



OUSA

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

POLICY PAPER BRIEF

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance is a non-partisan advocacy organization that represents the interests of over 160,000 undergraduate and professional, full-time and part-time university students at nine student associations across Ontario.

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SUMMARY

The *Indigenous Students* policy paper was developed, researched, and written by Indigenous undergraduate students from various Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance member institutions. The authors of this paper drafted the principles, concerns, and recommendations found below with the recognition and understanding that colonial violence in Canada did not end. It evolved.

Indigenous students throughout the province continue to be underrepresented within spaces of higher education and underserved by both the provincial government and post-secondary institutions. Utilizing evidence that is grounded in the lived experiences of Indigenous students gained through Circle Work sessions, Indigenous legal and governance traditions, and the recognition that performative reconciliation without structural change is insufficient, this paper focuses on the resilience of Indigenous students and communities, while providing recommendations that act as a starting point for meaningful decolonization and reconciliation efforts needed to equitably improve the experiences of Indigenous students within post-secondary institutions.

The lessons learned during the development of the *Indigenous Students* policy paper will continue to inform the policy and advocacy work that the OUSA does moving forward. While the development and writing of this paper is a necessary step in the organization's decolonization journey, OUSA is committed to lobbying on and advocating for the implementation of these recommendations.

INDIGENOUS SELF-DETERMINATION IN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

I. Indigenous Self-Determination

Concerns:

Currently, the provincial government has not demonstrated a transparent or sustained commitment to decolonization and Indigenous self-determination within post-secondary institutions. Further, the absence of dedicated funding and mandatory public reporting limits institutions' ability to support Indigenous governance representation, uphold the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, and create environments where Indigenous students can thrive.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Act in partnership with Indigenous sectors and student leaders to collaboratively create and uphold a framework that ensures Indigenous leadership is consulted and followed in all post-secondary work related to Indigenous Peoples.
- Provide sustained funding to Indigenous student organizations, which are independent of the government, to promote Indigenous engagement in governance and further decolonization solutions in post-secondary spaces.
- Amend the Ontario Universities and Colleges Act and related Ministry directives to require that post-secondary institutions integrate the TRC's Calls to Action into institutional policy and reporting structures.
- Mandate annual public reporting on progress, establishing dedicated funding streams for Indigenous initiatives such as the Indigenous student organizations, and requiring at least one voting governance seat for Indigenous student representatives within institutional decision-making bodies.

2. Self-Identification Processes

Concerns:

The practice of post-secondary institutions requiring or asking for proof of Indigenous ancestry or community ties is discriminatory and reinforces colonial definitions of identity. Unlike students from other marginalized groups, Indigenous students are often unfairly required to verify ancestry to access Indigenous spaces, initiatives, or supports, which can lead to feelings of exclusion or discrimination.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Issue a formal directive prohibiting Indigenous identity policing in post-secondary institutions. This directive should affirm that identity must not be verified through colonial documentation and require institutions to adopt Indigenous-led, trauma-informed, and community-informed self-identification processes that strengthen Indigenous spaces while ensuring accountability in access to supports and opportunities.
- Create “best practices” in consultation with Indigenous education groups and students on the most equitable trauma-informed methods of identity verification or attestation to mitigate continued colonial policing.

FINANCIAL AID AND ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY

I. Financial Aid

Concerns:

There is an ongoing stereotype that Indigenous students are frequently assumed to receive a fully paid education by their campus communities, perpetuating negative stereotypes and skewing the government's ability to fulfill treaty obligations on education through false representations and/or promises. This stereotype persists despite the fact that throughout Ontario, Indigenous students are more likely to have a lack of adequate financial support and funding needed to complete their education. This occurs because Indigenous students are not always made aware of the financial aid available to them because of a lack of meaningful relationships between Indigenous communities and post-secondary institutions, government institutions, and non-government organizations. Further, Indigenous students face discriminatory legislation by way of colonialist classifications of Indigenous identity, threatening access to Indigenous governments' sponsorship funding programs. For example, students

without Indian Status (as defined and determined by the Indian Act) are more frequently classified as ineligible for financial aid. This is because there is little transparency and communication between the provincial government and First Nations when students provide documentation to support their Indigenous student OSAP application, which infringes on a nations' rights to define their membership.

