



First Nations Post-Secondary Students

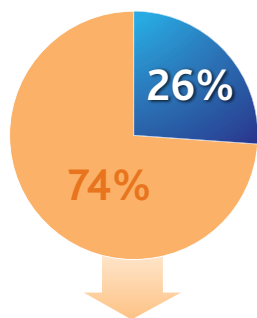
Fact Sheet

This fact sheet is intended to provide a snapshot of participation in and completion of post-secondary education (PSE) for First Nations people in Canada. First Nations have inherent and Treaty rights to lifelong learning, including post-secondary education. Currently, First Nations PSE students access Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)'s Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) for financial assistance. The fact sheet uses data from PSSSP, as well as the 2021 Census, and is limited by availability of federal government data.

First Nations Post-Secondary Education at A Glance

503,405

First Nations Population aged 25-64¹



First Nations High School Attainment Rates – First Nations aged 25-64

- Have not completed High School
- Have completed High School



84,313

Students upgrading to High School diploma are required to close the secondary school gap between First Nations and non-First Nations.



372,375

First Nations people aged 25-64 have completed high school

144,130

high school graduates have not completed post-secondary education



112,800

not enrolled in Post-Secondary Education (PSE)



31,330

attended post-secondary in 2021



24,722

accessed PSSSP in 2021²

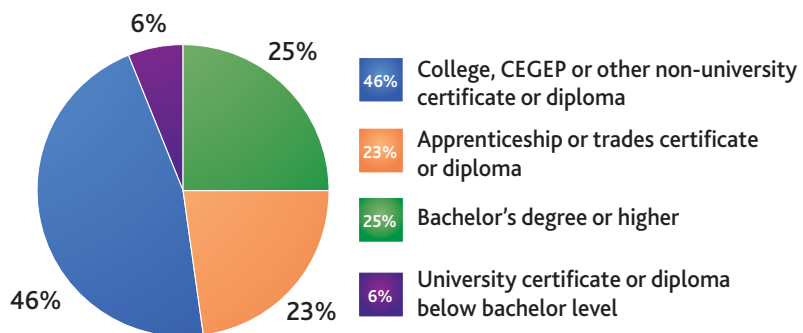


6,608

not funded under PSSSP

228,245

high school graduates have attained post-secondary education



¹ All data points on this page are from Statistics Canada, unless otherwise stated. [Table 98-10-0423-01 Highest level of education by Indigenous identity, Indigenous geography and labour force status: Canada, provinces and territories.](#)

² 2021 estimate updated from ERAS, 02-03-2018, as referenced in the [2021 Policy Proposal on First Nations PSE Models.](#)



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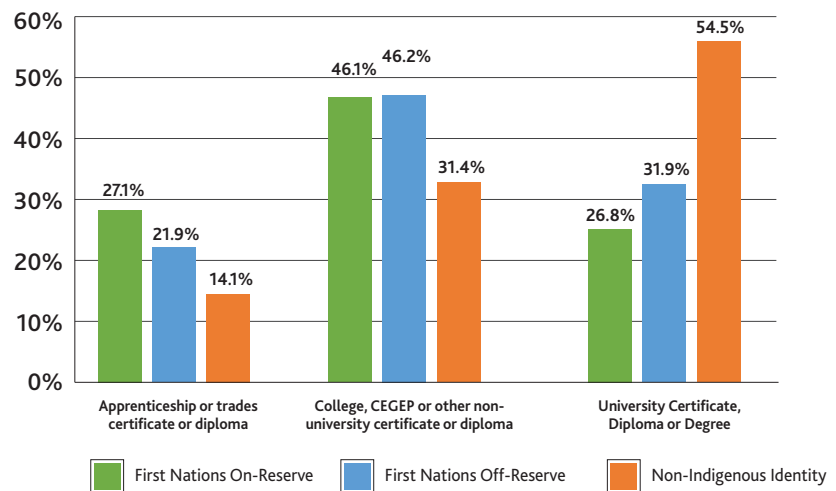
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UNDERSTANDING THE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION GAP



- In the last 15 years, First Nations attainment rates in post-secondary have increased significantly at the college and university level with a 26-percentage point increase in First Nations college attainment and 14-percentage point increase in attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher.³
- First Nations students in post-secondary are more likely to obtain trade or college level certifications.
- In 2021, nearly half (46%) of First Nations people that attained post-secondary credentials have a college diploma.

