

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

Indigenous Education Branch

Ontario Native Education Counselling
Association (ONECA)

May 29, 2023

Purpose

- To provide an overview of the work of the Indigenous Education Branch in the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.
- To provide an overview of ministry funding for Indigenous learners in postsecondary education.
- To provide information on the Ontario Student Assistance Program and the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant

Policy Framework for Indigenous Post Secondary Education (PSE)

- The ministry's objectives for Indigenous PSE are informed by a Framework developed and periodically reviewed through engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations and postsecondary education and training institutions.

The **Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework (2011) (APSET)** guides the development of policies and programs to:

- Help close the education attainment gap; and
- Enhance Indigenous learners' experiences.

Key **objectives of APSET** include:

- Increasing enrolment and success of Indigenous learners;
- Ensuring postsecondary education and training is increasingly responsive; and,
- Enhancing transparency and accountability.

Indigenous PSE Policy Framework cont'd.

Postsecondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL)

- Within the APSET Framework, the ministry brought together most programs under a primary funding envelope called the Postsecondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL).
- With currently over \$25.5 million, PEFAL funding supports:
 - Indigenous counsellors and Elders;
 - Education experience camps;
 - Academic supports and transition programs;
 - Supports for capacity building and piloting innovative projects;
 - Indigenous student bursaries; and
 - Student and community outreach activities.

Colleges and Universities – Supporting Indigenous Learners

- Colleges and universities are responsible for Indigenous student success, supported by ministry programs and strategies.
- The **Indigenous Student Success Fund** is an \$18.2 million dollar ministry grant to colleges and universities which supports the provision of programs and services for Indigenous learners. Many colleges and universities provide further support from operating budgets.
- Many colleges and universities have strategies, informed by local engagement and reports such as TRC, to improve Indigenous access and equity.
- Institutions report many activities to improve Indigenous postsecondary outcomes through:
 - Strengthening recruitment and retention of Indigenous learners, faculty and staff
 - Providing culturally appropriate supports and services.
- In 2020-21 there were 17,012 full-time and part-time self-identified Indigenous learners at colleges and universities. Data for 2021-22 is still being finalized.

Indigenous Student Bursary

- The Ministry invests \$1.5 million annually in the **Indigenous Student Bursary Program** to assist Indigenous students in financial need with the costs of college, university or their Indigenous Institute.
 - The Bursary provides financial assistance to over 1,000 Indigenous learners every year.

Indigenous Targeted Initiatives Fund

The Indigenous Targeted Initiatives Fund (ITIF) provides opportunities for publicly-assisted colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes and long-standing Indigenous partner organizations to create and develop new, unique and innovative projects that support Indigenous learners.

Student Financial Assistance

- All Indigenous learners can apply to the **Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)**, which provides needs-based assistance through grants and loans to help all qualified students with the cost of postsecondary studies.
- Changes in the design of OSAP have addressed some barriers for Indigenous learners:
 - Since 2017-18, Ontario does not include the PSSSP funding as a resource for OSAP.
 - Indigenous students are exempt from \$3,600 personal contribution.
 - The **Ontario Indigenous Travel Grant (2018-19)**, addresses high cost of travel for Indigenous students from remote First Nations communities.
 - In January 2021, Ontario expanded OSAP for eligible programs at **Indigenous Institutes**.

Indigenous Institutes Sector

Indigenous Institutes: The *Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017* recognizes that Indigenous Institutes play a unique role in the post-secondary education system of Ontario

- Indigenous Institutes are **education and training institutions** mandated by and accountable to Indigenous communities. Some are non-profit corporations; others are associated with First Nations governments.
- There are 9 recognized and publicly-assisted Indigenous Institutes in Ontario. Most campuses are located in First Nations communities.
- In 2021-22, Institutes provided postsecondary education and training for over 1,520 learners (82% full-time). Enrolment increased by 9% over 2019-20 and by 57% over 2017-18 levels.
- Institutes strive to meet Indigenous communities' postsecondary education and training needs. They provide lifelong learning opportunities in holistic, safe and supportive learning environments where Indigenous knowledges and ways of learning are integrated into the academic experience.
- Institutes provide access to learners who face a wide range of barriers to postsecondary education and training, particularly in northern and remote locations.
- Until the *Act*, postsecondary programs offered by Institutes had to be offered in partnership with colleges and universities.

Additional Funding

The ministry also provided over \$45 million funding to the Indigenous Institutes sector in 2022-23, including:

- \$26 million to the nine Indigenous Institutes to offset core operations costs, for the delivery of provincially-recognized postsecondary education programs and student support services, to improve Indigenous learners' access to and completion of postsecondary education and training.
- Approximately \$11.5 million to increase enrolment in Personal Support Worker (PSW) and nursing programs at Indigenous Institutes, including supports for students to successfully complete these programs.
- \$0.95 million under the Indigenous Institutes Mental Health Grant to support Indigenous Institutes in ensuring new and/or increased access to mental health, wellness, and trauma-related programs and services are available on campus.
- \$0.65 million under the Indigenous Institutes Accessibility Fund for Learners grant to support accessibility for students with disabilities at Indigenous Institutes.
- \$0.7 million under the Indigenous Institutes Virtual Learning Grant to support costs associated with delivering virtual academic programs, virtual student supports, and faculty and staff capacity development.
- \$4.5 million over three years (in Budget 2022) for the Indigenous Institutes Facilities Renewal Program to bring equitable access for facility renewal and maintenance funding. This investment would support capital repairs and renovations to accommodate additional programs and students.

Questions?

**Contact: Hilary Blain, Director, Indigenous Education
Branch, Ministry of Colleges and Universities**

Email: hilary.blain@ontario.ca

What's new in OSAP?

