



Indigenous
Institutes
Consortium

Investing in the Success of Indigenous Learners

Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Improving Graduation Rates & Successful Outcomes for
Indigenous Students

Committee Hearings March 2023

Leaders in lifelong learning

Indigenous Institutes Consortium

The Indigenous Institutes Consortium (IIC) represents the collective and collaborative efforts of its seven Indigenous-owned and operated post-secondary education and training institutes members across Ontario. We work collaboratively to improve the outcomes of First Nation learners and strengthen our communities by providing high-quality post-secondary education and training to Indigenous learners, **some of whom may not otherwise have access to post-secondary education.**

Our dedication to Indigenous-controlled and governed post-secondary education and training is making a profound difference in the lives of Indigenous learners, and our communities. Our graduates are highly skilled and have the knowledge employers need. By accessing Indigenous post-secondary education and training that is grounded in Indigenous culture, language, and knowledge, Indigenous learners are contributing to strong local economies and robust communities.

The IIC was instrumental in the establishment of Ontario's *Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017* which is unique to Canada. This legislation recognizes the important role Indigenous Institutes play as a pillar of post-secondary education and the contribution Indigenous Institutes make to the outcomes of Indigenous learners in Ontario. In addition, this legislation is the mechanism whereby Indigenous Institutes can offer accredited certificates, diplomas and degrees.

The seven (7) member Indigenous post-secondary education and training Institutes include:

1. ANISHINABEK EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE
2. IOHAHI:IO AKWESASNE EDUCATION & TRAINING INSTITUTE
3. KENJGEWIN TEG
4. OGWEHOWEH SKILLS AND TRADES TRAINING CENTRE
5. OSHKI-PIMACHE-O-WIN: THE WENJACK EDUCATION INSTITUTE
6. SHINGWAUK TEACHING LODGE (SHINGWAUK KINOOMAAGE GAMIG)
7. SIX NATIONS POLYTECHNIC

These seven Indigenous Institutes serve First Nation learners who are remote, isolated, urban, northern, on-reserve, and off in **99 communities across Ontario servicing 173,225 people.**

"It is important for us to have Indigenous Institute post secondary education so people can learn what Indigenous people have gone through because it has been hidden for so long. A lot of people don't understand or even know the traumas Indigenous peoples have gone through. Things won't change if people aren't aware of the things that have happened, so it's important to have teachings and resources for people to learn who we are and how the government and residential schools have ripped away our culture and how we can get it back."

Linda Pope, Elder, Nipissing First Nation

"I have really enjoyed the learning environment and experience at Oshki. Oshki has helped me expand my knowledge from the various programs they offer; pre-health, PSW and RPN program. As a mother of 5 the smaller classrooms and compassionate/ dedicated staff have made it possible for me to say that I'm a three time college graduate."

Victoria Allan, Oshki Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute graduate

About Indigenous Institutes

Indigenous Institutes serve First Nation learners in **99 communities across Ontario servicing 173,225 people**. Our locations service remote, isolated, urban, northern, on-reserve, and off-reserve communities across Ontario, and our campuses are community hubs that are utilized by the entire community. We offer high quality post-secondary education, training, and life-long learning, accredited certificates, diplomas, and degrees in areas such as healthcare, childcare, skilled trades, community services, social justice and language. Our programs are grounded in Indigenous culture, language and knowledge.

Indigenous Institutes serve more learners who would not have transitioned to post-secondary education and training. Across our campuses, we **serve over 3300 learners, about 75% of whom are full-time**. Over **90% of graduates transition to good jobs**.

We are experiencing significant growth and many of our programs are over subscribed. For example, Anishinabek is **forecasting a growth of 60%** over last year's enrolment (2021-2022). The IIC members administer and provide education and training programs within **17 facilities across Ontario**. We are not in a position to accommodate this growth. We need resources to meet the demands of learners and the needs of our communities.

Indigenous Institutes are directly connected with the needs of community and mandated by their First Nations.

Indigenous Institutes collaborate with employers and community partners to offer direct training-to-employment opportunities. For example, the Personal Support Worker Program and the Early Childhood Educators Program offered at Anishinabek Educational Institute, Iohahi:io Akwesasne Education and Training Institute, Kenjgewin Teg, Ogwehoweh Skills and Trades Training Centre, Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute, and Six Nations Polytechnic are in such high demand that learners are hired immediately after completing the program, resulting in a redistribution of wealth in the community and robust social development.

Indigenous learners are seeking micro-credential opportunities to upskill, and reskill. Indigenous Institutes are working collaboratively to respond to this emerging need and are in the process of developing more micro-credential programs.

Lifelong learning opportunities are important to Indigenous learners and the community, and Indigenous Institutes work to ensure access to lifelong learning initiatives.

Indigenous Institutes are training the skilled labour force to meet the needs of employers, and the community which is strengthening and growing an economy that works for everyone, provides significant economic, social, spiritual and psychological returns for decades.

