



Indspire

***Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries,
Scholarships Program Policy***

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Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Definitions

3.0 Program Objectives

4.0 Guiding Principles

5.0 Purpose and Scope of the Policy

6.0 Program Guidelines

6.1 ELIGIBILITY

6.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

6.3 APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

6.4 FINANCIAL AWARDS CRITERIA

6.5 FINANCIAL AWARDS DISBURSEMENT

6.6 REPORTING

7.0 Acknowledgement of Unregistered Indigenous Peoples

8.0 Jurisdiction

1.0 Introduction

Indspire has disbursed millions of dollars of financial support to thousands of Indigenous students through the Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries and Scholarships (BBF) program since 1985.

Research shows that a significant gap in graduation rates exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Also, Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in all areas of education and face numerous barriers, the largest one being financial.

Contrary to popular myth, Indigenous students do not receive automatic full funding for education. Indspire's BBF program strives to lessen the financial barriers that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students experience in accessing and completing education programs.

2.0 Definitions

Applicant: a person who applies for financial support through the BBF program.

Alumni: past recipients of financial support from Indspire.

Arts Training: studies in fine arts and performance arts, including visual, performing, media, graphic, and literary arts.

Award Record: a document used to establish eligibility criteria for each financial award.

Continuing Education: a program of study for adult learners beyond traditional post-secondary education.

Financial Aid: Indspire's program of financial assistance includes four components:

- Scholarships – based on academic merit;
- Bursaries – based on financial need;
- Awards – based on both academic merit and financial need; and
- Incentives – to encourage students to stay in school, or to reward successful completion of each period, or completion of a program.

Full-time and Part-time Studies: Full-time and part-time studies are defined by the educational institution the applicant attends.

Indigenous: For this policy, *Indigenous* refers to a person recognized as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, as defined in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. This includes First Nations (referred to in the Constitution as "Indians"), Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. In alignment with current Canadian practice, this policy uses the term *First Nations* instead of *Indians*.

To be considered Indigenous under this policy, individuals must provide verifiable proof of registration or enrolment with a federally or provincially recognized First Nations, Inuit, or Métis government or authority, as defined under the policy's registration criteria.

Status: means a person who is registered as an Indian by the Registrar of the Federal Government's Indian Register.

Registration: For this policy, *registration* refers to formal recognition of an individual's Indigenous identity by a federally or provincially recognized Indigenous Nation, government, or authority in

Canada. An individual is considered *registered* if they possess valid and current documentation that confirms their inclusion in one of the following:

First Nations Registration

A valid Certificate of Indian Status (a “Status Card”) or a citizenship, membership, registration, or enrolment card issued by:

- a. The Registrar of the Federal Government’s Indian Register
- b. A Band under the Indian Act that has control of its membership list
- c. Self-Governing First Nations under Section 35 and modern Treaties

The card must be current and bear the applicant’s name and unique registration and/or membership number.

Métis Registration

A valid Métis card from one of the following seven Métis registries:

- a. Métis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC)
- b. Otipemisiwak Métis Government (formerly the Métis Nation of Alberta or MNA)
- c. One of the Métis Settlements in Alberta
- d. Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS)
- e. Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF)
- f. Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)
- g. Northwest Territory Métis Nation

The card must be current, include the applicant’s name, and be issued by their respective Métis Nation registry.

Inuit Registration

Official confirmation of enrolment on the rolls of one of the four settled Inuit land claims regions, each of which has its distinct membership committees, protocols, and procedures separate from the Indian Act, but which share a commonality relating to beneficiary status:

- a. Inuvialuit
- b. Nunavut
- c. Nunavik
- d. Nunatsiavut

The confirmation must be an official document that verifies the applicant’s status as a beneficiary of the respective Inuit land claim agreement.

Professional Development: the advancement of skills or expertise to succeed in a particular profession, especially through continued education (typically short programs, workshops of a couple of days, week long, or less than a month) and taken while on the job.

Traditional Knowledge: a term used to represent the broad spectrum of Indigenous knowledge, primarily as it is linked to well-established cultural practices.

