



# 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  
2020 Budget

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Government of Canada provide funding of \$2 million over one year to Indspire for increased support to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Post-Secondary students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines as part of Canada's transition to a lower carbon economy.**

## Introduction

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Indspire is thankful to the Government of Canada for the Budget 2019 commitment to increase its financial support of Indigenous Post-Secondary education overall and its specific contribution of \$9 million over three years to the organization. This support is critical to increasing Post-Secondary educational attainment for Indigenous students relative to non-Indigenous Canadians.

On June 17, 2019 the House of Commons passed a motion to declare a national climate emergency in Canada<sup>1</sup>, recognizing that climate change impacts communities across Canada, with coastal, northern and Indigenous communities particularly vulnerable to its effects.

Supporting First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners to help lead the transition to a lower carbon economy is an element of Canada's response to the looming climate emergency, and this transformation is the context in which Indspire respectfully submits this Pre-Budget Submission for consideration of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Since late 2015, the Government of Canada has engaged with Indigenous Peoples on several initiatives relating to Canada's environmental stewardship, regulatory and legislative development and the approval of large-scale development projects.

The inclusion of First Nations, Inuit and Métis knowledge has strengthened federal legislative and regulatory development regarding approval of energy projects, fisheries management, species at risk, navigable waters, and climate change impacts.

Indigenous knowledge has the potential to inform the Government's response to the climate emergency by strengthening federal decision-making in providing a more complete understanding of First Nations, Inuit and Métis world views, Indigenous cultures, the environment, and the social, health and economic conditions of Indigenous peoples.

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.<sup>2</sup>

Indspire submits that a growing First Nations, Inuit and Métis population has the potential to play a critical part of Canada's transition to a low carbon economy. Post-secondary education is key to future employment, social and economic prosperity throughout such a transition, and beyond.

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 only 11%

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/en/parliamentary-business/2019-06-17>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>

of the Indigenous population have any form of university credentials compared to 29% for non-Indigenous Canadians.<sup>3</sup>

Indspire is dedicated to supporting improved educational attainment at all levels for First Nations, Inuit and Métis 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's value is our connection to students and educators, 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.

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 once they complete their studies.

Indspire has successfully fostered a community of supporters from a variety of sectors that are committed to lowering the climate impacts of their operations and share our ambition of improving educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

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 required if systemic change is to take root for the benefit of all First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Further, we advocate for the full inclusion of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada's transition to a lower carbon economy. Our people have been stewards of the land and water, flora and fauna since time immemorial and Canada will show leadership on the global stage when the traditional knowledge of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples guides the path toward a more sustainable future.

Increased investment in Indigenous peoples' access to fundamental and advanced STEM skills combined with the complementary skills that diversity brings to the workforce will prepare Canada to be flexible and adaptable to the uncertainty of our

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada - 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016177

climate in the future. As Indigenous peoples are already observing and reporting shifts in the climate, they are well positioned to find solutions.

Indigenous STEM professionals are already contributing to the Canadian economy with lower unemployment rates and higher wages.

As evidenced by the following statements from applicants to Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* scholarship and bursary program, First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students see the value of a STEM career and are looking to equip themselves to provide solutions to their communities' needs.

*I'm passionate about Mother Earth, interested in permaculture, effective waste management, renewable energy and conservation. The principles of this program align very well with my interests. I'm looking forward to learning and applying my new skills to my life in general, career, hobbies and communities, I want to become a First Nations leader in renewable energy and conservation in many industries. When I was younger, I didn't have the opportunity to pursue post secondary as I was in survival mode to live - now that I'm older I want to fulfil my education dreams.*

*My community does not have adequate access to clean drinking water. I'm pursuing my degree to give myself the skills to empower communities like my own to effectively govern the lands and waters in their territories. After my first degree. Water is a crucial part of everyone's lives, and I want to contribute to ongoing water protection efforts by communities and activists through my research and life's work.*

*University (has) set me on a path to reclaim myself. When I have access to language carriers, knowledge that Indigenous scholars provide, it uplifts the confidence to carry out the footprints of the ones who came before me and inspire me to leave knowledge for the generations ahead. I embrace learning on the land and, I hope to bring forth a relationship between knowledge systems, respecting all physical and spiritual connections to the world and to learn how to carry on the knowledge that sustained my family for generations.*

*I've decided to study Natural Resources Conservation because this program takes a multidisciplinary approach to conservation, integrating both physical and social sciences to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how to best manage natural resources for current and future generations. In the face of climate change and a growing population, there will be a need for people who are capable of properly managing these resources. My hope is that this degree will allow me to become one of these people, so I can help ensure future generations aren't harmed by our current actions.*

*It is with pride that I say I am working towards graduating with a degree in Environmental & Conservation Science and a degree in Native Studies.*

## About Indspire

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Indspire is Canada's only Indigenous 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.

Top 10 Impact Charity for 2017 & 2018 by Charity Intelligence<sup>4</sup>; Financial Post named Indspire as one of the most trusted and accountable charities in Canada for 2017 in Top 25 Charities Worthy of a Donation<sup>5</sup>; and a 2019 Top Rated Charity by Maclean's<sup>6</sup>.

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 is also proud partner in the STEAM Horizon Awards. Founded in 2016, the STEAM Horizon Awards encourages youth to promote positive changes throughout their community using science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM). Two of the five annual prizes go to Indigenous youth, and winners are awarded a \$25,000 prize for their post-secondary education.

### **Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards Program**

Indspire is helping to prepare students for the jobs of the future by providing 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.

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.

Since 2004, Indspire has disbursed some \$115 million to more than 37,500 recipients. In 2018-19, Indspire awarded \$16.3 million through 5,553 bursaries and scholarships.

Among the many areas of study funded this past year were 682 recipients studying in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines, an increase of 24% from the previous year.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.charityintelligence.ca/2018-top-picks>

<sup>5</sup> <https://business.financialpost.com/financial-post-magazine/charities-of-the-year-our-annual-picks-of-canadas-most-efficient-and-accountable-charities>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.macleans.ca/society/life/canadas-top-rated-charities-2019/>

## What Increased Funding Will Achieve

### 1. Bursaries and Scholarships

Many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis students rely on Indspire for financial assistance, yet we are only able to meet an average of 20% of their identified need in any given year.

In 2018-19, Indspire identified a funding gap of \$56 million, \$6 million of which was identified by students in STEM disciplines, an average of \$9,176 per student.

Many Indigenous communities have indicated that they require additional capacity to meet increasing governance and operational 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.

Indigenous communities are already reporting negative consequences of climate change and that the impacts will only continue to hit these communities harder. Increasing the number of Indigenous STEM professionals in communities will lead to more local solutions to addressing climate impacts in First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities.

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.

While the number of students pursuing STEM fields has grown, Indspire is only able to meet an average of 25% of their identified funding needs. With an additional investment of \$2 million in Budget 2020, Indspire will be able to meet up to 50% of identified funding needs. This will facilitate Indigenous contributions to addressing the looming climate emergency through the transition to a lower carbon economy.

## 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 supports and helps validate their identity in pursuing an education. Facilitating education, training and employment while integrating traditional knowledge is critical to address the looming climate emergency and transitioning Canada to a lower carbon economy.

Sincerely,



Roberta Jamieson  
President and CEO