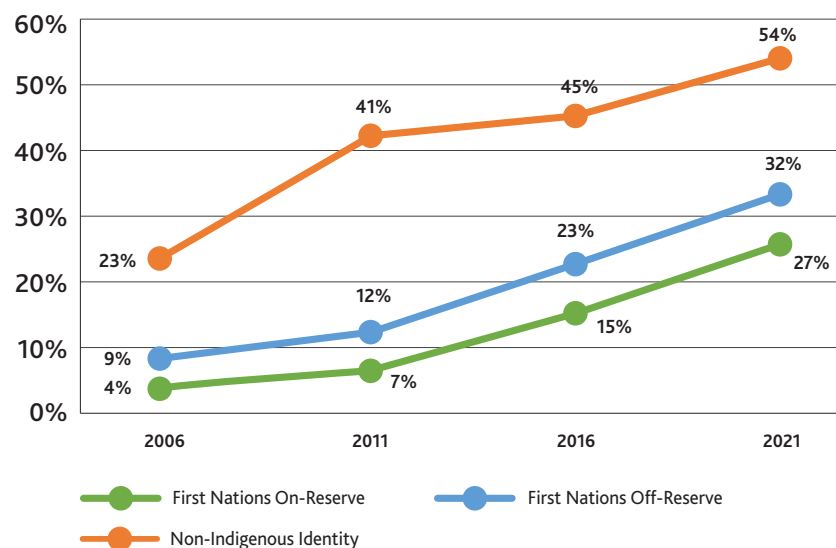
Figure 3: Post-secondary education attainment rates, aged 25-64, by degree type and area of residence, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0423-01 Highest level of education by Indigenous identity, Indigenous geography and labour force status: Canada, provinces and territories.

- The overall gap in post-secondary education between First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians is directly related to the persistent gap in university attainment.
- First Nations university attainment has significantly increased since 2006, with rates being 23 percentage points higher in 2021.
- The current gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians remains at 22-percentage points for First Nations off-reserve, and 27-percentage points for First Nations on-reserve.
- Currently, First Nations people with university attainment at the bachelor's and graduate levels enjoy slightly higher rates of employment rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts (1.4-percentage points higher at the undergraduate level, and 3.2-percentage points higher at the graduate level).

Figure 4: University attainment rates (certificate, diploma or degree), aged 25-64, by area of residence, 2006-2021



Source: Ibid.

³ Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006001.



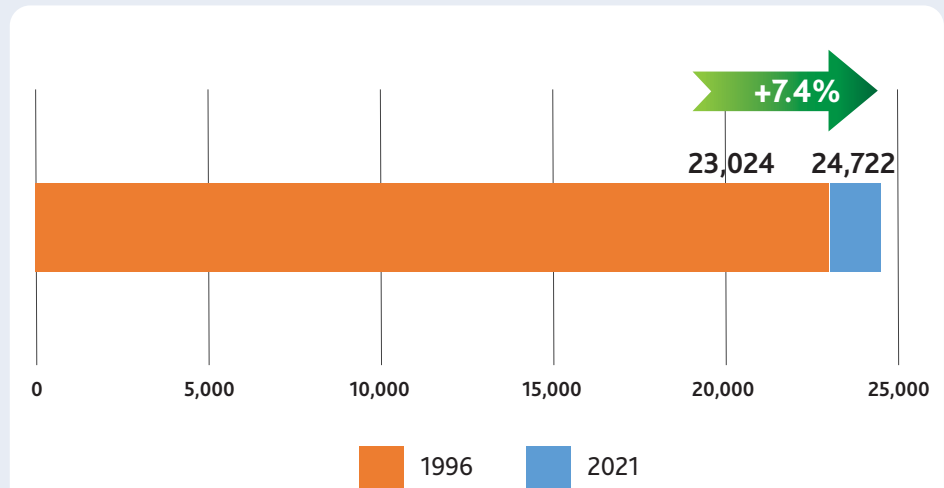
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LACK OF FUNDING TO ADDRESS FIRST NATIONS POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS' NEEDS



