



Indspire

Indigenous education,
Canada's future.

L'éducation des autochtones.
L'avenir du Canada.

Building Brighter Futures **Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards** **Recipient Graduation Outcomes**

June 2017

Acknowledgements

Indspire extends recognition and a sincere appreciation to *Building Brighter Futures* recipients who participated in this survey and provided us with important insights regarding their post-secondary education experience.

We acknowledge our Creator and all our relations, for providing strength and guidance.



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Executive Summary

Indigenous students have long experienced the effects of colonization: a 28-year gap in education¹ and an under-representation of Indigenous peoples in the labour force.

According to Statistics Canada, 69.9% of the Aboriginal population in the core working ages was employed, compared to 82.5% of non-Aboriginal counterparts².

Indigenous students' continued resilience is a testament to the progressive changes occurring not only in Indigenous communities but for Indigenous students attending post-secondary education.



Since 2004, Indspire has supported just under 28,000 Indigenous students with financial bursaries to pursue post-secondary education (PSE). In February 2017, Indspire conducted research with selected

Building Brighter Futures recipients from all levels of study (Certificate, Diploma, Degree). Ninety-six per cent had graduated. Of the 96% graduation rate, 42% of the respondents had obtained employment and the other 53% pursued higher education.

These statistics highlight the pivotal role Indspire plays in financially supporting Indigenous students to achieve a post-secondary education and gainful employment.

Indspire Graduation Facts for 2014-15

- 47% survey response rate;
- 96% of survey respondents indicated they had graduated;
- 42% of graduates were employed;
- 53% returned to PSE to obtain higher education;
- 5% were unemployed; and
- 61% of those employed indicated they were servicing Indigenous populations.



¹Fact Sheet, The Debate on First Nation Education Funding: Mind the Gap, 2013. Drummond & Rosenbluth

² Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2010 www.statcan.gc.ca



Celebrating Indigenous Achievement

Each year, we present the *Indspire Awards*, a nationally broadcast celebration of the successes achieved by Indigenous people.

Introduction

Indspire is an Indigenous-led registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people.

Outside the Canadian federal government, Indspire provides the largest post-secondary education funding through the *Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards* program. In 2016-2017, Indspire awarded \$11.6 million through 3,764 awards and scholarships to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students across Canada.

The *Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards* program has been in existence since 1985. Indspire originally provided funds primarily to students studying fine arts. The program assessed the need to expand the areas of study to include fields such as trades, apprenticeships, science technology & engineering, arts, math (STEAM) disciplines and high school awards.

Indspire stewards its relationships with students and understands from its monitoring and tracking of surveys that financial stress constitutes a significant barrier for Indigenous students enrolling in or attending post-secondary education (PSE) institutions. However, financial stress is not the singular burden Indigenous students face. For many students from remote northern or fly-in communities, they must relocate to urban post-secondary institutions often experiencing culture shock. Indigenous students indicated being academically unprepared as another significant third concern.

Indigenous Education Realities

Canada's Indigenous history includes a legacy of the *Indian Act*, residential schools and the 1960's scoop of Indigenous children from their homes. These policies, along with others, have profoundly scarred Indigenous communities.

Having a different view about education, historically, many Indigenous students did not attend PSE. Today, we are seeing a gradual increase of Indigenous students attending or wanting to attend PSE. We view this as a positive, however, the reality is, this does not translate into sufficient funding to support such a shift. In 2016-2017, Indspire could fund only 11% of the actual financial need of the students that applied for financial support. Indspire continues to develop private and public partnerships and collaborates with many other organizations and individuals to increase Indspire's funding base to better support Indigenous educational achievements.

EnviroNics Institute for Survey Research published a report in June 2016, indicating the Aboriginal population in Canada today experiences considerable disparities from the rest of the population in areas such as income, education and health outcomes.

Indspire answered the call to these educational disparities by establishing the *K-12 Institute*, which provides a range of programs for K-12 educators. The *Institute* is a virtual resource centre that services educators, communities and other stakeholders who are committed to improving education outcomes for Indigenous youth. Currently, there are over a thousand resources available for teachers, parents, and community leaders, including lesson plans, webinars, articles and more. The *K-12 Institute* is in its fourth year of existence and is continuing to look for opportunities to expand its programming to support demand. It is the work of K-12 that will make systemic improvements to educational achievements in Indigenous Communities.

While colonialism and its effects weigh heavily on many Indigenous communities, it is important to remember there is also a legacy of resilience and survival.

Research Methodology

Data Collection

A survey was sent to 779 *Building Brighter Futures* recipients who in 2014 & 2015 indicated they were in their final year of study. Indspire received 365 surveys representing a 47% response rate. There were four parts to the survey:

1. Demographics
2. Education
3. Employment
4. Reciprocity

Each section included between 1-8 questions elaborating on the specific topic. Subsequent questions covered field of study, leave of absence, distance education, study outside Canada, along with employment status (part or full time), employment mobility, salary range and reciprocity.

