



Report of the
Task Force on Northern
Post-Secondary Education

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: Northern Voices, Northern Solutions



Members of the Task Force¹

- Melanie Bennett, Executive Director of the Yukon First Nations Education Directorate
- James Cook, Northern Manitoba representative
- Peesee Pitsiulak, Nunavut representative
- Lisa Mesher, Nunavik representative
- Ashlee Cunsolo, Founding Dean, School of Arctic & Subarctic Studies, Labrador Campus of Memorial University
- Florence Kushniruk, Post-Secondary Program Officer, Champagne Aishihik First Nation Self-Government
- Jodie Lane, Director of Education, Nunatsiavut Government
- Erika Marteleira, Manager, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- Angélique Ruzindana Umunyana, President of Collège nordique francophone
- Kelsey Wrightson, Executive Director, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning

Former member

- Malerie Bayha, youth member

¹ Authors of this report do not represent the views of the governments or organizations with which they are affiliated. Members were chosen for their expertise, experience, and geographic location, and the views they expressed as members of the Task Force were their own.

Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge that we live, work, and learn on the homelands of diverse Indigenous Peoples across the country, and recognize their ancestral and continued ties to the lands and waters of the Northern regions of what is now called Canada.

We are extremely grateful to all the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, Northerners, and others living and working in the North, who engaged with us throughout this process, and who generously shared their insights, expertise, experiences, cultural strengths, dreams, and aspirations. It was an incredible privilege and honour to work with and learn from you, and we hope that you see yourselves, your families, and your communities reflected in this report, as we envision and design, together, approaches to and opportunities for education that draw on strengths to forge new and flourishing futures.

We recognize that our work has taken place at a time when Indigenous communities across the country are continuing to grieve fresh evidence of the ongoing devastation of residential schools. We also recognize that this work was conducted entirely during the global COVID-19 pandemic, when so many Indigenous and Northern communities were disproportionately impacted. These challenging times have continued to demonstrate the need for strong, accessible, locally-available, and culturally-relevant educational opportunities that support individual and community strength and resilience.

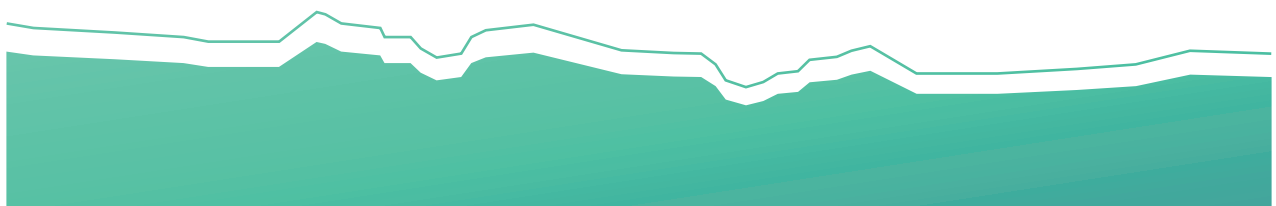


Table of Contents

Introduction	5
About the Task Force on Northern Post-Secondary Education.....	9
Our Approach	10
What We Heard	11
Overall Findings summary	13
I. Regional Engagements.....	23
1.1. Yukon engagement summary	24
1.2 Northwest Territories Engagement Summary	28
1.3. Nunavut engagement summary	39
1.4. Nunatsiavut, Labrador engagement summary	44
1.5. Nunavik data summary	49
II. Survey Results.....	62
III. Northern Institutions Summary	69
IV. Invited Guests Summary	74
V. Summary of the Literature Review Findings.....	84
Calls To Action.....	88
Calls To Action Table	100
 VI. Conclusion	 106

Introduction

An Urgent Need: Post-Secondary Education in the North, by the North, for the North

The North is the homeland of many Indigenous Peoples who have lived and thrived in this land for thousands of years. Survival depended on the successful transmission of essential skills and knowledge from parents and grandparents to children and grandchildren. This transmission of skills and knowledge did not take place in schools but, rather, on the lands and waters on which they called home. Over time, through colonization and ongoing colonial legacies, these highly successful learning environments that were thousands of years old, and were child-centered and rich with culture and freedom, were now reduced to schoolhouses and being inside, steeped with rigid rules, conformity and isolation.

The history of formalized education in Canada, especially for Indigenous children, is nothing to celebrate. Through years of ineffective policies and failure to celebrate the child, the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians continues to widen. In recent years, this has begun to change and, finally, people are starting to listen to what Indigenous Peoples have been saying for years – that we need to make significant changes to the education system in order to have our children succeed. While efforts have been made to outline recommendations to help close this academic gap in the North, such as those found in the First Canadians Canadians First: National Strategy on Inuit Education released

in 2011 by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, implementation is always a struggle when dedicated, ongoing funds are required.

We recognize the significant, painful, and long-lasting damages that many Indigenous Peoples have experienced since the advent of externally-imposed formal education systems; yet, we also believe in the transformative powers of post-secondary education – if accessible, flexible, and reflective of and responsive to Indigenous Peoples, cultures, histories, and ways of knowing, doing and being – for supporting dreams, aspirations, and community flourishing. With this understanding, our Task Force on Northern Post-Secondary Education has worked with hundreds of people from across the North to learn about challenges, hear about needs and priorities, discover opportunities for new ways forward, and celebrate already-present successes that are transforming what post-secondary education looks like in the North. Our engagements with diverse individuals and communities, including Indigenous Elders, youth, newcomers, and long-time Northerners, made it clear that Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being are the foundation of a transformative Northern post-secondary system that will create unique opportunities for educational success for all.

There is a strong and vibrant network of post-secondary institutions across the North. They are gaining recognition for providing high quality education that responds to the needs and priorities of the diverse populations and perspectives of the North. These Northern institutions are embedded in, and responsive and committed to, peoples and cultures of the North. They are providing high-quality, innovative, and life-changing programming, and they are leading important research that improves lives and informs decision-making. Yet, despite the strengths of these Northern-based institutions, there are still large inequities in access to education for people living in the North, compared to other parts of the country, particularly when it comes to accessing post-secondary programming.

Northern and Indigenous students often have to travel significant distances from their homes, families, and lands to access post-secondary education and, until the formation of Yukon University in 2020, there was no university located in the North. For many students, leaving home is undesirable and insurmountable; and for those who attend post-secondary opportunities in the south, there are often stories of ongoing mental, emotional, and financial stress from being away from home, navigating new places, and experiencing systemic barriers. The lack of diverse, place-based, Northern-focused, and Indigenous-led post-secondary options in the North creates generational inequities with access to educational opportunities.

Since the 1970s, the North has been going through a process of Indigenous self-determination and political reclamation, with the formation of modern treaties – building from already-present Treaties 8 and 11 (NWT) and Treaty 5 in northern Manitoba – and land claims agreements, including those in the four regions of Inuit Nunangat, as well as political organizations, Indigenous governments, and Indigenous educational systems, which remain active and powerful today. Although the North is now home to diverse peoples from around the world, the North is defined by complex and overlapping political, legal, cultural and linguistic jurisdictions, making comparison across territories challenging, but opportunities for North-to-North learning unique. There are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, groups, organizations, and governments spread throughout Yukon, Northwest Territories, northern Manitoba, and regions of Inuit Nunangat: Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut.



Further, for many Indigenous Peoples in particular, systemic, cultural, financial, and social barriers are increased, including in both K-12 and post-secondary education systems, including:

- A legacy of residential schooling and ongoing intergenerational traumas that has often left their families and communities to question the value and intent of education
- Cultural barriers in the programs of study offered and the locations of study;
- Insufficient background preparation for post-secondary education by the kindergarten to grade 12 system (especially if they live in smaller communities);
- Lack of access to affordable, reliable, or fast Internet;
- Overcrowded housing where there is no quiet space to study; and
- Insufficient time to study due to immediate or extended family responsibilities.

Despite these systemic barriers, Indigenous Northerners are working hard to access and complete post-secondary education and are transforming the ways in which post-secondary programming and research are conceptualized, designed, and delivered. Northern Indigenous governments, organizations, and leaders are continually calling for more sovereignty over post-secondary education, which more adequately reflects and is responsive to Indigenous Peoples and cultures of the North. Indeed, a key to addressing these

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other national and international documents call for changes to educational systems in order to reflect and respond to Indigenous needs, priorities, cultures, and contexts, including at the post-secondary level.

In December 2015, the federally-appointed Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its six-volume report detailing evidence it had collected over several years. This report substantiated the Commission's 94 calls to action. The calls to action particularly relevant to the work of this Task Force are:

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians
8. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.
11. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
16. We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.
62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
 - i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.

- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

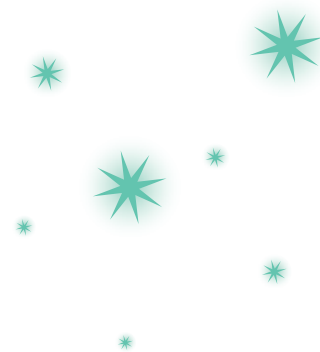
The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the United Nations General assembly in 2007, and endorsed by Canada in 2016. In 2021, the Canadian government passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The act commits the government to work cooperatively with Indigenous Peoples to:

- *Develop an action plan to achieve the Declaration's objectives*
- *Align federal laws with the Declaration*
- *Prepare an annual report on progress*

Portions of Article 14 of UNDRIP are particularly relevant to the work of this Task Force:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.)

inequities is the creation of Northern-focused and Indigenous-led post-secondary educational opportunities, in the North and its communities, that meet the needs and priorities of Northern and Indigenous Peoples, and reflect the lands, waters, and cultures of each region.



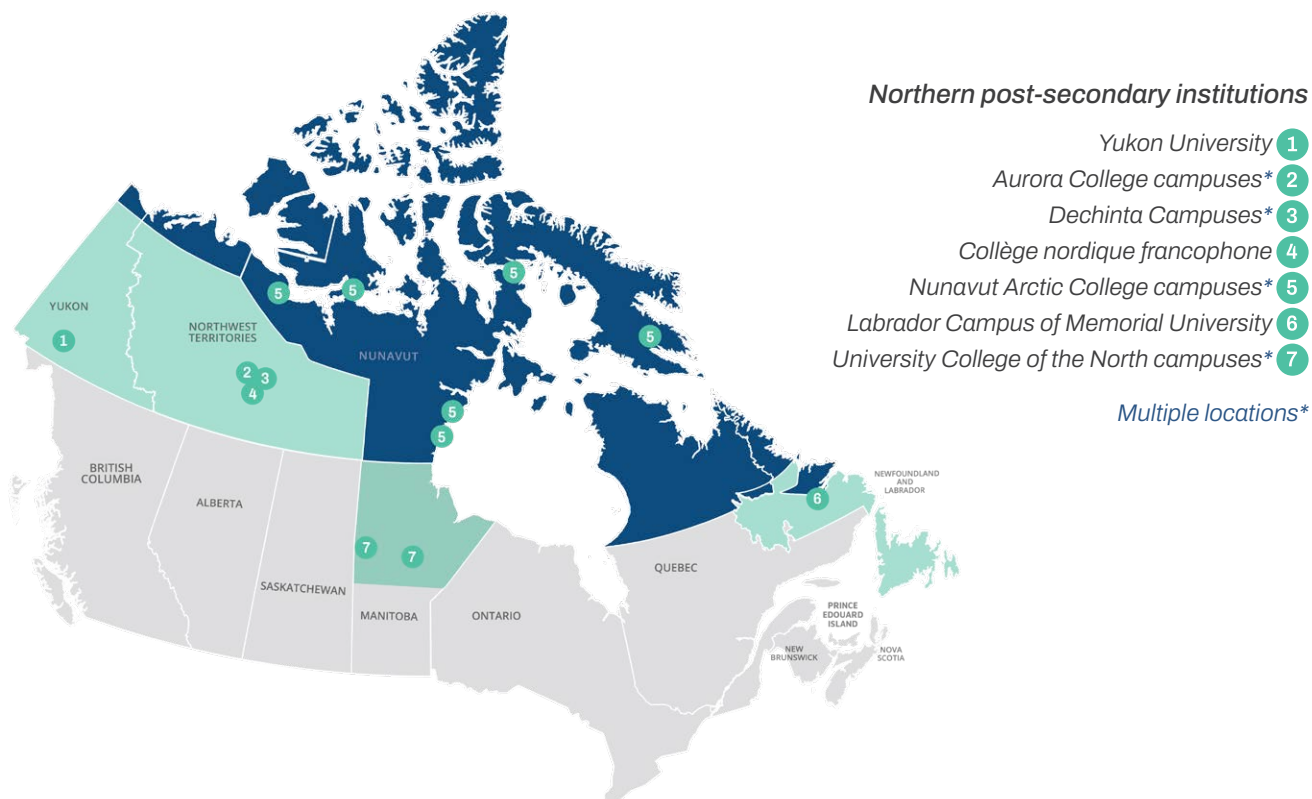
About the Task Force on Northern Post-Secondary Education

Understanding the ongoing educational inequities across the North and the urgent need for action, and emerging from the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework commitments, the Minister of Northern Affairs, Honorable Dan Vandal, appointed members from across the provincial and territorial Norths as members of the Task Force on Northern Post-Secondary Education in October 2020.

The mandate of this Task Force was to look at ways to improve post-secondary education in Northern Canada, and to enhance opportunities for accessing locally-available and culturally-

relevant post-secondary pathways for Northern and Indigenous learners. The Task Force members represented the three territories, all of Inuit Nunangat (Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut), Labrador, and northern Manitoba.

Our group included students, educators, academics, and education specialists from across the North, representing diverse places, cultures, and sectors. The Task Force was constituted as an arms-length organization from the federal government and was entirely independent in what it chose to include in this report.



Our Approach

The report was informed by the knowledge and experience of Task Force Members, and by the many Northern and Indigenous students, educators, administrators, Elders, and parents who shared their stories and thoughts with us through diverse engagement opportunities:

- An online survey was launched in May 2021 through the Task Force website, providing an opportunity for people across the North to share their experiences, ideas, and opinions of post-secondary education in the North. This survey was completed by more than 500 people from across the North;
- Regional engagement sessions, which were led by members of the Task Force with the public and invited guests in each of the regions (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunatsiavut, Labrador, and Northern Manitoba), in order to hear and learn from the rich experiences and aspirations of people across the North. More than 300 people were engaged in these sessions in total;
- Invited guest experts, who work in Northern post-secondary education, and were invited to the weekly Task Force meetings to provide further context on topics such as challenges and opportunities for Northern post-secondary education, bridging programs, local conditions for trades education, and Indigenous leadership in post-secondary institutions. We heard from fifteen people in this category.
- Written input, received from Northern post-secondary institutions, provided the Task Force with detailed context around the challenges, opportunities, needs, and priorities for Northern post-secondary educational contexts; and
- A literature review that included planning and strategic documents on post-secondary education from Northern governments and institutions, auditors' reports on Northern education, independent reviews, and academic sources.





01

What We Heard

This report reflects the diversity and the similarities between and among the Northern jurisdictions covered by our mandate and reflects place-specific considerations as well as pan-Northern needs. The voices represented in the following section share the challenges and the triumphs, the dreams and the opportunities, for strengthening Northern post-secondary systems across the North. We share what we heard by region, highlighting the unique contexts and rich diversities of each place.

The research, surveys, engagements, and other public input solicited by the Task Force, and the experience and knowledge of the Task Force members, present common themes that shape this report. It is important to note that all our research and engagement sessions were conducted during a global pandemic. This limited our ability to meet with Northerners in the ways and places they might have preferred to meet. These difficulties were exacerbated by the quality and availability of virtual means of meeting, including the general lack of reliable and affordable Internet access and virtual meeting infrastructure in most of the North. These factors may have changed the demographics of our engagements and made them less representative of a broad cross section of Northern society. We were also limited in our

abilities to meet as a Task Force. We were only able to have one in-person meeting during the data collection phase of our work.

Further, a large portion of respondents came from Nunatsiavut due to particularly effective outreach by the Nunatsiavut Task Force members. This means that survey results are more reflective of the experiences of people from Nunatsiavut, and due to demographics of the region, more Inuit than a truly representative sampling of people across the North. Despite the limitations of some aspects of the data, because we used so many different data sources, we feel that we were able to extract themes from the data that are reasonably representative of the concerns, issues and interests of Northerners.



Overall Findings summary

The following section identifies the challenges and barriers that exist across the North related to accessing post-secondary education, as well as the important strengths and exciting opportunities, particularly around the movement to Northern-based, Northern-focused, and Northern-led post-secondary programs and institutions. It highlights and synthesizes the overall findings from all data sources in all regions.

Barriers to success

The K-12 foundation

Various data sources suggest that the Northern K-12 system as a whole is failing to deliver students ready for post-secondary education. As a participant in the Northwest Territories engagement sessions commented, “There’s the basic secondary education to qualify to get into an institution of higher learning. It’s just not meeting its target.” The problem is more acute in smaller communities. The K-12 system is allowing students to graduate while still lacking basic literacy, numeracy, social and other academic skills. Of the current and former students who filled out the Task Force survey, more than 22% required two or more upgrading classes to meet the entry requirements for various post-secondary programs, with a significant number requiring more than three upgrading classes. This is not only burdening the students, it’s also burdening some Indigenous governments, according a participant in Yukon engagement, “Ninety or eighty percent of the First Nations children who are graduating from high school are graduating with a certificate. So when they apply to go into post-secondary, they’re

disappointed that they have to do upgrading. And so not only does it disappoint them to have to do upgrading, but they have to do it for several more years. And the First Nations pay for the upgrading.” As figures from Yukon show, 30% of Indigenous students graduate, so the 80-90% that require upgrading after graduation are those who managed to persist.

Post-secondary success is tied to K-12 access, success and resources. There are many areas that require improvement: funding for more space in schools to offer practical programming such as pre-trades and financial literacy ; addressing the high turnover rates of teachers and principals; providing career/academic counselling and advice to students that will set them on better paths to PSE; working with families to help them get involved in their children’s education; and improved recognition and incorporation of the cultures, languages, and learning styles of Indigenous students.

Housing

We have heard from students across the North that inadequate housing has a broad effect on their ability to access post-secondary opportunities. Students find it difficult to find appropriate housing while accessing post-secondary, and for those that do, situations are often unsafe or overcrowded, thereby negatively affecting their ability to study. Lack of adequate housing is also a barrier to more local delivery of post-secondary education, as this limits the number of potential students relocating from other nearby communities, who are often needed to fill a class. Northern educational institutions report having to turn students away

because they cannot provide housing for them. One Nunavut engagement participant reported, “I almost backed out of NTEP [Nunavut Teacher Education Program] because I had to make sure I had housing because I am expecting, if I wasn’t going to get housing, I would’ve had to find a job that provided me with housing.”

Inadequate and/or unaffordable housing for staff is also a problem at both K-12 and post-secondary levels. It contributes to the problem of recruitment and retention of staff in Northern communities. There was also feedback that housing unavailability, couple with high tuition costs, was a barrier for attracting international students

Financing

This is an area where federal policy has been partly successful. Agreements on student funding for post-secondary education, negotiated with Inuit regions, are showing signs of success. However, this approach has not been adopted more broadly across the North. Other Indigenous peoples’ organizations and governments need similar access to dedicated post-secondary education funding that they can control.

Despite the recent improvements in financing in some regions, affordability was identified by current and former students as the largest difficulty they faced. A participant in the Nunavut engagement sessions elaborated, “I don’t know how many times I’ve heard from students who are taking education in the south, as well as in Nunavut. The money they get is barely above the poverty line. And if they have families, and most do have families that come with them. They’re just getting by.”

Until the K-12 system is improved, Northern Indigenous learners need dedicated funding for bridging and upgrading programs. In many parts of the North, bridging and/or upgrading is counted against the funding years allocated to students. If students require two years to upgrade, that two years is deducted from their funding years for further post-secondary opportunities.

Local delivery and access

The requirement to leave their home communities to pursue diverse educational offerings after high school is a major barrier for many Northern learners. As a Nunatsiavut engagement participant explained, “It will be important to have education closer to home, so you don’t have to travel and experience the culture shock to expand education... people who have to leave and go far away for education are those who struggle the most.”

Funds are required to build community learning centers in all Northern communities currently underserved, so that post-secondary institutions can have a space to offer programs locally and further support place-based educational opportunities. Versatile, multi-use spaces that can be easily converted from classrooms to interactive learning spaces, complete with dynamic educational aids, such as interactive displays, visual art and space for ceremonies and demonstrations, an Indigenous-focused library, as well as accommodation space for instructors, could all help unlock the potential in many Northerners.

Innovative thinking is also required in the delivery of trades programs in the North. These programs have the potential to attract Northern students including those who have, to date, been under-represented in post-secondary education.

The barrier to entry into these programs is that Northern communities often do not have people with the certification required to take on apprentices, so Northern students cannot do the practical work required in their home communities or even in regional centres. For those that are able to complete a program, this barrier further creates limitations once they enter the workforce, as they often face challenges logging the required hours in order to progress through the journey person certification process.

Data suggested that not only do locally delivered programs attract learners who would otherwise not participate in post-secondary education, they also have other benefits. As an engagement participant in Northern Manitoba succinctly put it, “You teach people from the North in the North, and they stay in the North.” This concern was also noted in Francophone community engagement, where community members are lost because the ability to train them in the North does not exist.

Wrap around support

The Task Force survey data identified ‘family and cultural responsibilities’ as a major barrier to accessing or completing post-secondary education. It was the top reason for leaving given by students who were unable to complete their studies. Northern learners need to be supported in their responsibilities to look after immediate and/or extended families. Daycare was a particular need identified, especially as many Northern learners are single mothers. As a participant in the Northern Manitoba engagement sessions noted, “Most of our students are young parents themselves, they’re not coming straight out of high school, into the post-secondary pipeline, and they need daycare, and they need transportation, and all these things are amplified, the further north you go.”

For Northern students to thrive, it is also important to have culturally appropriate supports in place, such as counsellors who can speak their languages, and Elders who can provide guidance and opportunities to participate in cultural practices while away from home. A participant in the Northwest Territories engagement sessions highlighted the importance of appropriate counselling to maintain Northern students’ mental health, “Students are going to need mental wellness supports. That’s got to be part of the supports that are put in place and easily available, and it needs to be northern focused and Indigenous focused for our Indigenous students who are suffering trauma, our intergenerational survivors of residential school.” Mentoring was also frequently mentioned, especially mentoring by former students from the same cultural background.

Equitable access for distance and virtual education

Northern students are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing distance education, as most of the North is under-resourced in internet speeds, price, and accessibility. An engagement session participant in Northern Manitoba described the frustration of trying to participate in online courses from her location; “There’s poor connectivity, so half of your class you’re watching the wheel trying to load. You can’t access it later. There’s no recordings or you’ve got such bad Wi-Fi where you are that you can’t have your camera on. Even in my own coursework, it’s just frustrating. You just want to put it on mute, shut off your camera and go do something else in your house, and hope you passed the assignment.”

We heard that Northern students are often not practiced in navigating the many different distance education platforms, which further hinders their participation. The importance of these factors has been magnified in the past two years, as many programs have been forced by the pandemic to shift to online delivery. Applying national minimum Internet standards in the North is a start, but the goal should be to provide Northern students with a standard of accessibility common to students in much of southern Canada. Northern students should not be at a perpetual disadvantage as educational design is often optimized for higher Internet standards.

Looking ahead, some people thought online delivery could hold some promise for future Northern students, allowing them more local access to courses, diversity of available courses, and greater flexibility for schooling-life balance.

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

It is clear that Northern Indigenous peoples still bear the burden of colonization, and the educational aspects of colonization such as the legacy of residential schools. These burdens have left them with a remaining distrust of education systems, and a desire to find their way back to their own forms of education and training. As a Yukon engagement participant said, “The trauma that myself and older generations have experienced, I think that Indigenous people are still trying to find their voice in education. And we are very much currently still in the healing process.”

Finding that voice, and finding ways of ensuring that Indigenous knowledge is recognized and used in classrooms, as well as outside classrooms through land-based education, was a thread

through the data input to this report. Mande McDonald, a guest speaker invited by the Task Force, sees this approach as an opportunity for Northern education institutions, “There’s a really amazing opportunity to create and develop post-secondary from Indigenous perspectives and grounded in Northern Indigenous knowledges that I think would make the institution and the offerings extremely relevant and interesting not only to Indigenous northerners, but to all people in the three territories.”

Some learners, such as an engagement participant from Nunatsiavut have already had an opportunity to experience this kind of learning, “Learning from our Elders, and land-based learning, hands on learning, is so good. That could be making a kamutik [sled] or making snowshoes, cleaning sealskin, and then making the kamik [boot] and the pauluk [mitten] from the seal. And there’s so many opportunities that can come from that and Inuktitut can be intermingled.”

