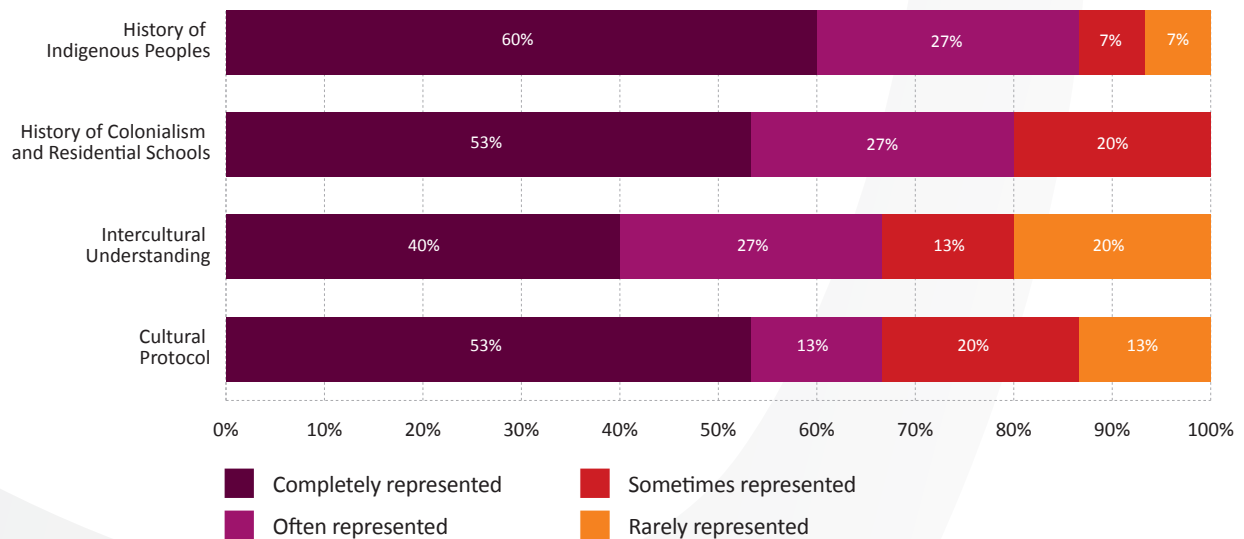


Figure 5: Social Work Programs specific to Indigenous learners

In the feedback received from students in non-Indigenous post-secondary settings, 60 per cent of Indigenous students felt that the history of Indigenous peoples was not well represented in social work/counselling programs. Indigenous students said it was well represented 20 per cent of the time. Intercultural understanding was slightly better represented, with nearly 40 per cent of students saying they received this as part of their education and 43 per cent saying this was not represented in their classrooms. Overall, 70 per cent of students said cultural protocols were not well represented. This left students to seek the information elsewhere.

“Thirty-seven per cent of students said cultural protocols were not well represented in their classes, while 40 per cent cultural protocols were well represented in their course work.”

### Social Work Programs Non-Indigenous Post Secondary Settings

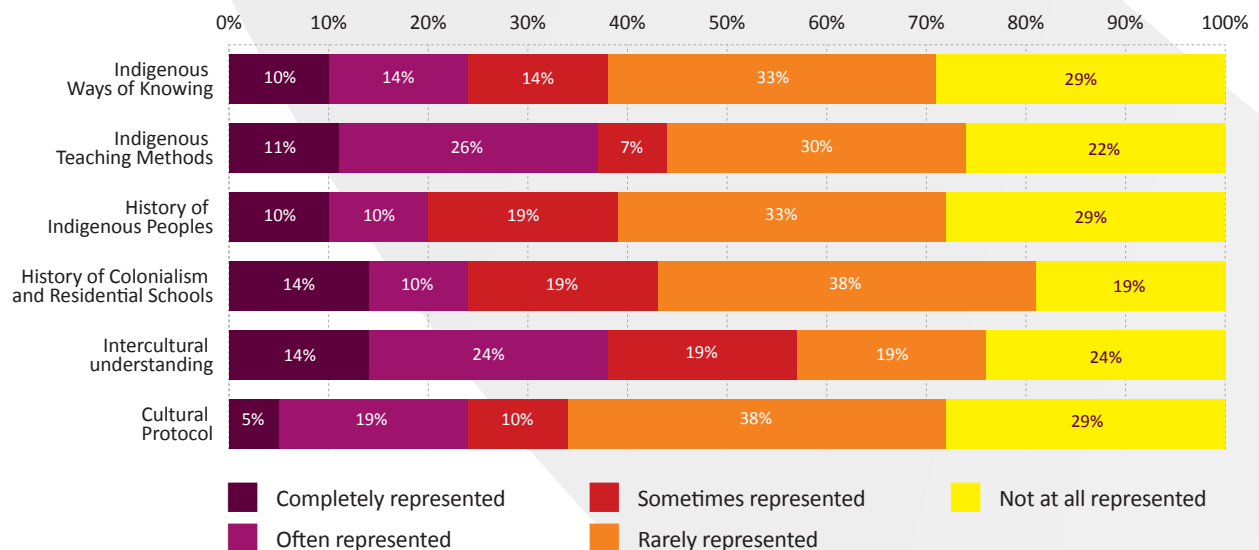


Figure 6: Classroom experience of Indigenous students in non-Indigenous social work and counselling programs



## Law

There was an insufficient number of students in law programs designed specifically for Indigenous students to characterize the students' experiences in detail. We have instead reported on their experience as a whole within law programs. Indigenous students did report that their academic experience did not reflect the values of the Calls to Action. Over 90 per cent of students said intercultural understanding was rarely or never represented in their Law programs. Nearly 75 per cent stated cultural protocols were rarely or not at all represented. While the history of colonialism and residential schools was represented in nearly 20 per cent of law student programs, this history was not well represented as noted by more than 60 per cent of Indigenous students (Figure 7).

Law students noticed the missing content in their courses and reflected on the crushing weight of debt:

“In some classes - certain professors did not make conversation regarding Indigenous legal issues part of their classes when they should have.”

“That post secondary debt is crushing. Although these bursaries helped, I am still suffocating with debt. Make more awards accessible and help indigenous students thrive. A massive part of why so few of us go to school is the debt. I will question whether it was worth it for a long time.”

“Taking the TRC Calls to Action is so important - if we're serious about reconciliation, we need to take the Calls to Action seriously. We need more Indigenous professors and more data collected so we can report on how schools are doing. We need to let our students know which environments are the best for them, their learning and their cultural identity.”

## Law Majors

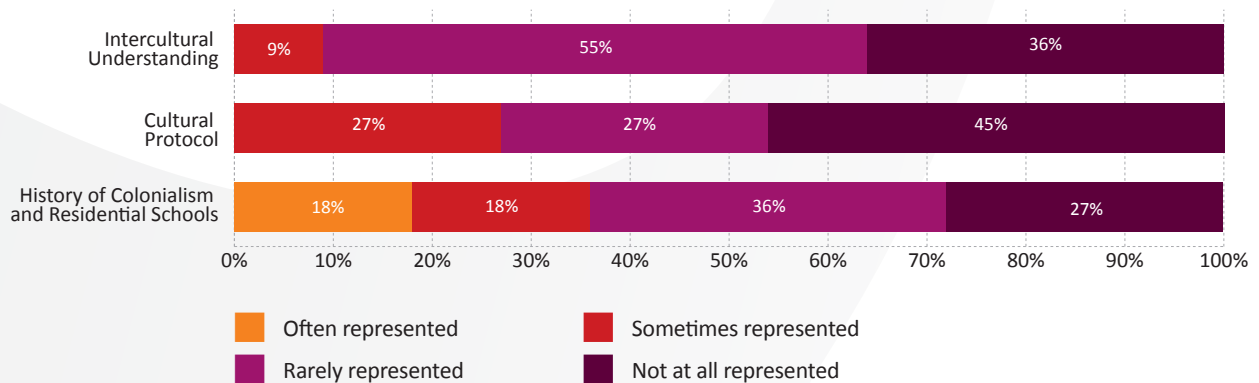


Figure 7: Classroom experience of Indigenous Law students

They also reflected on the importance and strength they gain from being in law programs

“Entering and conquering in spaces where my ancestors were absent.”

