



## Aboriginal, Inuit & Métis Women and Education in Ontario

### Education Statistics:

- Almost 42% of First Nations people and 41% of Inuit people in Ontario have no certificate, diploma or degree—nearly double the rate for the total Ontario population (OTF, online).
- Three in ten (30%) Métis people have not completed high school (OTF, online).
- First Nations people living on-reserve are much less likely to complete high school or to attain higher education than those living off-reserve. Nearly half (45.6%) of First Nations people living on-reserve had no certificate, diploma or degree compared to 26.6% for those living off-reserve (OTF, online).
- Fewer Aboriginal people obtain undergraduate or graduate degrees than in the general population (OTF, online).
- Aboriginal women who live on reserve are less likely (5.6%) to hold an undergraduate degree than those living off-reserve (11.2%).
- The Métis community holds the highest proportion of Aboriginal women with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree (OTF, 2009).
- A greater proportion of Aboriginal women hold undergraduate or graduate degrees (10.6%) than Aboriginal men (7.1%) whereas in the general population graduates are evenly distributed by gender. (OTF, online)
- Aboriginal women are twice as likely to not complete a degree or diploma in comparison to non-Aboriginal women (NWAC, 2009).
- First Nations women were more likely than First Nations men to have applied for financial assistance (60% versus 47%, respectively) (Stats Can, 2006).
- Aboriginal women make less money, work in lower-level jobs and are less likely to find employment than non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men (Stats Can, 2012).

### Barriers to Aboriginal Women's Education:

- Residual impacts from both the Indian Residential School and the Sixties (60) Scoop.
- Lack of affordable child-care options.
- Lack of status (impact of unstated paternity)
- Lack of funding for First Nation schools.
- Over 40% of Aboriginal women live in poverty (NWAC, 2009).
- 71% of Aboriginal single-parent households live off-reserve. Over 80% (82.5%) of those households are headed by single female parents (NWAC, 2009).
- The Post Secondary Student Support Program has not received any increases to funding since the early 80's and is currently under review. Education councils and ASETS programs are limiting the number of years that students are eligible for funding. Others are focusing more on recent high school graduates excluding many Aboriginal women who are mature learners.

- Despite a majority of First Nations people living off-reserve (OTF, 2009) some bands focus their funding to on-reserve population, excluding a high number of Aboriginal women that live off-reserve.
- Of Aboriginal women aged 25 to 44 living off-reserve who had started, but had not completed a post-secondary program, 34% cited “family responsibilities” as their reason for not completing, while 21% reported “financial reasons.” (NWAC, 2009).
- Aboriginal students are for the most part mature students, Aboriginal women are more likely to be mature students, than Aboriginal men (Diallo et al. , 2009; Junor & Usher, 2002; Hill, 2009).
- Violence. Aboriginal women are 17% more likely to be sexually assaulted, and more likely to report emotional abuse and life threatening violence than non-Aboriginal women (NWAC, 2009).

## Recommendations

- Increase funding to Aboriginal women’s employment and training programs such as the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Strategy.
- Age restrictions on bursaries and summer student job opportunities must be increased to ensure that Aboriginal women returning to school later in life have access to these added supports.
- Childcare and transportation subsidies should be available to Aboriginal women to increase the accessibility of the education system.
- Economic development opportunities that are specific to Aboriginal women’s unique training needs are required.
- Upgrading and access programs for post secondary education institutions must adapted to ensure they are accessible to Aboriginal women.

## References

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