Some institutions, particularly those in the North, have developed or are developing Indigenous-led curricula, and instituted shared Indigenous governance. A written submission from Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University says “It is important to acknowledge that institutions of higher learning are one of many sites where acts of reconciliation can, and do, occur. The ongoing nature of reconciliation requires strategies that can evolve in order to support the national responsibility of addressing ongoing historic injustices and trauma in order to close the education equity gap.” The Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning in the NWT is a good example of land-based education with curriculum developed in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

Credentialing, faculty & programs

The themes of credentialing, faculty support, and development of appropriate programming for Northern PSE institutions emerged through the data. We have grouped them as being pertinent to the management of those institutions. Credentialing refers to the ability to break educational programs down into smaller components that can make the programs more accessible to Northern students (sometimes referred to as “micro-credentialing”). Another element of this theme is the ability to then stack several of these micro-credentials to count toward more advanced certificates/diplomas/degrees, and/or to make them transferable between different institutions. A Nunatsiavut engagement participant observed, “I think that that’s a good option for people because you know, sometimes it’s scary to think of doing this programs with three whole years long, like, I don’t want to commit to something that long, but oh, they’re offering this, you know, Business 101 or something...like the basic things you need to know, it’s going to be three months or however many months, you know, people will be more willing to commit to something like that.”

Faculty development was a major part of a joint submission from three territorial post-secondary institutions (Yukon University, Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College) who need assistance to train and develop faculty, especially local faculty. “Building and sustaining northern academic capacity with an emphasis of different ways of knowing, being and doing requires focus and opportunities to support faculty in their development. The post-secondary sector needs to respond by providing training and supports that prepare faculty to better support Northern students to ensure educational outcomes and goals are reached.”

Northern institutions are also interested in developing programming that is more attractive and accessible to Indigenous students. This is something in which they are already engaged, but the cost of program development is a financial strain on the institutions.

Some Northern post-secondary institutions are working to modify their definitions of certificates, diplomas and degrees to support multiple entrance and exit points from programs, including stackable, flexible, and modular options to enhance accessibility and recognize success at all levels.

Partnerships

There is significant opportunity for Northern post-secondary and other institutions to collaborate on shared programming, credentialing, and research. This is already occurring to some extent. For instance the Labrador Institute and Nunavut Arctic College are working together on the design and delivery of some new offerings. Yukon University has partnered with some southern institutions where it does not offer full degrees, so students can take the first two years in Yukon, then transfer.

We believe more could be done to support North-to-North learning, sharing and knowledge co-production, including funding for student mobility schemes, North-to-North research partnerships, and investment in building capacity for programming and research partnerships between governments, community organizations and post-secondary institutions. These approaches could include student exchanges, and internships in northern businesses and organizations.

Research

Learners are more engaged by research that is relevant to them and to their communities, both in content and form. Northern post-secondary institutions are valuable and strong places of Northern- and Indigenous-led research.

Much of the federal research funding is currently channelled through the “tri-council” [The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)], as well as through federal funding programs from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and POLAR Knowledge Canada. Structural barriers exist in the current system that limit the ability of Northern post-secondary institutions to access the diversity of Tri-Council and federal research funding available to institutions in the south.

Indigenous governments, non-profit organizations and community organizations and individuals are rarely able to access this funding to lead Northern research. Expanding the eligibility criteria of federal research funding to reflect the needs and priorities of the North would not only better engage Northern learners and researchers, but would also produce research more likely to be of relevance and benefit to Northern communities. A written submission from Aurora College, Collège Nordique Francophone and Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning asks the federal government to review its funding guidelines “... to ensure they are inclusive of Northern priorities and ways of knowing—including of Indigenous knowledge and research protocols—and that southern-based researchers are compelled by the conditions of their grants to invest in the North.”

Admissions requirements and processes

The prior knowledge that Northern learners bring to post-secondary education does not fit well within categories often used by these institutions when evaluating an application for admission. This often leads them to devalue the credentials of the learners and limit their ability to participate in post-secondary educational opportunities. As an engagement participant in Nunavut noted “If we can find a process for assisting where we can recognize prior learning...So that people who have important experience, that they have knowledge that they can share with the rest of the college and that we have a process for them to recognize them for and get credit for it.”

Institutions need to recognize diverse forms of skills and knowledge and support the use of alternate assessment practices for admission into post-secondary institutions.

Trailbreakers and successes

There are some hopeful signs in the world of Northern post-secondary education. Indigenous and other governments in the North, NGOs, and Northern educational institutions have all been pondering some of the same issues as were identified in the ‘barriers’ section above. They have come up with some innovative approaches to breaking down or avoiding those barriers.

Opening doors to students

Northern educational institutions do not want to exclude prospective students, but some of their entrance procedures have inadvertently had that effect. Various institutions are now reviewing the way in which they receive applicants to their programs. The College of the North Atlantic has what it calls a Readiness Project.

“Our goal is to co-develop an education plan with the applicant that fits the goals of the applicant, builds on their skill set and leads to admission to their program of choice, either right away or after some upgrading if they need to do some upgrading,” says the College’s Amy Dowden. The Readiness Project is a pilot program and currently applies to some of the trades programs offered by the College.

Information and preparedness for post-secondary education

Some regions, such as Nunatsiavut, have been leading student orientations, taking students to southern Canadian university campuses so that they can get a feel for the places they may go, and have a supported introduction to them.

A Northern NGO has begun taking that approach for other regions such as the NWT. Northern Compass representative Lois Philipp outlined the goals of the program, “What we’re aiming to do is provide supports so that northern youth can transition to post-secondary with the understanding that ultimately they need to return to their communities to be the change that is really needed to sustain our communities.”

Northern university/universities

Northern Canada got its first University when Yukon College transitioned to Yukon University in 2020. While a historic milestone for Northern post-secondary education, it is just the start of what participants from across the North are hoping for, as this person from Labrador shared: “I have a dream for a university in the North. And that’s exactly what it would be, a university in the North. And what I mean, it’s in Labrador.”

Aurora College is continuing on a multi-year process to become a polytechnic university in the Northwest Territories; Nunavut Arctic College is working with Memorial University to transition to a university; and the Labrador Institute of Memorial University transitioned into a full campus of Memorial University in Labrador in January 2022. Finally, the national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, is currently in the early phase of developing plans for the creation of an Inuit University, but at this time, nothing has been decided regarding the location(s) or education model for such a university.

Bridging the gap

It is clear that many learners are emerging from the secondary system without the skills they need to navigate post-secondary education. For those people who still have the desire to enter post-secondary education, there are some successful bridging programs in the North. A representative from the Northern Manitoba Learning Centre described its approach “...we help them find sponsorship so that coming to school was their job. We help them with mental health, addictions, daycare, housing everything, all the social needs - mental and emotional - and then the learning can happen...”.

While not strictly bridging programs, two successful programs are running in Ottawa and Montreal that take Inuit students and give them additional support during their training. Nunavut Sivuniksavut (the first program started) is in Ottawa and takes Inuit students primarily from Nunavut. Nunavik Sivuniksavut, modeled on the Ottawa program, is in Montreal and takes Inuit students from Nunavik. Both programs provide education about Inuit history and cultures. A student who attended the Ottawa program

described what it did for her, “It was life changing for me to learn about Inuit history and all of the courses that NS offered, and it made me who I am today.” Students from the two programs often go onto other forms of post-secondary education. The Grand Council of the Crees is looking at these programs as a potential model.

A bright side to COVID-19 - more Northerners doing research

The current pandemic has disrupted the education plans of many Northerners. But it has been of benefit to some. Joel McAlister of the Aurora Research Institute explains, “As southern researchers couldn’t travel north, they have worked with hunters and trappers’ organizations and other community groups to get the research into the field. This has resulted in more southern research being conducted by Northerners.” McAlister hopes this may result in some permanent changes in involving northerners in research.

Culture and language in the classroom (and beyond)

Through the Labrador Institute, Memorial University ran an Inuit Bachelor of Education course in Goose Bay to train Inuit teachers exclusively in Labrador. In partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government and the Faculty of Education, the course was designed to infuse existing education courses with culturally relevant, Inuit specific content. Many local Elders co-taught classes offering teachings and guidance, students were taken out on the land, and while earning their degree, also Inuktitut classes to earn a Nunatsiavut recognized language certificate. Sylvia Moore was the Institute’s lead on the Inuit Bachelor of Education program; “I think it’s such important work especially when we look at the calls to action [of the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission] and what every province and territory across the country is asking K-12 teachers to do then there has to be a place where they’re learning how to do that.”

Taking trades to the communities

A common difficulty in trades education in northern communities is finding local people qualified to mentor the next generations of tradespersons. Yukon University has been taking a couple of different approaches to solving that problem. One such approach is the use of the “trades bus”, a mobile program to take pre-trades education to smaller communities. The University is also working with local First Nations to develop new trades programs that may combine various skills more appropriate to local employment in smaller communities.

Reconciliation initiatives

Various initiatives are already underway in Northern educational institutions that respond to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Yukon University has collaborated with all Yukon First Nations to develop a ‘Yukon First Nations101’ course that is designed to provide an overview of the First Nations in Yukon, their culture and history and their comprehensive land claim and self-government agreements. Students and staff are required to complete it.

The Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning in the Northwest Territories has developed land-based education programs for Indigenous learners and delivers “...accredited post-secondary programming that is culturally informed and co-developed with Indigenous Elders, community leaders and leading Indigenous academics.”

Collège Nordique francophone has played an important role in the promotion and vitalization of cultural heritage through the teaching of the languages and cultures of the Northwest Territories. Tłıchq courses are among the most popular at the college. The resources developed in partnership and under the guidance of Dene Elders have resulted in several educational projects that have contributed to the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures throughout the NWT.

The Labrador Campus of Memorial University has been going through a multi-year process working with the Innu Nation, the Nunatsiavut Government, and the NunatuKavut Community Council to transition the Institute into an academic unit and a full Campus of Memorial University in order “to develop educational opportunities that meet Indigenous and Northern needs and priorities.” In July 2020, the School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies was created, the first academic unit in Labrador, which is co-governed by representatives from the three Indigenous groups in Labrador. In January 2022, Memorial launched the Labrador Campus, a full partnership with the Indigenous governments to continue to grow place-based, Northern-inspired, and Indigenous-led undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

University College of the North in Northern Manitoba has annual meetings with First Nations Education Authorities and other sponsors to discuss how UCN can better serve sponsored students (who represent ~70% of enrollment), and also speaks of “...constant discussion with communities – their leadership, social agencies and others – to maintain an understanding of their priorities, and how they are supporting their youth.”

Education for the North

Throughout all the engagement sessions and data gathered, it was clear that so many learners pursued, or wanted to pursue, post-secondary education so they could support themselves, their families, and their communities. As the survey demonstrates, the most popular reason to pursue post-secondary education was “to make a difference in my community.”

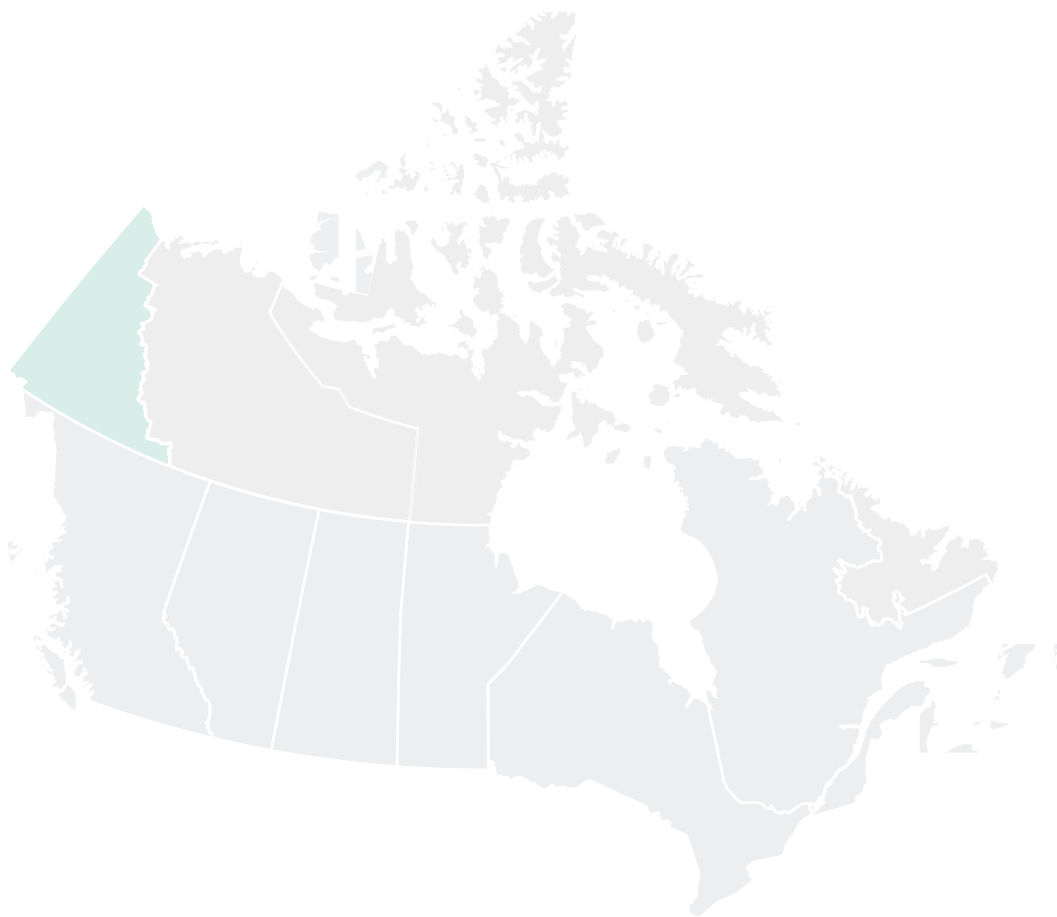


I. Regional Engagements

As part of the process of engaging Northerners in the quest to improve post-secondary education in the region, five of the six regions held public engagement sessions facilitated by Task Force members from the relevant regions. The engagement sessions varied from region to region, and within regions, partly due to public health measures in place due to the pandemic. Some were entirely in person, some were hybrid

in person/online, and some were entirely online. It was not possible to conduct such engagement sessions in Nunavik, as a representative from the region was not appointed until after the engagement sessions took place. Instead, the data from the Nunavik region is based on surveys and data-gathering conducted by Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, the school board for the region.





1.1. Yukon engagement summary

Yukon members conducted six formal engagement sessions in different Yukon communities. The engagement sessions were held in Dawson City, Haines Junction, Whitehorse (two sessions), Teslin, and Carmacks. Despite the pandemic, some people were able to attend in person, while others attended via Zoom.

The information from these engagement sessions is organized by theme.

K-12 Foundation

In every community session in Yukon, participants raised the issue of the territory's schools inadequately preparing students for a post-secondary education. The issue was identified as being particularly acute in smaller community schools, and in Indigenous students. Participants

brought up various facets of the problem. The most basic aspect is that students are being passed up through grades without the accompanying skills, as noted by one teacher, "I've had kids who cannot read at grade four, and I have to push them on to grade five, I have kids who can't count. And I have to push them on to grade five."

Various reasons were given for the school system's inability to consistently provide the requisite level of competence in rural and Indigenous graduates. They included systemic problems such as the legacy of residential schools, poverty, and inadequate housing. One school principal spoke of her struggle to improve the system, "we know there's a gap between Whitehorse education and the community's education, and I'm working on that. But I have to start slowly. Change is

difficult. And I am short 3.5 teachers. So, without teachers, and teachers willing to change and grow and learn, it's very hard to improve the quality of education that students graduate with."

As students graduate through the grades without the corresponding levels of basic competencies, they ultimately face a reckoning when they apply for post-secondary education and find that their skills are insufficient for admission, or for success if accepted. This leads them to drop out or to require upgrading courses that come with personal and financial costs, as expressed by a Yukon First Nations leader, "We spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on post-secondary every year for many of our students who finish high school, because secondary education is not stepping up to the plate to be providing adequate and fair education to First Nations children. They push them through and pass them without adequate education. And so they're left graduating with a certificate. 90 or 80% of the First Nations children who are graduating from high school are graduating with a certificate. So when they apply to go into post-secondary, they're disappointed that they have to do upgrading. And so not only does it disappoint them to have to do upgrading, but they have to do it for several more years. And the First Nations pay for the upgrading."

Another problem with smaller schools in Yukon is that they do not have the staffing and student levels required to provide courses (such as calculus) that may be prerequisites for post-secondary courses, so that even if students do succeed in graduating with an adequate level of the base course, their post-secondary choices are still constrained without taking additional secondary-level courses.

Participants also raised the issue of career counselling in secondary schools. They believe that on the whole, students are not sufficiently engaged in discussions about their post-secondary options and how to attain them. As one participant noted, careers should not be something discussed just one day a year.

Course accessibility

Course accessibility was something raised by several participants, in terms of both where the courses are delivered, and what is delivered. People spoke of the need to locate courses in more communities and to increase the provision of shorter, hands-on courses such as hairdressing or book-keeping.

One participant also suggested that if post-graduate courses were better grounded in the real-world experience of Northerners that might allow for some ability for course-work to also be applicable to the jobs of students (those working and studying at the same time).

Providing the knowledge necessary to implement claims and self-government agreements was top of mind for some participants. Indigenous governments taking on more responsibilities are finding they don't have enough of their own qualified people to fill the jobs "It's really important for especially the youth, maybe who are thinking about school and even like Citizens, maybe the generation below mine, really understand the agreements and what they're there for. Also, to really get a sense of the self-government agreement, because there's a lot of opportunity to make change within each of our Constitutions and so on."

One participant suggested that young people could be introduced to potential careers working for their First Nations governments by pairing practicums with relevant coursework.

Equitable access to distance education

The current pandemic has opened up access to some courses that were previously inaccessible to some students, “I live in a small community. And when I moved out there, any post-secondary that I wanted to pursue was non-existent. Because you had to do in-person classes, and I found it difficult to commute, like it was really hard. But now, during the pandemic, the university has had a huge change in the amount of classes that you can do online. So that’s very helpful.”

Other participants had a more negative view of the impacts of distance education, noting that many students could not afford computers, or Internet access, and that access was not available to many homes. Participants also questioned the quality of the learning obtained online.

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

Participants cited the trauma of Yukon’s recent history as a barrier to students grappling with the cultural values and expectations embedded in the education system, “the trauma that myself and older generations have experienced, I think it’s I think that, you know, indigenous people are still trying to find their voice in education. And we are very much currently still in the healing process and finding our voice in education.”

The clash of epistemologies was trying for one student who participated, “I’m trying to stuff my ways of knowing and doing into a box that is difficult because our ways of knowing and doing don’t fit into a box.” The participant suggested that better educating faculty about Indigenous epistemologies and learning styles might improve matters.



A different participant added another potential solution, “In terms of 20 years down the road I think it’s important for us as northerners, especially with how we are self-governing First Nations too, to ensure that we put the value of our traditional ways on the same mark as European culture. 20 years from now I think it would be amazing that a diploma program or a degree program would be a 16-year-old being out in the land for five years and actually accrediting that.”

Wrap around supports

Various participants spoke of the struggles of students uprooted from their home communities to pursue post-secondary education, whether in Whitehorse or further afield. As one person explained, kids in community schools are related to the majority of their community, and are used to being surrounded by an emotional support network. When that network is taken away from them, they can struggle.

Various suggestions were offered to help offset the dislocation felt by students:

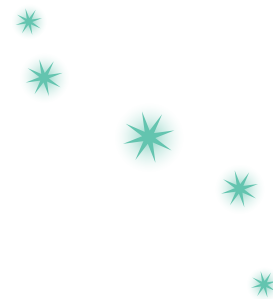
- The need to support families as well as students, so students could more easily bring family with them
- Small cultural connections such as bags of gifts from home around exam time.
- Having Indigenous mentoring in place for students
- Student preparedness necessary to navigate the world outside their communities
- Counselling support available outside of office hours
- Creating alumni communities that can help support incoming students

Participants recognized that post-secondary institutions have generally improved their approach to Indigenous students, creating Indigenous centres on campus. One participant cautioned that a more generic approach to culture does not always have the desired effect, “It’s great to have Elders, it really is but to be able to have Elders from your own home place that you can already connect with trust is so important.”

Financing

Financing of post-secondary education was raised by several participants, who spoke of the fact that different Yukon First Nations have different policies and different levels of support for students. Some participants suggested that First Nations needed to not apply blanket policies on funding limits, but look instead at individual needs.

One participant noted that several scholarships and bursaries exist, and that some are undersubscribed, but that young people don’t know that they exist; or if they do know, don’t know how to apply and secure them. She suggested secondary school students should be made better aware of those financial opportunities, and be provided with assistance to apply as part of enhanced career counselling.





1.2 Northwest Territories Engagement Summary

NWT engagement sessions used two methodologies. One set of engagements was targeted to specific groups of people, and was held in five sessions facilitated by two NWT Task Force members supported by a contractor. A total of 71 participants took part in the five online sessions. The target groups included:

- Institutional Stakeholders
- Educational Stakeholders
- Francophone Stakeholders
- The general public
- Education, Institution, Government Stakeholders (this session was intended for all those who could not attend the previous sessions)

These participants were recruited through a combination of targeted invitations and open calls.

To dig deeper into the community experience and perceptions of post-secondary education, a Task Force member resident in Deline worked with the Deline Got'ine Government (Deline is a self-governing community) and with NGO Northern Youth Abroad to organize engagement with the community. As this was a unique approach to gathering data for this report, the information is included separately in the report.

The summary below is a combination of highlights from the online engagements. Quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and length. Full unaltered transcripts are available upon request.

While participants in the engagement sessions reflected back many of the concerns that Task Force Members heard from regions across the north, it was clear that there were also unique challenges, and areas of particular strength, in the NWT. Participants noted numerous, complex and often interrelated barriers that people face when accessing postsecondary. This included those who are entering into post-secondary for the first time, barriers students face within the post-secondary system, and the transition into work and careers.

For one of the participants in the online engagement sessions there were two clear areas where the federal government had a role and responsibility to support post-secondary education in the North, the federal commitment to the Truth and Reconciliations Calls to Action, and the reduction and elimination of barriers for accessing post-secondary learning. “I would say that the first thing that the federal government has to recognize is that post-secondary funding is a redistributive or reparations mechanism that is owed to First Nations people with the ultimate goal of upending the relationship that Western education systems, and assimilation and genocide have caused First Nations and Indigenous peoples, because of the legacy of residential schools. They acknowledge and accept responsibility as a direct response to the Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women and Girls Report and the Truth and Reconciliation [Calls to Action]... Second... [there are] systemic barriers that are faced by Indigenous and northern students, and so those would have to be cleared away.”

Northern postsecondary education is an area where participants could see opportunities to fulfill the Calls to Action, as well as create more opportunities for northern students.

K-12 foundation

Several participants mentioned that NWT schools, particularly schools in smaller communities are not adequately preparing people for post-secondary studies, and suggested a renewed focus on early childhood education, and K-12 programming.

“There’s the basic secondary education to qualify to get into an institution of higher learning. It’s just not meeting its target.” One participant noted that this problem is not just anecdotal; it’s well-documented, “There’s the Auditor General of Canada’s Report² and multiple reports that have identified the seriousness of the problem of non-attendance, non-completion of the basic tools that you need in order to go into an institution of higher learning.”

There was a repeated emphasis on the need to make these programs relevant and reflective of northern communities, including staffing with folks who understand the north, and who can provide culturally relevant and appropriate programs. “Maybe we need to really be investing in those early days of making sure that we have early childhood educators and not just people that we bring from the south, but people who are trained here, who grew up here.”

² The auditor general's report on the NWT K-12 system was considered as part of the literature review in this report - the original report is available at https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nwt_202002_e_43522.html

The simple fix of adjusting school calendars to Northern calendars was suggested by one participant, “One thing that I’ve noticed as an educator is that we continue to lose students around the same time of year. It’s usually during hunting season or there could be cultural activities going on in the communities towards polar nights and polar days. These influences, I don’t think they’re accounted for because we teach the Alberta curriculum³...”

Many participants also noted the particular needs of students transitioning from K-12 into post-secondary specifically. One participant thought that a bridging program would help, “So having like a prep year before, say, going off to college or university would be beneficial.”

Reducing Barriers within Post-Secondary

Once students have entered into postsecondary, there are numerous barriers for them to continue, and successfully complete their education.

Facing the challenge of making post-secondary education more accessible to people in NWT communities was succinctly solved by one participant, “Bring education to the communities as opposed to forcing students to leave their communities and the people they love to get lost in a big system.” Another participant noted that even Yellowknife is an alienating big city to people from the smaller NWT communities. Building on participants who noted the unique strengths of a strong post-secondary system that centres northern and Indigenous knowledge, some participants focused on the idea of growing institutions in

the NWT so that people could study closer to home (if not at home). “You want to have ideally 30 years from now, you want to have a situation where the north should be known for a niche in a specific area of study. If I wanted to do an MBA in resource development, I would be thinking of U of A or the University of British Columbia. So those institutions have built their reputation. And so 30 years from now or 10 years from now or nine years from now, ideally when anybody in Canada or internationally thinks of maybe a diploma in climate change studies or whatever, then they would think of the North.”