Methodology Limitations

As with any research, there are limitations in the survey participation, and potential bias in participant interpretation of the questions.

Indspire completed the research from applicants in its database. There was potential research bias in that students who did not graduate may not have wanted to participate, fearing possible repercussions from Indspire despite assurances that participation in the research was confidential and would not have any negative implications.

Limitations could occur in the framing of the question. Although the survey was pre-tested, the representative sample for the research was comprised of Indigenous students from across Canada. Thus, due to the geographic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the sample, the questions could have been open to multiple interpretations.

Indspire did not examine the responses of students who did not graduate nor those of students who indicated they were still in school. This creates a further limitation and one that will be addressed in subsequent research.

Survey Results

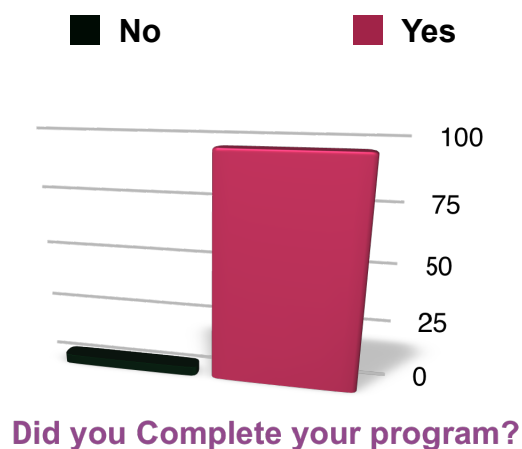
The objectives of this survey were to understand two main points relating to recipients of the *Building Brighter Futures* program:

1. Graduation Rates; and
2. Employment Rates.

Graduation Rates

Impressively, 96% of respondents who answered the survey and studied in either 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 indicated they had graduated. This was a 3% increase from the prior survey completed in 2013. Less than 20 years ago, many Indigenous communities and their students were not pursuing PSE. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the average price of tuition has more than doubled since 1996-97, fees were roughly \$4,000 and have increased to \$8,691 in 2016-17 – meaning the pool of funds available to Indigenous students has failed to keep pace with inflation and the rapidly rising cost of tuition³. We are seeing an important shift - an increase in Indigenous students not only pursuing PSE but graduating from the academy.

Chart 1: Graduation Rates



For those thirteen students who did not graduate, they withdrew for the following stated reasons: inadequate finances, health concerns, family responsibilities and employment.

³ Cap leads to steep drop in First Nations students receiving post-secondary support. 2016. CBCNews

The 4% of students that answered 'did not graduate' indicated factors such as health, lack of money and family responsibilities prevented them from completing their PSE program.

These obstacles are not new and indeed are referenced in both the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples⁴ (RCAP) (1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action⁵ (2015) which noted health wellness in Indigenous communities requiring immediate attention. The Post-Secondary Student Support Program⁶ (PSSSP) funding formula remains unchanged, therefore, the comment about lack of money could be a direct correlation to this. Family responsibilities are foundational to Indigenous culture and must be acknowledged and accommodated if Indigenous students are to succeed in their education.

Level of Study Attained

Almost half of the responses were from graduates who studied and obtained their undergraduate degree. This was followed by a college diploma and one-year certificate programs. The chart below details a very small percentage of graduates who completed either graduate degrees (Masters or Ph.D.), associates degree or Professional Designations (doctors, lawyers etc.).