It is also worth noting that the post-secondary sector throughout Ontario lacks best practices for administering Indigenous Student Bursaries as self-identification attestation processes evolve. Further, post-secondary institutions often require documentation of provincial financial aid (ie. OSAP documents) and deny Indigenous government documentation, which discriminates against and creates barriers for Indigenous students who are receiving sponsorship and/or band-funded benefits as their sole form of financial support. This may occur because post-secondary administration, staff, and faculty often lack adequate training on Indigenous student funding models and the band sponsorship

process, creating barriers for Indigenous students to access financial support within the post-secondary institution. Further, institutional financial aid funding is often calculated using automated expense calculators that neglect to recognize the economic disparities and oppression that rural, northern, and remote Indigenous students often face, like higher transportation and daily living expenses.

Recommendations:

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Work with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation to improve financial support opportunities targeted specifically for Indigenous students, including, but not limited to, increasing funding for the Indigenous Student Bursary Program and advocating to the federal government to expand the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

- Work with Indigenous Services Canada to develop guidelines for post-secondary institutions on ensuring access to post-secondary offered financial aids and support for all Indigenous students.
- Seek assistance from the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to guarantee that communication is established between OSAP and First Nations for the purpose of OSAP attestation verification.
- Amend the eligibility requirements for all provincially funded financial aids and supports to be available to any Indigenous person regardless of the OSAP eligibility or assessment.
- Collaborate with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation to re-evaluate the funding model for the Ontario Indigenous Travel Grant to account for distance travelled, access to public transit, and fluctuating transportation costs.

Recommendations Continued:

- Collaborate with delegations of the First Nations Financial Authority (FNFA), Metis Nations of Ontario (MNO), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to develop a comprehensive central site for all provincial and federal Indigenous students' financial supports, and implement an Indigenous Communities Communications Plan to disseminate this information.

The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation should:

- Consulate with the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to provide post-secondary institutions, including Student Financial Aid Offices, faculty, and staff, with a comprehensive document outlining the intricacies of band funding and its relation to Treaty rights, fund distribution, and the choice of First Nations to provide financial support to their students.

- Work with the federal government to expand eligibility requirements for all financial assistance programs and supports to include all Indigenous students regardless of factors such as status or blood quantum, and strive to improve Indigenous community reconnection through reporting declarations of nations.

2. Access to University

Concerns:

Due to the location of Indigenous Reservations throughout Ontario, many remote and northern Indigenous communities cannot send their students to university due to geographic, transportation, and/or financial barriers. These barriers are further compounded by the lack of access to reliable internet, cell service, and/or the technologies needed to apply for and attend university that many rural and northern Indigenous students face. For Indigenous students who have attended an Indigenous education institution on a reservation, these institutions either do not offer supports to help students plan for post-secondary or they lack the funding to provide the courses required to attend university. It is important to

consider the unique circumstances or barriers that Indigenous students face when trying to access university. However, post-secondary institutions often fail to produce academic and social environments that recognize Indigenous students' intersectionality and intergenerational trauma, creating a sense of exclusion from the broader post-secondary community, which affects the retention and graduation rates of Indigenous students. Finally, Indigenous students pay application fees to post-secondary institutions, creating a discrepancy with Indigenous Peoples' right to education as declared by the Treaty rights promised by government officials and as is outlined in the Canadian Charter's statement regarding Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendations:

The Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security should:

- Bridge the gap between remote Indigenous communities and universities by providing extra support during the application process, advocating to the federal government to re-evaluate the school funding on reserve, and aiding in the funding of specific recruitment.