“..... school includes aboriginal law (Canadian law that pertains to Indigenous people) in many of their courses. I was on a committee to determine how (the law school program) would respond to TRC #28 at the school. We implemented a mandatory upper year Indigenous law course. In these courses Indigenous law (our own law) will be taught along side Canadian law. The vote to approve the course was unanimous.”

When asked about feeling welcome on campus and within their programs, students had a great deal to say.

“Some of the time it feels like my school is putting in the work for reconciliation. Other times it feels like we are an after thought to be considered or consulted. Some legal issues are super contentious and some classmates verge on racism when discussing Indigenous people and the law. This usually isn't intentional - however their misinformation has led to frustration and confrontations.”

“Aboriginal inclusion seems only to be for public relations”

“Efforts have been made on campus as well as within my school of study to incorporate, welcome, and encourage Aboriginal people and identity.”

## Health

Nearly half of the Indigenous students in health, nursing and medicine programs said intercultural understanding is well represented in their field of study, but almost 30 per cent felt it still did not have sufficient representation.<sup>2</sup>

Cultural protocols were less well represented in their classes, as nearly 40 per cent report this was rarely, if at all, represented. Nearly 40 per cent of the students in health programs reported that cultural protocols, the legacy of colonialism and residential schools were represented in their education. Over 40 per cent state that the history of residential schools requires more time in their education, as they felt this was rarely or not at all represented (Figure 8).

“..... has definitely made strides with making Indigenous students feel welcome on campus. However, the school culture, whether it be engagements with professors, (but primarily) support staff/Teaching Assistants or otherwise, has yet to follow. There's a large disconnect between what the Administration says and what the Professors/Teaching Assistants do.”

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2 There was an insufficient number of students enrolled in programs designed for Indigenous learners to report the results and preserve their anonymity. But there was a sufficient number of students in all medicine, nursing and health programs combined to report on the survey results.

## Health Majors (including medicine, nursing and other health fields)

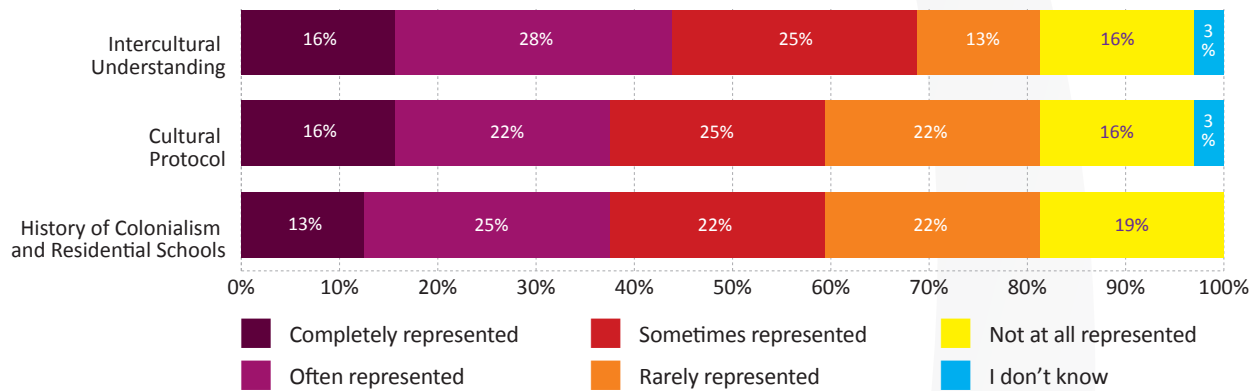


Figure 8: Classroom experience of Indigenous Students in health

Health Majors identified program shortcomings:

“Despite continuous requests by myself and other Indigenous students, our program still doesn’t make cultural competency training mandatory for our students”.

Some students said that Indigenous health studies had become a part of their coursework, showing some programs have introduced these materials.

### All Post-Secondary Health Majors

There is a notable difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous programs when it comes to the teaching of Indigenous ways of knowing, Indigenous teaching methods, history of Indigenous peoples, colonialism and Indian residential schools, intercultural understanding and recognition of cultural protocols. The break down is represented in Figures 9,10 and 11.

## All Health Majors Responses in All Post-Secondary Spaces

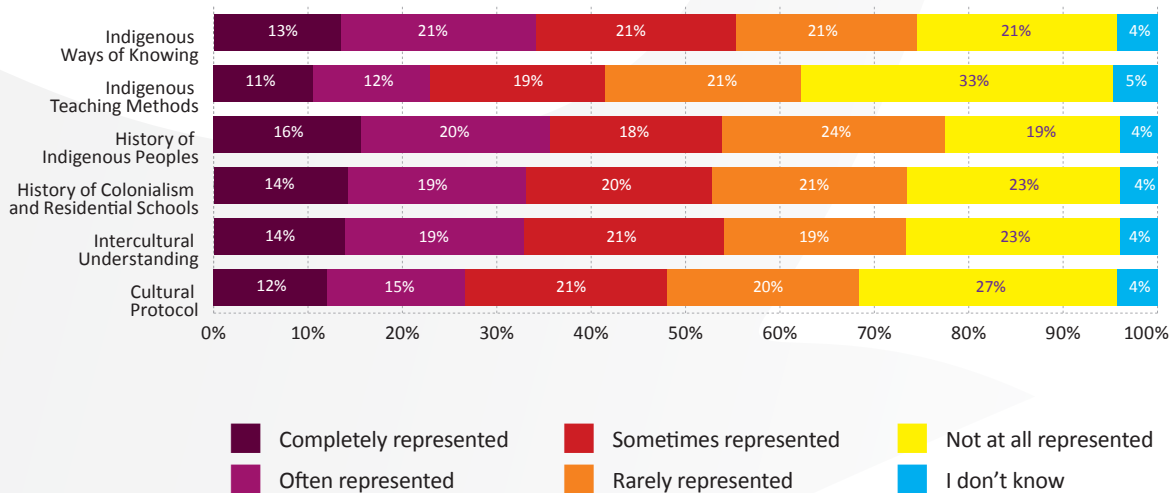


Figure 9: Experience of All Health Majors

Students who were enrolled in programs and settings specifically for Indigenous learners reported greater representation of all the topics we inquired about. Students felt that Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching methods and the history of their people and colonialism were well represented. They found intercultural understanding and recognition of cultural protocol had been often or completely represented.

When the experiences of students attending non-Indigenous post-secondary spaces were examined (Figure 10), we found their reflections were significantly different than those attending Indigenous settings and programs.

