The On-Going Legacy of Residential Schools

- Pre-contact, Indigenous people had their own systems of childcare and education rooted in the community, the natural environment and spiritual teachings.
- Post-contact, colonization began and the reservation and residential school systems responsible for the cultural genocide were imposed upon Indigenous people in Canada.
- The Canadian policy of assimilating Indigenous people came from the belief that Indigenous worldviews were inferior or primitive.
- Residential schools were established in 1880, with the last school closing in 1996. These schools practiced abusive and inhumane discipline on students. ¹
- Residential schools were so underfunded that proper care was not provided to students. Students were forced to provide most of the labour necessary to run the schools. Only two to four hours daily were dedicated to learning.
- When politicians faced pressure over spending on these schools, policies changed so education focused on agriculture and housework, limiting skills in the trades and academics.
- As a result, students were not prepared to advance in education or for entry into the workforce. ²

Funding of Indigenous PSE

- Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) is the primary funding mechanism for Indigenous students. ³,⁴
- It is a myth that all Indigenous students attend post-secondary without cost. ³,⁴
- From 1996 until 2016, the PSSSP was capped with a two per cent annual growth allowance. ³,⁴
- During this time, there were growing Indigenous populations, skyrocketing tuition and ancillary fees, meaning less students received funding each year. ³,⁴
- Indigenous students are more likely to enter PSE at an older age and with a dependant. ⁵
- PSSSP is not accessible to non-status, Métis and some students with ongoing land claims disputes. ⁵,⁶
- Canada Student Loans Program is not a solution for Indigenous students, as systemic discrimination makes these students debt averse. ³
- Inuit students experience culture shock when attending university because there are no universities in the North. ⁷
- Métis students cite the lack of Métis specific worldviews and teachings in PSE programs, which claim inclusion of pan-Aboriginal perspectives. ⁵

Works Cited

PSE Quick Facts

- Fifty-one per cent of Indigenous women age 25 to 64 have PSE credentials.\(^7\)
- Thirty-seven per cent on-reservation and 51% of off-reservation First Nation women have PSE credentials.\(^7\)
- Fifty-one per cent of Métis women have PSE credentials.\(^7\)
- Thirty-six per cent of Inuit women have PSE credentials.\(^7\)
- Indigenous women are more likely to have a university degree than Indigenous men.\(^7\)

Culturally Relevant PSE Programs

- There is currently a movement to make Indigenous studies mandatory in universities to counter prejudice and stereotypes.\(^1\)
- This is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.\(^8\)
- University of Winnipeg and Lakehead University were the first to implement mandatory Indigenous studies courses.\(^1\)
- In the 1970s, Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (IIHL) began to emerge as a response to the need to provide culturally-relevant PSE to Indigenous students.\(^2\)
- There are approximately 60 First Nations IIHL with a wide range of programs.\(^2\)
- There are some Métis specific IIHL.
- IIHL lack stable funding mechanisms that public PSE institutions have.\(^2\)
- Most universities and colleges offer programs in Indigenous studies or partner with Indigenous communities to provide culturally-relevant learning opportunities.\(^2\)