The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation should:

- Provide support for necessary financial and capital resources at on-reserve, rural, and northern high schools to allow access to higher learning.
- Collaborate with the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security and the Indigenous Institutes Consortium to provide a guide for post-secondary institutions on transfer credits between Indigenous institutes and post-secondary institutions to improve the transferability of Indigenous institutes credits and considerations of Indigenous teaching and learning outcomes.
- Collaborate with delegations of the ISC, First Nations Financial Authority (FNFA), Metis Nations of Ontario (MNO), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to develop a comprehensive guide for post-secondary institutions to set, implement, and re-evaluate an institution-level Indigenous Student retention and enrollment improvement strategy.

Recommendations Continued:

The **Ministry of Infrastructure** should:

- Continue its efforts and increase funding through the Improving Connectivity for Ontario Program to provide and fund reliable access to cell and internet service, technology, and infrastructure for First Nations and remote communities, as guaranteed in the Getting Ontario Connected Act, 2022.

DECOLONIZATION AND SOVEREIGNTY

I. University Culture

Concerns:

A central theme of this paper recognizes that post-secondary institutions in Ontario operate on stolen Indigenous land and continue to perpetuate direct and indirect colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples. Despite this fact, many post-secondary institutions often fail to acknowledge their historical and current participation in colonialism. Contemporary colonialism is reinforced by institutions through their tendency to exclude Indigenous art, symbolism, expression, and languages from most campus spaces, with the exception of Indigenous Student Centres. The majority of post-secondary institutions also fail to provide Indigenous students with safe, ventilated, accessible, and respected physical spaces to practice their cultures and ceremonies, including smudging. Institutions further memorialize colonial violence with the presence and use of colonial names, labels, statues, art, and symbolism displayed throughout their campuses. Unfortunately, Indigenous students and

allies who challenge colonial and racist symbolism at their institutions often face harm, arrest, or criminal charges from campus security and special constables; creating a university culture where colonial harms and racism are tolerated and encouraged.

Indigenous students are also likely to face discrimination, oppression, prejudice, and unconscious bias from students, faculty, and staff at their institutions. In cases where this behaviour is challenged at a disciplinary hearing, post-secondary institutions often lack transparency regarding the outcomes of these hearings because there is an absence of clear consequences for hate speech and racial prejudice, leading to student and staff distrust.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Provide adequate funding for post-secondary institutions to commission Indigenous students to create art and symbolism to be showcased across their campuses.
- Earmark funding from the facilities renewal program to upgrade signage and expression on post-secondary campuses to include local Indigenous languages.
- Encourage post-secondary institutions to prominently display appropriate and relevant Indigenous flags alongside the Canadian and Ontario flags across all campuses.
- Mandate that all post-secondary institutions create and implement Indigenous Strategic Plans if they do not already have one, led by Indigenous Peoples, with built-in short-, mid-, and long-term progress assessments.
- Uphold the principles of Indigenous sovereignty while mandating that all post-secondary institutions collect data on Indigenous student success, efficacy or programming, and perceptions of Indigenous initiatives on campus to support the creation of the Indigenous Strategic Plans.

- Mandate that post-secondary institutions include and engage with Indigenous communities prior to designing or establishing any frameworks, spaces, or programs that are intended to be inclusive of Indigenous Peoples

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Develop guidelines to help post-secondary institutions remove colonial and racist symbols and comply with the Ontario Human Rights Commission's proposed policy on discriminatory names, words, and images.
- Require post-secondary institutions to develop trauma-informed, culturally sensitive racial and religious equity policies, with clear, enforceable codes of conduct that explicitly prohibit racism and hate speech; as well as outline clear and enforceable codes of conduct for campus security and/or constables that are culturally sensitive within its response procedures.