### Experience of Students in Post-Secondary Settings/Programs Specifically for Indigenous Learners

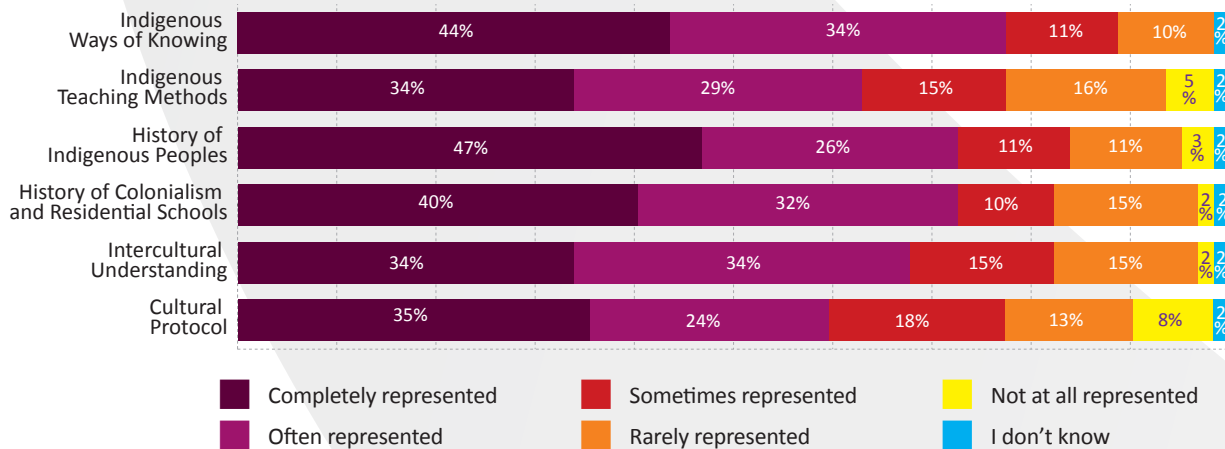


Figure 10: Programs specific to Indigenous Learners

More than half found that the topics, such as Indigenous teaching methods and recognition of cultural protocol were rarely or never represented. About half of the respondents said Indigenous ways of knowing, history of Indigenous peoples, legacy of residential schools, and intercultural understanding were not well represented. Less than 10 per cent of respondents stated that these criteria were completely represented in their classrooms.

*“The Indigenous content was relevant in the small program I took my studies through but on the main campus it was non-existent.”*

When it came to Indigenous course content, we heard that Indigenous post-secondary settings were doing better than non-Indigenous post-secondary settings.

*“That my experience with [Indigenous specific programs] was the best post-secondary education that I got. That they ensured the best way to help and guide all the new teachers as they begin their own path in education”.*

*“It’s been a great experience, almost done school. Being pregnant with my first child, I’m forever grateful for having a [university specifically for Indigenous learners] that teaches many people about things you don’t normally learn in high school or elementary that are based off of Indigenous issues, culture, and history.”*

## Students in Non-Indigenous Post-Secondary Programs

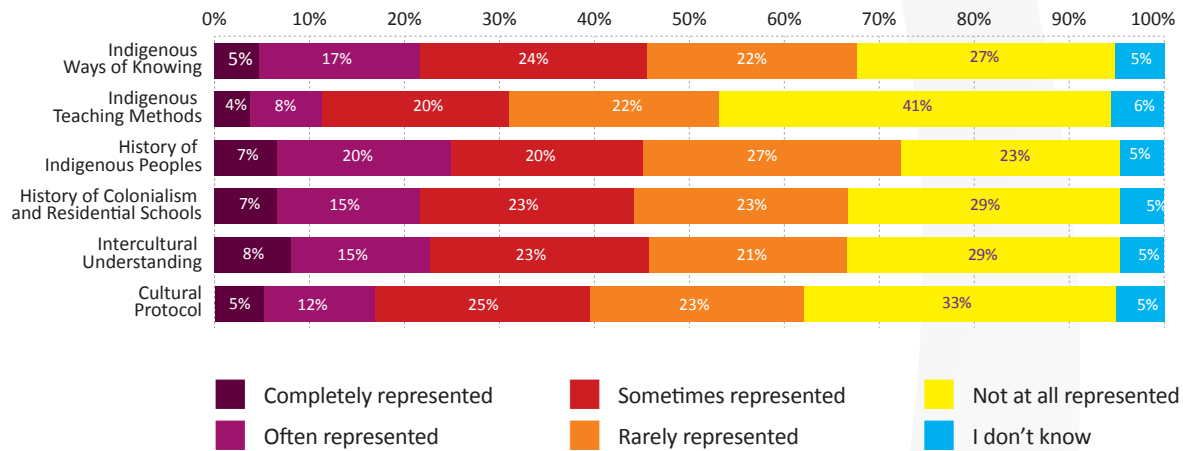


Figure 11: Classroom experience of all respondents who are not in programs or institutions for Indigenous learners

### INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES FOR CREDIT

Indigenous students were evenly split in their awareness of Indigenous language classes they could access at their post-secondary settings. A total of 36 per cent of students said they could access an Indigenous language class for credit, while 36 per cent of students said they could not. Another 27 per cent were not aware if their post-secondary setting offered an Indigenous language for credit (Figure 12). Cree, Ojibwe, Blackfoot, and Mohawk were the most common languages offered. Inuktitut and Michif were available to some students, while others noted the lack of access to the language of their people.

For those students learning an Indigenous language, the impacts are deeply personal and valuable:

“I am truly enjoying learning about my own culture and traditions, which has been a vital missing component in my life. My language is like a key that unlocks the door to my completeness, which seemed like a missing puzzle piece suddenly found that I felt was missing but not known was missing.”

“I felt better after I finished the first year of the Bachelors of Arts in Cree. My late parents passed away and I didn’t hear the language for a couple of years but when I went back to school, I heard the Cree language and it was such an amazing feeling and experience.”

### Prevalence of Indigenous Language Availability

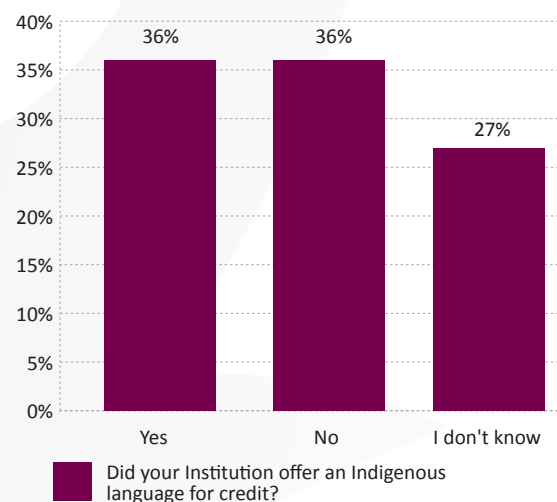


Figure 12: Prevalence of Indigenous Language Availability



## LIFE ON CAMPUS

### RACISM, ISOLATION AND MARGINALIZATION

While the majority of Indigenous students did not encounter these problems in their post-secondary programs, 45 per cent said they had experienced racism, a sense of isolation, or marginalization. This reinforces the need for training, content, and a focus on issues contributing to post-secondary success, such as the presence of Indigenous student centres, cultural supports, language classes.

#### How Welcome Did You Feel On Campus?

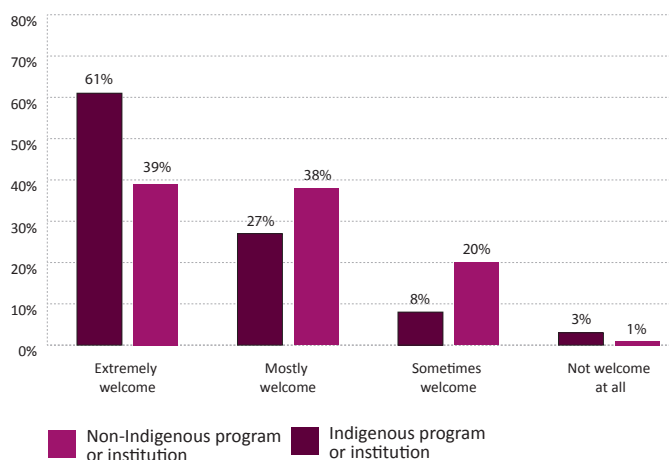


Figure 13: Feeling Welcome On Campus

Survey participants provided valuable insight on the factors that made them feel welcome in a post-secondary setting. Students who attended post-secondary settings for Indigenous learners reported feeling welcome because of the culturally specific nature of their studies. In programs tailored for Indigenous learners, students spoke of the power of these programs:

“The... program was one that helped to awaken my spirit, it brought awareness to all four areas of my life emotionally, mental, physical and spiritual and bonded my connection to this earth. I found a sense of belonging something I have been searching for.”