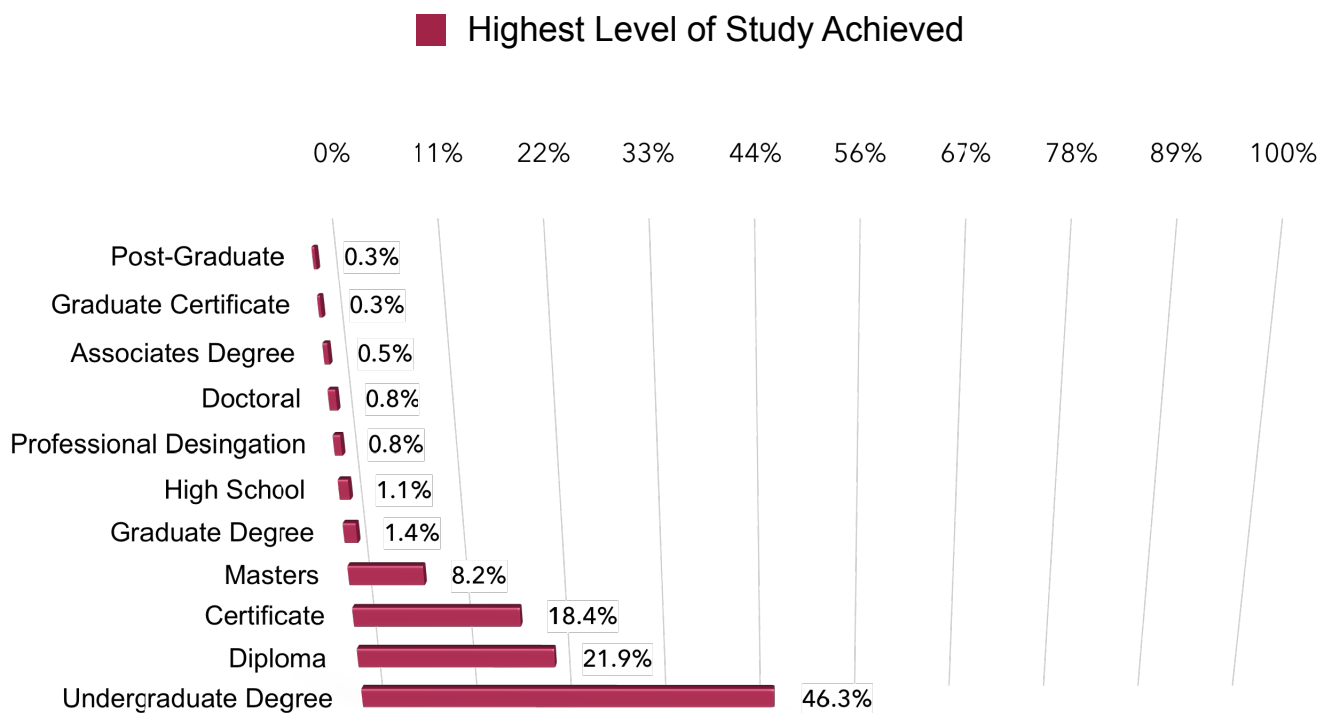
The survey results indicate a higher percentage of students pursuing Masters degrees than Doctorates. There is a small percentage of high school graduates as well. Indspire provides financial support for upgrading and/or transition year programs. Students often refer to this one-year program as completing high school.

⁴ Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. 1996. www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

⁵ Truth and Reconciliation, 2015. www.trc.ca

⁶ PSSSP funding is intended to help First Nations and Inuit students to pursue higher education. PSSP funding is intended to help First Nations and Inuit students obtain certificates, diplomas, undergraduate degrees and advanced degrees.

Chart 2: Level of Study Achieved



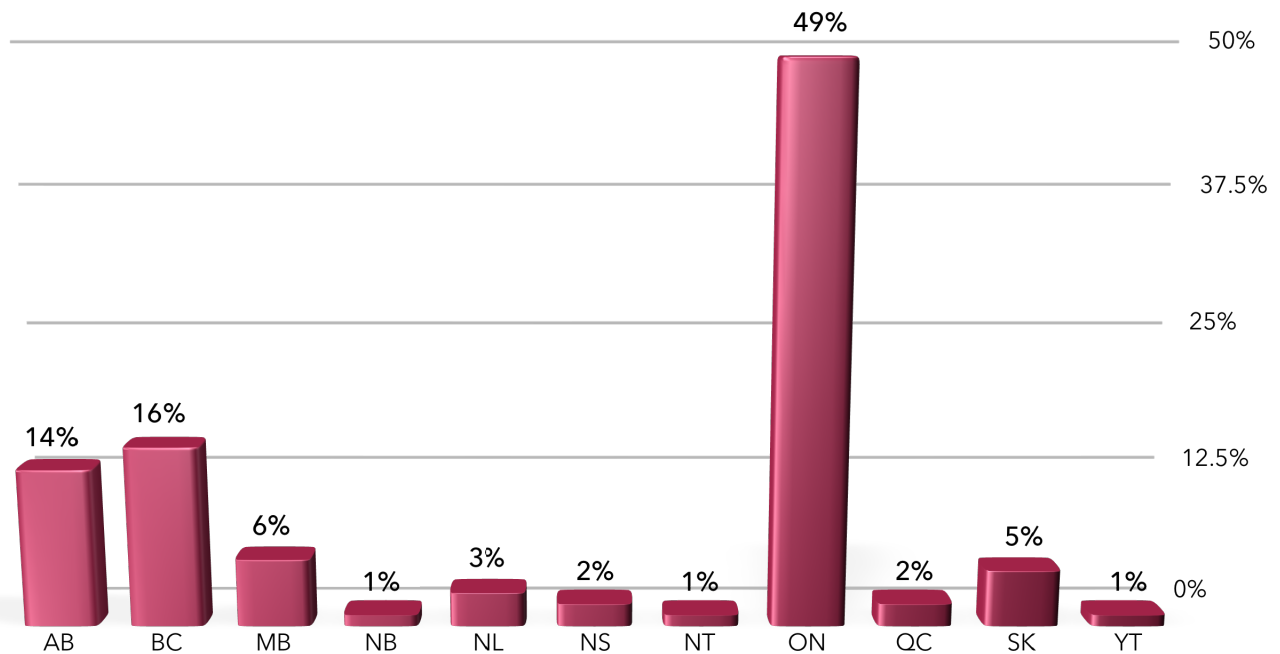
Geographic Rates of Educational Attainment