This was also of particular interest to representatives from the Tłıchq Government, who spoke to the importance of bringing education to their own nation, focusing on the unique knowledge of northern nations, and building opportunities at home. “I think for the Tłıchq Government’s perspective, we prefer to have more of a one-on-one catered approach centralizing how we want post-secondary done for the people and having Aurora College come to us instead of us go to them. Have Dechinta [a non-government land-based, university-accredited learning centre] come to us instead of us going to them. Really cater a program that is suitable and in keeping with the old way of life for our people.”

Other ways of increasing accessibility and successful completion of post-secondary that were raised included micro-credentialing, breaking courses down into smaller and shorter units. This was supported by some participants who thought such courses might be more welcoming to learners hesitant to embark on a full course of study, and be structured to include work

³ The NWT government has announced an intention to transition to the British Columbia curriculum

experience to ensure support for individuals as they leave post-secondary education. “If we could map out that path to where the end goal is, to enroll into something that leads to a long-term career that is transferable. I think maybe if a post-secondary education could focus on those aspects of things that are already existing and build up. Students that are struggling in communities don’t feel that they need to go through a four-year degree to get an engineering degree and become an engineer. You could always start as a heavy equipment driver. That’s fine, but there is a pathway that leads you to that direction.”

The role of internships in easing people into learning opportunities was also supported. “I think one way of being able to help and the federal government does that often, is to have wage subsidies for the employers who could take interns...and with wage subsidies, they would hesitate less. Especially when you know that in the North, it’s mostly small businesses.

Wrap around supports

Task Force members repeatedly heard about the complexity of northern lives, and the unique barriers that northern students face when deciding to attend post-secondary. These issues ranged from housing instability, to mental health supports, and the demands of complex family lives.

The non-academic preparation required for NWT learners leaving their home communities was addressed by participants, “And it is my belief that moving away from our families at ages as young as 17 can contribute to lasting dysfunction within families and even severe mental health issues. I think that we need local orientation courses for students heading south that cover independent living, managing finances, mental health and preparing for post-secondary education.”

The mental health of Indigenous NWT students was a concern for some participants. “Students are going to need mental wellness supports. That’s got to be part of the supports that are put in place and easily available, and it needs to be northern focused and indigenous focused for our indigenous students who are suffering trauma, are intergenerational survivors of residential school.”

“We really need to work on mental health. We need to work on mental health and wellness of our people. And then they will be prepared both academically and mental health-wise for post-secondary.”

A particular demographic was singled out by one participant as needing additional support, “We found a lot of students that came to Aurora College were families. Well, I shouldn’t say that. Let’s say single mothers, mostly single mothers with children. And that becomes very expensive to move your children and support them alone. There would be some families, but I think our demographics were a lot of single mothers that were ready to enter education and weren’t getting the funding to be able to support their children in a separate environment.”

Housing

Participants from the NWT expressed concern around significant infrastructure and the important wrap around supports required to ensure student success. “Housing- it’s a huge issue, not only availability, but cost and quality; internet would be the cost and the data caps. And childcare is a big concern... ensure that federal programs designed to encourage people to get post-secondary aren’t being barriers to actually access it.”

Another housing issue raised was whether learners' housing would be available to them if they moved back to their home communities after moving away for studies. Not only are there long waitlists for appropriate and affordable housing, moving for school can jeopardize long term housing stability and access. "There's also another issue with housing in the Northwest Territories that if you leave your house... you could lose your house. So that also is a barrier to people, whether some cases it's not true, some it's an urban myth in some places, but that's been something that really needs to be looked into that that you could leave and go back to your same house. You don't have to go to another house, a different house that that those supports are in place. And you know that you're not giving up something you've worked towards to finally have a home setup in your home community."

Equitable access to distance education

With much of the country's education moving online, participants recognized that the NWT is at a disadvantage. "It's about speeding up the whole issue of bandwidth for the North and no matter where you live in the North, it's crucial, crucial. Other participants picked up on other aspects of access to online learning "I think access to the internet and not just the internet but providing students or making it easier for students to lay their hands on devices and being comfortable with them is key."

Participants recognized that online learning could benefit NWT learners, but only if preconditions are met. "I can say that I can see some advantages to online learning. There's more flexibility. Since we teach diverse students, we need flexibility. My message would be to fund these endeavors to increase our capacity and to also get technology and data plans into the hands of our students,

because I'm not happy with the fact that there's still a digital divide and I'm trying to fill that gap as an educator. It's very difficult in such a short space of time."

Financing

"Education, post-secondary education should not be a privilege."

Affordability is a fundamental barrier to NWT learners to take on post-secondary education, as one former student attested. "My experiences with this Territory [is that] student financial assistance programs were not good. Across most of my peers, that was what I often heard. Our existing program did not come close to covering the cost of my tuition when I was in post-secondary. My understanding of what the tuition rates are now, the amount that is offered to students is not keeping up with both the cost of inflation, but also the skyrocketing cost of tuition. "

For Indigenous people in the NWT, additional funding may come through their political affiliation, or membership, with a particular Indigenous nation, but that means rates of such support are variable, and may require individuals to make citizenship decisions based on funding necessity. For example, one person noted that some people at the age of 18 change membership to take advantage of preferable funding from another nation. "It would be interesting to see the federal government almost make that top up flat line across the board throughout the whole N.W.T."

Another person thought the whole student financing approach should be rethought, “Tuition should be free across the country. Nobody should have to pay to attend post-secondary education... If that’s not going to be the case, at least tuition needs to be free for Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous people who are Indigenous to the Northwest Territories.”

Recognizing the Unique Systemic Barriers, and Pathways to Success in the NWT

Many of the participants spoke to the specific barriers that northern students are facing, as well as the broader systemic issues that face northern learners. For Indigenous students and potential students, this includes the lasting traumas of residential schooling, systemic racism, and intergenerational trauma. Noting the importance of thinking and acting broadly, one participant recommended: “Reinstate funding for the National Aboriginal Healing Foundation so we can start to further address some of our grief and trauma of the Indian residential schooling system of which you know. Many people were launched back into those experiences, the memories, with the recovery of these unmarked graves. I say that in particular because even though I’m immensely interested in having a conversation about the North specifically, I think there is a ton of work that the federal government needs to be doing for sovereign Indigenous nations and citizens more broadly first.”

Another participant noted that even local post-secondary infrastructure could be triggering to Indigenous students. “From what I understand, when students have assemblies, they go to a Northern United church. When we’re dealing with Reconciliation, when we have to bring Aboriginal students into a church, we refer to it as an auditorium”.

Participants noted the continued importance of northern learning institutions that would offer opportunities that were directly aligned with the existing labour market requirements. For example, representatives from the Government of the Northwest Territories offered examples from their own research that indicated the ongoing interest in and importance of northern focused trades programs.

However other participants noted that there were also unique opportunities to develop new northern post-secondary programs that reflect the unique interests and knowledges in the NWT.

Some participants went even further to note the risks of programming and institutions that offered programming that was too narrowly focused, limiting both the vision of post-secondary education, and the economic opportunities within communities. “This is a resource extraction economy, and it’s been forced down the throats of the population here in terms of the drive, this is historical, the drive since the 1930s to get resources out of the ground for the benefit of Canada, not for the benefit of Northerners, but for the benefit of Canada. So as a result, the systems that are built are systems that serve the resource extraction sector. And what happens is when that focus is continually reinforced by both setting up programs but also the funding of those programs, you start to have communities that are dependent upon only one thing and one thing only, which is resource extraction.”

One participant noted the importance of institutional agility, and pointed to some of the unique institutions that are able to fill diverse community needs. “It’s got to be an independent institution with independent governance. You’ve got to get government out of it. Where Dechinta

has gone, and where the Francophone college [College Nordique] has gone. They're independent bodies and those independent bodies are flexible. They can move the can, they're not risk averse and they can actually do something that is very exciting."

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

One theme that was repeated throughout the engagement sessions was the commitment to Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. Participants reflected on both the unique opportunities and important ethical commitments to ensuring that post-secondary is not only aligned with Indigenous knowledges, but works to create new opportunities for programming and pathways for Indigenous students.

This is a complex issue, with participants reflecting on the larger structures and legacies of colonization and in particular, residential schools, that are still impediments to Indigenous students in the NWT, starting at the earliest stages of education. However, participants also noted the important strengths that come from drawing on an education that is rooted in Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. "I think that both the federal government, but also the Territorial government, needs to improve investment into anticolonial, land-based, equity-informed elementary and high school programs. If kids could learn what they're learning in the traditional classroom, in their own languages, you know, you can teach science in another language that doesn't have to be in English. The expectations that we have around how kids are developing those skills is really rooted in patriarchy and colonialism and white supremacy, and I think that it's important that that's also understood."

Participants highlighted land-based educational opportunities centred in smaller communities. Some participants noted opportunities to support students to stay at home, while also tailoring the education to reflect the diversity of Indigenous knowledges in the NWT.

A participant from the Francophone community saw this issue as presenting new opportunities, "We are currently working on this. How can we put reconciliation into action? So it would be really something unique and to see the different cultures together, be it Francophone, Anglophone, Indigenous, multicultural, which really works together as a link, for the North to be a multicultural hub." Another participant echoed that viewpoint, "The other thing that I think needs to change or continue in this vein is really to have a collaboration between the three colleges and not just the three colleges, but really the three communities."

Community Centred Research

Connected to the value of Indigenous knowledge, there was significant conversation shared about the value of research that was based in the NWT and led by northern communities, employing northern people. There are already some successes in this area, with northern based research institutions partnering with communities and Indigenous governments to create research opportunities driven by community needs. It was noted that several organizations (Dene Nahjo, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, Hoti ts'eeda, and Western Arctic Moving Pictures) are directly contributing to this research field, bringing in research dollars to the territory and collaborating to create a significant northern research ecosystem that includes capacity building and training. Participants wanted to see this sort of approach more often, "Instead of just bringing

your thesis to the N.W.T., how about the people that are here actually drive the research... I think what we've known for a long time here is that we're trying to move away from this colonial system of education... And so why not let northerners drive the process where they want post-secondary education to go here in the north?" One person suggested "Seeing a community research unit at a local institution could be great. Actually having somebody responsible for connecting researchers with northern organizations and communities to inform community-based and equity-informed research."

While there were opportunities in the field of research, there were also areas where there could be more support to ensure research is invested in the north and not extractive of knowledge. One participant proposed a role for governments to play; "I think the federal government can do a better job of supporting the First Nations Information Governance Center and promoting the principles of O.C.A.P. [ownership, control, access, and possession, principles that assert that First Nations have control over data collection processes, and that they own and control how this information can be used]

Official Languages of Canada in Northern Post-secondary Education

The NWT held a Francophone-specific engagement session. Many participants in that session noted that having more choices to study close to home in French is a key part of having a learning continuum that supports their objectives. While participants generally felt it was important to have access to quality French-language post-secondary education, they wanted to do so in an environment where Indigenous cultures and languages are also valued and taught.

Students from the North wanted access to a diversity of learning opportunities and fewer barriers amongst institutions to transfer credits in order to benefit from the best of each one and to diversify their learning experience through courses in French, English and Indigenous languages. Some of the participants spoke about French-language education as a draw for inter-regional migration or for immigration and that post-secondary education institutions in minority language communities are community assets where people gather, access services and build their communities.

While it was acknowledged that a full comprehensive French-language college was not viable due to small cohorts, programs from Francophone universities could be offered in the North through partnerships. However, participants stressed that offering a southern-developed program with no adaptation would not be appropriate. Rather, participants noted that programs needed to be adapted to Northern realities. Those participants with experience with these partnerships noted that funding through Official Languages in Education programs from Heritage Canada support this type of activity and that Northern communities needed to have equitable access to those funding opportunities.

Participants raised the issue of losing Francophone students to other jurisdictions because of the lack of placements available in the North. The example was raised of students studying online in the North to be teachers who take their practicums in southern Canada and never return. When it comes to French-speaking communities, the loss of even one qualified individual can mean the difference between communities having access to services in French and not. That is why when

considering initiatives to support Northern post-secondary education close attention needs to be given to the impact rather than the numbers.

Supporting Immigrants to Canada's North

Participants noted that successful immigration journeys are best achieved when people can learn about Indigenous knowledge and language. They suggested this could be achieved by creating post-secondary opportunities grounded in Indigenous perspectives, making the offerings more relevant to Indigenous Northerners while attractive and useful for others.

Young people from families who recently immigrated to the territories noted that post-secondary education can help make communities destinations for international students looking for opportunities and welcoming communities. One college stated that they get weekly outreach from international students wanting to explore programming in the territory. However, the lack of housing and services, coupled with the high cost of international student tuition are often a deterrent. Participants spoke of building a culture of post-secondary education in the North with niche programming with a good reputation. Simply put, one participant said: “If you think of the North as a viable option for people coming... [from across the world]... education provides that option.”

Some participants spoke of immigration targets and how post-secondary education can support these objectives. But students and their families need to be supported with the right suite of holistic services to support successful immigration journeys. Those services include housing, childcare, employment services and multilingual and multicultural insertion programs.

When it came to encouraging international students to stay in the North, participants encouraged the Federal government to review rules that limit the ability for students to work while studying. This came up several times as a significant barrier to attracting and retaining international students. Another consideration one participant highlighted, was tuition rebate programs if people chose to stay in the region, “So it's not just always coming and taking away, but also contributing and helping with the growth that we're hoping for.”



Délįnę community perspective

In addition to the more general engagement sessions held in the Northwest Territories, a community-specific engagement event was held in the community of Délįnę. This predominantly Dene community of more than 500 people on Great Bear Lake is unique in the North, in that it has a community-level self-government agreement. The agreement includes control of education and early childhood education.

Engagement sessions with the local community were held over 2 evenings in November 2021. One session focused on K-12 issues, and the other on post-secondary education. The sessions were supplemented by surveys of community residents.

Participants discussed Dene laws as a basis for behaviour and actions in the school system. Specific Dene laws discussed were:

- *share what you have*
- *love one another*
- *be respectful to elders*
- *sleep at night, work during the day*
- *be polite and don't argue with anyone*

Participants articulated a long-term vision of having an Indigenous Principal and staff.

Elders noted that they want language and culture to be reflected in the school and as the foundation of school programming.



People at the engagement expressed concerns that people from Délįnę educated and trained in professions tended not to return - the example was given that three people from the community have trained as nurses, but none have returned. People wanted their youth to train in professions, but to return to the community. The local government was asked to consider the development of a 'return to Deline' plan for funding post-secondary students. Trades programming was also singled out as a priority with suggestions that it could be delivered at the high school level as well as at college.

Engagement participants suggested supporting local post-secondary students through:

- *Financial support*
- *Career counseling*
- *Tutoring*
- *Developing programs that suit their needs – i.e., *LOCALIZED**
- *Bachelors of Education (teacher training programs)*
- *Trade programs*

Some highlights of the survey found:

- *Difficulties in transitioning into post-secondary education included academic workload, loneliness, mental health, homesickness, culture shock, racism, lack of Indigenous spaces and cultural support*
- *42% of students would be interested in a bridging program specifically for D  l  n   learners.*
- *Students would like an increase in land-based education*
- *Students would benefit from cultural support, and mental health and addictions support*
- *more affordable housing and basic needs were also needed*

The top factor that helped PSE students was identified as “family support”.

The output from the engagements will not only help inform the Task Force on Post-Secondary education, but will also help inform the development of a an education vision and strategy by the D  l  n   Got   n   Government.





1.3. Nunavut engagement summary

Nunavut engagement sessions were targeted to specific groups of people, and were conducted in focus group style in a mix of in-person and online sessions as feasible. Five sessions were held, including representatives of: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and regional Inuit associations; District Education Authorities; post-secondary graduates and current students; adult educators; and Nunavut Teacher Education Program students. Participants were asked a series of questions about barriers to PSE and potential improvements, and were also asked to assess what PSE programs or structures would be most useful. A total of fifty participants took part in the focus groups.

Wrap around supports

Issues of how to support students in environments outside their home communities were frequently raised by participants. As one participant said, “I think a big part is the unknown, a lot of people have not moved or travelled outside of the North or lived in the south. Leaving for school on your own without family support can be a major issue when people are making those decisions. Or even having to move to another town or community in the North.”

The difficulties faced by students are exacerbated when they are from smaller communities, and are attending southern institutions. The difficulties can include common aspects of life in southern Canada, such as navigating public transport, and setting up an apartment.

Housing was frequently identified as an issue, whether students were heading to a Nunavut community or to a southern one. At Nunavut Arctic College, housing, especially housing suitable for families, is a constraint on the number of students that can be accepted. This assertion was backed up by the personal experience of a student in the teacher education program, “I almost backed out of NTEP because I had to make sure I had housing because I am expecting, if I wasn’t going to get housing, I would’ve had to find a job that provided me with housing.” According to one participant, the availability of housing has dictated the programs that students will take in Nunavut.

Finding housing in southern Canada is also stressful for Nunavut students, “Looking for housing is a very big deal for a lot of people. And having people understand that you’re a student, you have limited funds, so you may have to find roommates. Living with somebody you have never met can be very scary for people in their first year. Some supports around that area and understanding how things work in that area would go a long way.”

Many Nunavut students are already parents, so daycare was another major issue raised by respondents - again, it applied to both North and south. As one student observed, “If you’re coming to Iqaluit, the daycare waitlist is insane. This can be a limit.” Another former student spoke of how having a daycare on her southern campus made it possible for her to complete her education, “Having secure daycare at campus and availability of childcare have had an impact on my success in completing PSE. Because the daycare was right on campus, I can drop off my baby, go to my class and run back to the daycare to breastfeed him and then go to my next class.”

Several participants mentioned the absence of family support and the absence of community as stresses on Nunavut students. Some participants brought up ideas to help students cope with the strangeness and isolation they feel, such as encouraging Inuit alumni from particular institutions to register to mentor new Inuit students, or creating virtual communities of Inuit students.

A participant from Nunavut Arctic College highlighted the positive influence of bringing Elders into classrooms, “With the adult basic education program we do a lot of Elder projects where community members and community experts come into the classroom. That has really impacted I think on students who go from ABE programs onto other programs and because they have a positive experience coming into the college is not really different from being in the community. It’s just a place where a lot of the learning happens.”

K-12 Foundation

Other data sources have indicated that there are shortcomings in Nunavut’s schools when it comes to preparing them academically for post-secondary education. These findings were corroborated by participants in the Nunavut focus groups, “Right now, we have such a high dropout rate for grade 10, 11 we have students, they’re not making the grade because of the standards and there’s no real transitioning. If you’re not working at grade 9 level, you get into grade 10 and it’s frustrating.” Another participant spoke of the lack of study and work skills among Nunavut students, “They’ve never really been held accountable for behavior, attendance and they have this idea that, whether its conscious or not, that they’ll just be passed on, like they were in the secondary system and when they learn that that’s not the case, they don’t know how to deal with it.”

Several participants identified the lack of counselling services in schools outside Iqaluit as a weakness in the system. As one participant flatly stated, “The importance of guidance counselling is the biggest recommendation”. Other participants spoke of the need to have guidance counsellors engage with students at a grade nine level, as that is when the students begin to choose high school courses that will have a bearing on their ability to gain entry to particular post-secondary course options. As one student noted, guidance was not just about advising students what courses to take but also about broadening their horizons, “It’s really limiting for students to realize what kind of options they have when a lot of the things they see in the community are: hamlet workers, health workers and sometimes it’s even the environment that limits people from pursuing post-secondary education.”

One program available to some Nunavut students is bridging the disconnect between high school and post-secondary studies. Nunavut Sivuniksavut, an Ottawa-based program was referred to by several participants. Two current students had attended the program and spoke very highly of it. “It was life changing for me to learn about Inuit history and all of the courses that NS offered, and it made me who I am today,” said one participant. Another participant spoke more of the non-academic support she got from the program, “I found it a very supportive environment for me to start. Because it taught me a lot of the basic grounding, how to navigate myself around the city, how to find housing and it was a grounding start for me of where I wanted to go.” Some participants thought that the program should be expanded, and possibly also offered in Nunavut.

Other participants were unsure of the academic value of the program, but praised its work in instilling cultural pride in students.

In addition to the issue of academic readiness, a couple of participants picked up on the issue of learning disabilities, and their role in keeping students out of post-secondary education, especially if they are not diagnosed. “I was dismayed that there is no testing up here for learning disabilities and that it’s very expensive if you need it. I think this is a factor for some students who are not following through and finishing...and would think that they’re just falling behind and blaming themselves because they weren’t “smart enough” to keep up. When it was really a learning disability that held them back.”

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

As with all parts of the North, Nunavut Inuit have a less than positive experience of education in the past, “There is a lack of trust in the institutions and there’s definitely some intergenerational transfer from bad experience in schooling in the past.” Another participant succinctly framed the problem still facing Inuit, “The system has been challenging. Expecting Inuit to change, they make Inuit feel “you’re not valued much, we expect you to change to our system” this is a problem. Education has to change to the form of Inuit.”

Linguistic barriers were identified as part of the problem. Most education is in English, and for many Inuit in Nunavut, English is a second language. Increasing the use of Inuktitut in education brings up another issue for some participants, that of accreditation; “Our knowledge is unique and it is no less than other people’s knowledges and we need to honor that and have our own accreditation here in Nunavut.”

The integration of Inuit knowledge (Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit or IQ) into courses could make them more relatable and relevant to Inuit students according to some participants. One spoke of the way it has already been included in one Nunavut Arctic College course, “One of the main things we did was IQ principles. It was successful with the students and community. And the ability for students to develop skills that are relevant to the community.”

Financing

Some participants mentioned funding as a major limitation to peoples’ participation in post-secondary education. “I don’t know how many times I’ve heard from students who are taking education in the south, as well as in Nunavut. The money they get is barely above the poverty line. And if they have families, and most do have families that come with them. They’re just getting by.”

While funding levels may be a disincentive, students also struggle with their abilities to manage the money they get, according to participants, including this funder “We need to do a better job of explaining our funding and how it works. Because when you get a direct deposit it’s like “whoop here’s all this money” but it doesn’t go very far.”

Some participants recommended that students get some instruction or support in financial literacy, either through the school system, or through Indigenous student support services in the institutions they attend.

Equitable access to distance education

Participants had mixed feelings about distance education. Some commented on how the pandemic had demonstrated the potential of

offering high school courses at a distance, “If their small communities don’t offer certain courses like chemistry and physics, they can still have this option to get into PSE. This would be a good alternative, if this was offered, I think this can be an option to improve access to PSE.”

College programs could also be delivered virtually, leading an adult educator to muse about those possibilities, “The thing is when we do this is that we are able to do bring them into the communities, I think that’s what’s important because earlier, many people mentioned about trying to get to the places, trying to leave their home community. We can’t offer every program in every community, but I think now we see a future possibility that we can explore to produce online programs.”

Putting a damper on the potential of online programs, several people mentioned problems with the cost, reliability and accessibility of the Internet in Nunavut. Some also mentioned that online learning, even when accessible, does not suit everyone, “Just this past year, we noticed or have heard some students withdrawing because they find, or trying to do an online program is harder than being in the actual school. Trying to work from home, work from where there may be smaller kids disrupting or because they don’t have a private room to work out of. We heard some say it’s just too hard to try to do online, so they ended up withdrawing.”

Students were not the only ones to experience difficulties with online learning. According to one student, her instructors also had difficulties to the extent that it had an impact on the students’ learning.

Course accessibility

Participants discussed the recognition of the credentials of prospective learners as one aspect of the accessibility of post-secondary education. “If we can find a process for assisting where we can recognize prior learning...So that people who have important experience, that they have knowledge that they can share with the rest of the college and that we have a process for them to recognize them for and get credit for it.”

The idea of delivering programs closer to where people live was debated by participants. Some felt more local delivery of more programs would be beneficial. “We have not had the management studies course here in at least 15 years, that’s a course I myself am interested in, but I have four kids and a mortgage. Owning my own home makes it a challenge for me to leave for school.” Online delivery of some of those courses could be an avenue to accessibility, although with the reservations expressed earlier in this section. One participant noted that another limiting factor would be the availability of sufficient community adult educator capacity, and suggested recruiting more part time staff in communities.

An artefact of restricted local delivery noted by participants is that sometimes people will just take whatever is offered locally.” We see this in the NTEP [Nunavut Teacher Education Program] program, it’s great, we need teachers but not everybody is passionate about being a teacher. They take it because it’s offered. It’s not really what they want to do”

Other participants raised issues of quality control in local delivery, suggesting that courses delivered in smaller centres might not be of the same quality as when they’re delivered in larger centres.