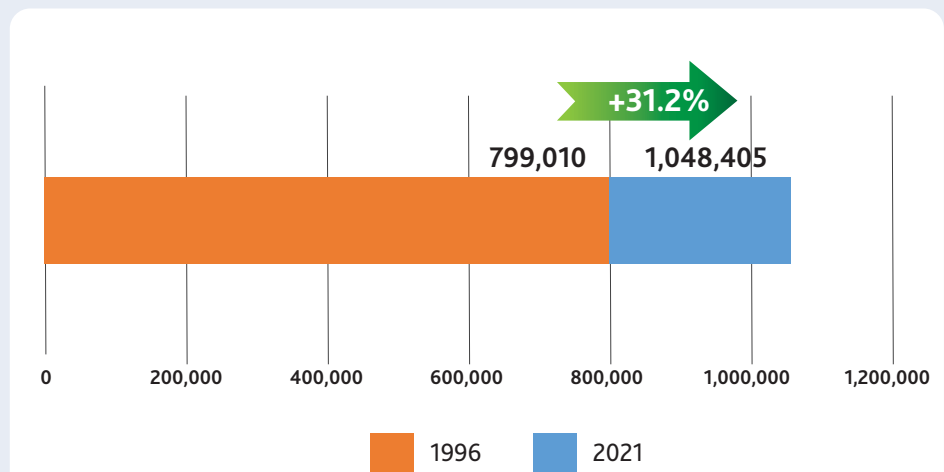
- Since 1996, the number of students funded through PSSSP has been capped at approximately 25,000 students.
- Students funded through PSSSP has not substantially increased since 1996. This is despite an increase in First Nations population and increased high school graduation rates.
- The PSSSP has consistently assisted 3,000 to 4,000 graduates per year (approximately 14% of students in the program).
- First Nations require an additional investment of \$8.53 billion to meet currently funded and unfunded students' needs.

Figure 5: Students Funded by the Post-Secondary Student Support Program 1996 vs. 2021



Source: Education Information System (EIS), Department of Indigenous Services Canada, 2020. 2021 estimate updated from ERAS, 02-03-2018, as referenced in the 2021 Policy Proposal on First Nations PSE Models.

Figure 6: First Nations Population 1996 vs. 2021



Source: Statistics Canada.



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CLOSING THE GAP



If First Nations age **25-64** attained similar education rates to the rest of Canada, there would be:



85,724

additional First Nations high school graduates, and



114,070

additional First Nations post-secondary education graduates.⁴

Closing the education gap between First Nations and the rest of Canada by **2041** is associated with substantial benefits, including:

\$24.7 billion

in First Nations GDP gains over baseline measures,



106,000

additional jobs for First Nations, a **38.3%** increase in total First Nations output, and



16.4%

increase in total First Nations employment.⁵



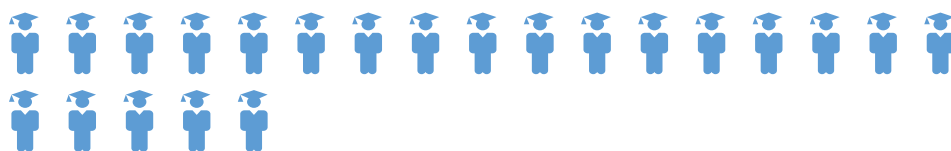
Figure 7: Closing the Gap in First Nations age 25-64

199,794 First Nations People needed to close the gap

= 5,000 people



+ **85,724** additional First Nations high school graduates, and



+ **114,070** additional First Nations post-secondary education graduates.

⁴ Over baseline measures.

⁵ Over baseline measures. These benefits are amplified when we close the income gap conditional on education, and the employment rate gap conditional on education. CSLS uses the working age (15+) population to identify these benefits. Pending finalized report: Closing the First Nations Education Gap in Canada: Assessing Progress and Estimating the Economic Benefits — An Update. Retrieved from: [AFN-Closing-the-Gap_Report-2023_EN.pdf](#) (csls.ca). 2023.