Many of Indspire's graduates attended post-secondary institutions in Ontario. This may be attributed to the number of First Nations communities, as well as the number of post-secondary education institutions in the province as well as targeted Ontario funds.

The chart below details the geographic areas where Indspire has representation, namely, 11 provinces/territories. It is noted that of Indspire's graduates, Canada's west coast has a higher number of graduates than the east coast. The lower percentage of graduates from the east coast may be attributable to the low number of PSE institutions and fewer Indigenous communities.

There were no graduates from Nunavut or Prince Edward Island. While Indspire continues to receive increasing numbers of applications from Nunavut, there are less than 50 applications per year from Prince Edward Island. Further student engagement in both areas will be examined.

■ Geographic Rates of Educational Attainment



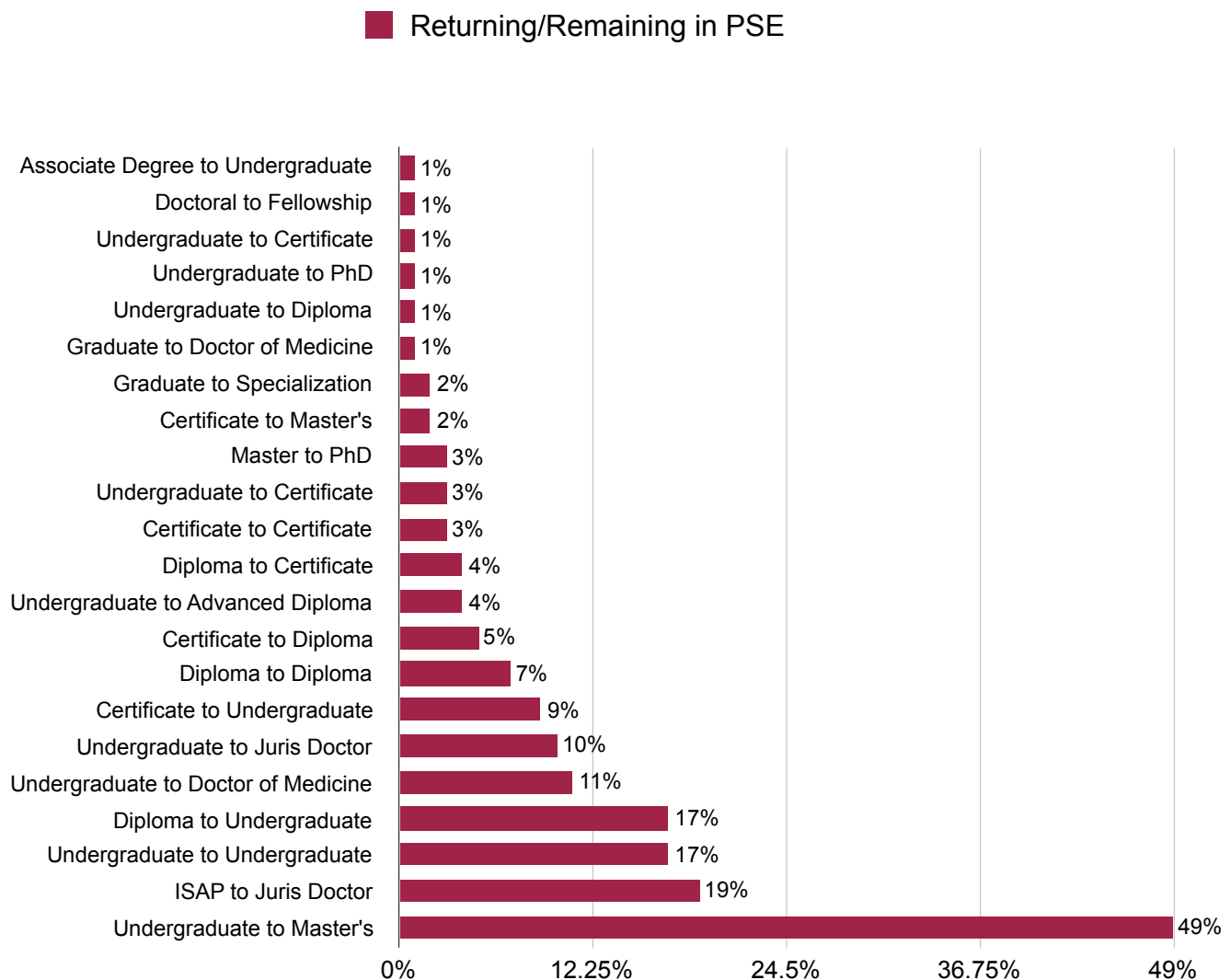
Post-Graduation

Of the individuals that graduated, over 53% indicated they had either continued towards another diploma/degree while the other 42% had obtained employment and 5% had not secured employment at the time of the survey. Comparing the initial research in 2013 to the cohort of students from 2017's review, the change in employment rate has significantly decreased from 82% to 42%.