One participant championed the idea of a university in Nunavut, for reasons of both accessibility, and symbolism. “If we had a university in our communities, young children can see their aunts and uncles and say “I’m going to go to university”. And I can say that from personal experience, my mom is the oldest of 7 and all of them went to PSE and just naturally I’m going to go to university. Just because it’s natural and expected of me and my role models. I know everyone is not fortunate to have these role models. But I think if we have a university at home, it would create that space and opportunities for our local northerners to see the role models within their communities.”





1.4. Nunatsiavut, Labrador engagement summary

Task Force members in Labrador held seven virtual engagement sessions altogether, one in each of the five Inuit communities in Nunatsiavut – Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville, and Rigolet – and two-Labrador wide sessions. A total of 38 people took part in these sessions, with the majority of participants identifying as beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claim Agreement. This section reflects the regional findings and voices from Labrador, particularly Nunatsiavut Inuit who have attended post-secondary education in diverse places, who are planning to attend, who are unsure if they will ever be able to attend, and those who always wanted to attend, but did not have the opportunity.

Post-Secondary accessibility

Throughout every session in Labrador, participants made it very clear that most post-secondary education opportunities currently available to them are often far away, inaccessible, and do not reflect who they are or where they are from. As one participant shared, “It will be important to have education closer to home, so you don’t have to travel and experience the culture shock to expand education... people who have to leave and go far away for education are those who struggle the most.” Not only does learning in place enable people to learn in the ways they want to learn, and learn with their full selves (e.g. with heart, head, and grounded in their identities, cultures, and histories), but it helps instill an obligation

to land and community, and can be a way of helping connect education with employment opportunities in communities after graduation.

A key priority from participants was to build modular, incremental, and flexible opportunities for people to move through their own educational pathways. This modular form of learning puts control and self-determination in the hands of learners: it provides choices, practical skills, and the flexibility and accessibility people need when they are balancing school with work and family. As one participant explained “Especially for people who don’t have easy access to post-secondary, like I didn’t from Nain, just making it more real for you, I think having those tangible, buildable steps that just grow. And it gives you permission, then to choose how far you want to go,”

Another participant also observed that breaking courses into smaller modules could help learners manage their concerns about a long-term commitment to post-secondary education, “I think that that’s a good option for people because you know, sometimes it’s scary to think of doing this programs with three whole years long, like, I don’t want to commit to something that long, but oh, they’re offering this, you know, Business 101 or something...like the basic things you need to know, it’s going to be three months or however many months, you know, people will be more willing to commit to something like that.”

Shorter courses that interspersed learning with work could also help manage affordability of education and family obligations, “But it’s like you almost need to set up some sort of program where people can go and work. Or they can go, they’ll do a course for three months or one semester, then after that semester they’re actually going into the

workplace and seeing what this job is really all about. And then in three months’ time, they’ll go on to another course or they’ll go do something else. But they’re learning but they’re also getting paid while they’re doing it. So it doesn’t feel like they’re losing out or not making any money to support their family or to support yourself.”

Another idea for place-based learning included establishing opportunities for rotating visits from instructors and administrators, where they would spend time in communities to deliver courses. One participant went a step further in advocating for local learning, “I have a dream for a university in the North. And that’s exactly what it would be, a university in the North. And what I mean, it’s in Labrador. ... And I would also like to see it administered by people from the North, which is from Labrador.”

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

Participants in the engagement sessions discussed the critical importance of Indigenizing, decolonizing, and Northernizing post-secondary education, in order to create educational systems that work for people in the North: educational systems where people see themselves reflected in all aspects, from the program choices, to the course content and assessment, to the instructors, to classmates, to student resources..

One aspect of this is prioritizing and accrediting Indigenous and land-based ways of knowing and learning. Some participants spoke of learning traditional skills in a course in high school and what it meant to them, while another enthused, “Learning from our Elders and land-based learning hands on learning is so good. That could be making a kamutik or making snowshoes,

cleaning sealskin, and then making the kamik and the pauluk from after the seal. And there's so many opportunities that can come from that and Inuktitut can be intermingled."

A key priority that came up in several sessions was the need for Indigenous-governed curricula and for Indigenous instructors to develop and deliver courses that are grounded in Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, and that centre Indigenous content. One participant spoke of what happens otherwise "a lot of the baggage that I'm just learning to unpack this year, as I finish my degree is how much racism I've internalized from my minor, from my professors, and from what my professors made me endure in classes, just comments from peers and arguments that they allowed to happen, I really internalize that... this is not the cost I want to pay for my education."

A dream many participants had for post-secondary education is for Indigenous courses and programs to be offered at all universities across the country, and for Indigenous perspectives to be included in every course. Essentially, participants felt we should not limit Indigenous content only to Indigenous-specific courses and programs, but we should also aspire to integrate these perspectives, worldviews, and ways of knowing throughout all types of post-secondary programs. "I would also like to see courses on Indigenous cultures included in all universities in the country. And, you know, ... people are just starting to become aware of what has happened to Indigenous people in Canada. And I think a lot of our social issues have to do with that. And I think that there needs to be a way that we need to find a solution. And it can be done through the universities to teach people on what has happened, and why Indigenous people, why some Indigenous people are, like we are today."

Connecting to community needs and opportunities

A theme that emerged throughout all sessions was the need to support people in applying and using their post-secondary education in ways that work for them and their communities. Integrating education and employment through partnerships with Indigenous governments, and through centring community needs and priorities in the design and delivery of programs, is crucial in helping people see themselves in their education and see the value of their education for their communities. As one participant shared, "I actually decided to come home early and not do my second year... And the main reason was because my heart was still focused on our Inuit culture, and how I can continue to learn and promote Inuktitut back home and to learn from our Elders."

People wanted to be able to use their education to give back to their home communities, but they felt that there aren't always opportunities to do so, or the opportunities aren't as explicit as they could be. "I just really wanted to let you know, like if we all had our own places that we can do our work and be supported within our role through the education, we can give back tenfold, you're not just you know, teaching 13 people in one course, you're enabling for a greater future for our community."

One way of giving back to their communities that participants identified is for the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) to work with educational institutions to create pathways for students to fill needed gaps in government capacity "like how NG could partner with the institution to create jobs or give input on what programs are offered, like where there's gaps in employment or employability skills are lacking, like targeting that I think would be really effective to get Northerners employed in the North in those positions."

Equitable access to distance education

Some participants spoke of the benefits of online classes, either because the online options helped them stay at home or because the option suited their learning style, “I just wish that we could have an online class every now and then I know I have the option to choose. Those are the ones where you can view a class but I think that even if I’m in a distance learning environment and teaching myself I’d like to be able to go somewhere to watch a class taught in the past, so it can make it easier for me.”

While distance/online learning offers a great amount of flexibility for students, it can present challenges and barriers due to limited and unreliable internet access. Further, when online learning is asynchronous, it can be challenging to engage with the material, and connect with instructors and classmates in a meaningful way. Finally, several participants discussed a desire to be able to connect with learners in their home communities who may also be doing distance courses, so they can still learn together and share challenges and strategies for success.

Wrap around supports

Indigenous Student Resource Centres and other types of on-campus resources for Indigenous students are important forms of support for post-secondary students. As a participant explained, “With our experiences with intergenerational trauma and all of the things that happen in our communities, and our families and ourselves, we don’t often know that there are supports that exists to help us through that. Our experiences are valid enough to need accessible options, but I think there’s also ways to Indigenize accessibility.” These Centres offer spaces where people feel safe and comfortable reaching out and asking

questions and provide opportunities for gathering and building community with other Indigenous students on campus. As one participant noted, the provision of culturally appropriate mental health services is particularly important, “We need health supports and mental health support that reflect Indigenous cultures.”. Another participant specified that such supports should not be generalized Indigenous supports, “I also wanted to just make a point that the supports, I guess, for students through the lab at our campus and the supports, in general, I guess they should for, especially for students from Labrador, they should recognize the social determinants of health for Inuit. And all support should be built on that foundation of that understanding. Because it makes a big difference.”

Support in successfully entering and negotiating the academic world was a common theme raised by participants “I feel like there’s a huge disconnect between getting students prepared for post-secondary, getting them excited for postsecondary, helping them cross the finish line in post-secondary, those are all three different stages, which would have their different support systems. But I think it’s really about tying all of that together.”

The current online environment for many students has its own challenges, and should come with appropriate supports according to one participant “Yeah, would be nice to have a full-time liaison in each community for support for students that are either doing online because right now it’s like a lot of online courses and you’re able to be home doing it online.” Another participant emphasized the importance of mentoring “I believe a mentor (alumni) would have helped greatly, beyond the liaison officer. Things you can speak about privately with someone you trust could help on many different levels. Ties into mental health.”

K-12 Foundation

Strong supports in secondary school would enable people to enter post-secondary from a more equitable place; as participants shared, it's not that Northerners are lacking in capacity, the capacity is there, but many people feel they are starting their post-secondary education journeys from an inequitable position compared to those from Southern places. As one participant put it, "If we don't have prepared students, then we're going to end up spending a lot of time in our post-secondary careers in upgrading and transition programs...as important as post-secondary is, a strong secondary education comes first."

Another participant pointed out that it is not the students who are at fault "You know, children who are in school, youth and teenagers who are in school. It's not their fault that their school is small, but they still deserve the same rights as every other child in this province to access, to access adequate studies."

Across all of the engagement sessions, the need for life skills training, starting in secondary school, was a key priority. This kind of hands-on, practical learning would help prepare students for the realities of moving away, so transitioning to life away from home would be a little less overwhelming. One aspect of that is career counselling, "Need to explain to high school students about pathways that you can use with different degrees. Something that highlights diverse career opportunities. Students also shouldn't feel pressure to go to post-secondary right after high school. They should go when they are ready and when they are centred on what they want to do." Another aspect is to give students practical skills they will need if they move on from their communities for post-secondary options.

Finally, many participants talked about the need to provide high school students with diverse options that are available to them in post-secondary education, so that they know what exists and what they can choose to do, during their education and after they finish. As one person explained, "We need to explain to high school students about pathways that you can use with different degrees. Something that highlights diverse career opportunities. ...And, they should know that they don't have to have one career for the rest of their life – they can switch careers, change learning."





1.5. Nunavik data summary

Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (KI) implemented a student information database in 2018 to move student documentation and sponsorship data into a shared information platform, Salesforce. What began as a data collection tool has become something that helps inform the Post-Secondary Student Services (PSSS) department in how to best adapt and modify its student support services. The information below is mostly extracted from this database.

For example, Salesforce indicated that our typical student profile was shifting from youths (16-18 years of age, recently graduated) to a more mature student candidate (25+ years of age, work experience, families). This data helped expand our housing service for more family-oriented accommodation and also drove policy changes to

provide the additional supports a family requires when relocating outside of the region for post-secondary education.

The following sections use the themes that have emerged from engagement in the other Northern regions. Here, they are presented in the context of our student information system. The PSSS department is responsible for the support of Nunavik beneficiaries who attend accredited post-secondary education programs outside of the region (Adult Education does provide accredited post-secondary options within Nunavik). We will note under each theme where we are limited in our mandate and data to provide an accurate assessment of the theme's impact in a Nunavik context.

K-12 Foundation

The majority of our academic counselling is concentrated on upgrading students who have been educated in the K-12 system in Nunavik. Due to staff shortages, class closures, high turnover, and a lack of special education assessment and services, our K-12 system has consistently struggled to sufficiently prepare Nunavik students to transition to southern pedagogical realities. As with other Northern regions, graduation rates are lower than the national average. Staff turnover is a consistent problem. In the last two years, the average turnover of teachers was about 27%. KI continues to promote school perseverance and completion to help overturn the high dropout rates which make post-secondary education inaccessible to most until they reach mature student status (+25 years of age).

To help support the transition from the youth sector to post-secondary education our counsellors tend to promote educational institutions that have Indigenous student bridging programs. Traditionally English language applicants were directed to the Crossroads bridging program at John Abbott College while the French language applicants were encouraged to apply to CÉGEP Montmorency where the Tremplin DEC program helps support them before they enter their program of choice. These programs were focused on writing, reading, and comprehension along with optional credited courses that would help create a bridge into regular programming in the second year.

In 2017, KI partnered with John Abbott College to create the Nunavik Sivunitsavut program⁴. Unique in Quebec, Nunavik Sivunitsavut offers

a one-year college experience during which students explore global modern issues from an Inuit perspective. Courses include Inuit and circumpolar history, literature, politics, sports, culture, and language. Students also take part in culturally relevant extracurricular activities and events. Over the course of the year, students gain valuable insight into Nunavik, its people and their culture. The program can accept 15% of our total applicants to post-secondary yearly.

In total, 27 Nunavik students accessed bridging programs (NS/John Abbott/Montmorency) in 2020/21.

Course accessibility

The student data indicates that relocation out of the region to pursue post-secondary continues to be the most significant barrier to completion at the post-secondary level. Another barrier faced by Nunavik learners is the pedagogical framework and course content which students often find not culturally relevant or adapted to their northern employment needs.

In March of 2019, the Federal Government approved a budget to support the Inuit Post-Secondary Education strategy for a 10-year period. As a result, our budgetary guidelines were adapted to allow for the PSSS sponsorship policy to support sponsored students from their communities through distance learning. This meant that the relocation barrier was theoretically lowered. Unfortunately, due to the poor internet infrastructure in Nunavik students continued to choose to relocate outside of the territory to ensure course completion in a timely and efficient manner. The benefits and limitations of distance

⁴ More information about the Nunavik Sivunitsavut program is in the “Invited Guests” summary section

education will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The data indicates that the percentage of students who chose to continue their studies from Nunavik after the initial phase of the COVID19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 academic year was only 4% of the total student population.

The PSSS department works to remove accessibility barriers for our sponsored students. Our counsellors are mandated to help our students navigate complex post-secondary systems to ensure their educational success.

To that end the PSSS department has recently created an education consultant position who will target regional employment needs and educational programs to help provide an annual projection of which educational programs and courses will be most beneficial for Nunavik beneficiaries who would like to align their studies with regional priorities.

Equitable access to distance education

Equitable distance education is necessary in theory and impossible in practice. In 2020 the PSSS department conducted an internal survey of students to assess their experience with distance learning in light of the pandemic shift to virtual classrooms. Overwhelmingly our students reported that while they prefer to be in their home communities, it was not feasible to continue to study at a distance with the poor internet infrastructure throughout the region.

Students cited the following challenges:

- No internet connection
- Interrupted video feeds for lectures
- Inability to transmit documents and files to their teachers
- Inability to receive documents and files from their teachers
- For students in media programs it was impossible to complete program requirements
- Overcrowding in the family home, no place to study
- Lack of local resources for direct student support

Following the rapid transition to virtual engagement across all sectors it is apparent that internet is a basic right and no longer an optional privilege. It is a basic issue of regional inequity that undermines any further exploration of distance education. Until there is reliable, fast, affordable and accessible internet throughout Nunavik, distance education will continue to be functionally inaccessible to Nunavik students.

Additionally, to meaningfully engage on the discussion of distance education from semi-remote, remote communities we should consider the students' feedback that lack of housing was a major barrier to their ability to study and concentrate during classes. PSSS has relied to some extent on student access to Adult Education centres to allow students to study online. However, not all communities have a centre for Adult Education. To pursue equitable access to distance education there needs to be an infrastructure plan to support its successful implementation. Adult Education in the previous 2

years has registered double the student applicants compared to Post-Secondary Student Services which supports the concept that Inuit beneficiaries would prefer to stay within the region to pursue continuing education.

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

We continue to advocate for Indigenous services and adaptations at post-secondary institutions across Canada. While many institutions have adopted plans for Indigenous reconciliation, our students are still displaced from their home communities, culture, and language in order to obtain post-secondary accreditation. In 2021, the PSSS department successfully secured an Inuit student lounge at the French-Language college. Opened in December 2021, the sponsored students attending CÉGEP Montmorency now have a lounge and study space filled with images and artwork from Nunavik. The intention is to create a space to help ground our Inuit students in a sense of connection to their culture and home while studying in a post-secondary French-language environment.

An ongoing challenge for students in the K-12 and post-secondary sectors is the lack of Inuktitut teachers. This is a growing concern because if we are able to promote post-secondary opportunities (which is the goal of this Task Force's work) in the North that are tailored to Inuit specifically then it will be a challenge to recruit the local Inuktitut teachers if they do not have the same work conditions as those coming from outside the region. In addition, PSSS has secured agreements with Montmorency, John Abbott, and Nunavik Sivunitsavut to provide credited courses in Inuktitut for our post-secondary students. Unfortunately, the lack of qualified Inuktitut

teachers and the absence of full-time contract work and equitable pay makes it difficult to provide these courses consistently.

The most significant change in post-secondary education relating to Inuit ways of knowing, doing, and being in the past 5 years has been the development and implementation of the Nunavik Sivunitsavut program.

A KI initiative, the program is supported within the department of Post-Secondary Student Services and as mentioned earlier in the report, acts as a culturally centered bridging program as the courses are accredited by John Abbott College.



The program allows Inuit students to explore their Inuit identity, and their ties to Nunavik communities and collective history. It has been significant in its ability to strengthen their sense of identity and leadership skills.

As the data table indicates, Nunavik Sivunitsavut now represents the second-largest cohort among the sponsored post-secondary institutions that the PSSS department supports.

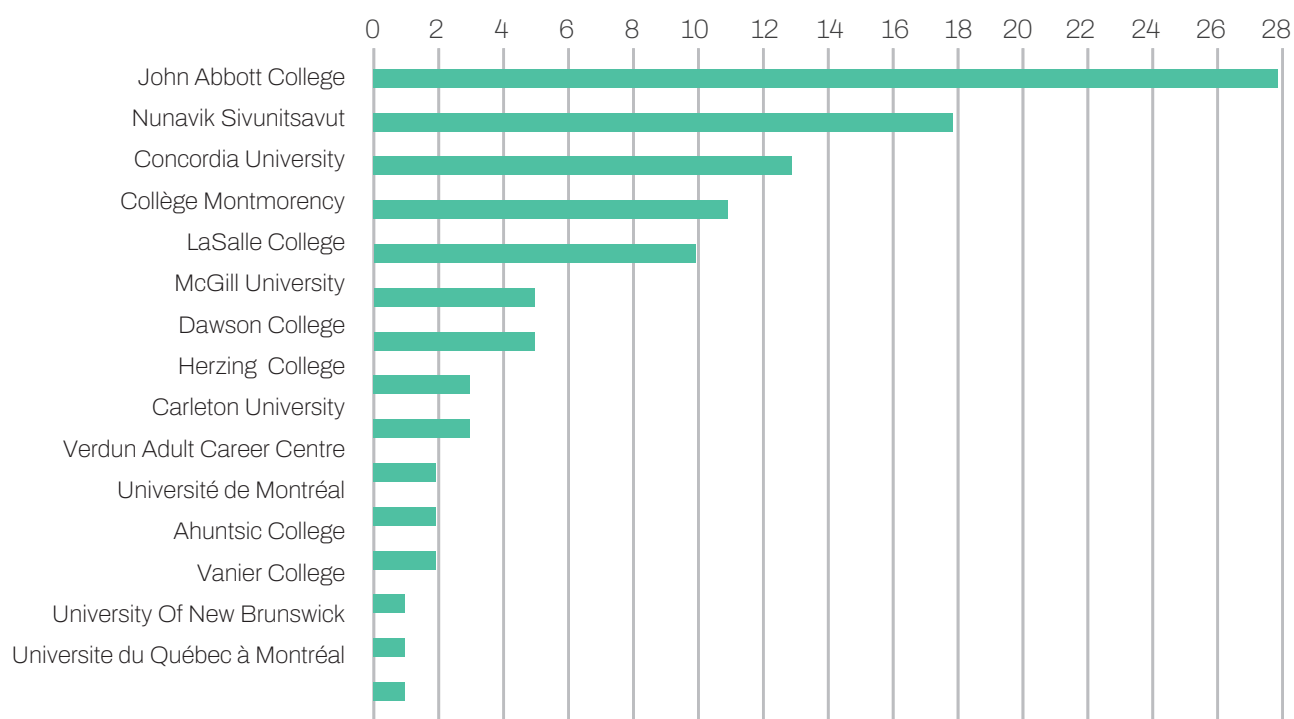
All of the classes strengthen Inuit culture, identity, language, and values, and it is a good way to promote revitalization and decolonization.

- Lizzie Novalinga, Umiujaq

Young people today, who make up most of the total population in Nunavik, are eager to learn about who they are and where they stand in society.

- Lizzie Nowra, Inukjuak

RECORD COUNT



Wrap around supports

Academic support has always been part of the mandate of the PSSS department. Over time, the data we gathered showed that the relocation out of region was a significant factor in retention and program completion. Students indicated a sense of displacement, lack of understanding regarding navigating urban centre systems, isolation, cultural disconnection, and worsening mental health as factors for withdrawing and returning to region. In 2017 the PSSS department began to integrate qualified social workers into the student support service. The academic counsellors now work in collaboration with the social counsellors to provide comprehensive wrap around support.

The social support service offers solutions-focused counselling to help support the mental and emotional health of sponsored students during their post-secondary studies. The social support also conducts welfare check ins, crisis interventions, social system advocacy supports, referrals for other health professionals, and workshops related to health and wellbeing.

The challenge with providing extensive wrap around supports is to continue to foster autonomy and also institutional responsibility. At times, post-secondary institutions will redirect our sponsored students to PSSS for support to help with their own internal capacity to serve all students. In these cases, our counsellors work with the students to make sure they are securing all the services and benefits they are entitled to as registered students.

In 2021 the PSSS department also recruited a project development officer to focus on transition and housing. This additional resource works with the social team to help students secure their own housing or to assign them a KI housing unit for the

duration of their studies. The project development officer is a critical part of helping our students successfully relocate for their studies and also return back to the region. Over the past couple of years, there has been a shift in housing likely resulting from COVID-19 with more students opting to stay in their own housing rather than opting for KI Housing Service or residences.

Financing

The KI Post-Secondary Student Services Sponsorship Policy provides financial, social, and academic support to Inuit beneficiaries pursuing post-secondary education outside of Nunavik. The financial barriers are not removed but are reduced through regular allowances that calculate costs for food, laundry, transport, internet, and school supplies among other eligible expenses. The financial formula is adapted based on how many dependents the student is responsible for during their studies so as to remove any financial hardship or barrier from their ability to concentrate on school.

Our sponsorship program is integrated into KI's payroll system so that payments are issued bi-weekly by direct deposit. We also are able to provide direct reimbursements to students when they submit receipts for eligible expenses. Recently we have broadened the financial support to include quality of life factors such as the Wellness fund to help offset non-insured medical costs, Extra-curricular funds to support school involvement, and a 'work from home' initiative that helps students purchase printers, monitors, or any other office-related materials to help them adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the financial scope of the policy is consistently adapted to reflect inflation and student realities, the barrier of the high cost of living in Nunavik coupled by a cultural expectation of family support means that many of our students are responsible for not only their cost of living but helping extended family members still in the region who are financially unstable. Our objective was to establish a living wage so that finances were removed permanently as a barrier

to accessing post-secondary education. Since many of the financial changes were implemented with the decentralizing of federal post-secondary funds, we will still have to measure the impacts of the policy changes over the next three-to-five years to see if it has had a positive impact on our recruitment, retention, and program completion rates.



ANNEX B		
RATES AND AMOUNTS		
KATIVIK ILISARNILIRINIQ POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM		
	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Students in residence (Inuktalik/Montmorency)		
		<i>All allowance rates are calculated on a 7 day period</i>
Pocket Money	\$120,00	
Personal Care Items	\$23,50	
Students in Room & Board		
		<i>Apply to students living with their parents</i>
		<i>All allowance rates are calculated on a 7 day period</i>
Room & Board	\$95,50	
Pocket Money	\$120,00	
Personal Care Items	\$23,50	
Students who have opted out		
Monthly rent subsidy		Up to the equivalent of CMHC rate of the area of apartment + 10%
Allowance for purchase of furniture and household supplies per student.	\$1500,00	
Additional amounts for each dependent	+ 500,00/dependent	Maximum as defined in the Policy
Moving costs	3600,00\$	Maximum as defined in the Policy
Students in Cegep/University residence & apartments		
		<i>Food allowance would not be applicable if Meal-plan is mandatory</i>
Food	\$95,00	
Personal Care Items	\$23,50	
Household supplies	\$9,85	
Pocket Money	\$120,00	
Laundry/per person	\$13,00	
Consumable school supplies (flat rate)	\$50,00	<i>Allocated to student prior beginning of each semester</i>

Figure XX: PSSS Sponsorship Policy Rates 21-22 (These do not include eligible expenses or reimbursement which are embedded in the policy)



1.6. Northern Manitoba engagement summary

Five virtual sessions were hosted by a Task Force member and a contractor to engage with Northern Manitobans on ways to improve post-secondary education in the North of the province. The sessions included:

- Education Specialists (teachers, lecturers, education administrators)
- General Public
- Current post-secondary and graduate students
- Secondary School students
- Individuals who started post-secondary education but did not complete

The total number of people engaged through the sessions was about 60.

