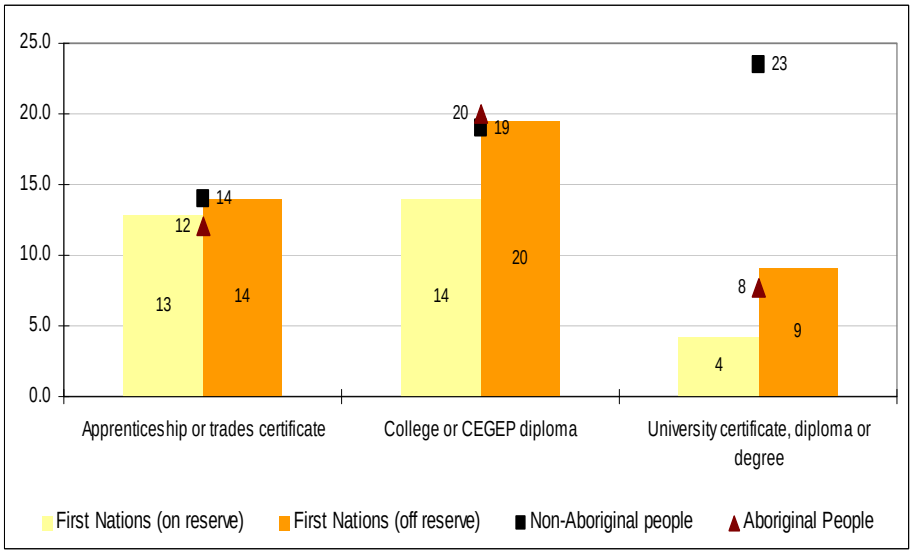
FACT SHEET
First Nations Post-Secondary Education

This fact sheet is intended to provide a snapshot of participation in and completion of post-secondary education for First Nations people in Canada.

Educational Attainment

- The majority of First Nations people who participate in PSE attend a college or trade school, rather than a university.
- In 2006, the proportion of First Nations adults who had completed a trades certificate was on par with non-Aboriginal adults.
- The overall gap in PSE between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people is directly related to the wide gap in university attainment.

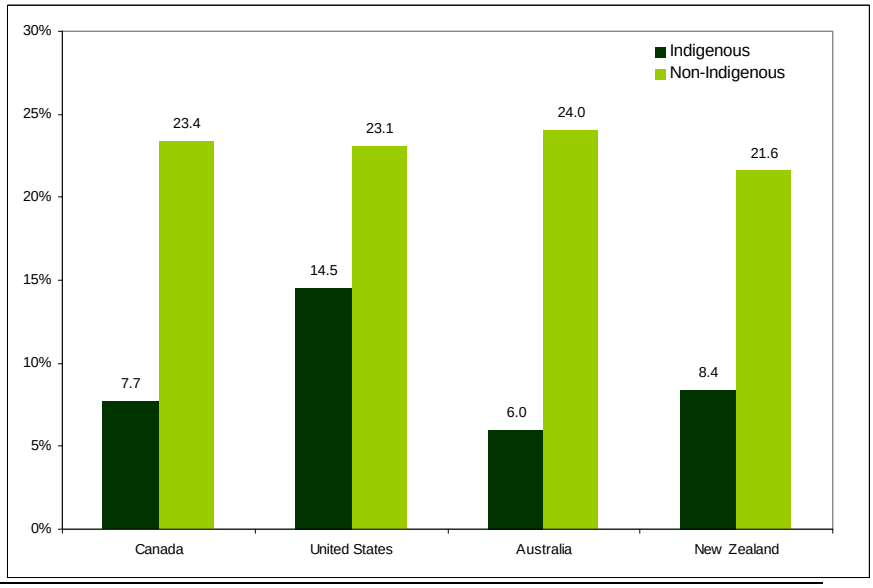
Figure 1: Proportion of First Nations people aged 25 to 64 who have completed a post-secondary program, by degree type and area of residence, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

- According to recent research comparing performance in education across the world, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States have similar gaps in university attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults.
- The smallest gap is found in the United States where nearly 15% of Indigenous adults have attained a university degree, compared to 23% of non-Indigenous adults.