“The program I am currently enrolled in is [for Indigenous students at a non-Indigenous university], and the university has not only taken into consideration my cultural background by implementing this program but has ensured the success of the program by giving the program even more space within the College of Education.”

Students in non-Indigenous settings said initiatives to include their culture played an important role in making them feel welcome on campus.

“They incorporated a lot of aboriginal culture within our school. We have the TRC on our campus, we do a march every year, and we announce what territory we are on during speeches/presentations.”

Students repeatedly said they were most comfortable while in Indigenous student centres and when part of program-specific Indigenous groups and spaces (e.g. Indigenous nursing students club, Indigenous engineering student lounge, etc.). Overwhelmingly, students indicated that resources, such as Indigenous support services, designated facilities for Indigenous students and opportunities to observe cultural practices were instrumental in feeling welcome on campus.

“My school has a lodge where we can come and participate in activities and enjoy events thrown by the lodge. I can also go and study there for some quiet time.”

“There are many aboriginal supports in my school as well as specific aboriginal events that are hosted at the school for aboriginal students such as graduation ceremonies and hosting of the witness blanket. Also, there are luncheons held in the aboriginal room monthly and added luncheons for holidays such as turkey dinner on Thanksgiving and Christmas.”

This indicates that students who have access to Indigenous cultural activities and resources made connections and a welcoming environment.

In addition, numerous students said caring friends, faculty and staff were instrumental to their feeling welcome on campus. While this is true for non-Indigenous students as well, the challenge of finding peers and staff who valued the students’ cultural understanding, history and worldview was pronounced for Indigenous students.

“I was most comfortable expressing [my Indigenous identity] in classes where I knew I had allies and the teachers were not going to push back immediately on what I said.”

While few students felt completely unwelcomed in their post-secondary setting, others had mixed feelings. Students described feeling socially isolated and having trouble finding connections.

“We (myself and children) came into the community without knowing anyone/anything.”

Some students described the burden of being one of the few Indigenous people in their program and having to represent all Indigenous peoples and be responsible for educating their peers and instructors. The emotional labour these students carry must be recognized. In addition to the usual stresses that any post-secondary student faces, it wears on Indigenous students to have to correct faculty members, represent all Indigenous voices and share their lived experiences. It diminishes their sense of feeling welcome in their schools. Indigenous students described the burden of facilitating cross-cultural understanding and defending Indigenous worldviews as a responsibility they should not have to carry.

“I feel that overall I was treated like all other students, unless it was revealed during class discussions that I am Indigenous (First Nations). Then professors often did not handle this well during discussions of Indigenous content because I either became singled out and would be expected to speak on my personal experiences and share these with the class, or I would have to challenge what the professor was sharing because they did not always share correct information. It was clear that there was often little to no consultation with an [Indigenous] person who could help professors adjust their curriculum to better share information about Indigenous people or that profs had no experience teaching Indigenous students on Indigenous topics. A lot more work needs to be done so that students can feel comfortable, especially in the classroom setting”.



“Sometimes in the classroom (being the only indigenous person in the room) having the instructors turn to me to speak to anything slightly related to Indigenous cultures or First Nations experiences. Had I not had the foundation and supports I had, I may have felt overwhelmed and inclined to withdraw.”

While many students described their classrooms as places they felt welcome and comfortable, they also talked about the challenge of having to “walk in two worlds”.<sup>3</sup>

“What made me feel uncomfortable throughout my classes: in my history courses, learning about Indigenous-based history from non-Indigenous professors (and from a Westernized approach), as well losing some marks of various assignments due to disagreeing with some aspects of the assignment requests (linear/colonized/black and white thinking about assignments, opposed to Indigenous ways of knowing/spirit/connection). Lastly, what made me feel uncomfortable was, again in my history courses, visiting sacred sites without adhering to proper cultural protocol.”

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3 Walking in Two Worlds. Achieving Balance Walking In Two Worlds: Culture and Education in the 21st Century.

[www.mfnerc.org/wp-content/uploads2012/03/Registration-Booklet.pdf](http://www.mfnerc.org/wp-content/uploads2012/03/Registration-Booklet.pdf)



Other students felt that their contributions were not valued as highly as those of their peers.

“I feel like sometimes professors do not hold my opinions to the same value as others.”

Students described the lack of awareness of their identity as frustrating:

“There is a lot of mis-understanding as to who the Métis are. Entering spaces both Settler and Indigenous without this understanding can be unwelcoming or frustrating.”

“[I’m] not [comfortable] anywhere. Again, I’m not First Nations and there is a lot of assumption that only First Nations attend university. There is no mention of Métis or Inuit.”

This sentiment was shared by multiple Métis respondents.

Frequently, students felt least comfortable identifying as an Indigenous person when they were in class.

“That it’s not easy. My experience has been okay. But there is always an undercurrent of racism.... I’m just another statistical injun who tried but didn’t quite make it or when I pass I’m a great example to my brood... I am a human being, original and unique, just like everybody else. Implement a change in the general public’s perception of the ‘indian’.”

“I found a lot of my peers were resentful towards Indigenous students because they felt the Indigenous students were getting special treatment. As a result, the Indigenous students were not as welcome.”

Indigenous students were clear that they needed champions and allies who are knowledgeable and informed, both within their classrooms and across the university system. They needed these champions and allies to stand with them when they faced with barriers to inclusion. Where it exists, post-secondary settings must address the racism that contributes to the sense of isolation and marginalization Indigenous students feel.

“There aren’t always safe spaces within the university, other than Indigenous Student Centres, that are welcoming to Indigenous students. Racism and violence still very much exist so it is sometimes hard to move throughout the University and not experience those things, from professors, other students, administration etc.”

Sadly, students reported they also experienced racism, isolation and marginalization in the broader community, outside their post-secondary environment.

“I’ve heard about racism in the town my school was in, so I was not too confident when I was in the grocery store or the mall. I didn’t want to confront anyone who might be racist and confront me, so I kept my distance from people [and avoided] being out for long periods of time.”

When students feel a lack of cultural safety in post-secondary spaces, post-secondary settings must take a proactive leadership role to address situations, so students see they are a valued and welcome part of the post-secondary environment.

### EMOTIONAL LABOUR

Many Indigenous students are caught up in a new phase of truth telling.<sup>4</sup> They are in many ways, cultural elders in training. It is important to take time to consider what students call the emotional labour involved in this.

“My experience in post-secondary has shown me that there are still things that need to be done in terms of reconciliation. Indigenous languages have not been offered by my university in years and are not taken to the same language integrity as Indo-European languages. People I know have been caught in situations where they have been discriminated against by professors or have been given responsibility of being the “indigenous point of view” in course material.”

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4 Truth Telling was the work of the TRC look at key terms, (Appendix 3) for definition.



