

RECOMMENDATION ONE

The federal government should consult with Indigenous student groups and student unions of institutions that host high rates of Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) users in their funding reform process.

All willing and qualified students should be able to access affordable and high quality education. Despite this, Indigenous students are disproportionately disadvantaged with regards to post-secondary education. The largest attainment disparity in post-secondary education for Indigenous students occurs in the university sector¹. In 2011, 48 per cent of the Indigenous population and 64.7 per cent of the non-Indigenous population held post-secondary credentials². However, only 9.8 per cent of the Indigenous population held a university degree³, in contrast to the 26.5 per cent of the non-Indigenous population with a university degree. A large proportion of Indigenous students, both who have (34 per cent) and have not (42 per cent) completed their high school diploma, have cited costs as a large barrier to achieving post-secondary education⁴.



PSSSP offers financial assistance to Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary programs, including: undergraduate degree programs, advanced or professional degree programs, diploma and certificate programs⁵. However, the chronic underfunding of the program has left an estimated backlog of over 10,000 students that do not receive funding and are waitlisted⁶. Indigenous populations are one of the youngest and fastest growing in Canada, therefore we can expect Indigenous youth to rely on the long-term sustainability of this program to access post-secondary education⁷.

The Liberal Party of Canada promised \$200 million increase to PSSSP funding over four years, while lifting the two per cent per year cap on funding increases. In the 2017 federal budget, only \$90 million was allotted to PSSSP along with a commitment to an extensive review of the program with Indigenous federal partners that support programs tailored to Indigenous students. To ensure the needs of Indigenous students are adequately met, UCRU recommends that this review process include a diverse range stakeholders. In particular, Indigenous student groups and student unions of institutions that have a higher number of Indigenous students accessing PSSSP.

Our recommendation aligns with the National Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Calls to Action, which outlines the need for more funding to allow Indigenous students wanting to access post-secondary education⁸.

¹ Statistics Canada, *The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada* (Ministry of Industry, 2013), 5.

² Statistics Canada, *Educational attainment*, 4.

³ Statistics Canada, *Educational attainment*, 4.

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance: 2nd Edition*, (Statistics Canada, 2015), 20, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-645-x/89-645-x2015001-eng.pdf>

⁵ Post-Secondary Student Support Program, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, last modified March 3, 2017, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033682/1100100033683>.

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 199.

⁷ Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit*, (Minister of Industry, 2013), 15.

⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

RECOMMENDATION TWO

The federal government should create a multi-million dollar grant that institutions can access for the purpose of reconciliation initiatives on campuses.



The National Truth and Reconciliation Committee released 94 calls to action for Canadians and all levels of government to repair the damage caused by the residential school system⁹. The federal government has pledged to take immediate action on these 94 items, thereby beginning the outlined path to reconciliation and encouraging other Canadian institutions to follow suit¹⁰. Post-secondary institutions, as well as the government, have been called to put forth reconciliation efforts and some universities have begun this process. Some have taken initiative by introducing programs and services that are dedicated to reconciliation, such as National Day of Remembrance, and Action on Violence Against Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The annual campaign at McMaster University relies heavily on fundraising and sponsorship sources due to a lack of funding designated towards reconciliation initiatives. Cost should not be a barrier to achieving reconciliation, therefore there should be a dedicated grant for institutions to enable them to pursue these initiatives. As an ongoing process, it is vital to financially support these institutions and their efforts for create an equitable environment for Indigenous students and remove barriers impeding their success.

⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

¹⁰ Gloria Galloway, "Trudeau vows to develop plan to put Canada on path to 'true reconciliation'", *The Globe and Mail* [Ottawa], December 15, 2015, www.theglobeandmail.com.