The Challenge

Indigenous Institutes have been **historically underfunded** since our inception which severely impacts our communities and educational attainment for Indigenous learners. The 2016 Census reports **significant gaps in PSE completion** across all age cohorts. For example, 43.3% of Indigenous people in Ontario between the ages of 25 and 29 have a college or university certificate or diploma, while 66.4% of non-Indigenous Ontarians in the same age cohort do. Indigenous Institutes urgently need the government's support to address the needs of learners and close the education and training gap.

Indigenous learners want access to equitable, culturally relevant post-secondary education. Long-term, well-funded colonial education system, steers Indigenous students to non-Indigenous post secondary institutions.

Non-Indigenous colleges and universities are not safe or well-positioned to meet the unique needs of Indigenous learners. While there have been improvements, Indigenous learners experience lack of knowledge of Indigenous history and culture, racism, marginalization, isolation.

Application-based, year-to-year program funding provided by the Government of Canada is not sufficient to meet our growing population or the growing demands of learners, nor is it in keeping with the Government's obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirms the inherent jurisdiction of Indigenous people to exercise control over their own education systems, nor is it consistent with treaty and inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and the principles of self-government.

Current funding is not in keeping with the Government's obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, nor is it consistent with treaty and inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and the principles of self-government. Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* provides the Parliament of Canada with "exclusive Legislative Authority" in relation to the classes of subjects "Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians." The federal government has the authority to fund both on-reserve **and** off-reserve. Long-term, sustainable, equitable funding is needed so that Indigenous Institutes can effectively plan and meet the needs of learners and communities.

Federal government funding policy needs to be modernized to include funding for infrastructure development. Indigenous Institutes in Ontario are recognized in legislation and have credential recognition yet Indigenous Institutes are not treated fairly.

Without stable, long-term core operational funding, growth will be stalled along with the implementation of the TRC recommendations. Our communities rely on Indigenous Institutes to provide Indigenous education and training to learners and we are committed to providing the educational supports to help our learners succeed.

In addition, COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on Indigenous learners and institutions. Institutes had to quickly pivot to provide on-line learning and some learners struggled to remain engaged. Mental health concerns continue to be a challenge as learners need additional wrap-around support and our institutes are overstressed and understaffed.

The Opportunity

Canada is experiencing a perfect storm with an aging population and a labour and skills shortage challenge. A solution to these challenges is Indigenous youth. "Between 2016 and 2026, 350,000 Indigenous youth will turn 15, the age at which they become potential members of the workforce..." If this cohort gets the support they need to build essential skills through access to quality, targeted, and culturally appropriate education, skills and training, they would boost the country's economy by **\$27.7 billion annually**.¹ Ensuring that these future workers have the knowledge and skills, and community supports to join the workforce, will be critical and in the best interest of Indigenous communities and Canada.

¹ Future Skills Centre (June 25, 2020). Mapping the Landscape: Indigenous Skills Training and Jobs in Canada. Retrieved from <https://fsc-ccf.ca/research/mapping-the-landscape-indigenous-skills-training-and-jobs-in-canada/>

It is a national priority to increase the number of younger Canadians with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the labour market. If Indigenous post-secondary institutions had more capacity, they could significantly expand the pool of skilled workers to help address the labour shortages.

Indigenous Institutes in Ontario are recognized in legislation as a pillar of PSE, which is unique in Canada, and mechanism to establish quality assurance for the granting of credentials. Indigenous Institutes are training and transitioning unprecedented numbers of learners into high-demand jobs - Personal Support Workers, Skilled Trades, Early Childhood Educators.

Indigenous PSE institutions can play an important role as partners in improving the graduation rates and successful outcomes for Indigenous learners. based on current data, increasing PSE success for Indigenous people in Canada through gradual increases in funding and enrollment at the seven-member Indigenous Institutes of Ontario would lead to **over 40,000 new skilled workers, at least \$4.5 Billion in additional GDP, and a return of 3-1 per dollar invested over the next two decades.**²

Indigenous Institutes are training the skilled labour force to meet the needs of employers, and the community which is strengthening and growing an economy that works for everyone, provides significant economic, social, spiritual and psychological returns for decades.

The Indigenous Institute Consortium is committed to ensuring every learner at Indigenous Institutes has equal access to high-quality post-secondary education and training that is grounded in Indigenous culture, language, and knowledge, and gives learners the confidence and support they need to succeed and contribute to the social, economic and spiritual growth for themselves and their community.

Recommendations

To improve graduation rates and successful outcomes for Indigenous students, the Indigenous Institutes Consortium recommends the following:

- \$90M investment in Indigenous Institutes over three years for core operating funding
- \$75M over three years for capital and deferred maintenance at Indigenous Institutes
- Launch tripartite process with the Province of Ontario and the IIC and its members

² Matthew Mendelsohn, Core Funding For Indigenous Post-Secondary Institutes in Ontario: Business Case. Retrieved from https://iicontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/IIC-Business-Case-Report_Final2.pdf Page 6.