Wrap around supports

The demography of northern Manitoba was top of mind for many respondents as they discussed barriers to post-secondary education. Poverty was often mentioned. “A lot of the first nation communities, Indigenous communities and the ones in the north, especially the north, are very poor.”

Students tend to be older. At University College of the North, the average student age is 28. This means that students are not just trying to provide for themselves, but often also for their families. “Most of our students are young parents themselves, they’re not coming straight out of high school, into the post-secondary pipeline, and they need daycare, and they need transportation,

and all these things are amplified, the further north you go.” Even if they wanted to, many students cannot commute to a nearby town for courses, because there is no public transportation, and they do not have their own transportation.

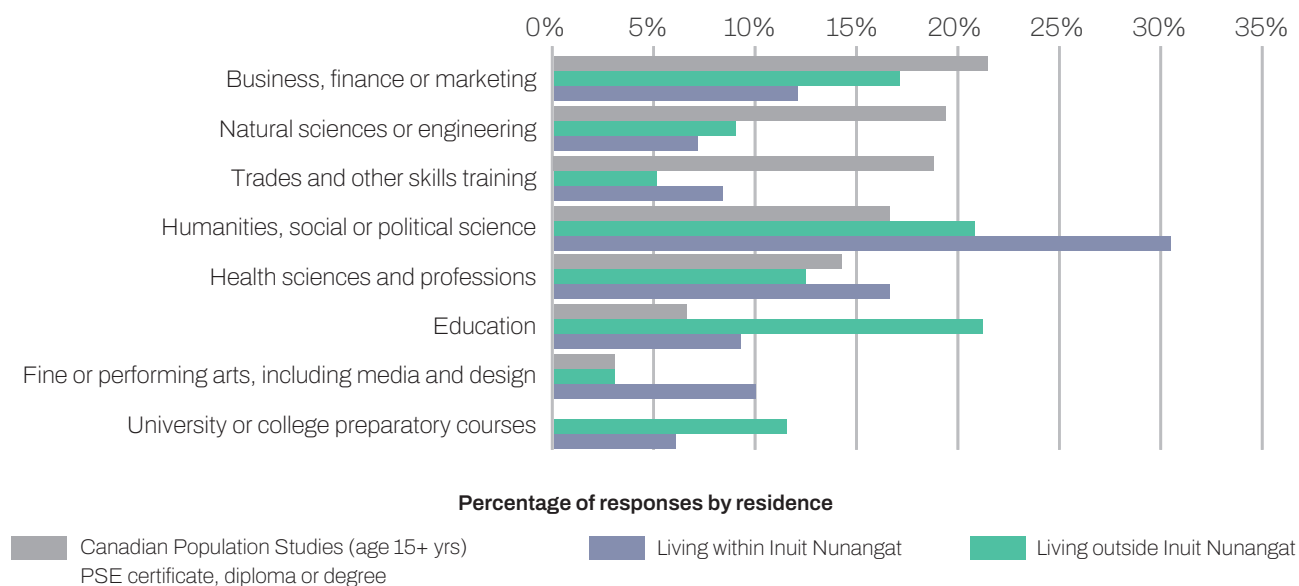
Finding housing for themselves and their families is a challenge. If they plan to study in northern Manitoba, rents are high, and housing is scarce. Some participants spoke of innovative ways to get around the housing crunch, by offering hybrid programs that would schedule in-person classes for relatively brief times when student housing was almost empty, and run the rest of the course online.

The inability of many northern students to navigate urban environments was a common theme, “As important as academics are, basic life skills are a keystone. Of course, being able to take a group of students is expensive, funding is the issue. I am aware of many First Nations communities that have programs like this and have been seeing very positive results.”

Summary of Findings from Inuit PSE Survey

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) surveyed current and future Inuit PSE students in March 2021. The findings highlight some of the unique circumstances and opportunities facing Inuit students based on feedback from over 500 survey respondents. Survey respondents included Inuit living within Inuit Nunangat and some living outside of Inuit Nunangat. While many challenges and opportunities are common to both groups of students, each group also faces unique circumstances and barriers. The sections that follow note where major differences were present in the data, along with the general high-level findings.

FIGURE X - STUDENT FIELDS OF STUDY



1. *The K-12 Foundation*

Many Inuit students are currently taking University or College preparation courses or bridging courses, a PSE category that is not reported on by Statistics Canada (2016 Census of Population), to help prepare them for PSE. This is more prevalent among Inuit living within Inuit Nunangat (~8% of respondents) than those living outside of Inuit Nunangat (~5% of respondents).

When asked what worries students about starting PSE, “not having the grades needed to enter PSE and not knowing how to apply was identified as a concern by 10-20% of the respondents. When asked to elaborate on how high school has prepared them for PSE-relevant skills, around half of all respondents stated that high school did not help them develop life skills such as budgeting. Additionally, many respondents stated that “southern” academic standards and pace of schooling were challenging to keep up with, and cited other challenges related to time management, subject matter and technical material, and the speed and pace of courses.

Programs of Study

Using the survey data and data from Statistics Canada, we concluded that in addition to preparatory and bridging courses, Inuit students are more likely to study education, social sciences, and humanities than non-Indigenous students. They are less likely to pursue business, finance, marketing, trades and skills training, or natural sciences and engineering. Inuit living inside Inuit Nunangat were more likely to take courses in education (such as the Nunavut Teacher Education Program) than Inuit living outside of the region and non-Indigenous Canadians. Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat were more likely to take courses in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts.

Mentorship would also be invaluable. For a northern/remote youth to move to a larger Center for any training, having somebody to touch base with that is familiar with the community and the student to provide assistance to ensure success.

Apart from preparation and supports, one participant thought providing students with an incentive might be effective, “I would layer in student accountability tuition rebates based on attendance and achievement. So maybe we can’t give out free tuition to everybody. But for those who do find the path and who are ready, we can reward them at the end. Can you imagine graduating from a five year degree program? Not only did you do well and you did it but here’s your check because you came and did these things.”

K-12 Foundation

Just as poverty was identified as a barrier to post-secondary education, it was also noted by participants as a factor in student success in the K-12 system, “They struggle with what’s gonna be on the table. What food are they going to eat? The parents don’t unnecessarily worry about what topics are going to be studied, what is the homework, they’re going to be bringing home and they’re worried about the day to day, paying the bills and paying the hydro.” The outcome of schooling in the North of the province according to one educator is that students trying to access programs are showing up with a grade five level of literacy and numeracy, and limited computer and study skills.

High school students are concerned that they cannot access things that may give them a competitive edge in some Post-secondary institutions and programs, such as advanced placement classes or extra-curricular activities.

Some programs have been developed to help pick up young people who want to improve on their school educations to take them on to trades or other post-secondary opportunities. One learning centre representative spoke of the success of their program “Of the 86 [graduates], just about all of them ended up registering for post-secondary within UCN [University College of the North]. But to get to that 86 took about three years for the average student to close the gap and keep it going, and how it works is really simple. Attendance based incentives; we help them find sponsorship so that coming to school was their job. We help them with mental health, addictions, daycare, housing everything, all the social needs - mental and emotional - and then the learning can happen, and they’re doing well, watching them progress through, sets the bar for others to follow as well.”

A representative of another such program spoke of the need for such programs to bridge the gap between secondary school and other learning opportunities, “it’s the nurturing, it’s the hand holding, call it what you will but it’s vital to break the system to break the cycle.”

Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

Although a large proportion of the population of northern Manitoba is Indigenous, there was little discussion by participants of issues specific to Indigenous peoples. One student spoke of her wish for more Indigenous language classes in post-secondary education.

There are opportunities to encourage more diversity in programs Inuit choose to pursue and also opportunities to support Inuit in key program areas that will help to meet labour needs within Inuit communities.

2. Family Responsibilities

Many Inuit have responsibilities in addition to their PSE studies. Nearly all students living within Inuit Nunangat help provide for their families. Over 60% of respondents stated that they are a caregiver for their children or other dependents. Many students (~90% living inside Inuit Nunangat and ~70% outside of Inuit Nunangat) have other family responsibilities such as taking care of siblings or other relatives.

Between 10 and 15% of students stated that having support to help with childcare would help them decide if PSE was right for them and over 20% of Inuit living within Inuit Nunangat stated that they worry about finding childcare. Nearly 30% of all respondents stated that they worry about having too many responsibilities including family and the jobs they have to maintain.

3. Inuit Language and Culture

When asked about some of the biggest challenges faced during their first year of post-secondary education, language challenges or barriers were cited by more than 10% of Inuit living within Inuit Nunangat, compared to just over 5% for those living outside of Inuit Nunangat. This is to be expected since Inuktitut (a word describing Inuit languages) is more likely to be the first language spoken at home for people living within the regions as compared to outside of the regions. Furthermore, culture shock, isolation, and adapting to living in a new place were other common challenges cited by all respondents.

When asked about the types of mental health supports that would be most useful for Inuit students, more than half of respondents selected “access to Indigenous, Inuit, or traditional healing methods”. Inuit students also cite a need for food from home, and expressed interest in talking to Elders as a way to support their mental health.

4. *Distance Education and Virtual Training*

For many Inuit PSE students, the COVID-19 pandemic expanded opportunities to attend and participate in PSE virtually. When asked if they are completing their studies online or in person, over 50% of Inuit who live outside of Inuit Nunangat said they were completing their studies online at home, while about 22% stated they were completing their studies online but away from home. This situation is different, however, for Inuit who live within Inuit Nunangat. Likely due to bandwidth limitations, only about 35% were completing their studies online at home and about the same number were doing so away from home.

Another participant raised the issue of the disconnect of academic research from northern Indigenous communities, “The majority of the research is theoretical, so it looks like they’re doing a great bunch of fantastic work, but who does it really benefit and who is it really for other than the researcher and the university? Whereas with research done through using indigenous knowledge, indigenous science systems, the knowledge is readily available to all, and it benefits all.”

Financing

This issue of financing as a barrier to post-secondary education was not mentioned directly by many participants, though it is implicit in their observations of the poverty of northern students. One area where financing was mentioned is in the education system itself. One participant noted that chronic under-funding of band-run schools was a factor in the performance of students from those schools.

Regional education officials who participated also mentioned that they are often in the position where they would like to pilot programs aimed at northern students, but find that their budgets are too tight.



Equitable access to distance education

As with many other northern communities, Internet connectivity is a limiting factor to online learning in Northern Manitoba. “There’s poor connectivity, so half of your class you’re watching the wheel trying to load. You can’t access it later. There’s no recordings or you’ve got such bad Wi-Fi where you are that you can’t have your camera on. Even in my own coursework, it’s just frustrating. You just want to put it on mute, shut off your camera and go do something else in your house, and hope you passed the assignment.”

Course accessibility

As in many other parts of the north, social support and family are important to learners, “I have a very, very big family, like I have hundreds of cousins, and everybody is in the north so just being away from them is really hard.” Participants spoke of family responsibilities, and those with children did not want to uproot them for four years to take a course elsewhere. The pull of family in the north is layered with fear of the larger centres; according to one participant, “People need options closer to their community to get over that fear.”

People noted that finding ways to deliver post-secondary education in the north is difficult and often more expensive as there are not the economies of scale. In the case of trades education, as one participant pointed out, the limitation is the structure of trades education, “sometimes some of the traditional models of education, don’t work well in remote communities and I’m thinking, particularly about the apprenticeship model, where you need, you know one journey person for each apprenticeship. And that’s, that’s a prescribed ratio, and if you do not have any journey persons in your community, you’re not going to get any apprentices, and if you don’t have any apprentices, you’re not going to get any journey persons”

Despite the difficulties of local education delivery, in Northern Manitoba, one participant emphasized an important outcome, “You teach people from the north in the north, and they stay in the north.” One approach being tried in northern Manitoba is to use schools as a base for delivering more adult-oriented trades courses, such as hairdressing.



II. Survey Results

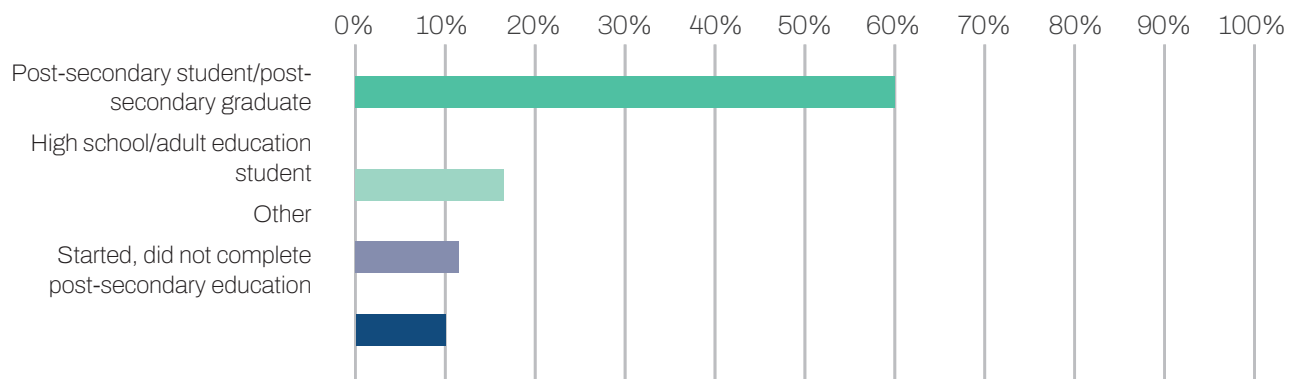
The Task Force designed an online survey accessed through its website as a method of collecting data on attitudes to and perceptions of post-secondary education in the North. The complete survey results are now available on the website. The survey was accessible for several months and attracted a total of 574 responses. Basic demographic information was collected, such as age, location, and background of respondents. More than 50% identified as Inuit. All of the Indigenous respondents made up just

under 75% of the total. Just over 37% of the total number of respondents were from Nunatsiavut. These results skew responses as being more representative on Inuit, and particularly of Inuit in Nunatsiavut. The majority of those who completed the survey were current post-secondary students, or post-secondary graduates (we put both of these into one category). Other categories are shown in Figure 1 below.

Q4 TABLE 1:

Breakdown of post-secondary experience across participants

Answered: 581 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Post-secondary student/post-secondary graduate	59.38%	345
High school/adult education student	17.04%	99
Other (please specify)	13.60%	79
Started, did not complete post-secondary education	9.98%	58
Other	0%	0
TOTAL	581	

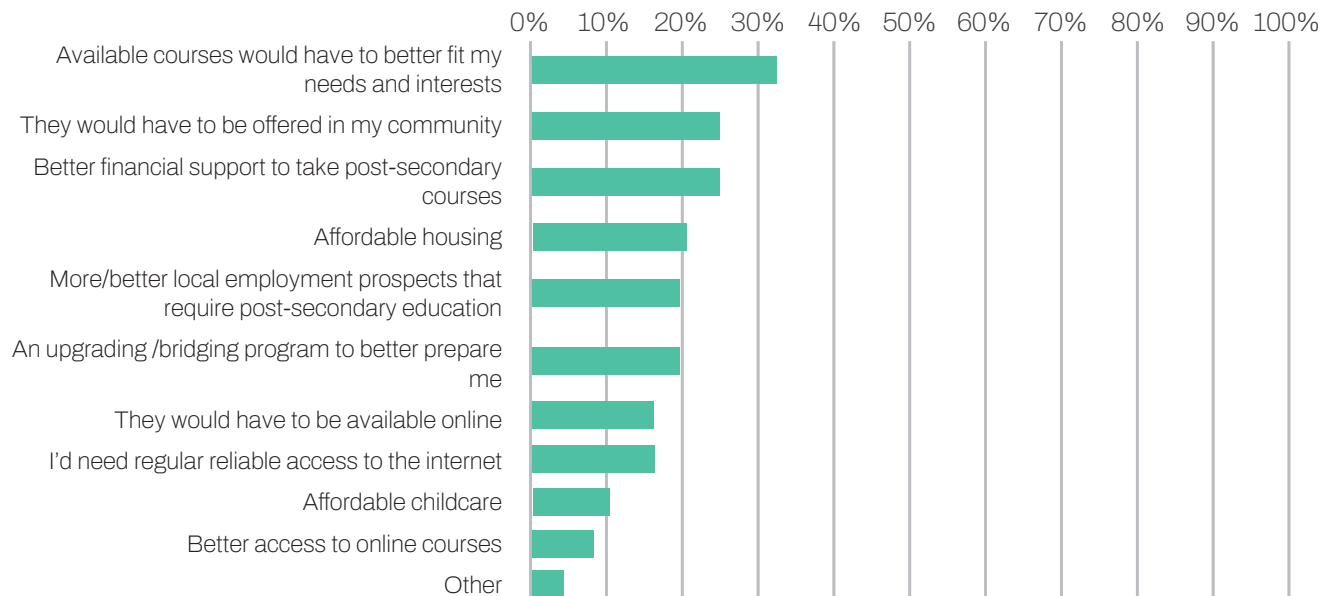
Figure 1: Breakdown of post-secondary experience across participants

Data from current high school/adult education students

Q7 TABLE 2:

Breakdown of factors that could convince participants to consider attending PSE

Answered: 68 Skipped: 513



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Available courses would have to better fit my needs and interests	32.35%	22
They would have to be offered in my community	26.47%	18
Better financial support to take post-secondary courses	26.47%	18
Affordable housing	20.59%	14
More/better local employment prospects that require post-secondary education	19.12%	13
An upgrading /bridging program to better prepare me	19.12%	13
They would have to be available online	17.65%	12
I'd need regular reliable access to the internet	17.65%	12
Affordable childcare	11.76%	8
Better access to online courses	8.82%	6
Other	4.41%	3
TOTAL	68	

Figure 2: Breakdown of factors that could convince people to consider attending PSE.

Ninety-five respondents answered this part of the survey. Of those, 54 planned to go onto PSE, while 41 did not. Of those not planning to go to PSE, almost half answered that the reason they were not planning to go was that they already have a job. The next highest reasons given were “family circumstances” and “I don’t want to leave my home community”. When asked what might persuade them to go to PSE, the highest response level was “available courses would have to better fit my needs and interests”.

Of those who decided to go onto PSE, the most popular reason given was “to make a difference in my community”. The majority of those who answered were also planning to study in their home community as opposed to elsewhere in northern Canada, or in the south. This matched up with a question of why students chose their post-secondary institution. 37% answered, “It was close to home”, with the same percentage choosing “It had the courses/program I wanted.”

Data from post-secondary students and post-secondary graduates

The largest number of questions on the survey was aimed at current PSE students and PSE graduates as those with most experience of the system. Of the 300 people who answered questions in this section, a slight majority (just over 51%) study or studied in Northern Canada.

A large minority (27%) were not able to go directly from high school to PSE, but required upgrading. More than 22% required two or more upgrading classes to meet the entry requirements for PSE, with a significant number requiring more than three upgrading classes. The process of applying and registering for programs was generally unsupported, and more than 70% of students did not receive career counselling to help them decide what program to take. The deciding factor for most people in choosing to go on to PSE was interest in the subject, followed by a desire to make a difference. “To help get a job in the North” was the third most popular response.

“I have always wanted to help in the healing of our communities but there hasn’t been anything offered here in the Yukon. Thanks to COVID, the school in Vancouver that I have been looking into for 9 yrs, started offering online learning so I am finally able to take the course I have wanted.”

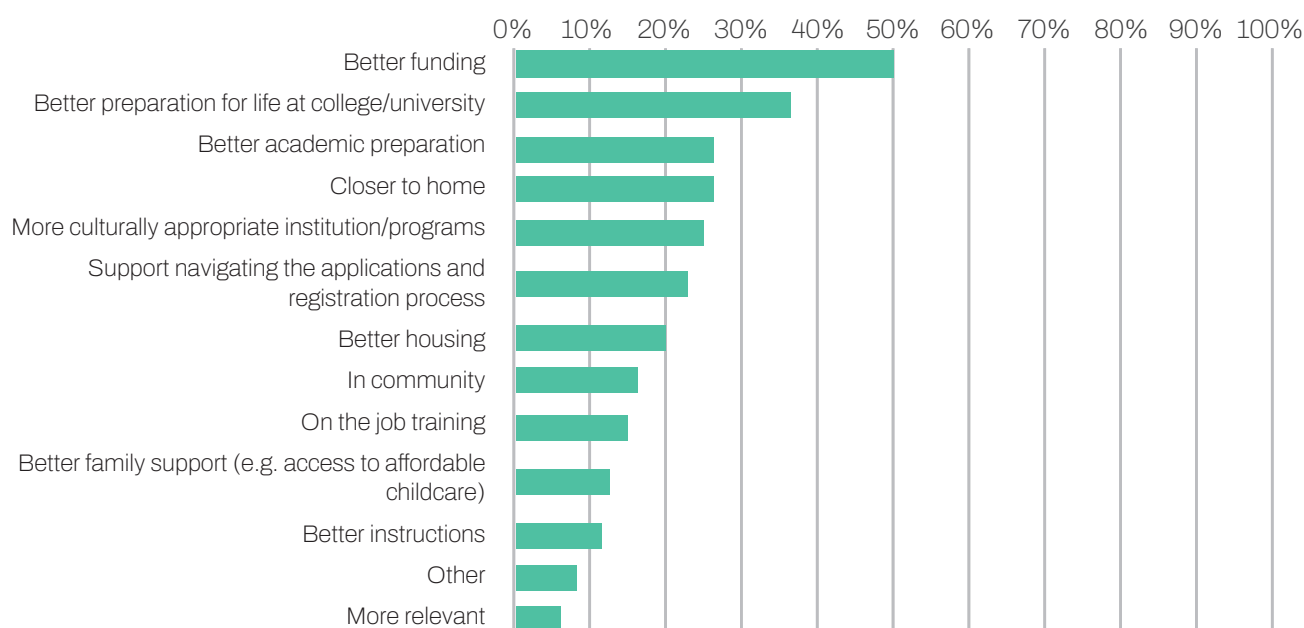
Once in PSE, 87% of respondents did not require any special education support. Of those who did require support, most found it easily accessible. Courses and programs were the biggest factor in what made respondents choose where to study, followed by proximity to home, family and friends. The reputation of the institution was also a consideration for many.

What students found hardest about attending PSE was affordability. “Homesickness”, “Adjusting to the cultural differences”, “Finding housing”, “Making time for family responsibilities” and “Did not feel academically prepared for the work” also featured prominently. What people found helped the most was adequate funding, followed by the support of friends and family. When asked, “What would have most improved your post-secondary experience?” the highest rated responses were:

Q25 TABLE 3:

Breakdown of factors that contributed most to participants successes in their post-secondary experience

Answered: 274 Skipped: 307



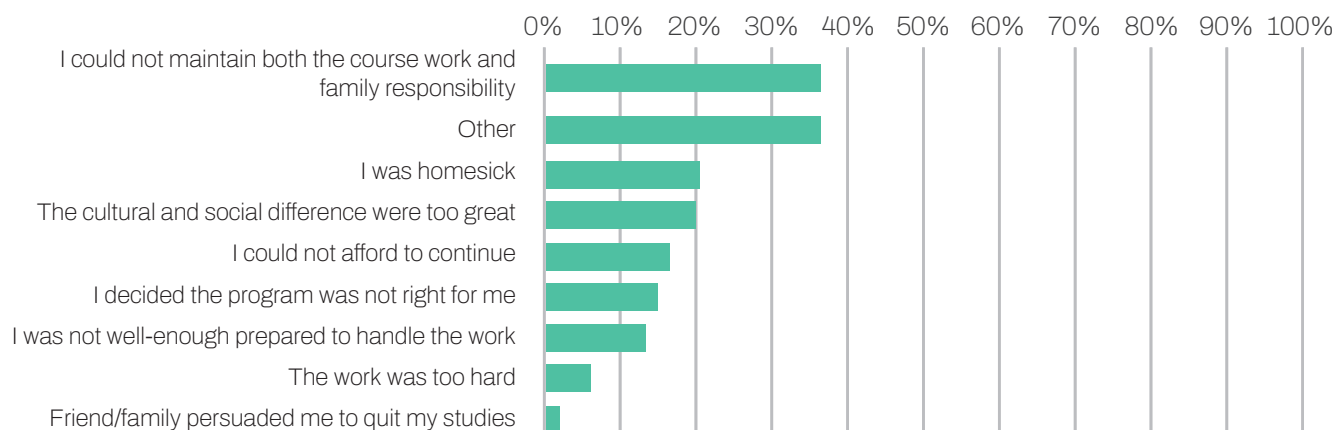
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Better funding	48.91%	134
Better preparation for life at college/university	36.86%	101
Better academic preparation	27.74%	76
Closer to home	27.01%	74
More culturally appropriate institution/programs	25.18%	69
Support navigating the applications and registration process	22.99%	63
Better housing	20.44%	56
In community	16.06%	44
On the job training	15.69%	43
Better family support (e.g. access to affordable childcare)	12.77%	35
Better instructors	11.31%	31
Other	9.85%	27
More relevant	8.76%	24
TOTAL		274

Figure 3

Data from people who started but did not complete post-secondary education

Task Force members were particularly interested in the experiences of people who started, but did not complete a post-secondary program. We wanted to know what factors were most important in their decisions to not continue in their programs. We also knew that this number might be smaller and harder to find than people in other categories. In the end, 58 people responded to this portion of the survey. When we asked them why they chose not to continue with their studies, the top response

was “family responsibilities”. The second-highest response was “other”, and that included several people who became pregnant, people who experienced difficulties with mental health, and people who found that the PSE experience conflicted with their cultural backgrounds. A high proportion of people also cited homesickness and affordability as reasons that they did not complete their programs

Q26 TABLE 4:**Breakdown of most important factors that contributed to students decision to not finish in post-secondary studies***Answered: 47 Skipped: 534*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I could not maintain both the course work and family responsibility	36.17%	17
Other	36.17%	17
I was homesick	21.28%	10
The cultural and social difference were too great	19.15%	9
I could not afford to continue	17.02%	8
I decided the program was not right for me	14.89%	7
I was not well-enough prepared to handle the work	12.77%	6
The work was too hard	8.51%	4
Friend/family persuaded me to quit my studies	2.13%	1
TOTAL	47	

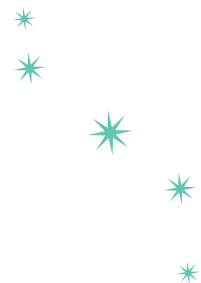
Figure 4

Data from general public

The final category of respondents was “general public” to get an idea of public perceptions of PSE in the North. When asked about the factors that are most important in encouraging Northern students to get PSE, many of the factors presented received strong support, but the top four were:

1. Adequate financial support
2. Local schools prepare students to go on to post-secondary education
3. Available affordable housing
4. Bridging programs to help students take the step from secondary studies to post-secondary.