This statistic poses further research questions to determine the reasons for the high percentage of students returning or staying in PSE. It remains to be determined whether there is a paucity of employment opportunity in the fields students are graduating from or whether they are pursuing higher education because of seeing its benefits.

Some of the respondents who said they were continuing higher learning were doing so in fields of law, medicine, politics, business, social science and education. These areas of endeavour have the potential to influence change and create different outcomes for Indigenous people. Many students, for example, were obtaining Master of Education degrees or entering graduate studies in social sciences.

Chart 4: Returning/Remaining in PSE

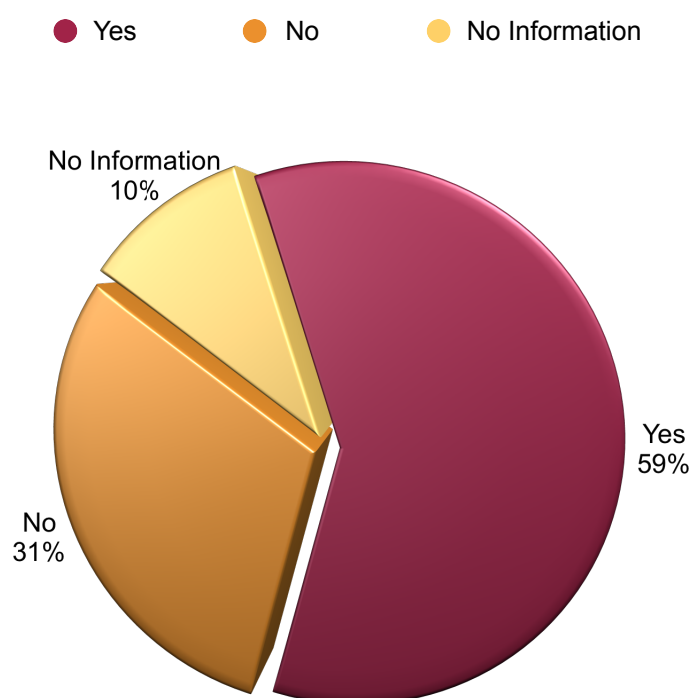


Over half of *Building Brighter Futures* applications were submitted from students at the undergraduate level. It is promising to see the number of respondents (49) who completed an undergraduate degree and were pursuing graduate studies.

In conjunction with the level of study being pursued, 59% of students were continuing their studies in the same field while 31% selected a different discipline. This observation

may suggest Indigenous graduates are unable to secure employment, therefore, perhaps they are returning to PSE studies to obtain a degree in an occupation where the current labour force demand is greater. Further study of this matter is required.

