



Story as Knowledge: Experiences of Early Leaving & Persistence from Indigenous Post-Secondary Students

This study explores the experiences of Indigenous post-secondary students who have encountered early leaving and persistence, drawing on their stories to better understand the complex factors that influence Indigenous persistence in post-secondary education (PSE).

**Persistence is not shaped by one factor – students navigate a balance of reasons to stay and reasons to leave.*

Factors Impacting Persistence & Retention*

Motivators to Stay

Empowerment

Identity, independence, belonging, pursuit of knowledge, social justice.



Relationships

Family, community connection, peer support, role models, giving back.



Supports

Cultural supports, student services, and transition supports.



"Mentoring was vigorous and what got me through it all was knowing these wonderful Indigenous scholars on a personal level, that really made it more possible and made me see how possible it is."

Motivators to Leave

Impacts of Colonization

Cultural insensitivity, inaccurate or harmful curriculum, racism, discrimination, tokenism, and intergenerational trauma.



Health, Wellness & Safety

Alienation, isolation, lack of confidence, mental health challenges, stress, role overload, and harm or violence.



Socio-economic Circumstances

Financial stress, student loans, work demands, and housing insecurity.



Situational Experiences

Too young, better opportunities outside school, lack of accommodation, academic pressure, and uncertainty regarding path.



"There's an emotional burden that Indigenous students carry and maybe because of that emotional burden, because of our history, communities, institutions, and faculty and everybody that work is involved, we need to work at supporting Indigenous students more."

Recommendations* (at a glance)

**There are 40+ recommendations total. For complete list, see p.20 of the report.*



For Institutions

- Implement Indigenous-led cultural safety training for staff/faculty.
- Provide more cultural resources for those who are researching or reconnecting to their Indigeneity.



For Indigenous Students

- Take advantage of resources available to you and don't be afraid to ask for help (e.g., counselling, academic assistance, financial aid, Indigenous student centre).
- Know you can always go back to PSE if you choose to leave early.



For the Public

- Realize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to education.
- Know that Indigenous students often pursue education not just for themselves, but for their community and for others.

Stay

Leave



READ REPORT