When asked what most discourages students from taking PSE, there was strong consensus around three answers: “Local schools do not give them the education they need to succeed at post-secondary education”; “Students cannot find or afford housing; and “Post-secondary education is too far away”.



III. Northern Institutions Summary

This is a summary of input received from several northern institutions. Separate written documents were received from Yukon University, Aurora College (NWT), University College of the North (Manitoba), and the Labrador Campus of Memorial University. There was also a joint submission from Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University, and a further joint submission from Aurora College, Collège nordique francophone, and Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning.

Preparedness of Students

The deficiencies of Northern education systems in preparing Northern students to meet the academic requirements for post-secondary education, and a lack of general readiness for PSE were highlighted by some of the responses. A response from University College of the North (UCN) found, "...reading, writing, math skills in our students are generally low. Essential skills and study skills are also low." To help offset those deficits "UCN offers literacy, essential skills, adult education, and preparation for post-secondary education to help offset the impact of low levels of preparation."

Social Determinants

Housing and childcare were identified by some of the institutions as barriers to access or ability to complete PSE. The submission from the three territories observes that, "...a lack of housing overall means student housing is in such high demand that our institutions are challenged to meet the needs of students as availability of community housing pressures continue. Northern Institutions also require culturally

appropriate accommodations vital for community students who may be leaving their small home communities for the first time. Landing in a safe and welcoming space is the first critical step to ensuring academic success."

Connectivity

There is an ongoing digital divide in Canada, and most of the area covered by the Task Force is lacking affordable and reliable Internet connectivity. As a submission from the UCN put it, "...learning management systems, asynchronous or synchronous options, and sometimes even email, cannot be relied upon consistently." Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University recognize the efforts of the federal government to narrow this divide, but underscore the importance of timely solutions.

A submission from Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University noted that the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the high cost, limited accessibility/speed (especially outside of regional centres) and lack of unlimited data plans were limitations for many northern students.

However, these three institutions acknowledged that not all learning can occur online, nor do all students learn effectively online. This point was further elaborated by Yukon University. In surveying students last year, it “...found that students who had attended some or all their K-12 in the Yukon reported greater challenges with several aspects of remote learning.” Yukon University’s response is to develop and pilot online digital literacy initiatives.

UCN provides physical locations with computer labs so that students are able to access internet services for educational purposes. In Yukon, the University is trying to keep campuses open for distance education students, not only to provide access to computers and bandwidth but also to address a problem with safe study spaces.

Residential Schools’ Impacts

The submission from Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University says “It is important to acknowledge that institutions of higher learning are one of many sites where acts of reconciliation can, and do, occur. The ongoing nature of reconciliation requires strategies that can evolve in order to support the national responsibility of addressing ongoing historic injustices and trauma in order to close the education equity gap.”

In the case of both the NWT and Nunavut, college buildings are parts of former residential schools, a fact that Aurora college describes as an unacceptable situation. Aurora College is asking for new buildings.

Some institutions are approaching reconciliation through instructional design. Yukon U collaborated with all Yukon First Nations to develop a YFN101 course that is designed to provide an overview of the First Nations in Yukon, their culture and history and their comprehensive land claim and self-government agreements. Students and staff are required to complete it. It has co-developed various courses with First Nations that in turn attract mostly First Nations students. The University also has a President’s Advisory Committee on First Nation Initiatives that provides advice on meeting Indigenous students’ needs. The University intends to develop an Indigenization plan to decolonize and advance reconciliation in the Yukon and Canada. It recently hired a Research Chair led by an Indigenous Knowledge holder to create a research program focused on Indigenous knowledge, in consultation with youth and elders and employing Indigenous research methodologies.

The Labrador Campus Institute of Memorial University has partnerships with the Innu Nation, the Nunatsiavut Government, and the NunatuKavut Community Council “...to develop educational opportunities that meet Indigenous and Northern needs and priorities. It means that people can be educated in place, and access education that is reflective of their cultures and histories, languages and ways of knowing and doing.” The UCN also notes that location is important, “If the institution is situated in the north, the programs and research tends to be more directly tied to the social, cultural, and economic needs of the north.”

The Dechinta Centre has developed land-based education programs for Indigenous learners and delivers “...accredited post-secondary programming that is culturally informed and co-developed with Indigenous Elders, community leaders and leading Indigenous academics.” The Centre’s approach responds to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Responding to the needs of Northern Students and Communities

This theme is connected to the one above but is not necessarily specific to Indigenous students or communities.

UCN accommodates the different student demographic it encounters, “Our students are older, and they tend to have families. This impacts their ability to study, and we adjust accordingly.” Labrador Institute is “...looking to reduce barriers for learners by creating prior learning assessments for professional development and non-credit courses to transfer into credit and/or degree programming.”

UCN has annual meetings with First Nations Education Authorities and other sponsors to discuss how UCN can better serve sponsored students (who represent ~70% of enrollment), and also speaks of “...constant discussion with communities – their leadership, social agencies and others – to maintain an understanding of their priorities, and how they are supporting their youth.” They are also in regular contact with industry to talk about workforce needs.

Yukon University is pursuing a partnership with Yukon First Nations to collaborate in the creation of an Institute of Indigenous Self-Determination at Yukon U. It conducts research in partnership and collaboration with Yukon First Nations, co-creating and partnering on projects hosted by First Nations.

Every Yukon University campus develops a community education plan in collaboration with its campus committee and First Nation education directors. “The plans are signed off annually by both parties and shared with senior executives at the University and program areas. The information collected by Community plans helps inform community priorities. For instance, housing maintainer was identified as a priority by many communities. The university worked with the communities that identified housing maintainer as a priority to deliver the program.”

Memorial University has leased an 80-acre farm in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and is working in partnership with local farmers, the Nunatsiavut Government, the NunatuKavut Community Council, the Innu Nation, community food organizations in Labrador, the provincial Agrifoods department, and Agriculture and Agrifoods Canada, and with faculty, staff, and students throughout Memorial. “Together, we are responding to food systems, food security, and food sovereignty priorities of Labrador. The Labrador Campus Institute is also looking at working on other offerings in partnership with Nunavut Arctic College, focused on an Indigenous approach to subjects, such as Indigenous teacher training, Indigenous social work, and a masters in place-based learning.

Partnerships

All of the submissions described partnerships with other educational institutions, and some also had partnerships with other organizations. Labrador CampusInstitute and Nunavut Arctic College are working together on the design and delivery of some new offerings. Yukon University has partnered with some southern institutions where it does not offer full degrees, so students can take the first two years in Yukon, then transfer. Yukon University is a part of the British Columbia and Alberta credit transfer system, so students can transfer Yukon University courses to other universities and colleges in BC and Alberta.

UCN has partnered with southern institutions in programs such as the Bachelor of Nursing degree program (University of Manitoba), and since 2017, a Primary Care Paramedic certificate program offered in partnership with a private vocational institution called CritiCare EMS Manitoba.

It has a number of credit transfer agreements and block transfer agreements with many southern institutions to allow students greater mobility within Manitoba's post-secondary system, and across Canada.

Research

Yukon University partners with Yukon First Nations on research projects in several ways. A First Nation Engagement Advisor supports research teams in doing research in a good way, and in building strong, lasting relationships with Yukon First Nations. Engaging more students in research is also a focus.

The submission from Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University says the post-secondary institutions need resources

for prioritizing research leadership, capacity development and research infrastructure (equipment and research space) in support of student learning and experience. It says, "Research support for undergraduate students is paramount to ensure those students are exposed to research opportunities early in their academic pursuits, which may then translate into graduate pursuits after graduation."

The submission from Aurora College, Collège Nordique Francophone and Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning asks the federal government to review its funding guidelines "...to ensure they are inclusive of Northern priorities and ways of knowing—including of Indigenous knowledge and research protocols—and that southern-based researchers are compelled by the conditions of their grants to invest in the North." It adds that Northern research ought to be conducted primarily by Northerners and that the results and benefits of research should be shared locally.

Incompletion

Incompletion of programs is mentioned in a couple of submissions. A response from UCN noted that better data are required to quantify and understand why students do not complete courses or programs. Yukon U is planning to expand its academic advising services including a pilot project "...for additional outreach activities for students on probation."

Credentialing, Faculty, and Programs

UCN, the Labrador Institute and Yukon U spoke of the need for shorter courses to build toward certification, and that they already provide (UCN) or intend to provide (LI, Yukon U) such courses. Yukon U says it is, "...part of several Canadian networks exploring micro-credentials." Labrador Institute says, "As we design the courses, we

are focusing on flexible, adaptable, and modular learning formats, allowing learners to take stand-alone degrees and diplomas, and/or to stack courses, diplomas, and certificates together for different credentials.”

In their submission, Aurora College, Nunavut Arctic College, and Yukon University chose faculty training as an area of focus, “Building and sustaining northern academic capacity with an emphasis of different ways of knowing, being and doing requires focus and opportunities to support faculty in their development. The post-secondary sector needs to respond by providing training and supports that prepare faculty to better support Northern students to ensure educational outcomes and goals are reached.”

The institutions are trying to match their program offerings to what is desired locally. UCN says, “Professional programs such as Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Education are most relevant to Northern students.” Yukon U took the co-creation route, “Many programs delivered by the university were co-created with Yukon First Nations governments/communities, such as the Indigenous Governance Degree, the Environmental Monitoring certificate and the First Nations Arts certificate program.”

Counselling and Careers

The institutions recognize that northern students benefit from support before, during (and even after) their path to PSE. UCN is, “...trying to create a centre for career development that puts a career pathway into the role of assisting a student to create an appropriate educational and career

plan. Rather than just a tool to select a program, this pathway is a life-long learning tool that may have multiple educational loops and employment cycles within it.” UCN also highlighted the need for more dedicated advisors and student supports.

Yukon U has a Student Success Division Services that provides access for northern students to all services through email, phone/text & web conferencing. Services include counselling, well-being, academic/learning advice and First Nation student success and navigational services. The institution also ramped up its wellness supports in the past year, “...with a strong focus on community and/or remote learners (e.g., Personal wellness library resources on themes of anxiety, stress management, trauma, depression, addiction support; Group counselling groups and sessions were created).”

Recently Yukon U hosted a lunch for school counsellors in Whitehorse to provide information about the university’s programs and services and to consider how everyone may collaborate to foster seamless transitions from secondary education to post-secondary education. Yukon U committed to working with the counsellors to articulate clear pathways from high school to post-secondary studies for Yukon high school students interested in pursuing PSE. UCN also noted a need for longer and more enriched orientations, on-line and in-person, to help incoming students better understand courses and the PSE environment.

IV. Invited Guests Summary

The Task Force held weekly online meetings and, over the course of our work, invited seventeen guests to speak to us to provide further context on topics such as challenges and opportunities for Northern post-secondary education, bridging programs, admissions processes, local conditions for trades education, and Indigenous leadership in post-secondary institutions.

This section summarizes what we heard from the guests. Unlike other sections of this report, the section below is not organized by theme, but summarizes the key messages from each presenter.

Amy Dowden, College of the North Atlantic

The College of the North Atlantic is piloting a “Readiness Project” to help Indigenous mature students access several of its trade programs. “Our goal is to reduce barriers to accessing college of North Atlantic Programs for Indigenous Adults by developing a new mature student admission process...our goal is to create a process that’s reliable, that’s valid, culturally sensitive and appropriate for indigenous adults.” The new project will apply to Indigenous learners over 19 and will focus on industrial trades programs as that tends to be a popular entry point for mature students.

In its research, the College found that the “Canadian Adult Achievement Tests” currently used by many institutions to assess mature students were not an acceptable measure of academic ability and created a barrier to admission as the tests were culturally biased. In the College’s estimation, the tests were poorly designed to assess the readiness for post-secondary education of people from any background.

The pilot assessment starts with applicants having an individual session with a counsellor to assess what they have done in the past, what supports they have, and help guide them through the admissions process. They then proceed to testing if deemed necessary. Tests include math and writing, but are designed to mirror the sort of math and writing required by the courses for which they are applying. Tests can be taken in Innu-aimun (a local Indigenous language), but even in English the tests are constructed to be culturally relevant, using situations with which applicants would be familiar. Tests are not ‘pass or fail’ but are designed to help decide what help a student might need. Finally, the counsellor and applicant develop a co-education plan that could include upgrading or tutoring as required.

“Our goal is to co-develop an education plan with the applicant that fits the goals of the applicant, builds on their skill set and leads to admission to their program of choice, either right away or after some upgrading if they need to do some upgrading.”

Erica Bourdon - Yukon University

The admission process at Yukon University is test-based for those students who are coming back to school. Their team is very committed to supporting the student as much as they can. One way they do this is to prepare them for the test, training the students before they actually take the test. In addition, if a student scores lower than the course requirement on a test, the University will often talk with the student and connect with the program or academic chair to explore options for entrance for the student.

If students are missing one or two key courses from grade 11 or grade 12 and want to directly enter a program based on conditional acceptance into those program areas, the University can offer admission. The student will be required to take some upgrading classes, but they are a formal student with whatever program they applied for throughout their academic career. Yukon University's academic upgrading goal is to never say no to a student who's applied to come to the institution.

Lois Philipp and Karen Aglukark - Northern Compass

Lois Philipp describes the goal of Northern Compass this way, "What we're aiming to do is provide supports so that Northern youth can transition to post-secondary with the understanding that ultimately they need to return to their communities to be the change that is really needed to sustain our communities."

The project has been helping Northern students with a variety of programs, although its work has been significantly interrupted by the pandemic. It had been running orientation programs to take Northern youth on tours of several southern campuses. The orientations are not just an introduction to the institutions to also to life in southern Canada, "A lot of our youth coming out of the north face a lot of barriers that are not understandable to southern Canadians. Just the idea of traffic lights, pavements, all of that stuff."

During the pandemic, the program has been providing more virtual support to students. That includes "achievement coaches" contacting students who have asked for help, to provide assistance with application processes, application fees, and other supports. When Covid-19 hit and some students moved back north to complete their courses online, the project offered bursaries for students going back home who needed help paying for internet to complete their courses online as they sometimes had to pay hundreds of dollars for a month's access. Sometimes the support is just to provide encouragement, as Karen Aglukark described, "One challenge we all share is leaving home to do something. We get youth whose families and communities don't understand the purpose of them leaving, some try to discourage them from leaving. I know of students whose families depend on them financially. So, we have students who are trying to go to school learning for the first time how to do college courses, how to live on your own, all of those big steps that they're taking combined with the guilt of leaving behind families and communities that rely on them."

**Andrea Giesbrecht, Gwen Woodward,
Deana Twissell, Government of NWT,
Department of Education, Culture
and Employment**

The NWT government is attempting to increase local employment in communities in the NWT outside of Yellowknife by boosting involvement in trades. Skills trades are in high demand in the NWT. There are always ongoing GNWT initiatives, including infrastructure projects, and housing construction projects that are underway or proposed. These require skilled trades and skill tradespeople. The apprenticeship program is a really important part of that. The NWT government is discussing, in partnership with employers and communities, additional options in the Apprenticeship Program that provide apprentices with flexible on-the-job training, mentorship and supervision.

The government recently led extensive engagements with dozens of different stakeholders, organizations, and hundreds of individuals.

As part of the engagements, they heard⁵:

- importance of partnership with all levels of government, indigenous governments, employers, industry.
- innovative ideas to build an NWT 'pool' of journey-persons
- financial incentives for people to pursue trades
- local options to learn trades
- trades promotion strategy
- different pathways for people to learn trades, including more online
- better social supports for those studying in the south

As part of the promotion of trades, the GNWT has launched a "blue seal" Program. This is a certification that can be earned by a journey person. It is already operational in Alberta. Journey persons who have taken various business courses can apply for the certification, which would in turn qualify them for more supervisory or managerial positions. The NWT government is hoping the blue seal program will help to raise awareness for their journey people and also raise the esteem of what a journey person does and the trades in general.

The Conference Board of Canada is developing an occupational demand for NWT which will project out to 2040. "The "skills for success" initiative in the NWT is very much an exercise in filling those labour market demands" They also recognize the importance of supporting trades jobs in smaller communities. They are trying to attract more students to trades. One initiative is hiring more "Career and Education Advisors" in high schools, mostly in regions outside of Yellowknife, to support students to determine career pathways.

The GNWT has also created a "housing maintainer" trade together with Nunavut - ideal for small communities where specialists such as plumbers, carpenters etc. may not be available.

NWT has an Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupation Certification program - delivered through 5 regional service centres, and have career development officers in each.

5 Full report at https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/2021-09-s4s_what_we_heard_report.pdf

They work directly with clients, one-on-one. A board for the program is largely made up of industry representatives appointed by the government.

Current priorities for the board are:

- women in trades
- development of mentorship for journey-persons
- blue seal certification

Kelsey Schmitz, Inuit Tapiirit Kanatami

Kelsey's presentation focused on the concept of an Inuit Nunangat University. Recently ITK and MasterCard Foundation have announced a partnership to support the planning and visioning of a university in Inuit Nunangat, for Inuit by Inuit. This gives Inuit the space to dream, develop a plan starting from their own priorities. They are starting by asking Inuit what that space could look like, what could ownership look like, what could the philosophy of the institution look like, and how would it be created, when they are not being told what they have to do.

No matter how hard they work at partnerships with southern institutions, there are always strictures that may not fit an Inuit way of being. This initiative is to give students another option that might fully immerse them in their own language and culture. As Kelsey Schmitz said, "If you're given independent financial ability to not be tied to anyone else's goals and anyone else's mandate, to just think through whatever you want, it opens up a lot more opportunity."

ITK has a National Inuit Committee on Education, and this body has appointed members to a committee to discuss the university concept. They are also planning to consult widely with communities, and particularly with students.

They're also looking at international examples such as the Sámi University in Norway, and Maori arts and crafts collectives in New Zealand.

Mandee McDonald, Dene Nahjo

Dene Nahjo runs several programs in the NWT, including hide tanning camps, Indigenous leadership workshops.

To deliver programs outside of mainstream institutions, the main issue is funding. Online programs and land-based options (such as those delivered by Dechinta) are good options for the NWT. There are many online programs that people in the North could access, but they are all siloed, making it difficult to access and understand. It would be good if there was a comprehensive listing of what all of the opportunities are, so people could find them all in one place.

On the issue of credentialing and postsecondary education. She thinks that there is a lot of opportunity to create a postsecondary institution that doesn't necessarily have to follow or reflect the standards of existing postsecondary institutions in the South. The issue of credentialing, in her opinion, is only important if students are planning to transfer into other postsecondary programs in the South. "It would be exciting to see an institution that was created and developed to meet the vision and goals of the people of the NWT rather than trying to fit into the expectations and framework of southern institutions. However people go about visioning this post-secondary institution it would make sense to be clear which programs would be easily transferred and recognized by southern institutions, and which programs are valid and legitimate according to nobody else's standards except the people who created it and those who are going to take it."

The idea of Northerners as a monolithic group is problematic - around 50% of the NWT is Indigenous. "There's a really amazing opportunity to create and develop post-secondary from Indigenous perspectives and grounded in Northern Indigenous knowledges that I think would make the institution and the offerings extremely relevant and interesting not only to Indigenous northerners, but to all people in the three territories."

Finally, she discussed the importance of diverse programming. "A lot of young people are pushed into trades - when I graduated, I wanted to take political science - my counsellor said my grades were not good enough and pushed me to take trades at Aurora College. I have no problem with trades, but they are promoted at the expense of other options. The NWT is still treated as a resource colony, pushing people into trades, presenting mining and extraction as the only viable careers and options for young people has been a strategy of the federal government for a long time. There's a huge role that the federal government can play in providing funding to other options."

She also described the barriers that northern students face when entering post secondary, because the northern education system does not adequately prepare people for post-secondary education. A 'bridge' program that people did not have to apply to student financial assistance to take would be very useful. A bridging program should cover not just academic, but other forms of preparation.

Morley Hanson - Nunavut Sivuniksavut

Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) is an Ottawa-based Inuit Studies program that evolved from a training program for young people to work as field workers while the Nunavut claim was being negotiated in the mid-'80's. It became a non-profit organization in 1999. It gradually evolved from informal popular education style teaching with no textbooks to a more formal program; not a transition program, but rather a post-secondary program in its own right accredited by Algonquin College., offering a first year Inuit Studies certificate and a 2nd yr Advanced Inuit Studies certificate.

NS has surveyed alumni several times and finds that about 95% of alumni are either in post-secondary education, or are employed. Morley Hanson attributes this not just to the skills and knowledge gained in the program, but also to an attitudinal change in students; "It was these heightened feelings of cultural pride, of respect for the people who had come before them and created the world that they were stepping into, confidence in their ability to step into that world, and just being overall inspired...We've come to see that without those positive attitudes of self being developed, all of the knowledge and skills in the world leaves them still vulnerable to things that can go sideways." NS graduates are actively involved in all aspects of Nunavut life: the professions like law, teaching, nursing; public service in all levels of gov't and Inuit land claim organizations; the performing Arts, along with municipal and territorial politics.

Students have said in surveys that if they'd just started to go straight to university, few of them would have been successful. He notes they could have handled it intellectually, but didn't have the skills.

Courses at NS are focused on Inuit history, the details of the Nunavut Agreement, the story of Inuit-Gov't relations and current issues Inuit are dealing with, along with other instruction in English and Inuktitut and some cultural learning. All of the instruction can be related to the story of Inuit history that NS has developed (figure 1 below).

There was some initial concern about sending students south, removing them from their culture and home. However, this approach seems to have strengthened culture; with graduates playing a strong role in revitalizing culture. Relocating south is a stressful experience and huge challenge, but it's also a stimulating adventure. There is some

attrition - 70-80% will complete a year. However the cohort model is part of the success - the group identity is really valuable. NS has tried to find ways to maintain that in an online environment, but it's difficult.

In terms of transferability, content can be delivered anywhere, but the cultural performing, the ambassadorial work, the relationship building and independent living, all of it makes the program what it is. People from other parts of the north have come to observe and study what we do, but so far, only one other region has done something like this (Nunavik Sivunitsavut).

