



BRIEFING NOTE

SUBJECT: Closing the Post-Secondary Education Gap

DATE: May 18, 2018

REQUESTED BY: Janice Ciavaglia, Director, Education

DRAFTED BY: Julie Williams, Senior Policy Analyst, Education

PURPOSE:

To provide an update on the research regarding the backlog of eligible First Nations post-secondary students and the development of the Post-Secondary Education Fact Sheet 2018.

BACKGROUND:

The Post-Secondary Education Fact Sheet (PSE Fact Sheet) and research address the following resolutions:

- AFN Resolution 36/2016, *Inherent and Treaty Right to Post-Secondary Education*.
- AFN Resolution 40/2016, *Call on Canada to address the backlog for eligible First Nation post-secondary student*.
- AFN Resolution 122/2016, *Post-Secondary Education*.
- AFN Resolution 14/2017, *Post-Secondary Education Federal Review*.
- The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) is a federal program that provides funding to First Nations and Inuit students to access post-secondary education.
- Since 1996, the number of First Nations students funded through PSSSP has been capped at approximately 25,000 students. This is despite an increase in population and high school graduation rates.
- First Nations on and off-reserve have seen post-secondary education attainment rates increase significantly since 2006. The 2016 Census shows that First Nations on and off-reserve are attaining apprenticeships/trades certificates and college credentials at equal rates of attainment to the rest of Canada.
- The 2006, 2011, 2016 Census data show that the gap in post-secondary education is attributed solely to university level attainment.

KEY ISSUES/FACTS:

- First Nations rates of post-secondary attainment have consistently increased since 2006 but the gap persists in university attainment. While First Nations rates of university attainment have increased, so too have non-Indigenous Canadians.

- Canadian university attainment rate 2016: 45%
- First Nations off-reserve university attainment rate 2016: 23%
- First Nations on-reserve university attainment rate 2016: 15%
- Despite the significant and persistent gap in university attainment, less than half (49%) of students funded through PSSSP are funded to complete a university diploma, degree or certificate.
- There are 32,690 First Nation students currently enrolled in post-secondary education.
 - 23,764 of these students receive PSSSP funding.
 - 8,926 of these students do not receive PSSSP funding. These students could be funded through PSSSP today.

Closing the Gap

- There are 112,230 First Nations individuals who are currently eligible to attend post-secondary.
- In addition, one must consider that First Nations high school attainment is not yet equal to the non-Indigenous population of Canada.
 - As First Nations high school graduation rates increase we can expect an additional 105,372 high school graduates would bring the First Nations population to the equivalent high school attainment of non-Indigenous Canadians.
- If First Nations attained the same post-secondary education attainment rate as non-Indigenous Canadians (73%) then there would be approximately 292,000 First Nations people needed to close the gap in post-secondary education.
- Of those 292,000 First Nations People, in 2015:
 - Approximately 181,000 have already attained a post-secondary degree
 - Nearly 33,000 are currently enrolled in a post-secondary program (and 23,764 are funded through the PSSSP program)
 - That leaves **78,000** First Nations graduates needed to close the post-secondary education gap.
- It should be noted that these numbers do not consider those First Nations students who have obtained post-secondary credentials and may need/wish to upgrade or pursue graduate or professional degrees.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. It is recommended that the information in the PSE Fact Sheet should be used to inform the 2019 budgetary submission advocating for additional investments in First Nations post-secondary education.
2. It is recommended that advocacy for increased investment should underscore the need for funding to support the increased tuition fees and associated costs of attaining a university degree in order to close the post-secondary education gap.
3. It is recommended that the PSE Fact Sheet be distributed widely to all First Nations and relevant partners and stakeholders.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. AFN Fact Sheet: First Nations Post-Secondary Education