2. Non-Indigenous Allies

Concerns:

Due to non-Indigenous faculty, staff, and students, classroom and learning spaces throughout Ontario do not foster an environment of understanding, empathy, and respect towards Indigenous Peoples and affairs. Further, post-secondary institutions disproportionately place the responsibility of all Indigenous outcomes and initiatives on Indigenous Peoples without adequate support or compensation. This practice occurs because when indigenization initiatives do take place, post-secondary institutions do not provide adequate support, the necessary tools, and fail to foster an environment for non-Indigenous allies to engage with Indigenous allyship.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Consult and collaborate with Indigenous leaders to develop performance management and evaluation guidelines for institutions to conduct comprehensive performance reviews of faculty and instructors regarding the facilitation of a safe learning environment surrounding Indigenous academia.
- Provide funding to post-secondary institutions to hire Indigenous educators to develop and oversee recurring, mandatory training, and ongoing education opportunities for non-Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Consult and collaborate with Indigenous leaders to develop an evaluation framework of Indigenous inclusion and safe learning environments for courses outside of Indigenous studies.
- Create a new grant dedicated to funding non-Indigenous allyship initiatives facilitated by broader campus student support initiatives and departments.

3. Indigenous Faculty and Staff

Concerns:

Indigenous faculty and staff working at Ontario post-secondary institutions may face bias, discrimination, or tokenization from non-Indigenous faculty and staff working at their institution. Indigenous faculty and staff lack safe, anonymous ways to report and discuss behaviour that compromises the safety and inclusivity of their workplace. This means that when Indigenous faculty and staff speak out about the harm and inequity they are facing, they are often dismissed, and no action is taken to protect them from future harms. Further, because Indigenous faculty and staff have limited access to culturally relevant supports and community-building opportunities on campus, there is no safe place for them to speak about their experiences, leading to isolation and a reduced sense of belonging.

Indigenous faculty and leaders are severely underrepresented in post-secondary institutions and are disproportionately hired into short-term rather than permanent positions. The underrepresentation of Indigenous

peoples within faculty and/or leadership positions occurs because post-secondary hiring processes and requirements systematically exclude Indigenous knowledge by prioritizing Eurocentric standards and educational credentials. The lack of Indigenous faculty present means that many Indigenous-focused courses are taught by non-Indigenous faculty or instructors. Post-secondary institutions will, however, employ a token Indigenous faculty member during periods of decolonial training, as Indigenous staff bear the responsibility of repeatedly providing cultural sensitivity training to faculty and delineating racist behaviours and teachings, a process that may cause retraumatization.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Mandate that post-secondary institutions promote clear policies and procedures when it comes to Indigenous bias, discrimination, and harm perpetrated by faculty and staff.

Recommendations Continued:

The **provincial government** should:

- Mandate that university administrations and faculties, in collaboration with local Indigenous Education Councils, develop a recruitment and retention strategy for faculty, instructors, and staff that honours Indigenous ways of knowing.
- Provide envelope funding to ensure the creation and maintenance of senior-level positions for Indigenous faculty and staff.
- Provide funding to post-secondary institutions to hire allies to develop and implement recurring, mandatory cultural safety training and ongoing educational opportunities for non-Indigenous staff and faculty.

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Provide post-secondary institutions with funding to commission equity audits, with results publicly disclosed to reveal hiring and retention gaps and inform policies and programs supporting Indigenous faculty and staff.

4. Data, Artifact, Knowledge, and Teaching Sovereignty

Concerns:

There is a history of abuse through the collection of data from Indigenous Peoples. In academic spaces, data has been routinely collected from Indigenous Peoples without their consent or input, which leads to the creation of harmful laws, policies, and programs. Data, knowledge, and artifacts belonging to Indigenous Peoples are also commonly sold by non-Indigenous Peoples with no compensation or inequitable compensation of the value derived to the Indigenous communities. This practice has been used to create academic materials and activities in addition to the display of artifacts held in museums and galleries. Currently, post-secondary institutions and the provincial government lack adequate policies and regulations to facilitate the free and undistributed repatriation of Indigenous communities' artifacts. Further, the provincial government lacks guidelines and practices around equitable compensation for Indigenous data collection and use, knowledge and teachings distribution, and artifact use.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Responsibly and meaningfully consult with Indigenous Peoples (students, faculty, staff, educators, and communities) to ensure that the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism can be appropriately applied to the post-secondary sector.
- Mandate that any collection of equity-based data should use the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism as amended through responsible and meaningful consultation with Indigenous students and communities.