Chart 5: Returning Graduates Pursuing the Same Field of Study



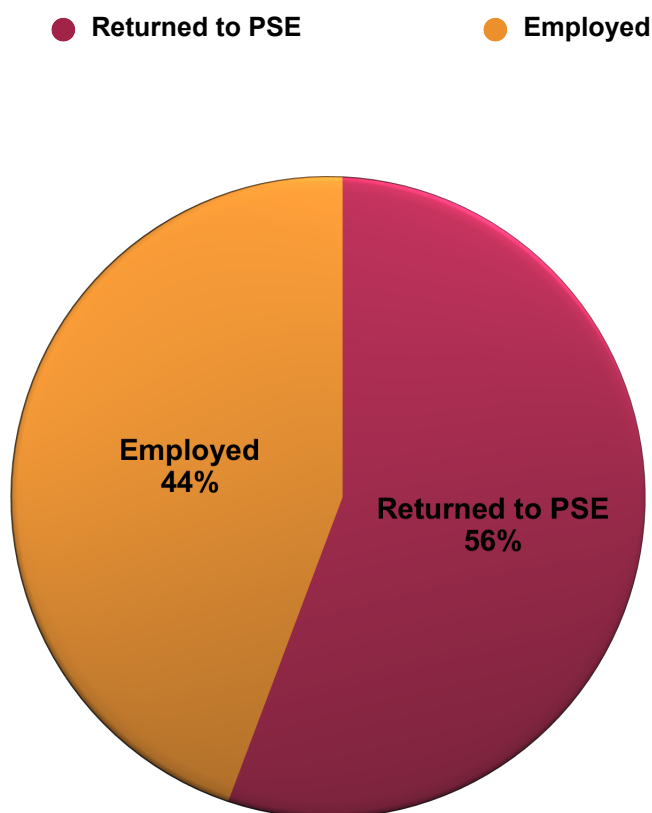
Employment

This section of the survey posed seven questions about employment. They were optional and only asked if students indicated they had graduated. The questions were about full or part-time employment, secured employment in the field of graduation, current work, occupation mobility, salary range and whether the respondent was working with Indigenous populations. While most questions were answered, those about occupation mobility and salary range were scant.

Employment After Graduation

Of those students who graduated, 42% indicated they were employed. This statistic has dramatically decreased from Indspire's earlier survey at 82%. However, the survey results also indicate that 53% of students are returning to school suggesting that students are seeking higher education.

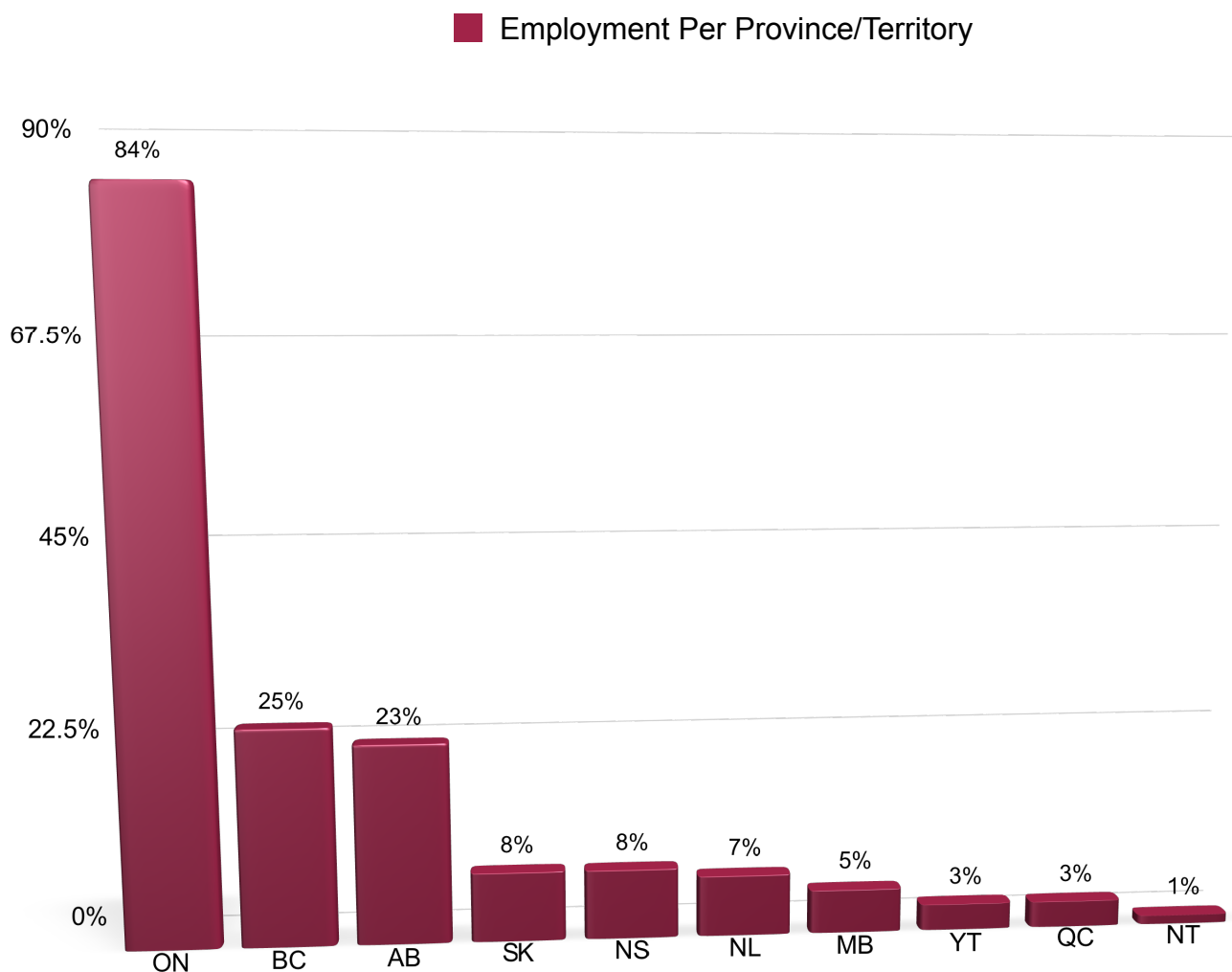
Chart 6: Employment After Graduation



Forty-two per cent of respondents indicated they had found either part time or full time employment. Of the 42% employed, 74% indicated they had secured full-time employment and 26% were employed part-time. The fact that 74% of the graduates found full-time employment is significant given the competitive nature of the labour market. Graduates were employed in occupations such as administration, education, engineering, medicine and trades. (See Appendix A & B).