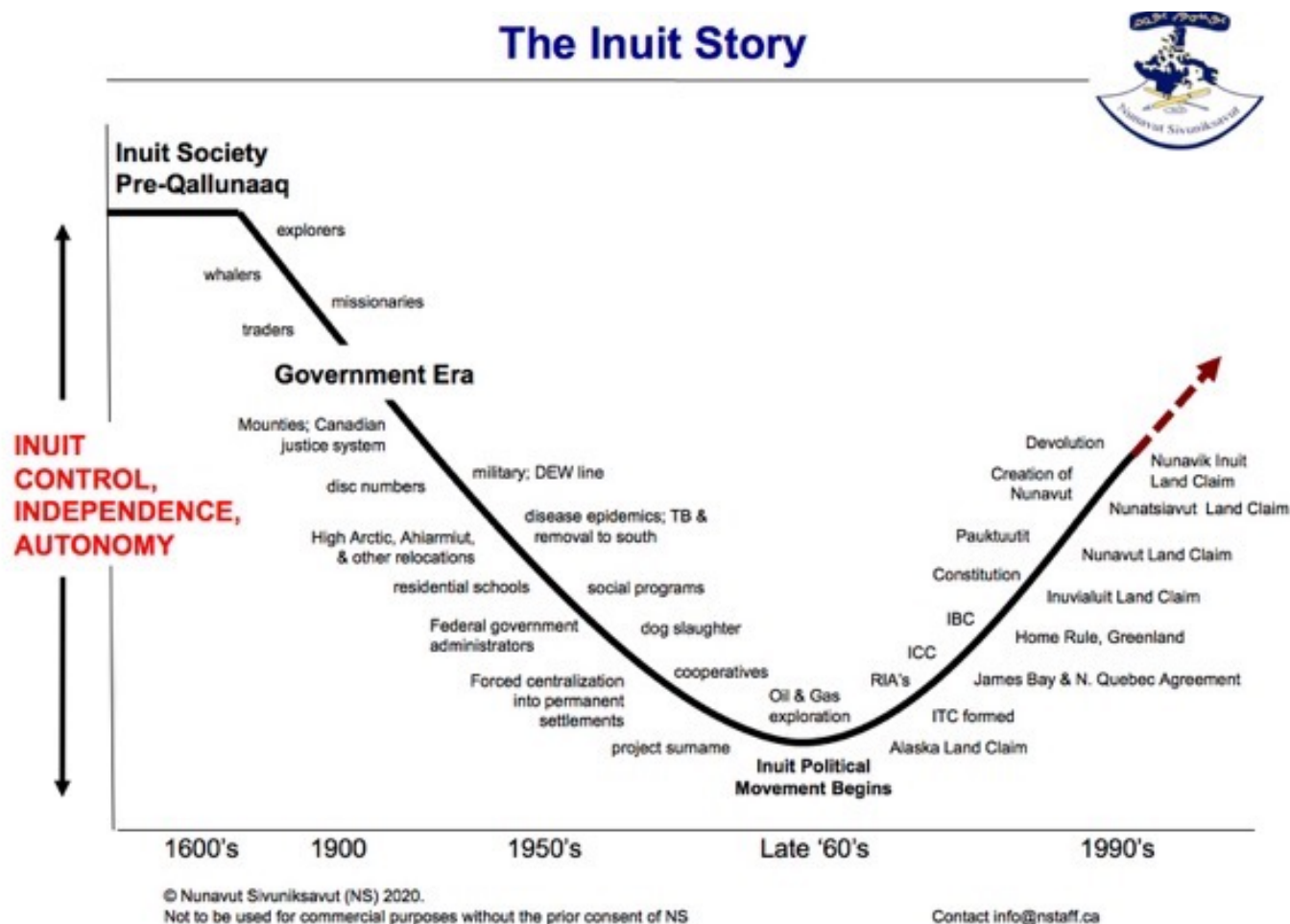


Figure 1. The Inuit story

James Vandenberg, Nunavik Sivunitsavut

The Nunavik Sivunitsavut program was modeled on the Nunavut version. It was launched in 2017-18 to make up for the lack of post-secondary options in Nunavik. James was hired to transform or adapt the NS program to the Nunavik and Québec reality. Quebec has a CEGEP system that bridges high school and university. The funding comes from various institutions in the Nunavik region, including the Makivik Corporation and the Kativik School Board. The program began with a CIRNAC grant, but is now funded mostly by the province. In part this was because the CIRNAC reporting requirements were too resource intensive.

This is a one year certificate program, where students take five courses each semester, including Inuit literature in English, Inuit games and on the land programs for phys. ed., Inuit language. Cultural confidence is a primary goal of the program. There are also “cultural weeks” in the fall and spring.

The program acts as a bridge between Nunavik high schools and larger post-secondary institutions. Graduation rate right now is about 78%, and most graduates are now employed or in post-secondary education. This year has been difficult due to Covid, and has reduced the number of students the program could accommodate. “It’s very challenging when they can’t get together, because that ‘cohort feel’ is everything.”

They are conducting a survey to see how well the program has met its goals, and how it might be improved in the future. One question is whether it should be continued in Montreal or delivered in Nunavik. On the question of transferability of the program, the Grand Council of the Crees is now looking at starting something similar.

Bronwyn Hancock, Yukon University Research Centre

Research funding agencies are ready to support work at the intersection of education, research and reconciliation. Increasingly, funders want to work directly with communities, and Yukon University is supportive of this direction. We are keen to serve as a valued collaborator supporting community leadership.

Graduate students are looking to have a different relationship with the North than their supervisors did. “they feel personally compelled to serve in the spirit of reconciliation.”

In the most practical sense, we’re not setting our research priorities, we’re responding to funders. We have tried to set priorities, but the lists are very long. I’d rather have a conversation about how we do research than how we set priorities. We still have a fairly limited amount of research truly co-created with communities, because university structures don’t really align with community timetables.

There’s a real gap in money to support structures (physical and organizational) that enables research in the North, as opposed to project funding. ArcticNet awarded us some unrestricted funding under their North by North program to invest in capacity development and that really helped.

Joel McAlister, Aurora Research Institute

Every year the college hires between one to ten students or in some cases even more, as research assistants on research programs. There are also student positions in support services, administration, and technicians who work with the Aurora College technicians to support research logistics out on the field. In these roles, students learn the necessary research related skill sets, including navigation, and the traditional knowledge aspects of the work involved.

Aurora Research Institute has a robust research outreach program that goes into communities, the high schools, including western science and traditional knowledge components in the outreach. The Research Institute has been able to take on interns with funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories intern program, and one of these has turned into a full-time job.

The College through its environmental and natural resources technology program offers a technical research project (6 to 8 months). Students develop a mini thesis, proposals and research questions, sometimes community-driven, sometimes reflecting the students' own interests. Then they develop a research program, and do the fieldwork. Partnerships with visiting researchers have provided students with opportunities to utilize southern researchers expertise, helping the students develop their research skills. We have had students at the diploma level have their work published as peer-reviewed research.

Southern researchers who come up are recruited into a 'speaker series' to share their research and knowledge.

In terms of research priorities, the program draws on the Aurora College strategic plan, the GNWT knowledge agenda, the health research agenda, all of which were arrived at through consultation. They also work in conjunction with Hotii ts'eeda and in partnership with Indigenous governments. "We're really trying to build that sort of platform where the communities may have questions or research interests. Our role is to support building the capacity for the communities to go out and conduct those research questions."

COVID-19 has helped evolve a new relationship with research. As southern researchers couldn't travel north, they have worked with hunters and trappers organizations and other community groups to get the research into the field. This has resulted in more southern research being conducted by northerners.

Jamal Shirley and Karen Vanden Boomen, Nunavut Research Institute

Each jurisdiction has its own unique challenges and strengths. One of the NRI's main roles is regulating research in Nunavut, reviewing between 160 and 200 research applications per year. NRI is also the science division of Nunavut Arctic College and is responsible for building NAC's institutional research capacity through fostering research and training.

NRI involves northern students in many of the same ways as other jurisdictions, including internships and opportunities for students to support visiting researchers. NRI has developed an annual wildlife contaminants workshop funded by the northern contaminants program that includes Inuit and western knowledge - for instance, students would be directed by Elders in cutting up seals and taught traditional food safety practices, then go into the lab and check the seal tissue for mercury levels.

NRI works closely with Inuit rights-holding organizations and communities on questions of licencing, and are in constant dialogue with them about research. “Right now in Nunavut we’re really struggling with the challenge of research fatigue and saturation in many of our communities. Some have specifically requested that we not send to them any new research applications for review, because they want to spend more time developing their own in-house research needs and priorities and strategies.”

NRI sees an incredible growth in community research capacity. However, many groups are developing at the community level and there is a clear need to bring those groups together. NRI is working to develop their role as a research facilitator in this area.

Sylvia Moore, Labrador Campus of Memorial University

The Inuit Bachelor of Education (IBED) program, developed in partnership between Memorial University and the Nunatsiavut Government, was offered at the Labrador Institute in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Instructors worked with the Nunatsiavut Government education staff to ensure courses were culturally relevant and Inuit culture was infused throughout the program. The Nunatsiavut Government also staffed a Cultural Consultant position to support instructors and students. The consultant worked on including Inuit knowledge in the courses, through arranging activities such as dogsledding, and bringing Elders into the classroom. Students had tutorial and counselling support, and the cohort structure also helped as students supported each other.

The course had four main strategies to include Inuit culture and to model ways in which the future teachers could incorporate Inuit knowledge and cultural values into their teachings:

- Land - it was important to get students out on the land but also to teach them about making connections between K-12 subject areas and the land of Nunatsiavut.
- Inuktitut Language – there were 3 linguistics courses and Inuktitut methods course, as well as a concurrent Inuktitut language program offered by the Nunatsiavut government.
- Elders and knowledge holders- offered teachings and stories in the classroom and on the land. They guided the program in many ways and supported students.
- Resources –Inuit and Labrador-specific teaching resources were used in the courses. The Children’s Literature course, for example, relied exclusively on Inuit and Indigenous children’s literature.

“We spent a lot of time trying to bring in resources that were either specific to Inuit, specific to Labrador, but also ideas around how they could make resources as future teachers or how the experiences they might share with students might result in some product to share cultural values and knowledge along the way.”

Building from the model of the Inuit Bachelor of Education program, and the new generational partnership between Memorial University and Nunavut Arctic College, Memorial is working with the Nunavut Teacher Education Program to reflect Inuit knowledge, values, and language. There has been on-going international interest in the program structure of the IBED. “I think it’s such important work especially when we look at the Calls to Action [of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission] and what every province and territory across the country is asking K-12 teachers to do. There has to be a place where teachers learn how to teach in culturally relevant and responsive ways.”

Shelagh Rowles, Yukon University

Shelagh Rowles described lack of high school completion as a big limiting factor for people getting into trades in Yukon. This is especially prevalent for Indigenous students in Yukon communities as highlighted in the 2019 Auditor General’s report on Education in Yukon. Most trades require grade 10 completion for math, however, many students don’t have Math 10. Further, Math 10 provides a minimum foundation for students but students may struggle if they experience difficulty. Even if a student goes in and even if they have a math 10, they often experience difficulties. Higher completion rates in high school math will help increase the success rates in the trades.

The other challenge is getting into apprenticeships in communities. They have worked to attach apprentices to First Nation governments rather than a succession of employers, but that’s still “a work in progress”. The availability of local work is a challenge for people to complete their apprenticeships within their community, particularly in industrial trades, where Indigenous northerners and northerners in general are under-represented.

There is a need to align training with what is happening in the territory. For example, with climate change, there is a need to consider heating sources that draw renewable energy. Apprenticeship programs in the North are not keeping up with the changing skills required to support new energy systems. We don’t have a plan to retrain existing tradespeople or to prepare new apprentices to acquire the skills to install, service and maintain such systems.

The Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining developed targeted opportunities for Yukon First Nation people to have jobs in the mining industry. Realizing that relocating people to Whitehorse was a barrier, they purchased a ‘mobile trades trailer’ to offer trades and pre-apprenticeship programs, in partnership with Indigenous governments and industry.

New (First Nations) governments have created some new opportunities for trades, as it can take a long time to get territorial legislation drafted and passed to regulate trades, while First Nations governments can be more agile. For instance, the Trondek Hwech’in government and YukonU are piloting a multi-trades mining course. Should it be successful, this could become a Northern apprenticeship pathway.



V. Summary of the Literature Review Findings

Strategic documents from Northern Indigenous peoples, universities, Northern governments and cities were analyzed, as well as other research and analysis on this subject. The analysis is broken down by themes that emerged from the data.

Adequacy of Primary and Secondary Education

Various sources mentioned the importance of education received before the post-secondary level in helping students decide whether or not to pursue post-secondary education, and in equipping them for post-secondary education.

Early Childhood Education

Prior to primary and secondary education, some sources mentioned Early Childhood Education (ECE). The report, “A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model” noted that, “Strengthening ECE programming through enhanced and sustained funding agreements is the first bridge toward success in school (Simon, 2017)”. Especially, ECE has a role in teaching Indigenous languages and in creating bridges with parents’ involvement in their children’s education.

Counselling in Schools

The Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut (2019) advanced the importance of education and career counselling, as high schools in Nunavut don’t have formal guidance counsellor positions. The report suggests that Nunavut Arctic College should better promote its post-secondary education programs to high school students.

Furthermore, institutions should inform students of the job opportunities offered to them once they have finished their programs. Bell and Brown (2018) also say counselling services should be available to high school students, to inform them about post-secondary programs in the North and the availability of programs in different Indigenous languages.

Low Attendance and Success Factors

Low school attendance is raised as being one of the roots of students’ completion rates. The Nunavut Auditor General’s report recommended improving the quality of attendance data of students in the territory, to which the Nunavut Government agreed. In this, as in many other issues, there is a difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. A report on school attendance in the Yukon published by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office (2021) stated that 55% of students who identified as Yukon First Nations experienced chronic absenteeism, compared to 29% for non-First Nations students. Similar trends can be seen across the North, with the NWT reporting an overall 80% attendance rate for students (although that attendance figure drops off further if Yellowknife schools are taken out of the picture). Both the Nunavut and Yukon reports note that social issues underlay both attendance and performance issues for students. These include systemic barriers and inequalities, including overcrowded housing, the legacy of residential schools, and food insecurity. The Yukon report suggests some potential measures such as providing meals at school. It also identifies

shortcomings in the school environment, such as belonging and culture, safety at school, lack of behavioural support, and lack of educational support.

In 2019, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada published another report on primary and secondary education in Yukon, and the Yukon Department of Education's support for Yukon First Nations' cultures and languages. The report concluded that the Yukon government did not know if its programs met its students' needs. To address this discrepancy, the report recommended a First Nations education strategy to close the gaps in student outcomes. The Legacy (2015) says residential schools led to few PSE graduate role models and mentors for students who are thinking about continuing to PSE. The report also mentions the unsuitable curricula, as provincial curricula are not adapted for Indigenous students, who need to have access to curricula adapted to their culture and taught in their language. The end of colonial violence in the educational system in the North is raised by Scramstad (2020) who proposes anti-racist mentors in the schools, teachers and staff, and the creation of an appropriate curriculum as potential remedies. A discussion paper from the GNWT (2021) on the modernization of the Education Act discusses the Indigenous Languages and Education Policy, which requires the school system to provide Indigenous language and culture programs, where Elders and cultural experts are elaborating and advising on these programs. Several other reports note the need for improvements in the teaching and inclusion of Indigenous cultures and languages, including the incorporation of elders into school classes, and land-based education.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's National Strategy on Inuit Education (2011) also states that students with special needs must have access to adapted support: "Literacy and math programs, breakfast programs, alternative discipline programs, parenting classes, drug and alcohol counseling and mental health counseling are all essential in Inuit Nunangat".

The education sector creates a feedback loop of greater educational capacity. The more it trains northern teachers, the more students progress to PSE, some of whom in turn become teachers. Berger et al. (2017) published a study on Inuit teachers in Nunavut and insisted that more Inuit teachers must be trained, to preserve language and culture of Inuit. The GNWT (2013) highlights the role of teachers and their impacts on the learning progress of students, "... trusting relationships between students and teachers have been demonstrated to be more important even than socio economic challenges in the life and community of the learner."

Social Determinants of PSE Success

Social factors are evident in the literature on Northern PSE. These social determinants are defined by the World Health Organization as, "... the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life (WHO, 2021)". This definition includes the basic needs of every human being – including food, housing, employment, security. These factors have been found by a variety of studies to be significant in determining people's ability to engage and succeed in PSE. For instance, Berger et al. (2017) found funding opportunities and housing were factors in dissuading Nunavut students from taking teacher training courses.

Housing

The accessibility and the expensive cost of housing in the North can discourage students. Rodon et al. (2018) give the example of unmarried students with no children in Nunavut. As they have no priority for housing or access to a subsidized unit, they need to find work to afford the rent. The 2017 ITK report (re)Visioning Success in Inuit Education: a report of the 2017 Inuit Education Forum, also addressed the housing crisis as being an issue for hiring and retaining good teachers in the north. It highlighted that housing allocation mechanisms in some communities should be changed to ensure greater access to housing for teachers.

Income/affordability

Shankar et al. (2020) identify funding as being the largest barrier to Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education in Canada. This barrier is interrelated to other factors, according to these authors - increasing student fees to attend undergraduate studies, followed by family responsibilities and the lack of proximity to postsecondary institutions. A report of the Conference Board of Canada (2014) shows the operating grant funding is decreasing in Canada, due to a smaller cohort of Canadian students in higher education. But the Indigenous population is increasing and more students are pursuing PSE. The report questions the accessible funding – while the number of Indigenous students in PSE increased in recent years, the proportion of funding available for them did not increase even with more Indigenous students attending PSE.

Financial support is mentioned in Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's Inuit Post-Secondary Education Strategy, published in 2020. It proposes that funding should be more accessible to Inuit students and also increased, from \$20,000 to \$35,000 per year. In the University of Manitoba Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, a similar argument is raised regarding the development of new grants for students. In the Northwest Territories, students have access to Income Assistance to support them to cover their expenses and basic needs. Assistance to navigate through the application process should be provided to applicants according to the GNWT report (2019), and other benefits should be covered such as prescription drugs, and dental and vision appointments. Childcare costs and availability can also be a barrier according to some research. In Iveson's (2016) study, some Deline students mentioned having received the Child Tax Credit (Childcare) and others raised the difficulties they faced to cover their living expenses, especially when living with dependents. Shankar et al. (2020) mentions the need to properly fund childcare services for students.

Responding to Residential Schools' Impacts

Many strategic documents reaffirmed the importance of taking into account the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the UNDRIP principles (GNWT, 2019). Cote-Meek (2019) gives the example of the process undertaken at Laurentian University, which developed a new vision and an Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre as a starting point to respond to the TRC Calls to Action.

Rodon et al. (2014) give the example of the Master of Education program in Nunavut, which has a cohort approach, and where the courses were given by Inuit, non-Inuit and Elders, and students were still within their community. In their article, Tanche et al. (2020) propose that Yukon College (now Yukon University) should have Indigenous language at the forefront and provide Indigenous language learning for its staff and community.

The lack of role models is addressed in *The Legacy* (2015), as being an intergenerational impact of residential schools, leaving some families without strong role models for parenting, and therefore leaving students with lack of support to pursue PSE. Furthermore, residential schools led to few PSE graduate role models and mentors for students who are thinking about continuing to PSE.

Gender

No specific studies of gender differences in PSE in the North were reviewed, but older national statistics are broken down for Indigenous students. These show a marked difference in PSE participation between female and male students. The proportion of Indigenous women aged 35 to 44 who had a university degree in 2011 was 13.6%, compared with 7.6% for Indigenous men in the same age group. Just over 27% of Indigenous women aged 35 to 44 had a college diploma in 2011, compared to 18.3% for Indigenous men in the same age group.

Social supports

As noted in the TRC report, the legacy of the residential schools can influence students' families to have negative attitudes to the education system, which in turn can lead to a lack of support for students' aspirations. Several sources noted the importance of family and friends in students' choices to opt for PSE, and

to successfully complete PSE. Rodon et al. (2014) highlight the role of students' families and communities to support students to pursue their studies. Iveson's (2016) report reaffirms parents' support in the life of the students, especially for younger students from Deline. An ITK report on Inuit education (2016) underlined the importance of mobilizing parents, which has been central to the national strategy on Inuit education, and was one of the prioritized recommendations for the implementation of the strategy.

Admissions

To attend PSE, Northern students often must pass admissions standards and/or tests that are not designed with them in mind. The College of the North Atlantic (CNA, 2019), which partners with different levels of government, including Nunatsiavut, did a review of the literature on the subject and concluded that standardized tests might not predict the success of students, as they were biased to a Eurocentric worldview that disadvantages Indigenous peoples. The report concluded that a holistic approach including life experience would be beneficial for mature students. The report raised the relevance of updating the admission process for all students, concluding that the Canadian Adult Achievement Test is not the appropriate test for anyone. Another report from the CNA (2020), centered on the "Readiness Project", was specifically on the admission of Indigenous mature students. It highlighted that a lack of information regarding admission procedures can discourage students from applying and recommended that colleges and universities adapt their admission requirements or selection process to support Indigenous students.



02

Calls To Action

The calls to action in this report emerge from a synthesis of all the data gathered from engagement sessions, the national survey, guest experts and knowledge holders, a literature review, and our own professional and lived experiences. These calls are broad in scope, and represent urgent and pressing issues across the North, and are organized according to overarching themes. While not every call to action is equally applicable to all regions (see Table on page 100), there is a consistency across all regions and we hope that our recommendations are taken up and applied across all Northern regions, giving all Northern learners an equal opportunity to dream, aspire, and succeed in their post-secondary goals. Further, while we have presented these Calls to Action based on order of urgency and the frequency in which we heard these needs and priorities across all the engagement sessions, the survey, and from the guest experts, we note that many are interlinked and of equal importance, making a full ranking undesirable.



Recognition and use of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being

1 New and continued investment in programs that represent enriching and empowering approaches to and for Indigenous education and research within post-secondary institutions and Northern and/or Indigenous organizations to ensure continued innovative implementation of Indigenous-led education.

This is a foundational call to action that is further elaborated in several of the other calls to action. Northern Indigenous communities have thrived in their homelands since time immemorial. Multi-generational education systems that celebrate learners and centre that land have demonstrated that Northern Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being have always been empowering and enriching. Some institutions have made structural changes to their systems to reduce barriers and increase access for Indigenous learners, develop Indigenous-led curricula, and institute shared Indigenous governance. We encourage others to find ways to implement the various national and international calls to action (e.g. TRC, UNDRIP, MMIWG), and make significant, substantial, and structural changes to, for example, university governance, programming design, delivery, and management, teaching and learning strategies, admissions processes, and recruitment and retention.

The K-12 foundation

1 Investigate the potential for a shared investment in the K-12 system (similar to the daycare arrangement between the federal government and other jurisdictions).

There is broad recognition that the K-12 system is allowing students to graduate while still lacking basic literacy, numeracy, social and other academic skills. Post-secondary success is tied to K-12 access, success, and resources. The K-12 system, no matter who is administering it, needs increased investment from all levels of government involved.

2 Support and fund Indigenous-led programs that foster family engagement to support student learning.

The support of families is important to the success of learners. Particularly for Indigenous families, there is understandable reticence to entrust children to the education system. That trust must be (re)built by Indigenous-led programs that will engage Northern Indigenous families in the educational success of children.

3 Dedicated annual funding to support the training of teachers from the North, who will continue to live and work in the North, strengthening the K-12 system.

Northern teacher education programs, based in the North, and recruiting from local candidates, have been a success story in Northern jurisdictions for decades. These programs help provide culturally-relevant instruction, including using local languages, and reduce problems of teacher retention. However, these programs are often only funded to recruit occasional cohorts.

4 Increase incentives and supports for teacher recruitment and retention, including making incentives available to local hires.

A chronic issue in providing K-12 education is attracting and retaining teachers, particularly in smaller communities. Responsible authorities need to consider improving incentives for teachers, and providing the necessary supports especially where teachers are already over-stretched. Both incentives and supports should not just be aimed at attracting teachers from elsewhere, but should support and be equally applied to all teaching staff.

5 Support and fund education programs that create opportunities for culturally relevant learning.

Keeping students in school, particularly Indigenous students, could be assisted by incorporating and integrating their cultures in school settings, and by valuing the knowledge that flows from those cultures.

6 More regular and inclusive processes for evaluation and accountability of K-12 education.

Improvement in the K-12 system requires accountability, and accountability requires regular evaluation. This evaluation should not just be an internal education system evaluation, but should include and value inputs from students, teaching staff, and parents.

7 Enhanced provision of specialized instruction for core prerequisite courses required for post-secondary program entrance, including through access to distance education.

Northern students frequently find it difficult to advance to their preferred post-secondary education programs because the prerequisite high school courses were not readily available to students. In places where online learning is required, students are also more likely to face problems accessing online versions due to affordability, reliability, speed, and accessibility of Internet connections, which are substandard across much of the North.



Local delivery and access

1 Federal, territorial, provincial, and Indigenous government funding to continue to develop local university education in every region covered by this Task Force.

Canada's first Northern university launched in 2020 in Yukon and most Northern regions have now set goals to transition to providing local university education. We encourage all regions to set this as a goal, and all levels of government to provide needed supports.

2 Funding to support the ongoing availability of online, remote, and distance post-secondary learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated an increase of online and remote learning options available across Canada. With funders recognizing these courses as equivalent to in-person learning, online learning is more accessible and affordable for Northern students than ever before. It is vital that this increased accessibility be maintained, and further opportunities be made available through the creation of online courses designed for Northern learners and Northern bandwidth limitations.

