



Indspire

Indigenous education,
Canada's future.

L'éducation des autochtones.
L'avenir du Canada.

Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance for the
Pre-Budget
Consultations on the 2019 Budget

Recommendations

- 1. That the government provide funding of \$1.5 million over five years to support analysis on Post-Secondary Education outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students**
- 2. That the government provide funding of \$225 million over five years for Indspire's scholarship and bursary program**

Introduction

Canada's competitiveness in the face of a changing economic landscape requires an educated and skilled workforce.

According to Statistics Canada, the Indigenous population is Canada's fastest-growing demographic. Since 2006, it has grown by 42.5%, more than four times the growth rate of the mainstream population over the same period. ¹

Indspire submits that a growing Indigenous population has the potential to be part of Canada's competitive advantage, and with sufficient support can become a significant portion of Canada's labour force. Post-secondary education is key to future employment, social and economic prosperity.

The 2016 Census found that 44% percent of Indigenous people, aged 25-64, in Canada now have some form of post-secondary credential, compared to 63% of the non-Indigenous population. Contrasted to the non-Indigenous population, however, significant gaps persist, particularly in university education, where only 11% of the Indigenous population have any form of university credentials compared to 29% for non-Indigenous Canadians. ²

Gaps in educational attainment have an impact on labour market participation, leading to lower earned incomes, lost productivity and higher demands on social programs. Educational attainment is the most significant way of achieving economic prosperity for Indigenous peoples.

The Centre for the Study of Living Standards estimates that if the education and labour market gaps for Indigenous peoples were closed in Canada by 2031, Canada's gross domestic product could add \$36 billion that year.³

Indspire is dedicated to supporting improved educational attainment at all levels for Indigenous peoples across Canada. Ninety percent of the students we support, graduate from post-secondary. It is our vision that every Indigenous student will graduate within a generation.

Indspire has successfully fostered a community of supporters from a variety of sectors that share our ambition and recognize the importance of improving educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

As education is critical to advancing reconciliation, Indspire incorporates reconciliation into its programming and service delivery in many ways, including the advancement of Indigenous ways of knowing. For example, we deliver the workshop *Truth and*

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>

² Statistics Canada - 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016177

³ The Contribution of Aboriginal People to Future Labour Force Growth in Canada, Centre for The Study of Living Standards, Research Report 2017-07, October 2017

Reconciliation: An Educator's Guide at our annual educators' conference. We advance the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by supporting investment in education and opportunity for Indigenous learners.

Indspire recognizes the very challenging circumstances that many Indigenous governments face in providing programs and services to their citizens. We advocate for increased funding across Indigenous education systems as sustained investments are what is required if systemic change is to take root for the benefit of all Indigenous peoples.

Indspire's value is our connection to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students in remote communities, rural areas and urban centres across Canada. Students tell us about institutional barriers and lack of supports to address their fundamental needs and they say that Indspire gives them confidence, validates their identity and helps them on their path to success. As an Indigenous organization, grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, we are trusted by students and seen as an entity that validates and supports their educational success.

We have relationships with thousands of students, through initiatives such as our mentoring programs, where we provide support and role modelling for learners; peer supports for young professionals; scholarships and bursaries for 1000s of post-secondary students in communities across Canada; and through our annual youth Empowerment Gatherings bringing together some 1,000 students to learn about education and career opportunities. Indspire's relationship with employers allows us to support students transition from school to work by acting as a conduit once they complete their studies.

Geography is often a unique barrier for Indigenous learners in that there is little or no access to university education in their communities or regions. Many students must move away from their communities, on average travelling 1,700 kilometres at significant cost from distant locations.

I never thought it would be possible ...to pursue higher education. I was a young mother and chose to drop out of conventional high school to look after my daughter. I was accepted in college and we moved with our 3 children so that I can continue my education and provide a positive example. The difference in the quality of life for my children is remarkable.

I was working two...jobs just to make ends meet.... Funding from Indpsire absolutely changed my life and made it so I didn't need to spend 20 plus hours... working. I could invest myself in changing the lives of vulnerable Indigenous youth in my community.

About Indspire

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

In 2017, Charity Intelligence selected Indspire as one of the Top 10 Impact Charities based on impact per dollar donated.⁴ In 2017, for the third year, Indspire was named a Top 25 A-Rated Charity in the Financial Post Magazine's annual charities report card.⁵

In addition to financial support from federal and provincial governments, the private sector, foundations, trade unions, educational institutions and civil society, Indspire counts over 10,000 individual Canadians among its donors.

Indspire's K-12 Institute

Fewer than four in 10 Indigenous students on reserve graduate from secondary school.

In 2013, Indspire launched the *K-12 Institute*, a resource centre that connects educators of Indigenous students with resources to improve outcomes and increase high school completion rates. The Institute is supporting the building of capacity and fostering systemic change to improve K-12 outcomes.

Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards Program

This program provides financial assistance to students with demonstrated financial need as they pursue post-secondary studies in colleges and universities and through apprenticeships, skilled trades, and technology programs. Indspire is helping to prepare students for the jobs of the future. Since 2004, Indspire has disbursed some \$100 million to more than 32,000 recipients.

In 2017-18, Indspire awarded \$14.2 million through 4,942 bursaries and scholarships. Among the many areas of study this past year were 551 funding recipients studying in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines and 340 recipients studying Business.

Students tell us that Indspire supports them financially, but also motivates them to succeed. A recent survey of Indspire supported students found that approximately 90% graduated, of which 53% pursued a further post-secondary credential.

⁴ <https://www.charityintelligence.ca/2017-top-picks> - Accessed July 24, 2018

⁵ <http://business.financialpost.com/financial-post-magazine/charities-of-the-year-our-annual-picks-of-canadas-most-efficient-and-accountable-charities> – Accessed July 24, 2018

What Increased Funding Will Achieve

1. Data and Reach

Indspire has significant data holdings on Indigenous post-secondary students. Routine surveys demonstrate that the most important reasons for choosing an institution are: preferred program available; school's reputation; the faculty; availability of financial aid; services provided by Indigenous students' centres; and proximity to home.

Indspire learns from students about the challenges they face on university and college campuses and shares this information with institutions. We share insights from the students we support to make the educational, social and cultural life on Canadian campuses more welcoming and supportive of Indigenous ways of learning and knowing.

Indspire wants to share data with stakeholders, work with others to better harness its information and be available to inform public policy landscape. Our student voices can contribute to the dialogue on the state of Indigenous post-secondary education and identify potential solutions to addressing the challenges that limit the access, and success of Indigenous learners.

Reliable data on Indigenous post-secondary education is a challenge, as observed recently by the Auditor General of Canada, in his 2018 Spring Reports to Parliament. He found the Government did not have comprehensive data about post-secondary graduation rates for on-reserve students, nor did it collect complete data on the number of First Nations students who wanted to pursue post-secondary education but could not access the necessary funding. Indspire stands ready to assist in this important initiative.

A thorough analysis of our data could demonstrate what we already know anecdotally about students' experiences and provide insights into the impact of investments in post-secondary education. Such an intensive effort is beyond our current organizational capacity.

2. Bursaries and Scholarships

Many Indigenous students rely on Indspire for financial assistance, yet we only meet an average of 20% of their identified need in any given year. In 2017-18, Indspire identified a funding gap of \$52 million, an average of \$10,700 per student.

Using Statistics Canada data Indspire calculates that on average we can fund less than 5% of the estimated number of Indigenous people that are eligible to attend post-secondary.

We project that more than 130,000 Indigenous individuals, ages 17-51, will be eligible to attend post-secondary education by 2023. With our additional funding request, we could provide up to 14,000 students annually with the opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies.

Many Indigenous communities have indicated that they require additional capacity to meet increasing governance demands. Nearly 50% of Indspire-funded students surveyed in 2017, reported that they had returned to work in their community or found employment serving Indigenous populations, demonstrating that investments in Indspire have an impact on increasing community capacity.

By increasing investments in Indspire, the Government will show leadership and incent other sectors to contribute to improving education outcomes.

Indspire is thankful to the Government of Canada for the Budget 2017 commitment to contribute \$25 million over five years. This support is critical to addressing the educational attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, and Indspire has been able to attract matching funds from many supporters.

Indspire hears from students that their circumstances may make them more likely to be averse to debt and less likely to borrow to pay for school. Additionally, they may not have access to a familial safety net, financial advice and the cultural and social capital to get an early career head start.

Lack of funding is a significant barrier to educational attainment for Indigenous students and taking on student debt is a source of significant stress, which often impacts their ability to focus on their studies and achieve their goals. As a recent recipient reported to Indspire:

This award could not have come at a better time, as I am no longer eligible for financial assistance through my First Nations band... With your financial support, I will complete my studies and become the first person in my immediate family of ten siblings to obtain an undergraduate university degree.

Closing the gap in educational attainment will require that Indspire has the financial capacity to reach and fund more students each year. Additional investments of \$45 million annually will allow Indspire to fund up to 14,000 students annually while meeting on average 20% of their identified financial need.

Conclusion

Indspire has become a part of the fabric of Indigenous post-secondary education in Canada, by providing support for individuals through our scholarships and bursaries, mentoring and related educational programs. As we are frequently told by Indigenous learners, Indspire also supports and helps validate their identity in pursuing an education.

In considering the support of community, family, and teachers, it is important to see Indspire as a part of this educational, cultural, and socio-economic support system. Indspire is positioned to contribute to measuring and supporting far greater achievement in post-secondary education and equipping Indigenous people to succeed in the workforce, strengthening Canada's competitiveness.

Such investments are what is required if systemic change and structural improvements are to take root. To enable sustainable change for Indigenous peoples through education, investments in Indigenous-led organizations, such as Indspire, must continue and expand over the longer-term.

We know more can and must be done. Indspire stands ready.

Sincerely,



Roberta Jamieson
President and CEO