“The primary healthcare professional program I completed my training at did little to support [its] Indigenous students and even less to train [its] non-Indigenous students in cultural competency. Many instructors relied on Indigenous students to teach Indigenous content. The utter lack of attention or even awareness of the TRC Calls to Action<sup>5</sup> was embarrassing. It took our Indigenous students going beyond our director to get a dialogue started for supporting our Indigenous students and hopefully mandatory cultural competency training for all our students. I felt the overall message from my experience at the post-secondary institution I attended for five years was that Indigenous cultural safety training, Indigenous students and Indigenous people who we would be serving in the future were not a priority.”

Many students felt pressured to acknowledge they had a role in implementing the TRC's Calls to Action. In some cases, students felt they did not have an option to participate, it was something that the post-secondary space expected of them.

“Listen to them and try to implement them in a meaningful way—it is not up to Indigenous people to implement the Calls to Action—but include our voices and representation if we want to be part of it”.

Students felt that post-secondary settings expected them to bear some responsibility for the transformation of the post-secondary system, as part of healing and reconciliation.

“There needs to be an understanding of why Our First People are struggling in school, work and everyday life. We need a positive, loving, respectful relationship with all people in Canada”

“There were not proper steps of considerations in bringing Truth and Reconciliation to the students, a full course load is a challenge and adding more stress and pain with no real support system at proper times was a struggle”.

This is not meant to diminish the importance of the Calls to Action, a fact that one student powerfully noted.

“We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Truth and Reconciliation is a must, especially for non-indigenous people. There needs to be an understanding of why Our First People are struggling in school, work and everyday life. We need a positive, loving, respectful relationship with all people in Canada”.

Students were very clear that the Calls to Action are just that, a call for change through action. They repeatedly referred to the importance of reconciliation, the changes they foresee and the need for post-secondary settings to take a greater role in their implementation.

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5 TRC refers to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The launch of the TRC was part of the Indian Residential School Settlement.

“Action speaks louder than words. Don’t say that change is coming and take steps back.”

Students spoke directly to the emotional labour that comes from participating in course work that can be triggering for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and staff. They highlighted the stress and feelings of shame, anger and pain.

There is a need to consider the emotional labour involved in talking about Indigenous history and experiences and ensure that courses with this content also include contact information for services and supports for any and all students who feel a need to talk.

“There is still work to be done as some students feel that learning about Indigenous history with settlers is not important. There are some that also support the efforts being made. One comment/question that resurfaces is “why wasn’t I taught this in elementary and secondary level?” I have seen many Settler Descendants experiencing shame of how their ancestors treated Indigenous people.”

“There were not proper steps of consideration in bringing Truth and Reconciliation to the students, a full course load is a challenge and adding more stress and pain with no real support systems at proper times were a struggle.”

## MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT NEEDS

Indigenous students needed support, guidance and role-models to support them as they pursue their dreams in post-secondary spaces. They said they felt the absence of Indigenous educators in the classroom.

*“WE NEED MORE INDIGENOUS ROLE MODELS IN THE CLASSROOM. We are not being set up for success if we don’t see ourselves being reflected in these positions of success and respect”.*

Students with mentors said it encouraged them to help other Indigenous students.

*“I had such a wonderful experience and hope to get my post bac. I am also helping my son get his education through...College. I hope to be a role model for many more Indigenous people to work for their dreams through education”.*

In addition to role-models and mentors, students needed proactive support and outreach to help them navigate their route to academic success, health and well-being. Indigenous Students said Indigenous staff at Indigenous student service programs were overworked and that this has an impact when they are navigating areas of need and struggle.

*“Better experienced staff in the Aboriginal Centre Programs that are more hands on and check on their students. With the high rate of drop outs and suicides. Every Indigenous student should be given an aboriginal advisor that checks in. It’s not culturally historic for aboriginal men to seek out help that’s why follow through by advisors a must. The [negative] experience at the [Indigenous student centre at my school] is one of the main reasons I felt unsupported and dropped out after my first year”.*

“As a First Nations student sitting on the Aboriginal Student Council I found that many Aboriginal students were apprehensive about accessing programs and functions. There was an Indigenous Liaison worker who had an office but nowhere for Aboriginal students to go. We had to set up a different space (booking out different classrooms throughout the college) on a weekly basis where Aboriginal students could meet. It is not the same as having a central, stable space. The college had a policy against smudging which creates a cultural insensitivity and missed opportunities for healing/cleansing. Much work needs to be done still”.

“I would only add that there should be a system that is able to group a few aboriginal people from the same communities to attend school together. Most are very family orientated and need that support while being away. Most FN people don't pursue their dreams and goals because of that aspect. It would be really cool to see people sincerely show up to these communities to hype and motivate these individuals.”

It appears that the lack of instructional staff and the limited resources tied to Indigenous student services has created a significant gap in natural mentors and on-campus resources that provide the critical kinds of connections students needed. What is concerning is the lack of mentorship and support services left students without critical resources tied to academic, personal and professional life skill development. The combination of Indigenous instructional staff, mentors and resource staff provided a context for students that post-secondary settings often miss, a visible representation that others have struggled in the same way current Indigenous students do and they have succeeded. Students may be more willing to seek assistance, ask questions and take risks tied to their own development knowing that there are Indigenous staff and support people providing a range of resources they can relate and connect with.

## SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

A number of initiatives have been launched within post-secondary education since the TRC's Calls to Action. But it is hard to be definitive about the Calls' impact, as there is no baseline and this is Indspire's first student survey on the topic.

It is clear, however, that change is happening. But more is needed if Indigenous students are to feel reconciliation is real in their post-secondary world.

“There is still a lot to do. However, compared to my K-12 experience we are moving in the right direction!”

“It is starting to evolve and many of the faculty are putting in the effort to recognize that we are on native land. We also are being taught the differences in culture between each nation and how it impacts health and education. There is a shift upwards and we are being recognized as a people and not as a minority but as the first people of this land”.

“With a learning disability i experienced a lot of help from post-secondary with my learning in school.”

Students reported that progress in Indigenous post-secondary settings and programs appears to be further along than in non-Indigenous ones. But non-Indigenous post-secondary settings are having an impact as well.

“... I have been welcomed and respectfully educated by my college. I have never felt discriminated while [attending] my college. We have an Indigenous Resource Centre that welcomes all. This place provided me with knowledge about my people ..... as well as support as my heart broke learning about my people and the suffering..... I have struggled academically, financially and personally and they have been there to guide me the entire time”.

“I would let them know that the [Program for Indigenous students] was one that helped to awaken my spirit, it brought awareness to all four areas of my life. Emotionally, mental, physical and spiritual and bonded my connection to this earth. I found a sense of belonging to something I have been searching for”.

Students felt there is still work to be done. Some recommended it be focused on the disciplines cited in the TRC Calls to Action, such as law and medicine, where students felt there is a need for significant improvement.

“There has been a lot of work done, but that work is fractional [among institutions]. There are lots of areas that need to focus on i.e. areas of education where First Nation students have typically been omitted from, law and medicine etc.”.

Students said they wanted to see a focus on the Calls to Action that were close to their hearts. They want more language programs because they have benefited from them in their post-secondary settings.



“The TRC’s Calls to Action ask for implementation of Indigenous languages at post-secondary education, and while it is offered in the school I am attending, I feel that Indigenous students are not obtaining enough language skills other than minor exposure to the sounds of the language. The language is often times taught in a manner that is based on memorization versus immersive style. As a result, I believe that it limits the learning capacity of Indigenous student’s ability to learn more of the language”.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations come from the hope and the belief that we can do better to realize the TRC’s Calls to Action and support Indigenous students in post-secondary spaces. Indigenous students want the post-secondary world to do the work needed to let them see these spaces as their spaces. Each support and initiative is valuable, but there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure we see the day when educational settings are filled with Indigenous people and perspectives and their input is a recognized and valued asset to the academy. To do that work, post-secondary settings must be properly resourced.