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Mandate that post-secondary institutions adhere to the First Nations principles of OCAP®.

- Collaborate with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation to mandate the recognition and equitable compensation of Indigenous Peoples' data, intellectual property, and artifacts when it is being shared, researched, and discussed in academic settings.

The **Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation** should:

- Develop in collaboration with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Associations and equitable compensation guide for post-secondary institutions for the use of data, knowledge, and teachings, and/or artifacts.

The **Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming** should:

- Mandate that all successful applications across funding streams have an approved Indigenous artifacts assessment, and if unrepatriated artifacts are identified, a four-year repatriation plan must be established.

INDIGENOUS STUDENT CENTRES, SUPPORTS, & SERVICES

I. Promotion of Student Supports

Concerns:

Not all Indigenous students feel welcome to access supports, services, or exist in Indigenous spaces due to the colonial construct of measuring Indigeneity. Further, the inadequate promotion and outreach of the availability of these services by institutions often prevents Indigenous students from fully accessing these resources, programming, and information, resulting in further exclusion and barriers to participation. There is also a lack of essential student services available in French and local Indigenous languages which renders them inaccessible to students who prefer to communicate in these languages.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Provide funding for post-secondary institutions to implement accessible signage displaying information about how to find and contact the Indigenous Student Centre, as well as what events, supports, and services are offered in English, French, and local Indigenous languages.
- Provide funding to institutions to provide services in French and local Indigenous languages.
- Provide funding to post-secondary institutions to hire Indigenous educators to develop and implement recurring, mandatory training, and ongoing education opportunities for non-Indigenous staff working in student support services.

Recommendations Continued:

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Issue a statement emphasizing the importance of integrated student supports and ensuring that all student support services and offices are up-to-date and able to inform students about the resources offered through the Indigenous Student Centre.
- Require and support post-secondary institutions in ensuring that Indigenous Student Centres and Indigenous student initiatives consistently communicate that all Indigenous students are welcome and belong in these spaces.

2. Indigenous Student Centres

Concerns:

On many post-secondary campuses, Indigenous Student Centres and their associated spaces lack a centralized, visible, and accessible location, which limits Indigenous students' ability to gather, access supports, and practice their cultures and Ceremonies. These spaces also lack consistent and predictable funding, leaving staff under-resourced and overburdened, which undermines their ability to fully support Indigenous students. This lack of funding also means that Indigenous Student Centres are unable to support the implementation and continuance of long-term, full-time staff positions to service Indigenous students. Further still, the unpredictability of funding means that Indigenous Student Centres are not able to maintain consistent involvement of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Healers, and other Indigenous Peoples on campuses to support the cultural events and Ceremonies necessary for Indigenous student well-being and mental health. It is also important to note that Indigenous Student Centres and their associated spaces are often

stigmatized, disrespected, and targeted by racism and vandalization, reflecting a broader lack of respect from the non-Indigenous campus community.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Provide sufficient long-term funding to post-secondary institutions dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe, visible, and accessible physical space for Indigenous students to practice their cultures and Ceremonies on campus, with a requirement that decisions be made by Indigenous students, faculty, and support staff.
- Provide increased and ongoing funding for Indigenous Student Centres through the Indigenous Student Success Fund, without the need for recurring grant applications.
- Allocate funding to post-secondary institutions to expand staffing within Indigenous Student Centres by hiring Indigenous counsellors, Indigenous Student Support Coordinators, and other appropriate positions in long-term, full-time contracts.

- Mandate that post-secondary institutions develop a policy that outlines reporting mechanisms and accountability measures in place to respond to instances of disrespect, vandalization, or targeting of Indigenous Student Centres and their associated spaces on campus.

