

# Advancing reconciliation through higher education

## 2017 survey findings

A university education is a transformative experience. It challenges students to set high aspirations for themselves and provides the supports they need to achieve them. But First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Canada do not always have the same opportunities for access and success in higher education as non-Indigenous students. That must change.

Closing the education gap will help Indigenous youth achieve their potential, strengthen their communities and build a better Canada. Universities are committed to helping make this happen by improving access and success for Indigenous students, staff and faculty, and advancing reconciliation.

Universities Canada regularly surveys its 96 member institutions on progress. We are pleased to share these results for 2017.

### Call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The 2015 Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called for the postsecondary education sector to improve capacity in Indigenous education, research, language revitalization and culture, and to more truthfully represent our shared history, including the effects of colonization and the impact of residential schools on Indigenous peoples. Alongside the federal government's renewed efforts to reset relations with Indigenous peoples in Canada, universities are answering this call to action.

### Universities' commitment

In 2015 Canada's university leaders adopted a set of 13 *Principles on Indigenous Education*. Developed in consultation with Indigenous leaders, these principles acknowledge the unique needs of Indigenous communities across Canada and their goals of self-determination.

In 2017, Canadian universities also committed to seven *Principles* and a five-year *action plan* to advance equity, diversity and inclusion on campus.

### Measuring progress

The new 2017 Universities Canada member survey shows that universities across the country are prioritizing reconciliation efforts. For example, almost **70%** have or are developing strategic plans for advancing reconciliation.

Universities are integrating Indigenous knowledge into curricula and research, helping to revitalize language and culture, and ensuring Indigenous leaders and voices are included in governance and decision-making.

### Indigenous representation on campus

**Currently, an estimated**

**5%** of undergraduate students<sup>1</sup>

**3%** of masters and PhD students<sup>2</sup> **and**

**1.4%** of full and part-time faculty<sup>3</sup>

**on Canadian campuses self-identify as Indigenous.**

<sup>1</sup> 2017 Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2017 Universities Canada Survey

<sup>2</sup> 2016 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey

<sup>3</sup> 2016 Statistics Canada Census

### Reviving language and culture

The revitalization of Indigenous cultures and languages helps Indigenous students achieve success and strengthens their communities. Universities engage with Indigenous elders and researchers to support these efforts through course development, student support services and Indigenous programming on campus.

## 55% increase in Indigenous programs

Since 2013 there has been a **55% increase** in the number of academic programs that include an Indigenous focus or are designed for Indigenous students. There are now 345 such programs at Canadian universities. Additionally, **just over half** of universities now offer Indigenous language courses, and a growing number of non-language courses are offered with an Indigenous language as the language of instruction.

## Enhancing student access and success

Opening university classrooms to Indigenous knowledge and experience is only one part of building success for Indigenous learners. Social, emotional, mental and physical supports are vital to all students' success. Canada's uni-versities are working with Indigenous communities to build supportive relationships for students both on and off their campuses.

They are also working to educate non-Indigenous students on the truths of their shared history with Indigenous peoples and to create opportunities for building understanding and deeper relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

**72%** of universities offer on-campus activities specifically designed for Indigenous students

**75%** provide dedicated gathering spaces for Indigenous students

**78%** offer intercultural engagement

**78%** of universities actively promote intercultural engagement through cultural activities, events, talking circles and cultural competency or reconciliation training. More than **70%** partner with Indigenous communities, organizations or other postsecondary institutions to foster dialogue and reconciliation.

**69%** do community outreach

**More than two-thirds** of member universities reach out to prospective Indigenous students to inform them of the services, programs and supports available to them on campus. Of these universities:

**98%** do outreach with high school students in local Indigenous communities

**81%** employ Indigenous recruitment officers

**65%** have reach-back or mentorship programs for high school and elementary students in local Indigenous communities

## Building Indigenous leadership

Canada's universities have a responsibility to model positive change. Universities recognize and embrace the importance of Indigenous leadership in governance bodies and at all levels of faculty, professional and administrative staff.

Many universities are also working to build Indigenous leadership and better incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in fields like medicine, law and education through new approaches to professional programs.

**71%** governance representation

**Well over two-thirds** of Canada's universities include Indigenous representation in governance or leadership structures to ensure Indigenous voices are included in decision-making.

**60%** setting faculty recruitment goals

**60%** of Canadian universities are taking steps to increase low Indigenous faculty numbers by setting recruitment goals and recognizing Indigenous knowledge as an aspect of tenure and promotion.

In addition, **65%** are working to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, methods and protocols into research and teaching policies, programs and practices.

## Continuing commitment to action

Canada's universities embrace their responsibilities as educators, partners and civic leaders in combatting ongoing racism and discrimination, and advancing meaningful reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples. Building access and success in universities for Indigenous learners and researchers, and nurturing respectful relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities reflect the core values of Canada's universities.

Universities Canada hosts an online directory of Indigenous academic programs, as well as services and programs designed specifically for Indigenous students. Go to [www.universitystudy.ca/indigenous-programs-and-services-directory](http://www.universitystudy.ca/indigenous-programs-and-services-directory) for our searchable database.