Chart 7: Geographic Employment Per Province

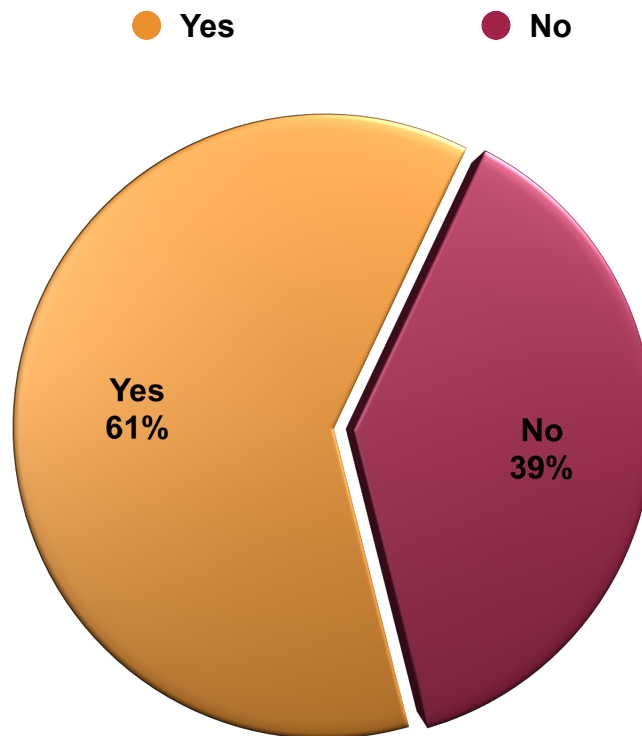
The following chart reflects the earlier one (see Chart 3) in which educational attainment by geography is illustrated. Here, graduates found employment in either Ontario or the west coast. There is little employment secured in eastern Canada and no graduate indicated that they had secured employment in Nunavut or Prince Edward Island.



Unfortunately, the survey question about employment mobility only yielded five responses, in which they said they relocated from one geographic location to another. Future research in this area needs to be undertaken to gain an understanding of graduates' occupational mobility and the reasons surrounding the moves.

Servicing Indigenous Populations

Sixty-one per cent of employed graduates returned to their community or found employment serving Indigenous populations.



Employment Salary Range

In addition to being employed, recipients were asked about their salary range. This question was optional and not many students answered it. These results were therefore not statistically valid and have not been reported.

Reciprocity

The final section of the survey related to 'giving back' or reciprocity. Many Indigenous graduates indicated that not only were they employed and serving Indigenous populations, but they also volunteered or provided monetary donations to Indigenous communities.

Traditionally, many communities "give back". It is part of traditional culture to help others, to give thanks, to mentor one another and to steward the lands for future generations. Some of the commentary and visuals provided by recipients detail such reciprocity.

Expressions of gratitude included:



"Indspire has helped me financially support my two kids and attend school and be successful at both. The worst part of going to school is not knowing where my next dollar was going to come from; Indspire gave me hope and one less worry as a single parent of a 15-year-old and 1 month old at the start of the school year".

"I am forever grateful to Indspire for helping me achieve my dream of going to university, while not having to worry about finances or burdening my family. INDSPIRE allowed me to convocate from university with my Business degree, with distinction, without me having to worry about finances or relying on anyone else for support. Thank you very much!"

Female, Business Graduate

"I became a student as a single mother of 2, since my children were 3 years and 3 months old. They are now 6 and 9 and with the generous support from Indspire, I have been able to lessen the financial burden associated with being a mother and a student. I have been able to move further in my academic studies than I ever dreamed possible. I hope to begin a PhD in the Fall of 2017- something that might not be possible if it weren't for Indspire! Thank you!"





"I was fortunate to receive 3 bursary awards from Indspire during my time in school. One of these awards included the opportunity to intern with a mainstream media outlet. This experience led to gaining full-time employment with APTN as a video journalist in Thunder Bay. Meegwetch, Indspire and sponsors for the support in this chapter of my journey."