The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:

- Collaborate with Indigenous Student Centres on post-secondary campuses to provide support related to financial, resource, and policy needed to host Ceremonies and cultural events.

3. Health and Wellness Supports

Concerns:

Throughout Ontario, Indigenous students lack consistent access to Indigenous counsellors or mental health services provided by Indigenous Student Centres, on-campus health and wellness services, or local community supports. This means that Indigenous students need to rely on colonial supports to address their health and wellness needs. Unfortunately, medical professionals

trained in a colonial discipline frequently lack cultural competency and, in many cases, exhibit bias or discrimination towards their Indigenous patients, which harms Indigenous students and discourages them from seeking the care that they need. Further, the health and wellness support services offered by post-secondary institutions do not have widely accessible mental health and well-being supports available to address the consequences of colonialism, such as intergenerational trauma and addiction. For Indigenous students who rely on coverage through the Non-Insured Health Benefits program, it is important to note that coverage under this program is limited, inconsistent, and difficult for students to navigate, which creates further barriers in accessing care.

Indigenous students who come from First Nations Reserves or rural and northern communities may experience “culture shock” as they transition into post-secondary education due to their inability to access their cultures and lands. This culture shock further extends into the health and wellness supports available, as Indigenous health services

that reflect holistic and traditional medicine practices are often not available, supported, or recognized by post-secondary institutions. Unfortunately, because binge drinking and heavy drinking have been normalized as a part of university culture, sober culture at post-secondary institutions often faces stigmatization, which can be especially harmful to Indigenous students.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Provide long-term funding earmarked for post-secondary mental health care to hire and retain Indigenous staff who can better understand and support the needs of Indigenous students.
- Mandate that all student support staff undergo mandatory, recurrent training and ongoing education opportunities covering cultural sensitivity; Indigenous cultures, affairs, and trauma responses; and culturally appropriate crisis intervention and responses.

Recommendations Continued:

- Provide or increase funding to Indigenous-specific crisis resources, including but not limited to Talk 4 Healing and the Hope for Wellness Help Line, to support awareness and access to services for Indigenous post-secondary students.
 - Provide envelope funding to community-based Indigenous health and wellness supports to expand their capacity to support Indigenous post-secondary students whose needs are not met by on-campus resources.
 - Provide grant funding for student groups on post-secondary campuses to host sober events on campuses and to facilitate safe consumption education for students.
 - Mandate that post-secondary institutions provide information about, and access to, culturally appropriate resources to support sobriety on campus.
 - Provide institutions with a reliable, regularly updated list of external Indigenous health supports and practitioners, and require institutions to disseminate this information to Indigenous students.
 - Work with the federal government and insurance providers to improve communication and transparency around the Non-Insured Health Benefits program and other health coverage, and require post-secondary institutions to provide clear guidance and navigation support to Indigenous students accessing these benefits.
 - Advocate to the federal government to mandate that all insurance providers allow Indigenous students with Non-Insured Health Benefits coverage to opt out of post-secondary insurance plans.
- The **Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** should:
- Work with the Office of Mental Health and Addictions to develop guidelines for hosting sober events on post-secondary campuses.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND COURSE CONTENT

I. Racism and Microaggressions in the Classroom

Concerns:

Indigenous students face racism and microaggressions in the classroom through course content, and at the hands of students, staff, faculty, and instructors. Racism against Indigenous students is manifested in a variety of ways, but primarily exists when Indigenous students are tokenized, exploited, and made to represent the viewpoints and experiences of all Indigenous Peoples. When instances of racism occur, Indigenous students do not always feel that they can speak up against their professors and instructors, course content, or the institution, for fear that doing so may jeopardize the completion of their degree or education. Further, students are rarely made aware of the reporting processes that are available to them when racism occurs, should such a reporting process exist.

The university programs and classes currently offered to students do not fully educate them on accurate history, intersectionality, and intergenerational trauma, beyond certain social disciplines.