3 Funding to support the delivery of community programming, including infrastructure for the growth and development of post-secondary spaces, community learning centres, local learning spaces, and accommodations for instructors and students.

The requirement to leave their home communities to pursue education is a major barrier for many Northern learners. Funds are required to expand and build community learning centers and post-secondary spaces in all currently underserved Northern communities, so that post-secondary institutions can offer programs locally and further support place-based educational opportunities.

4 Encourage governments, businesses, communities, and institutions to partner on local delivery of post-secondary programs with lower enrolment thresholds.

The lower numbers of learners available to take any given program in the North often leads to one of two outcomes: the program will not run in a given location due to lower numbers, or the local Indigenous government is expected to subsidize the running of the course with lower numbers. Partnerships between a combination of institutions, government, communities, and businesses could help increase community-based delivery of programs with smaller numbers of learners.

5 Funding to better support local delivery of trades education based on community interest and industry need.

Innovative thinking is required in the delivery of trades programs in the North. These programs have the potential to attract Northern students including those who have, to date, been under-represented in post-secondary education. One barrier to completing these programs is that Northern communities lack people with the certification required to take on apprentices, so Northern students cannot do the practical work required in their home communities or even in regional centres.

6 Funding for regions to examine the success of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut and Nunavik Sivunitsavut (NS) programs and assess whether similar programs would work for them.

The NS programs have proven successful in providing the supports and cultural instruction that help Inuit students thrive. Other regions should be supported by all levels of government in examining this model to determine if it could or should be successfully replicated.

Wrap-around support

1 Dedicated funding from federal, provincial and territorial governments, and post-secondary institutions to support the unique needs of Northern and Indigenous learners, including increased funding for counselling, child, and family support.

Much of the data focused on ‘family and cultural responsibilities’ as a major barrier to accessing or completing post-secondary education. Northern learners need to be supported in their responsibilities to look after immediate and/or extended families. These wrap around supports are important to reduce barriers for International students, and newcomers to Canada who are seeking education and employment pathways in the North. The new agreements on daycare are expected to help but, particularly in Northern jurisdictions, the focus may well shift from affordability of daycare to availability.

2 Dedicated funding from federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and post-secondary institutions to support Indigenous Elders, traditional knowledge holders, and Indigenous language speakers to actively participate in a) Northern post-secondary institutions; and b) other post-secondary institutions with a Northern student presence.

For Northern Indigenous students to thrive, it is important to have culturally-appropriate supports in place, such as counsellors who can speak their languages and Elders who can provide guidance and opportunities to participate in cultural practices while in school.

3 Federal, territorial, provincial, and Indigenous governments funding to support student orientation programs that give students a glimpse of life in post-secondary hubs outside of their communities and help prepare them for successful transitions

Northern students, especially those from smaller communities, are often inexperienced with many aspects of life in larger centres that offer post-secondary education. Programs have been initiated in several parts of the North that help students with this transition. These need to be uniformly available, and developed to match local cultural contexts.

Housing

1 Dedicated funding to build new and/or renovate existing student housing in the North that reflects appropriate cultural, social, and environmental contexts.

Students across the North, including both current and prospective domestic and international students, identified that inadequate housing has a broad negative effect on their ability to access post-secondary opportunities. This includes the inability to find housing in Northern communities where post-secondary opportunities are offered, and unsafe or overcrowded housing negatively affecting their ability to study. New or renovated housing complexes for Northern students should also include associated amenities such as ample family residences, student lounges, daycare centres, common kitchens (incorporating country food preparation areas) and Elders’ spaces.

2 Northern institutions in partnership with federal, territorial, provincial, and/or Indigenous governments, should provide adequate staff housing.

Inadequate and/or unaffordable housing for staff is a problem at both K-12 and post-secondary levels. It contributes to the problem of attracting and keeping staff in Northern communities. Staff housing should be available to all staff, regardless of home origin.



Financing

1 The federal government should negotiate financial assistance plans with all Northern regions similar to those negotiated for Inuit Nunangat regions in order to guarantee equivalent access to post-secondary student funding and support Indigenous control of funding for Indigenous students.

Agreements on student funding negotiated with Inuit regions are showing signs of success. However, this approach has not been adopted more broadly across the North. Other Indigenous Peoples' organizations and governments need similar access to dedicated post-secondary education funding that they can control.

2 Provinces and territories should cover costs of upgrading for students, and not pass on such costs to Indigenous governments, or deduct such costs from money allocated to Northern and Indigenous students' post-secondary education.

At present, there is a patchwork of approaches to covering costs for upgrading for Northern students. In some cases, costs for upgrading are passed on to Indigenous governments, and in

other cases the costs for upgrading are deducted from the post-secondary support available for individuals.

3 Federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments should provide equitable access to programs to meet Northern and Indigenous students' needs for personal development and the skills required to succeed in post-secondary education.

In some cases, Northern students have access to bridging programs that help provide them with the skills and confidence required to access higher levels of post-secondary education, or to programs (Nunavut Sivuniksavut/Nunavik Sivuniksavut) that fulfill a similar function.

Equitable access to distance and virtual post-secondary education

1 Make equivalency of service the goal for provision of Internet services.

Northern students are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing distance education and remote/online learning, as most of the North is at a disadvantage when it comes to speeds, price, and accessibility of Internet services. Applying national minimum Internet standards in the North is a start, but the goals should be to provide Northern students with a standard of accessibility common to students in much of southern Canada. Northern students at all educational levels should not be at a perpetual disadvantage as educational design is often optimised for higher Internet standards.



Credentialing, faculty & programs

1 A dedicated federal fund to support program redesign and development.

New and innovative programming is required to make Northern postsecondary more accessible and flexible. For example, breaking educational programs down into smaller, modular, and stackable components can make the programs more accessible to Northern students. These courses and programs should be stackable to count toward more advanced degrees and/or transferred between different institutions.

2 A dedicated federal fund to support the training and professional development of faculty and staff in Northern post-secondary institutions.

Ongoing faculty and staff development and professional learning and training opportunities is a priority for Northern post-secondary institutions, particularly strategies and skills to better support Northern and Indigenous learners, from cultural learning opportunities to diverse pedagogical approaches to trauma-informed teaching and learning to research capacity-sharing opportunities.

3 A dedicated federal fund to support Indigenous-led and Indigenous-created programs, including certificates, diplomas, and degrees at the undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels.

The design, development, and delivery of programs that centre Indigenous knowledges, leadership, and governance is a key priority. Diplomas, certificates and degree programs that are Indigenous-led and Indigenous-created have proven to increase student success, and reflect the growing recognition of the importance of Indigenous knowledges, and ways of knowing, doing, and being within post-secondary research and education across all fields. Credentialed Indigenous language programming face a particularly urgent need for financial support, and reflect important commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Language programs are particularly expensive to design and deliver.

4 A dedicated federal fund to support land-based programming, including post-secondary accredited programming and research training.

Investing in Northern land-based programs is vital to creating enriching and varied educational and employment pathways in Northern and Indigenous communities. These programs are at the cutting edge of research and educational fields, including climate change science, community health and wellness, and governance. Land-based programs are proven to increase Northern and Indigenous student success and retention, while creating sustainable employment opportunities across Northern and Indigenous communities. Many post-secondary institutions across Canada are developing land-

based programming, recognizing its vital role in creating innovative educational programming. Investment in Northern land-based programming will continue to support student success, while ensuring the North continues to be a space of recognized innovation in research and education. This approach also requires the recognition of the credentials of knowledge-holders who are able to lead and instruct in such programs.

5 A dedicated federal fund to support the development of more locally inclusive post-secondary governance systems.

Northern post-secondary institutions have been taking steps to be more locally-inclusive in their governance systems, to help create an environment and programs that are more responsive to local needs and cultures. A dedicated funding source to help support these efforts would further enhance the ability of the institutions to connect with, and respond to, local interests.

6 A dedicated federal fund to support the development of North-to-North post-secondary partnerships and program development.

There is significant opportunity for Northern post-secondary institutions to collaborate on shared programming, credentialing, and research. This is already occurring to some extent, but more could be done to support North-to-North learning, sharing and knowledge co-production, including funding for student mobility, North-to-North research partnerships, and investment in building capacity for programming and research partnerships between and among governments, community organizations and post-secondary institutions.

7 Post-secondary institutions should develop and require training of new staff that provides them with a thorough and rigorous introduction to the Indigenous Peoples of the region served by the institution.

In order to be effective faculty and staff in Northern post-secondary institutions, it is essential that people receive the appropriate training about the history of the peoples, lands, and waters of the region in which they live and work. Requiring all new hires to take an introductory course that is locally-reflective and culturally-appropriate, such as “Yukon First Nations 101” instituted by Yukon University, should be common across Northern institutions.

Research

1 Expand eligibility requirements for federal research funding organizations (e.g. SSHRC, CIHR, NSERC, CFI, NRC, and Polar Knowledge Canada) to include Northern post-secondary institutions and Northern and Indigenous research organizations in funding opportunities.

Many Northern post-secondary institutions and Northern and Indigenous research organizations conduct high-quality and innovative Northern-focused and Indigenous-led research that meets the needs and priorities of the North; yet, many of these Northern and Indigenous institutions and organizations do not meet eligibility requirements to directly receive federal research funding.

Much of the federal research funding is currently channeled through the “tri-council” [The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)], as

well as through federal funding programs from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the National Research Council (NRC), and Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR). Structural barriers exist in the current system that limit the ability of Northern and Indigenous post-secondary institutions and research organizations to access the diversity of Tri-Council and federal research funding available to institutions in the south. Further, Indigenous governments, non-profit organizations, and community organizations and individuals are rarely able to access this funding to lead Northern and Indigenous research. Expanding the eligibility criteria of federal research funding to both reflect the needs and priorities of the North and directly fund Northern post-secondary institutions and Northern and Indigenous research organizations would not only better engage Northern and Indigenous learners and researchers, but would also produce more desirable, accessible, usable, and timely research for Northern and Indigenous communities and regions.

2 Ensure that federal research funding promotes Northern and Indigenous research leadership.

Northern and Indigenous organizations, governments, communities, and post-secondary institutions are increasingly calling for more sovereignty over research conducted in the North, and for more Northern- and Indigenous-led research. Research in the North should be by the North and for the North, and should meet Northern- and Indigenous-identified needs and priorities. Federal funding should ensure that Northern and Indigenous Peoples, communities, organizations, institutions, and governments are meaningfully included in all aspects of the research design and delivery. This requires including Northern and Indigenous Peoples as partners, leads, co-leads, and collaborators.

3 Ensure research licensing agencies and bodies require applications for Northern research to include Northern and Indigenous Peoples as partners, leads, co-leads, co-researchers, and/or collaborators, and require applicants to explain how they plan to involve Northern and Indigenous Peoples in all elements of their research, and to identify how their research meets Northern and Indigenous needs and priorities. For elements that do not involve Northerners, applicants should be required to explain why this involvement is not possible. Northern and Indigenous Peoples have the skills, talents, and capacities to lead research in the North and identify key research needs and priorities. Research in the North should require a clear partnership with, or involvement from, Northern and Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities. Research licensing bodies should ensure these partnerships are in place before approving research in the North.

4 Dedicated funding to support Northern and Indigenous research capacity.

The North has a long history of research leadership and excellence, and the pandemic has further highlighted the capacities of Northern and Indigenous Peoples to lead and conduct research. With increasing recognition of Northern and Indigenous research innovation across diverse fields, there have been increasing calls for significant involvement in Northern research. Yet, Northern post-secondary institutions and Northern and Indigenous research organizations are often over-stretched and underfunded, and have limited internal capacity to meet the ever-growing Northern research demands, both from the North and from the South. Further, there are limited opportunities for Northern and Indigenous Peoples to access research skills-building and capacity-enhancing workshops,

courses, or training opportunities. Dedicated funding to support Northern post-secondary institutions and Northern and Indigenous research organizations to enhance research capacities and training opportunities is required to expand the knowledge and talent base of Northern researchers.

Admissions requirements and processes

1 Post-secondary institutions must recognize and place value on prior and life-long learning experiences in order for potential students who may not meet traditional admission requirements, to be considered fairly when applying to post-secondary programs.

The prior knowledge that Northern and Indigenous learners bring to post-secondary education does not always align well within categories used by post-secondary institutions when evaluating an application for admission. This often leads them to devalue or even fail to recognize the credentials of Northern and Indigenous learners and their ability to participate in post-secondary educational opportunities. Assessment processes, particularly testing, need to consider the individual rather than taking a “one-size-fits-all” approach to admissions. Institutions need to recognize diverse forms of skills and knowledge and support the use of alternate assessment practices for admission into post-secondary institutions (e.g. The Readiness Project - College of the North Atlantic). We recommend working with Indigenous partners when reviewing and revising entrance requirements.

Francophone Supports

1 Support access to quality French-language post-secondary education in an environment where Indigenous cultures and languages are also valued and taught.

Students from the North want access to a diversity of learning opportunities and fewer barriers amongst institutions to transfer credits in order to benefit from the best of each one and to diversify their learning experience through courses in French, English and Indigenous languages. French-language education is a draw for inter-regional migration and for immigration, and post-secondary education institutions in minority language communities are community assets where people gather, access services, and build their communities.





















































2 Support partnership with Southern colleges and universities to develop programs in French that are adapted to Northern realities

Funding through Official Languages in Education programs from Heritage Canada support this type of activity for Southern institutions and Northern communities need to have equitable access to those funding opportunities.



Calls To Action Table














































Priority Level	Responsibility									
	Urgent	High	Medium	i.e. Federal Government						
				YUKON	NWT	NUNAVUT	NUNAVIK	NUNATSIAVUT	INUIT NUNANGAT	NORTHERN MANITOBA
CALLS TO ACTION										
The K-12 Foundation										
Investigate the potential for a shared investment in the K-12 system (similar to the daycare arrangement between the federal government and other jurisdictions).				Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent
Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										
Support and fund Indigenous-led programs that foster family engagement to support student learning.				High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										
Dedicated annual funding to support the training of teachers from the North, who will continue to live and work in the North, strengthening the K-12 system.				High	High	Medium	High	High	High	Urgent
Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										
Increase incentives and supports for teacher recruitment and retention, including making incentives available to local hires.				Urgent	Urgent	High	Urgent	High	High	High
Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										
Support and fund education programs that create opportunities for culturally relevant learning.				Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	High
Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										
More regular and inclusive processes for evaluation and accountability of K-12 education.				Urgent	High	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	Urgent	High
Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										
Enhanced provision of specialized instruction for core prerequisite courses required for post-secondary program entrance, including through access to distance education.				High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Urgent
Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, School Boards										

Priority Level  Urgent  High  Medium	Responsibility <i>i.e. Federal Government</i>							
		YUKON	NWT	NUNAVUT	NUNAVIK	NUNATSIAVUT	INUIT NUNANGAT	NORTHERN MANITOBA
CALLS TO ACTION								
Recognition and Use of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Being								
<p>New and continued investment in programs that represent enriching and empowering approaches to and for Indigenous education and research within post-secondary institutions and Northern and/or Indigenous organizations to ensure continued innovative implementation of Indigenous-led education.</p> <p><i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government, School Boards</i></p>								
Local Delivery and Access								
<p>Federal, territorial, provincial, and Indigenous government funding to continue to develop local university education in every region covered by this Task Force.</p> <p><i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government, School Boards</i></p>								
<p>Funding to support the ongoing availability of online, remote, and distance post-secondary learning.</p> <p><i>Federal Government, Post-Secondary Institutions</i></p>								
<p>Funding to support the delivery of community programming, including infrastructure for the growth and development of post-secondary spaces, community learning centres, local learning spaces, and accommodations for instructors and students.</p> <p><i>Federal Government, Indigenous Government, Post-Secondary Institutions</i></p>								
<p>Encourage governments, businesses, communities, and institutions to partner on local delivery of post-secondary programs with lower enrolment thresholds.</p> <p><i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government, Non-Governmental Organization, Post-secondary Institutions, Communities</i></p>								
<p>Funding to better support local delivery of trades education based on community interest and industry need.</p> <p><i>Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government, Post-secondary Institutions</i></p>								
<p>Funding for regions to examine the success of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut and Nunavik Sivunitsavut (NS) programs and assess whether similar programs would work for them.</p> <p><i>Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government, Post-secondary Institutions</i></p>								

Priority Level	Responsibility													
<div><div></div> Urgent</div> <div><div></div> High</div> <div><div></div> Medium</div>	<i>i.e. Federal Government</i>							YUKON	NWT	NUNAVUT	NUNAVIK	NUNATSIAVUT	INUIT NUNANGAT	NORTHERN MANITOBA
CALLS TO ACTION														
Wrap-Around Supports														
Dedicated funding from federal, provincial, territorial, and post-secondary institutions to support the unique needs of Northern and Indigenous learners, including increased funding for counselling and child and family support.														
<i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Post-Secondary Institutions, Communities</i>														
Dedicated funding from federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and post-secondary institutions to support Indigenous Elders, traditional knowledge holders, and Indigenous language speakers to actively participate in a) Northern post-secondary institutions; and b) other post-secondary institutions with a Northern student presence.														
<i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Post-Secondary Institutions</i>														
Federal, territorial, provincial, and Indigenous governments funding to support student orientation programs that give students a glimpse of life in post-secondary hubs outside of their communities and help prepare them for successful transitions														
<i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, Post-Secondary Institutions</i>														
Housing														
Dedicated funding to build new and/or renovate existing student housing in the North that reflects appropriate cultural, social, and environmental contexts.														
<i>Federal Government</i>														
Northern institutions in partnership with federal, territorial, provincial, and/or Indigenous governments should provide adequate staff housing.														
<i>Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, Post-Secondary Institutions</i>														

Priority Level	Responsibility													
<div><div></div> Urgent</div> <div><div></div> High</div> <div><div></div> Medium</div>	<i>i.e. Federal Government</i>							YUKON	NWT	NUNAVUT	NUNAVIK	NUNATSIAVUT	INUIT NUNANGAT	NORTHERN MANITOBA
CALLS TO ACTION														
Financing														
The federal government should negotiate financial assistance plans with all Northern regions similar to those negotiated for Inuit Nunangat regions in order to guarantee equivalent access to post-secondary student funding and support Indigenous control of funding for Indigenous students.								<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
<i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government, Non-Governmental Organization</i>														
Provinces and territories should cover costs of upgrading for students, and not pass on such costs to Indigenous governments, or deduct such costs from money allocated to Northern and Indigenous students' post-secondary education.								<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
<i>Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt</i>														
Federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments should provide equitable access to programs to meet Northern and Indigenous students' needs for personal development and the skills required to succeed in post-secondary education.								<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
<i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government</i>														
Equitable Access to Distance and Virtual Post-Secondary Education														
Make equivalency of service the goal for provision of Internet services.								<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
<i>Federal Government</i>														
Admissions Requirements & Processes														
Post-secondary institutions must recognize and place value on prior and life-long learning experiences in order for potential students, who may not meet traditional admission, requirements, to be considered fairly when applying to post-secondary programs.								<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
<i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Governemnt, Indigenous Government</i>														

Priority Level <div><div></div> Urgent</div> <div><div></div> High</div> <div><div></div> Medium</div>	Responsibility <i>i.e. Federal Government</i>	YUKON	NWT	NUNAVUT	NUNAVIK	NUNATSIAVUT	INUIT NUNANGAT	NORTHERN MANITOBA	
CALLS TO ACTION									
Credentialing, Faculty, and Programs									
A dedicated federal fund to support program redesign and development. <i>Federal Government</i>		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
A dedicated federal fund to support training and professional development of faculty and staff in Northern post-secondary institutions <i>Federal Government</i>			<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
A dedicated federal fund to support Indigenous-led and Indigenous-created programs, including certificates, diplomas, and degrees at the undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels. <i>Federal Government</i>		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
A dedicated federal fund to support land-based programming, including post-secondary accredited programming and research training. <i>Federal Government</i>		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
A dedicated federal fund to support the development of more locally inclusive post-secondary governance systems. <i>Federal Government</i>		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
A dedicated federal fund to support the development of North-to-North post-secondary partnerships and program development. <i>Federal Government</i>		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
Post-secondary institutions should develop and require training to new staff that provides them with a thorough and rigorous introduction to the Indigenous Peoples of the region served by the institution. <i>Federal Government, Post-Secondary Institutions</i>		<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	

Priority Level  Urgent  High  Medium	Responsibility <i>i.e. Federal Government</i>						
	YUKON	NWT	NUNAVUT	NUNAVIK	NUNATSIAVUT	INUIT NUNANGAT	NORTHERN MANITOBA
CALLS TO ACTION							
Research							
Expand eligibility requirements for federal research funding organizations (e.g. SSHRC, CIHR, NSERC, CFI, NRC, and Polar Knowledge Canada) to include Northern post-secondary institutions and other Northern and Indigenous research organizations in funding opportunities. <i>Federal Government</i>							
Ensure that federal research funding promotes Northern and Indigenous research leadership. <i>Federal Government</i>							
Ensure research licensing agencies and bodies require applications for Northern research to include Northern and Indigenous Peoples as partners, leads, co-leads, co-researchers, and/or collaborators, and require applicants to explain how they plan to involve Northern and Indigenous Peoples in all elements of their research, and to identify how their research meets Northern and Indigenous needs and priorities. For elements that do not involve Northerners, applicants should be required to explain why this involvement is not possible. <i>Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government, Post-Secondary Institutions</i>							
Dedicated funding to support Northern and Indigenous research capacity. <i>Federal Government, Territorial Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous Government</i>							
Francophone Supports							
Support access to quality French-language post-secondary education in an environment where Indigenous cultures and languages are also valued and taught. <i>Federal Government</i>							
Support partnership with Southern colleges and universities to develop programs in French that are adapted to Northern realities <i>Federal Government</i>							

**NOTE: While regions rank priorities differently and may rank some priorities lower than in other regions, it does not mean these calls are not urgent; in many cases, it indicates that the region has already taken steps to address these priorities.*

VI. Conclusion

Given the perspectives, experiences, and ideas shared by participants of the Northern Post-Secondary Engagement Sessions, there is a clear need for place-specific understandings of Northern post-secondary education that reflect local contexts, needs, and priorities. Across the North, people are calling for Northern and Indigenous-led post-secondary education systems that are Indigenized, decolonized, and Northernized; systems that expand understandings of what education can and should look like, and that are designed with and for the people they serve. Further, these systems should offer modular, incremental pathways that enable learners to build autonomy and self-determination over how they choose to move through these pathways, and learners should have access to support before, during, and after post-secondary education; support that enables them to find and navigate post-secondary pathways where they can thrive.

We take inspiration and heart from the incredible work being led by communities and institutions across the North focusing on expanding, enriching, and enhancing opportunities for Northern and Indigenous learners at all grade levels. In 2020, we celebrated the creation of Yukon University, the first University north of 60° marking an important moment in Northern post-secondary history, and aligning Canada with the other Arctic 8 countries. We are now eagerly awaiting and supporting the developments and commitments of Aurora College and Nunavut Arctic College to move to university status in the coming years, following closely the evolution towards an Inuit Nunangat University, and delighted that Memorial

University announced the creation of the Labrador Campus in January 2022, extending university opportunities to Labrador. We are inspired by the ongoing work of the 'NS Programs' – Nunavut Sivuniksavut and Nunavik Sivuniksavut – and the strong success they have shown in providing cultural instruction and support environments that help Inuit students thrive. We are pleased to see the rapid increase of programming and training in post-secondary education in the North that are ensuring faculty and staff understand Indigenous and Northern Peoples, places, lands, waters, cultures, and contexts to better serve learners and communities, and hope that more institutions have locally-reflective and culturally-appropriate training for all staff and faculty, such as First Nations 101 instituted by Yukon University. We are excited to see both new and continuing programming, including land-based and language programming, that celebrates and invests in the strengths of Northern communities. We are happy to see increasing supports and programs emerging across the North that are focused on transitioning students into post-secondary education, so they are better prepared when they begin, and we encourage their continued development and application. Finally, we are inspired by the ongoing work in the K-12 system to ensure that Northern and Indigenous students are fully supported, and that Indigenous communities have leadership and authority over education systems, such as the historic vote to create a First Nations school board in the Yukon in February 2022.

These are incredibly exciting times in post-secondary education in the North, and we hope that the federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments will come together to continue to support the educational needs, priorities, dreams, and desires of Northern and Indigenous Peoples, communities, organizations, and governments. A healthy North needs robust, flexible, and accessible post-secondary options where people see themselves and their culture reflected in their education; where they can find value in what they do for themselves, their families, and their communities; and where they can make positive and tangible contributions to their communities and to the North. Place-

based, Northern-focused, and Indigenous-led post-secondary education opportunities, in the North, by the North, and for the North will help contribute to thriving, flourishing individuals and communities, and create more just and equitable opportunities for the diverse peoples of the North to pursue post-secondary studies.





**Report of the
Task Force on Northern
Post-Secondary Education**