Rather than map out a list of key recommendations tied to each of the areas above, Indspire merged the feedback it received from Indigenous post-secondary students into three critical recommendations.

1. More funding for Indigenous students and Indigenous campus resources:
  - a) Indspire recommends that increased and sustainable funding be provided for the staffing and provision of Indigenous student services, so the postsecondary educational system can benefit all Indigenous students.
  - b) Indspire recommends that increased and sustainable funding for Indigenous students be committed by the Government of Canada in Budget 2019.

- c) To expand access and foster greater achievement in post-secondary education and equip Indigenous people to succeed in the workforce, investments in Indigenous-led organizations must continue and expand over the longer-term.
- d) Indigenous students have consistently said Indspire is a beacon of hope, helping them realize their educational goals. Indspire will continue to be a leader in providing an educational, cultural, and socio-economic support system for Indigenous learners.

2. The ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the TRC Calls to Action in post-secondary spaces.

The TRC’s Calls continually refer to the need for monitoring, evaluation and annual reporting. Indspire sees the need for an ongoing conversation about such monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the experience of Indigenous students in post-secondary settings. Students want their language programs expanded, funding that meets their needs and educators that are trained and informed about Indigenous realities. They want to see change. Someone must be actively engaged with students and post-secondary settings, asking the questions that will support ongoing evaluation and reporting of that change.

3. The strengthening of Indigenous Culture, Identity and Belonging through mentorship on campus and beyond.

While more funding is required if Indigenous students are to thrive and be successful in post-secondary settings, the next priority is to meet the cultural needs that strengthen their sense of self and support their community connections during their time in post-secondary.



## APPENDIX 1: Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

For more than a century, over 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children attended Indian Residential Schools in Canada, affecting successive generations of communities and families. While attending these schools, children were often banned from speaking their languages, denied access to their families and their cultural and spiritual practices. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted that at the time of their report there were an estimated 80,000 former students of Indian Residential Schools still living. The impact of the schools has contributed to the social, health and educational barriers faced by Indigenous communities to the present time.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was part of a court-ordered settlement.<sup>6</sup> Its mandate is detailed in Schedule “N” of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.<sup>7</sup>

The TRC issued 94 Calls to Action in June 2015 to address the legacy of Indian Residential Schools. Among the Calls to Action is a demand for the repudiation of the “doctrine of discovery” that gave European colonizers the right to claim discovered lands as their own, as well as a request to implement the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>8</sup>

The TRC’s seven-volume final report was released in December 2015 and contained detailed accounts of the physical and sexual abuse of former students of Indian Residential Schools, as well as the lasting impacts on families and communities.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada defined the task of reconciliation in *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*:

“Ultimately, the Commission’s focus on truth determination was intended to lay the foundation for the important question of reconciliation. Now that we know about residential schools and their legacy, what do we do about it? Getting to the truth was hard but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered”.<sup>9</sup>

6 Mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, see SCHEDULE “N” Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE\\_N\\_EN.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE_N_EN.pdf)

7 [http://trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE\\_N\\_EN.pdf](http://trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE_N_EN.pdf)

8 [http://trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE\\_N\\_EN.pdf](http://trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE_N_EN.pdf)

9 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, (2015), Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication. (pg. vi) [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring\\_the\\_Truth\\_Reconciling\\_for\\_the\\_Future\\_July\\_23\\_2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)

## APPENDIX 2: Survey Details

The survey Indspire shared, asked Building Brighter Futures BBF students to reflect on their experiences during their post-secondary studies and whether any progress had been made on implementing the Calls to Action.<sup>10</sup> Some questions allowed for straight forward responses from students: for example, students were asked if their post-secondary setting offered any Indigenous language courses for credit. Other questions allowed students to give more descriptive illustrations of their experiences. Survey participants were informed their feedback would be part of an Indspire report that would be shared with decision-makers, leaders in public policy, academic settings and other organizations.

Indspire received responses from 290 of the students canvassed, a statistically valid response rate of 15 per cent.

The survey was narrow in its scope, seeking the students' post-TRC perspectives. A total of 22 questions were asked about the specifics of their personal history:

- where they lived when not attending post-secondary
- their area of study
- their attendance at an Indigenous or non-Indigenous post-secondary program
- their year of study in their diploma/ degree program
- the availability of credit based Indigenous language courses and

- their insight on the implementation of the Calls to Action in their post-secondary setting
- The findings identified areas of success and places for improvement, as well as highlighting the very personal impacts on Indigenous students of not achieving the Calls to Action. We focused their feedback into the following key areas:
  - educational funding
  - language, culture and a place on campus (Culture, Identity and Belonging)
  - professional development for post-secondary staff
  - Indigenous content
  - racism, isolation and marginalization
  - emotional labour
  - mentorship and supports and
  - successful practices

As the report documents, Indigenous students provided rich narratives, full of insights and expectations tied to the urgency and need for post-secondary settings to implement the Calls to Action.

Throughout this report, all efforts have been made to protect students' anonymity. When the numbers or responses in a category were too low, we chose to fold them into a broader category to assure the students' identities are protected.

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and therefore may not always equal 100 per cent.

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<sup>10</sup> Indspire used a randomized sample to inform this report. The following variables were used to extract potential survey respondents; Indigenous student in receipt of Indspire bursary or scholarship funding who had attended a post-secondary setting in the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 academic period, enrolled in a program noted in calls to action, education, social work, health, law, journalism, indigenous studies. From this group 2,000 individuals were selected to receive the survey. Participation in the survey was voluntary and no student received monetary remuneration for their participation in the survey.

### Student Profile

The respondents were representative of the recipient population. The Indigenous students identified as 69 per cent First Nations, 4 per cent Inuit, 26 per cent Métis. 73 per cent of the respondents identified as female (Figure 13).

36 per cent of respondents had lived almost all of their lives in their communities and 13 per cent spent many years in their communities. Twenty-four per cent had not lived in their home communities at all. Not surprisingly, nearly four out of ten Métis and two thirds of non-status First Nations had never lived in their community. Over half of Inuit and nearly four out of ten status First Nations had lived in their communities their entire lives. Only 9 per cent Inuit and 17 per cent First Nations had never lived in their communities (Figure 14).

