



University nuxethot'ine thaa?ehots'ì nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills

UnBQ Brief March 2023
Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada Standing Committee
Improving Graduation Rates and Successful Outcomes for Indigenous Students
Submitted by Sherri Chisan, ipkDoc, President

'Reconciliation invites us to illuminate the insidious intellectual infrastructure of imperialism and individualism.'

kitatamiskatinawaw edlarot'e *I bring you greetings from University nuxhelot'ine thaa?etos'ì nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills operating as University nuhelot'ine thaiyots'ì nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills (UnBQ). Located in Treaty Six Territory, we are the first Indigenous owned and governed educational centre in Canada. Despite the barriers we continue to encounter, we are living the vision of our ancestors. **Yet we continue to be chronically and profoundly underfunded.***

UnBQ is a schoolhouse on reserve *as promised in the Treaty, and as the agent of the Crown of Great Britain, the government of Canada is responsible for ensuring that we receive a proportionate share of the resources generated by our lands accounting for the recovery work ahead of us as we address the educational and other abuses our people have experienced in Indian Residential Schools an public provincial schools.*

Your department staff will tell you all of the reasons why UnBQ has not received the funding we need to provide the programs and services our Nations and Peoples deserve/ need/ require/ have not been supported – ‘post-secondary education is not a treaty right – that it is discretionary, not statutory funding.’ They will tell you how and why they have allocated the funding in such a way that we now receive less than half of what we did 30 years ago while costs have increased

exponentially. And they will make it sound rational. But that does not acknowledge what our ancestors have told us about Treaty or the way successive governments have denied and diminished and limited our rights. It appears that the priority is the protection of the Canadian state and privilege, and the presumed right that seems burned into the Canadian colonial psyche that the settlers are entitled to whatever they want and that Indigenous people are only entitled to starvation rations and funding and land.

You can either uphold the Treaty and the Honour of the Crown, or you can protect the colonial infrastructure, but you cannot do both. Until Canada is willing to change the thinking that supports the systems that continue to oppress Indigenous Peoples in their own lands, reconciliation will be an empty promise. Colonists seem not to understand the ways in which colonialism and supremacy manifest in attitudes and systems, so certain are they in their superiority and entitlement. Real change will only happen when Indigenous People are not the only ones expected to change. **How is the government going to fundamentally change?**

Our languages, our ceremonies, our people carry knowledge that is essential to the future of these lands. Our Indigenous post-secondary education centers are the sanctuaries and incubators of this knowledge. Many cultures seem to have forgotten their place in creation, seem to think more of themselves than they do of the Creation that supports life.

During Treaty ceremonies, our ancestors did not surrender our lands or our rights to continue to our own ways of teaching/ transferring knowledge. They did ensure that their future generations

would benefit from the presence of settlers by being able to access the education that the scribes enjoyed.

These Treaties are a commitment between the original Nations of these lands and the Queen of Great Britain who wished to gain access for her citizens – access to the depth of the plow to farm and feed themselves and access to timbers to build their homes. **The Governments of Canada and the Provinces are agents of the Crown responsible for meeting the Treaty Obligations of the Crown.**

Since the 1800s colonial governments have presumed to be responsible for our education, building Indian Residential Schools to ‘take the Indian out of the child.’ The horrors and tortures our children endured in these genocidal institutions, lingers through the generations. The TRC opened these wounds and we have been living with the trauma again. The search for Unmarked Burials has opened these wounds again, and we continue to live with the trauma. This is not just about the business of finding the unmarked burial sites. **It is the business of healing our people, and healing your people.**

We develop our programming to support the whole learner. Our people and our visitors need places to learn this history in a learning environment that embraces the context and the potential, that is grounded in ceremony and ancestral knowledge, that balances this with the knowledge that others have brought to our lands, that focuses on **honouring the Treaties as the foundation for our relationships in future generations.**

In 1970 when the government was preparing to close Blue Quills Indian Residential School and send the children to public provincial schools, the parents and grandparents occupied the school and said we will take over this school. After sitting in ceremony, sharing food, and listening to the people, an Elder addressed the assembly and asked how many had graduated from grade 12. No one, he went through the grades and there were very few young people who had achieved more than grade six. He said, **‘they have been responsible for our education for more than 100 years, surely we could not do any worse.’**

In the last 53 years, our people have grown this old Indian Residential School from an elementary/ high school, to a facility hosting post-secondary programs brokered from public post-secondary institutions. In late the 1990s we began developing and delivering our own programs, currently offering 25 credentials in 14 programs with 2 more pending. Since 1976 there have been almost 3,300 graduates (90% indigenous) in a diversity of programs. **I wonder if there is a public post-secondary institution operating at the same level of funding that can match this achievement? Yet they continue to receive disproportionate funding**

We are still undoing the damage done by Indian Residential Schools, public provincial schools and curricula. We have designed programs that support healing and learning simultaneously, we invite learners of all cultures to create a future based on the respect and honour that our ancestors envisioned when they made Treaty. **We need appropriate funding to continue to grow, to sustain the work we do, for ourselves and for the ones who have come to share our lands.**

We need to teach our children what we need them to know.

We need to teach our teachers what we need our children to know.

We need to teach the ones who teach our teachers what we need our children to know.

We need to teach your children.

We need to teach your teachers what we need to teach your children.

We need to teach the one who teach your teachers what we need your children to know.

Recommendations:

- Provide Treaty based funding to University nuxhelot'ine thaa?etos'į nistameyimakanak Blue Quills (UnBQ) directly from Treasury Board and calculated using the formula in the Medow Report. **UnBQ should be getting between \$11.1 and \$22.4 million annually.**
- Provide capital funding to UnBQ for new buildings and restoration of historic Indian Residential Schools. **Estimated at \$64.3 million and \$23 million respectively.**
- Provide annual capital operations and maintenance funding to UnBQ, for the historic and new buildings. **Estimated at \$2 million annually**
- Recalculate the Post-Secondary Partnership Funding administered by Indigenous Services Canada to ensure that all existing and emerging **Indigenous owned and governed Post-Secondary Education Centres are appropriately funded for administration, operations, and programming.**

- Organizations must provide a general description of themselves at the end of the brief.

University nuxhelot'ine thaa?ots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills is the first Indigenous owned and governed educational centre in Canada. **We are a schoolhouse on reserve.** We are now a full spectrum University, directly accountable to our Nations. We offer programming from Headstart and children's language immersion programs, to employment and academic readiness, certificates, diplomas, degrees, including Masters and Doctoral degrees. We are grounded in ceremony and ancestral knowledge. We welcome learners of all cultures. We provide professional development in cultural sensitivity to government, industry, not-for-profits, NGOs, business, municipalities, Universities, and schools, and host tours of the Indian Residential School led by survivors.