Application Launches

- On May 16, 2023, the Ontario Government launched its 2023-24 applications for both the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and its new Ontario Learn and Stay Grant.
- OSAP applications are available at ontario.ca/osap.
- For the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, applications are available at ontario.ca/learnandstay.



What's new in OSAP?

Ontario Learn and Stay Grant

- The Ontario Learn and Stay Grant is a new financial aid program providing grant funding for students who enroll in the **first year** of an eligible nursing, paramedic and medical laboratory technologist program and stay in a priority region to work after graduation.
- The grant provides upfront funding for tuition, books and other direct educational costs for students studying in priority programs in priority communities in Ontario in exchange for a term of service after graduation.
- Students with Ontario Learn and Stay Grant funding receive **grants only** (i.e., no loans) **as long as** they are enrolled in an eligible program, and they fulfill their service commitment.



Learn: Students choose to study in fields and professions where Ontario needs them most



Serve and Stay: Students work in those fields and professions, and live and invest in the priority communities, where Ontario needs them most

What are the eligibility and program requirements?

Ontario Learn and Stay Grant

To be eligible for the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, students must:

- successfully apply to and enrol in the **first year** of an eligible program in a priority community
- be an Ontario resident who is a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or protected person
- commit to work in the region of study after graduation
- not be receiving funding from any of the following government programs:
 - The BEGIN Initiative: Bridging Educational Grant in Nursing
 - Better Jobs Ontario
 - Skills Development Fund
- not be restricted from receiving OSAP assistance

What are the eligibility and program requirements?

Ontario Learn and Stay Grant

Service commitment:

To receive this grant, students need to fulfill a service commitment. This means students are required to work in the region of study for a **minimum of six months for every year of study funded by this grant**. For example, if a student's program of study is four years long, and received the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant for each year of study, he/she must work in the region for 24 months (two years) after graduation.

Funding will be converted to a repayable loan if certain conditions are not satisfied, including not completing the service commitment.

Eligible programs

Ontario Learn and Stay Grant

In the 2023-24 academic year, the grant will focus on specific human health resources programs, including:

- Nursing programs in Northern, Eastern and Southwestern Ontario;
 - Medical Laboratory Technologist programs in Northern and Southwestern Ontario; and
 - Paramedic programs in Northern Ontario.
- The list of approved programs has been finalized for the 2023-24 academic year.
 - For the 2023-24 academic year, Seven Generations Education Institute is offering an eligible paramedic diploma program in an eligible Ontario Learn and Stay Grant region (Fort Frances, Kenora, and Sioux Lookout campuses in partnership with Durham College).
 - For a full list of eligible programs, students should visit the grant's website at ontario.ca/learnandstay.

How does the service commitment work?

Ontario Learn and Stay Grant

If a student studies in an eligible program in an eligible region in the 2023-24 academic year, they can work for an eligible employer in any community in that region of Ontario.



- Mary lives in Temagami First Nation reserve and is applying to the first year of the practical nursing diploma program at Canadore College, North Bay campus, in the North region.
- After graduation, Mary can work for an eligible employer in any community listed under the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant North region.



- Carla is from Oneida Nation of the Thames reserve and is applying to the first year of the medical laboratory technology program at St. Clair College in Windsor, in the Southwest region.
- After graduation, Mary can work for an eligible employer in any community listed under the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant Southwest region.

More OSAP Updates



First Payer for students receiving OSAP and PSSSP

Next Steps

- ✓ On May 24, 2023, the ministry met with all financial aid administrators at the spring conference for the Ontario Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (OASFAA). At the conference, all financial aid administrators were reminded about the process for applying tuition payments for students with both OSAP and PSSSP.
- ✓ The ministry has established an OASFAA working group to develop best practices for applying first payer tuition processes for students receiving OSAP and PSSSP.
 - ✓ Best practices for applying tuition payments for these students will ensure OSAP funding is released to students in a timely manner and will reiterate commitment to tuition payment processes established between Financial Aid Offices and Indigenous partners.
- ✓ When finalized, these best practices will be communicated with all Financial Aid Offices through the 2023-24 Full-Time OSAP Policy Manual, OASFAA meetings and other ministry communications.

Self-attestations for confirmation of Indigenous Identification

Next Steps

- ✓ The ministry is collecting information and engaged in internal conversations about the role of attestations as required documents for OSAP purposes.
- ✓ Over the coming months, the ministry will review the self-attestation policy for confirming Indigenous identification in consultation with Indigenous partners and stakeholders.
 - ✓ Consultation and review will ensure that the policy addresses concerns related to self-attestations for confirming Indigenous students while facilitating access to OSAP benefits targeted to support Indigenous students.
 - ✓ Final changes made to this policy would be seen in the 2024-25 Full-Time OSAP Application and OSAP Full-Time Policy Manual.

Ontario Indigenous Travel Grant

Next Steps

- ✓ Over the coming months, the ministry will be engaging with students, Indigenous Institutes, and Indigenous partner organizations to understand existing challenges and barriers with the Ontario Indigenous Travel Grant (OITG).
 - ✓ The ministry plans to engage with members of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, as well as other Indigenous partners.
 - ✓ The objective of the engagement would be to gather information that would help inform a potential redesign of the OITG to improve the program's accessibility and better support Indigenous postsecondary students travelling from remote communities to attend postsecondary studies.



Questions

For more information or questions about OSAP or the new Ontario Learn and Stay Grant:

Travis Coulter (travis.coulter@ontario.ca), Director, Student Financial Assistance Branch, Ministry of Colleges and Universities