### National Breakdown of Respondents

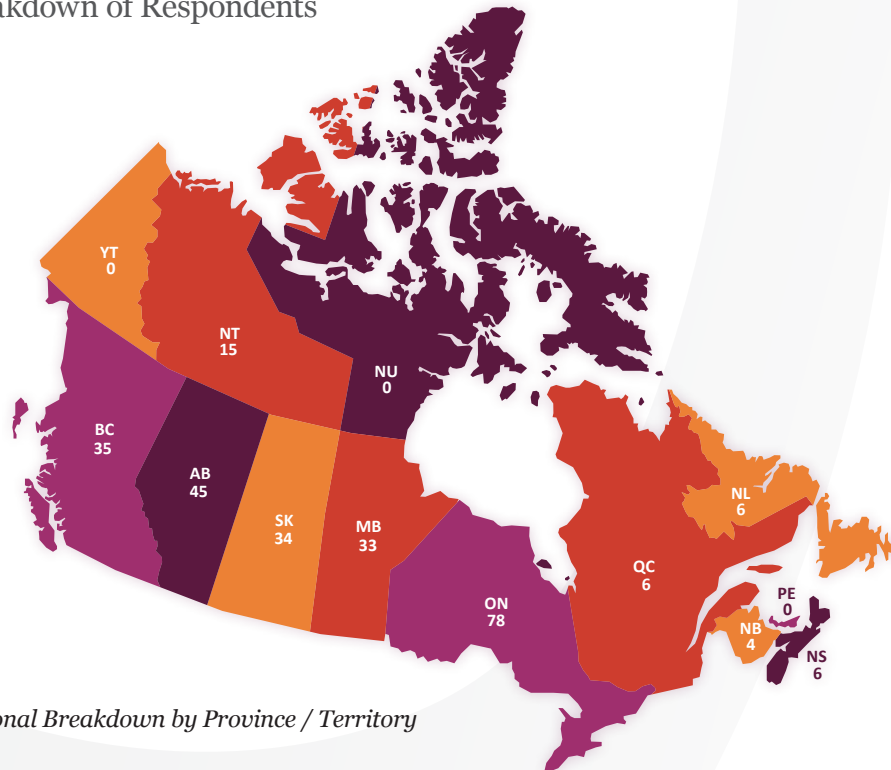


Figure 14: National Breakdown by Province / Territory

### Indigenous Identity of Survey Respondents

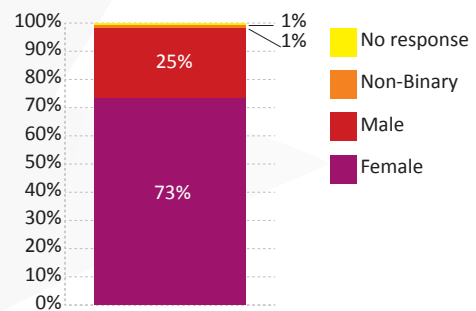
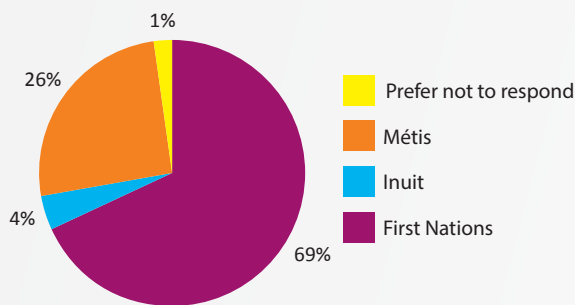


Figure 15: Indigenous Identity And Gender of Survey Respondents.

Recipients of Indspire’s Building Brighter Future scholarships and bursaries have increasingly studied in key areas of post-secondary education:

- 16 per cent of recipients were enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- 16 per cent in education
- 14 per cent in social work
- 13 per cent in social science and humanities and
- 10 per cent in business

Almost half the respondents were enrolled in an undergraduate program. Nearly a quarter were studying at the diploma level, with an additional 11 per cent completing a certificate program. Sixteen per cent were at the master’s or doctoral level.

Most respondents were enrolled in a university 71 per cent when they received their scholarship or bursary. One-quarter were enrolled in college, with the remaining studying in institutes and other types of training programs. Overall, 21 per cent of students were in a program or a setting specifically for Indigenous learners.

### Areas of Study

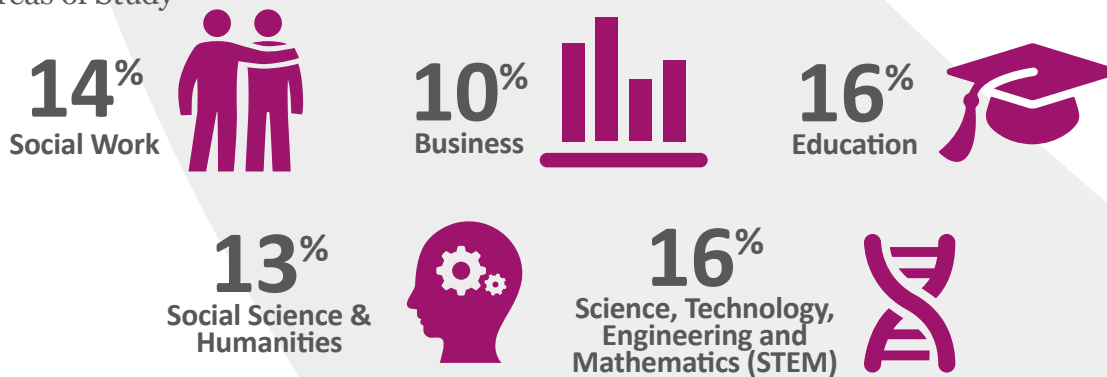


Figure 16: BBF Recipients Area of Study

### Where Have Indigenous Students Lived?

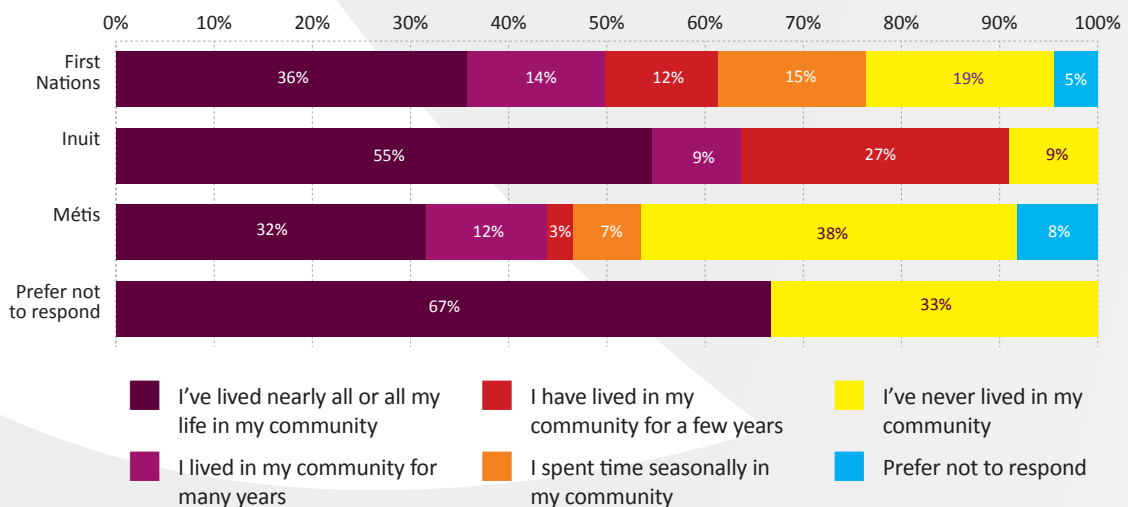


Figure 17: Where have Student Respondents Lived?

## APPENDIX 3: Key Terms

**Calls to Action** - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published 94 “*Calls to Action*” in its summary report in June before 2015, urging all levels of government to come together to change policies and programs in order to repair the legacy and harm caused by residential schools and move forward with reconciliation.<sup>11</sup>

**Colonization** - ‘Colonization’ describes the gradual loss of Indigenous peoples’ power to European settlers who began playing a greater role in the community, social, political and family life of Indigenous peoples. Through the process of colonization, Indigenous peoples have been removed from their traditional lands and forced to abandon cultural practices and traditions by Europeans who imposed their own laws, rules and customs. Indigenous peoples who did not take on the ways or cultural practices of Europeans were punished.

### Emotional Labour

A great deal has been written about emotional labour. For the purpose of this report, emotional labour references the emotional toll paid by an Indigenous person when placed in the position of being viewed or perceived as the Indigenous expert or continually asked to provide the Indigenous context as post-secondary spaces and engage in activities tied to reconciliation.

**First Nations** - A description of the first peoples of Canada that came into common usage as a result of political advocacy for Aboriginal rights in Canada. The term, recognized under the federal *Indian Act*, does not include Inuit and Métis peoples. It is considered a more respectful alternative to the terms ‘Indian’ or ‘Native’.