Female, Communications Graduate

"Without Indspire's generous contribution, I would not have been able to move into the city from my reserve and enroll in such a wonderful program. I am very grateful that I was given the chance to attend college and can meet such interesting people and start building a network of connections through college. It is with great gratitude that I thank you for the generous support that has allowed me to realize my dream of becoming a pilot, and to pursue this goal of mine."

Female, Pilot Graduate



"Indspire is a great program for First Nations students who want to excel and make their community proud. Students who apply for Indspire awards can strive to fulfill their academic endeavors. This program is a great initiative to provide encouragement to keep going with studies and defeat difficulties and challenges that post-secondary student face in urban environments. I am grateful for a program like Indspire that is available"

"I love Indspire, it's a great organization! They have helped me out a lot and I appreciate all their hard work. You guys are amazing. I will always be thankful for what you guys have helped me achieve."

Female, Recreation and Leisure Studies Graduate

Conclusion

The analysis of this Indigenous post-secondary data illustrates the successful graduation outcomes that occur when Indigenous people are supported in their pursuit of post-secondary education. Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* PSE enrolment and graduation rates continue to rise. This program is a testament to the importance of supporting Indigenous students so they can complete their education, become self-sufficient, enhance their ability to support their families and give back to their communities and to Canada.

For more information on this Survey, please write to education@indspire.ca

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APPENDIX A:

***BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES* Graduate Survey**

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* program has been providing scholarships and bursaries to support Indigenous students in post-secondary studies across Canada. Statistics Canada has reported that Indigenous peoples are Canada's fastest growing population and will have a significant impact on Canada's labour force. Indspire's *Building Brighter Futures* program has felt the impact of this demographic directly through a significant increase in the number of Indigenous students applying for scholarships and bursaries.

We are looking for your feedback as an Indspire recipient, as this information will help us better plan for future demand. We thank you in advance for completing this annual survey.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender:	Male	Female
Age:	Drop Down of Ages 17-60	
Indigenous Affiliations:	First Nations Non-Status First Nation	Inuit Metis
Provincial Affiliation:	Drop Down of Provinces	
Band/Organization:	Drop Down of First Nations/ Metis Orgs/ Inuit Territories	

EDUCATION

1. What was the program you studied? (Drop down: list of program fields)
2. What is the highest level of study you achieved?
 - Certificate
 - Diploma
 - Bachelor's
 - Master's
 - Doctoral

- Professional Designation

3. What year did you start your program?

4. What year did you complete your program? Drop Down: Years

5. Were you enrolled as a:

- Full-time student
- Part-time student
- Both full-time and part-time

6. Did you need to take a leave of absence from your studies?

Yes If yes, select the reasons why No

- Full-time employment
- Part-time employment
- Lack of money
- Family responsibilities
- Health Reasons
- Program not offered full-time
- Other

7. Did your program include studies outside of Canada? Yes No

8. Did your program consist of distance education (e.g. use of internet, video) Yes
No

If yes, what percentage of your program was distance? 100%; 50%

EMPLOYMENT

9. Upon graduation did you find full-time or part-time employment?

Full-time Part-time

10. Have you secured employment in the field you graduated from? Yes No

11. What is your current occupation? (Drop down of occupations)

12. What province are you employed in? (Drop down of Provinces)

13. Did you relocate to another province for employment? If yes, select the province you graduated from and select the province you moved to for employment. (Drop down of Provinces)

14. What is your salary range? (Drop Down ranges 0-\$19,999/ intervals of \$20,000)

15. Are you employed with an organization that services the Indigenous population?

Yes No

RECIPROCITY

16. How are you giving back to your Indigenous community? (Drop down: volunteering, charitable donations, coaching/mentoring youth)

17. Would you be interested in supporting other Indigenous students to attend post-secondary education through any of the following Indspire programs?

- Becoming an Indspire donor
- Mentor
- Outreach
- Volunteer
- Other

COMMENTS

If you have additional comments you would like to share, please explain:

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX B: OCCUPATIONS

Aboriginal liaison
Accounting/ bookkeeper
Administrative (secretary, personal assistant, office assistant)
Administrator
Analyst
Band councillor
Biologist
Broadcaster/announcer (radio broadcaster, telecaster)
Business administrator
Cardiac sonographer
Civil designer
Civil engineering technician
Consultant
Construction/building site manager
Counsellor
Curator
Customer service representative
Early childhood educator
Education director -government
Educational administrator
Educator
Electrician
Engineer
Fashion designer
Financial analyst
Forestry
Gas technician
Journalist
Journeyman
Kinesiology
Medical laboratory technologist
Mineralogist
Physiotherapist
Pipefitter
Plumber
Policy analyst
Program coordinator
Project engineer
Public health Inspector
Researcher
Social service worker
Social worker
Software developer
Specialist physician
Speech-language pathologist
Telecommunications installation and repair technician
Training and development consultant



Indspire