3.0 Program Objectives

The objectives of the BBF program are to:

- Support as many Indigenous students as possible;

- meet each student's financial need;
- increase the number of Indigenous post-secondary graduates in Canada;
- increase the number of Indigenous people participating in the economy and workforce through education;
- transform lives within Indigenous communities through education; and
- collect and present data about Indigenous education to support sound public policy.

4.0 Guiding Principles

BBF is a student-focused program designed to financially support Indigenous peoples in completing their post-secondary education.

Indspire strives for fairness, accountability, and transparency in the administration of this program. Indspire is distinctive in its approach, as an Indigenous-led organization; as such, the program strives to encourage:

- fairness and equity (in the disbursement of financial support);
- reciprocity (rooted in Indigenous values); and
- diversity (Indigenous identity, geography, academic/professional discipline)

5.0 Purpose and Scope of the Policy

The purpose of the BBF policy is to:

- Guide the administration of the program by Indspire; and
- Inform external stakeholders, including students, funders, the education sector, Indigenous leaders, and parents, about the program.

This policy governs the equitable assessment and fair and wide funding disbursement of said financial awards.

6.0 Program Guidelines

6.1 ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for BBF financial awards, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a registered First Nations, Inuit, or Métis individual (see section 2.0);
- Be a Canadian Citizen
- Be enrolled in:
 - An accredited education program;
 - A professional development program;
 - A continuing education program;
 - A traditional knowledge program, or arts training; and
 - not be a member of the Indspire staff, board, or BBF jury at the time of applying for funding support.

6.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants to the BBF program must provide proof of eligibility (see section 6.1) and a completed application form by the deadline(s).

6.3 APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

Application assessment is based on criteria established by Indspire and/or its funders.

6.4 FINANCIAL AWARDS CRITERIA

Disbursement criteria for financial awards are negotiated with funders for significant donations (i.e., gift amounts of \$5,000 per year or more), recognizing that Indspire's goal is to make funding accessible to as many eligible applicants as possible.

The disbursement of financial awards is tied to funding agreement criteria, where it can be either:

- A fixed amount, the total amount of which will be disbursed to a successful applicant(s); or
- based on (1) an application assessment, and (2) monies available to be disbursed.

If Indspire deems the criteria specified in a funding agreement to be too restrictive, Indspire will renegotiate the criteria with the funder to increase the accessibility of the funds for successful applicants. Any type of financial award may be considered, including renewable ones. Indspire levies a fee to cover the cost of administering and promoting the program. The criteria for financial awards are detailed in the award records.

6.5 FINANCIAL AWARDS DISBURSEMENT

Applicants may receive more than one financial award per year, based on funds available for disbursement.

Indspire strives to promptly disburse all funds available for financial awards.

6.6 REPORTING

Indspire gathers information about applicants to monitor and evaluate program success, build statistical metrics, promote the program, and report to its funders.

With the expressed consent of successful applicants or Indspire alumni, their names and contact information may be provided to funders for employment consideration or to encourage the funders to continue to support the program. With the expressed consent of successful applicants or Indspire alumni, Indspire may also use their names and stories for promotional purposes.

7.0 Acknowledgement of Unregistered Indigenous Peoples

Indspire recognizes that there are individuals who identify as Indigenous and have strong cultural, familial, or community ties but who may not possess formal registration or documentation due to historical, legal, or systemic barriers. These may include individuals affected by colonial policies such as enfranchisement, the Sixties Scoop, lack of access to registration processes, or disputes over membership criteria within Indigenous Nations.

While this policy requires documented registration with a recognized First Nations, Inuit, or Métis authority for eligibility, Indspire acknowledges the diversity and complexity of Indigenous identity in Canada. The organization remains committed to monitoring and reviewing these criteria in dialogue with Indigenous communities and leadership. Indspire will revisit the policy as needed to reflect evolving legal, cultural, and community standards.

8.0 Jurisdiction

The President and CEO of Indspire has jurisdiction over implementing this policy.