**Historic Trauma** - Refers to the harm that was done to Indigenous individuals, cultures and Indigenous communities by the Indian Residential School System (IRSS), forced relocation from traditional lands, loss of language and culture, the child welfare scoop, racism and ongoing underfunding of supports and services.

Like the families they left behind, the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of residential school survivors may continue to feel the impact on family members who attended one of the more than 100 residential schools across Canada, often for many generations.

Historic trauma can take many forms:

- emotional, mental and physical pain
- distrust and feelings of not being good enough
- ongoing intergenerational physical, emotional, sexual abuse
- the need to hide your identity and cultural background from outsiders to your community
- being ashamed or afraid that if people know who you are they will judge you or treat you differently

The trauma gets passed on from generation to generation in ways that Aboriginal peoples may not even be aware of or able to talk about.<sup>12</sup>

11 [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

12 Robertson, Lloyd Hawkeye (2006). “The Residential School Experience: Syndrome of Historic Trauma”. Pimatiswin, 4.1.

**Identity** - The sense of belonging, connection and awareness that some Indigenous people say comes from their place in their families, clans, communities and nation/people. An Indigenous person can develop a positive sense of self and identity when they have a strong connection to their traditions, community and culture.

**Indigenous Languages** - Many Indigenous languages are spoken in Canada; Statistics Canada says there are about 60 languages in 12 language families. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), there are approximately 90 languages.<sup>13</sup> UNESCO does not consider any Indigenous language in Canada to be safe.<sup>14</sup>

**Indigenous Student Services** - These include a range of social, cultural, academic, and resources for basic needs provided to students in post-secondary settings. They are often a home away from home, a place that anchors, supports and provide a sense of culture, identity and belonging to Indigenous students in post-secondary spaces.

**Indian Residential Schools** date back to the 1870's in Canada. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. These government funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Indigenous children. During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were placed in the schools often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. While there are an estimated 80,000 former students living today, the ongoing impact of residential schools has been felt throughout generations and has contributed to social problems that continue to exist. On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister, on behalf of Canada, delivered a formal apology in the House of Commons to former students, their families, and communities for Canada's role in the operation of the Residential Schools.<sup>15 16 17</sup>

**The Indian Residential Schools Settlement (IRSSA)** was signed on May 8, 2006. The parties to the settlement included: Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Representatives, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the United Church of Canada and Roman Catholic Church entities.

Between December 2006 and January 2007, nine courts from across Canada certified the class actions and approved the terms of settlement as being fair, reasonable, and in the best interests of the Class Members.

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13 Diversity of Indigenous Languages in Canada, (2017). Canadian Heritage [https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TableauFIP\\_EN.pdf](https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TableauFIP_EN.pdf)

14 Norris, Mary Jane Aboriginal Languages in Canada: Trends and Perspectives on Maintenance and Revitalization, (2006) In Volume 3: Moving Forward, Making a Difference. Thompson Educational Publishing (2013).

15 <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=4>

16 <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/a-long-awaited-apology-for-residential-schools> (video link),

17 [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/rqpi\\_apo\\_pdf\\_1322167347706\\_eng.pdf](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/rqpi_apo_pdf_1322167347706_eng.pdf) (Canada's Official Statement of Apology)

The IRSSA is the largest class action settlement to date in Canadian history. It has five components: The Common Experience Payment; Independent Assessment Process; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Commemoration; and Health and Healing Services. Former students obtained individual compensation through the Common Experience Payment and the Individual Assessment Process.<sup>18 19</sup>

**Indigenous Content** - Within the framework of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, all levels of government were asked to consult with survivors, educators and Indigenous peoples on a mandatory curriculum that includes the pre and post-contact history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis, including colonialism and the legacy of the Indian residential school system and settlement.

**Intergenerational Survivor** - Many Indigenous people may not have personally attended a residential school, but have one or more of their family, extended family or community members that did. The impact of generations of children being taken away has an impact on the entire community and the families who live in that community. The impact can include the presence of a widespread deep sadness that no one talks about, unexplained bursts of anger or acts of violence that seem to happen for no reason. Even though the schools no longer exist, the hurt and harm they caused has not gone away. The size of the problem is enormous when you realize that in the early 1990's, an estimated 287,350 intergenerational survivors were living in Canada, both on and off reserve.<sup>20</sup>

**Inuit** - For more than four thousand years, the Inuit, a founding people of what is now Canada, have occupied the Arctic lands and waters in the Mackenzie Delta, the Labrador and Hudson's Bay coasts and the islands of the high Arctic. Most Inuit live in 53 communities in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 35 per cent of Canada's landmass and 50 per cent of its coastline.<sup>21</sup>

**Legacy Issues** - The closing of the Indian Residential Schools did not bring an end to the story of residential schools. The lingering impact can be seen in lower levels of education, higher levels of poverty, lower quality of life, shorter life spans and overall poorer physical, mental and psychological health for Indigenous people. These legacy issues also play out in the over representation of Indigenous people in the child welfare and justice systems, in ongoing and ineffective policies of government tied to the *Indian Act*, and unresolved treaty negotiations and land claims.

Legacy issues are not just tied to the history of the residential schools. They are tied to Indigenous policies of the federal government over the last 150 years. The beliefs and attitudes that were used to justify the creation of residential schools are not things of the past: they continue in official Indigenous policy today. These policies continue to shape the programs, services and thinking of the majority of people living in Canada and their governments.

Reconciliation will require more than apologies. It requires an understanding of the ways the legacy of residential schools continue to play out in the lives of Indigenous people and the steps needed to change policies and approaches that allow the legacy of hurt and pain to continue.<sup>22</sup>

18 <http://www.afn.ca/policy-sectors/indian-residential-schools/>

19 <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/>

20 [http://wherearethekids.ca/watc\\_blackboard/intergenerational-survivors/](http://wherearethekids.ca/watc_blackboard/intergenerational-survivors/)

21 <https://www.itk.ca/national-voice-for-communities-in-the-canadian-arctic/>

22 [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring\\_the\\_Truth\\_Reconciling\\_for\\_the\\_Future\\_July\\_23\\_2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf) (pg103-104)

**Marginalization** - This is the process that pushes individuals or groups to the edges of society. While on the margins, people are often excluded from access to opportunities and resources that are readily available to others in society. People who are marginalized see many of their rights denied to them and experience discrimination, bias and inequality. This social marginalization leaves individuals or groups at risk and open to being blamed for their life circumstances simply because of who they are. Marginalization can be seen in the history and every day experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

**Métis** - means a person who self-identifies as Métis and is in possession of a Métis citizenship, membership, registration or enrolment card issued by:

1. one of the Métis Settlements in Alberta,
2. a provincial organization that is a member of the Métis National Council, which includes the Métis Nation British Columbia, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Métis Nation- Saskatchewan, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Métis Nation of Ontario;
3. an Indigenous group under a modern land claims agreement; or
4. a Métis organization that is recognized by the Government of Canada,

**Post-Secondary** - Statistics Canada defines postsecondary education as

- an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma (including 'centres de formation professionnelle')
- a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
- a university certificate or diploma below bachelor level or
- a university degree (bachelor's degree; university certificate or diploma above bachelor level; degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry; master's degree; earned doctorate).<sup>23</sup>

**Reconciliation** - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, defines reconciliation as "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country." This requires an awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, an atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-004-x/2010001/def/posteducation-educpost-eng.htm>

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring\\_the\\_Truth\\_Reconciling\\_for\\_the\\_Future\\_July\\_23\\_2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf) pg 6





