

Post-secondary Education: How Do You Choose?

The Right Fit

Whether you've just graduated high school or you're a returning student, choosing a post-secondary institution is an important step in determining your future. With over 280 colleges and universities in Canada, it can be difficult to know which one is right for you. In this article, we take you through questions that will help you narrow down your options.

Identifying Your Needs

Every student is different! Not all schools will be able to meet your individual needs. Because of this, it is important to ask yourself what type of education you need. For example, if you are a single mother living on-reserve with your family, moving away to attend a college or university may not be feasible at this time. Other important factors that will determine if a school is right for you include:

Tuition – The price of attending postsecondary school ranges from \$2,000 to \$8,000 a year. With such a high cost, you may opt for a school with lower tuition fees over a more prestigious school. Remember, a school's price tag does not always determine the quality of education.

Location – Moving away for school is significantly more expensive than studying at home. However, you may decide that your program and school of choice makes the extra costs worth it. Alternatively, some schools also offer online courses for students who do not want to move away.

Public or Private – Private schools have higher tuition fees and often offer expedited programs or networking opportunities. Be sure to research your private school's credibility before buying into faster programs.

Reputation - Some schools may have a good reputation for a specific program they offer, while others may have strong Aboriginal student support centres. Identifying the strengths of your potential school will help to ensure a successful university experience.

Thinking Ahead

Perhaps many of the post-secondary institutions in Canada meet your needs, but it is also important to consider how your options will assist you in ways other than gaining knowledge. Most students attend post-secondary schools for the purpose of eventually becoming employed in their field of study. One university or college may have an excellent research facility or a reputable linguistics program, but these merits will not matter as much if you can't find a job after graduation. Because of this, you must consider how this school will help you reach your future goals.

Ask yourself:

- **Will this program help me become employed after graduation?**
- **Does this school offer apprenticeships, co-ops, or vocational studies that will more directly lead me to a job in the future?**
- **Will the expenses leave me with student debt after I graduate?**
- **Is there another school that offers a similar program but has a higher postgraduate employment rate?**

Preparing before enrolment will help send you on the right path to employment.

Ask Questions!

Choosing a school is a big decision and you may not have all the answers right away. Make sure you do your research by attending school fairs, researching schools online, or contacting student services to ask questions. Below is a list of resources that will help you navigate Canada's institutions as you make your decision:

www.univcan.ca

www.canlearn.ca

www.ontariocolleges.ca

Funds for Aboriginal Education

The Aboriginal Stereotype

There is a belief that all Aboriginal students have their post-secondary education paid for by the Federal government through the **Post-Secondary Student Support Program**. The reality, however, is that many students are under-funded.

Tuition fees range from \$2,000 to \$8,000 per year in Canada, not to mention the cost of living and textbooks. For many students, these expenses pose a large barrier to education if no financial aid is available.

According to a report, entitled, **Redressing the Balance: Canadian University Programs in Support of Aboriginal Students** by David Holmes, "Even for Status Indians eligible for funding, there is not always enough money to go around." Further to this, Metis and non-status First Nations students are excluded from Federal funding programs. This leaves many Aboriginal students with the task of navigating student loans in order to fund their education.

The Alternatives

If you are a student who has been left in the dust by Federal funding, there are fortunately other options for you. Based on your parents' income and a variety of other factors, you may choose to apply for an Integrated Student Loan through your provincial government, which will provide you with financial assistance. Note that these must be paid back after graduation and relying heavily on loans may result in overwhelming student debt.

Alternatively, many colleges and universities have bursaries specifically for Aboriginal students. A bursary of this nature is a great source of aid because you do not have to pay it back. To explore Aboriginal bursaries and find out if your school offers assistance, go to:

[The Aboriginal Bursaries Search Tool](#)



Awards, Scholarships, and Beyond

Support is also available to Aboriginal students through awards and scholarships, which are often distributed based on academic performance, financial need, and community involvement. Some examples of these awards include:

[The Helen Bassett Award](#) – An award that is granted to four Indigenous candidates who demonstrate a commitment to improving the well-being of Aboriginal women. Priority is given to those studying in a law-related field.

[Indspire](#) – A charitable foundation that offers multiple awards and scholarships to Aboriginal students.

Financial aid for post-secondary education is also available through programs like the [Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy \(ASETS\)](#). Many organizations deliver this program, which was designed to help Aboriginal people prepare for and find high-demand jobs quickly. ASETS may help cover tuition, books, transportation, or other costs.

Start Early!

Many sources of financial aid have processes that take months from the time you first apply until you receive the money. These applications require that you provide detailed information about school, living expenses, and personal resources. Get ahead and begin applying early to allow yourself time to write and proofread your application.

Still looking for more funding opportunities? Visit Windspeaker for a list of sources:

[Aboriginal Scholarship Guide](#)

Aboriginal Youth Employment and Training Survey Results

Aboriginal youth use a multitude of activities when searching for jobs and the internet is a key tool that they utilized. They also volunteered to gain work experience and utilized computers, resume writing tips or job trends from employment service agencies. In addition, the youth looked at job boards and attended job fairs. When asked if they have ever participated in a government operated wage subsidy program, only 23% of the 165 respondents had ever participated in these programs. In many instances, the programs were summer student or work experience programs, ASETS or work study programs.

When choosing what programs to access, Aboriginal youth are influenced by:

- Program accessibility (60%)
- How well the program is tailored to my future career (53.9%)
- Program costs (49.1%)
- Friends or peers (41.2%)
- Parent or guardian suggestion (38.8%)

The top six (6) supports that Aboriginal youth identified as needing to assist them in entering the workforce were:

- Provide information on the types of jobs available;
- Provide programs that allow you to explore different jobs;
- Provide incentives for employers to hire apprentices;
- Transportation;
- Childcare; and
- Create an employment database focused on Aboriginal youth.

Interested in reading more? [Contact us today!](#)

This issue marks the first anniversary of the LMD Information Bulletin! Stay tuned for the second issue of volume #2, where we will cover:

- Information on the benefits of apprenticeships
- Interpreting labour market data
- And much more!

Have an idea or concept for our newsletter? Let us know! Submit your ideas via e-mail to:

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