In fact, course content often perpetuates systemic racism through problematic themes, discriminatory ideologies, and harmful misinformation. If an Indigenous student would like to complete an Indigenous Studies course during the completion of their post-secondary education, they are often subject to “Indigenous Peoples 101” type courses, regardless of the year of study, due to the lack of prerequisites needed to enroll in these classes. With the exception of students who are entering into an Indigenous Studies program, the majority of students are not taught Indigenous values and expectations of non-Indigenous students regarding cultural inclusion, understanding of truthful historical and current affairs, cultural sensitivity, and how to be anti-racist.

It is also worth noting that non-Anglophone Indigenous students, such as Indigenous first-language speakers and Francophone students, are often subject to linguistic barriers, a lack of resources, uninformed professors, and misleading Indigenous course content that is often falsely translated.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Mandate that post-secondary institutions add Indigenous-specific performance measures into existing faculty evaluations, allowing non-Indigenous faculty and instructors teaching Indigenous courses and content to receive performance feedback on their ability to facilitate a safe learning environment and pursue additional training when a need is identified. Additionally, including Indigenous scholars in their field can help to broaden the perspectives of students.
- Direct post-secondary institutions, through the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Securities, to work with Indigenous Education Councils to develop and implement prerequisite or foundational learning requirements for upper-year Indigenous courses. These requirements should ensure that students possess baseline knowledge of Indigenous histories, cultures, and governance systems to promote respectful and informed engagement with advanced course content.
- Mandate that post-secondary institutions, under the leadership of the Indigenous Education Council, implement a required education component for all non-Indigenous first-year students and faculty that teaches cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and how to be anti-racist.
- Mandate that post-secondary institutions require at least one Indigenous studies credit to be completed regardless of the discipline.
- Provide funding to post-secondary institutions to hire a committee of Francophone and Indigenous first-language speakers to review all translated Indigenous material, resources, and course content.
- This inclusive language funding should also support the development of language-specific academic resources, culturally informed translation practices, and language-access supports to ensure that non-Anglophone Indigenous students can engage meaningfully with course content and succeed academically.

Recommendations Continued:

- Commit to, when possible, hiring an Indigenous faculty member to instruct Indigenous Studies courses. When this is not possible, an Indigenous knowledge keeper, Elder, or other guest speaker should be implemented in course material.
- Mandate that all institutions implement anonymous reporting processes for incidents of racism and microaggressions towards Indigenous Peoples on campus and widely promote this process among students, staff, and faculty.

2. Indigenous Worldviews

Concerns:

Recognizing that Ontario's post-secondary institutions are colonial spaces also means recognizing that Indigenous faculty and instructors are made to operate under colonial ideas of success. This reality culminates in an educational system when non-Indigenous students' interpretation of Indigenous content is prioritized over the voices and perspectives of Indigenous students and community members. In addition to

the prioritization of non-Indigenous world-views, Indigenous students often lack access to seeing and learning their traditional language in colonial institutions. Finally, this reality means that Indigenous students are often subject to outdated and stigmatized content referring to Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendations:

The **provincial government** should:

- Provide funding to Indigenous Education Councils at post-secondary institutions to hire Indigenous Peoples to develop and review any and all Indigenous content.
- Provide funding to ensure that all post-secondary institutions offer classes reflecting the language of the Peoples of those territories.
- Provide funding for every post-secondary institution to hire and/or invite (always with appropriate offering and compensation) Indigenous Peoples, including but not limited to Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Healers, to interact with and support students.

Recommendations Continued:

- Continue to provide and increase funding annually for Indigenous Education Councils on each post-secondary campus to support Indigenous-led research, course teaching, and all other academics.
- Provide targeted funding and policy direction to ensure that evaluation and promotion standards for Indigenous faculty and instructors recognise Indigenous knowledge systems, community engagement, and relational teaching practices as measures of academic success.

The image features a light blue background with decorative geometric shapes in the corners. These shapes are composed of overlapping squares and triangles in shades of purple, magenta, and dark blue, creating a modern, abstract design.

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