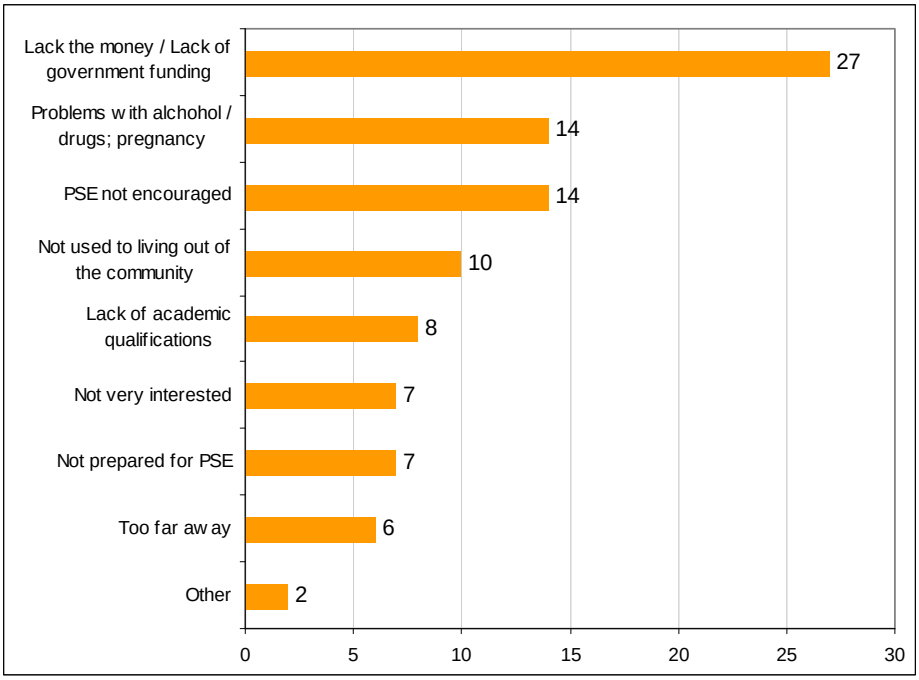
Figure 2 : Proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults aged 25 to 64 with a university degree above a bachelor's, 2006



FUNDING NEEDS

- Approximately seven in 10 First Nations youth aspire to complete a PSE degree.
- However, the reality is persistent barriers are preventing First Nations from reaching their goals.
- Lack of funding remains the primary barrier PSE for First Nations people living on-reserve.
- In 2005, more than one in four (27%) felt the lack of funding was prohibiting access to PSE.

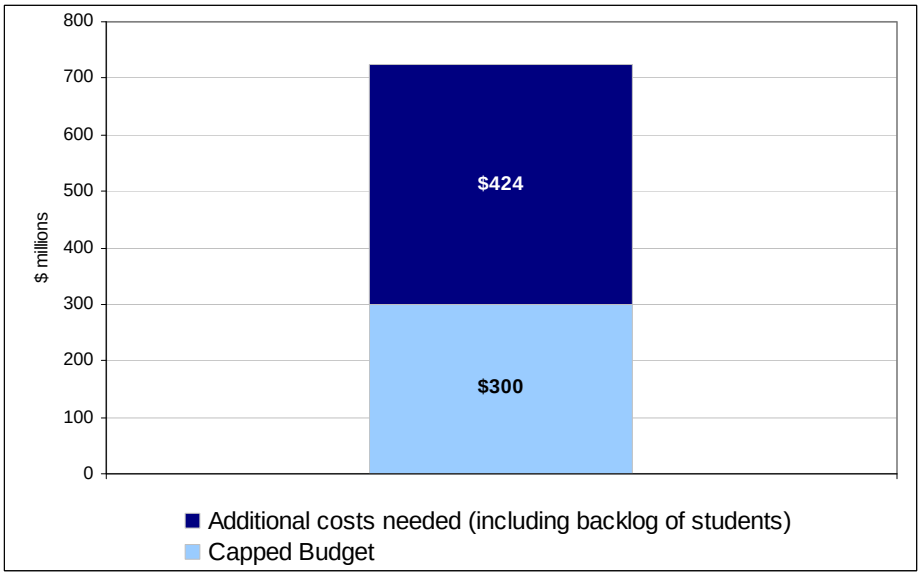
Figure 3: Barriers to post-secondary education as identified by First Nations living on-reserve, 2005



Source: EKOS Research Associates Inc., 2005-Wave 2

- First Nations youth are significantly impacted by the 2% funding cap on education program spending.
- In 2008, the PSSSP program supported an estimated 22,303 students at a total of $300M.
- In actual fact, $724M was needed in 2008 to support:
  - The real costs needed for 22,303 students ($147M).
  - An additional $64 million for 3,213 other students who were ready to enrol.
  - An additional $208 million to address the backlog of 10,589 students who are ready but have not been able to enrol in PSE.
  - This leaves only $5 million required for the 280 First Nations students needed to close the PSE gap.

Figure 4: Estimated PSSSP funding needs, Canada, 2008-09

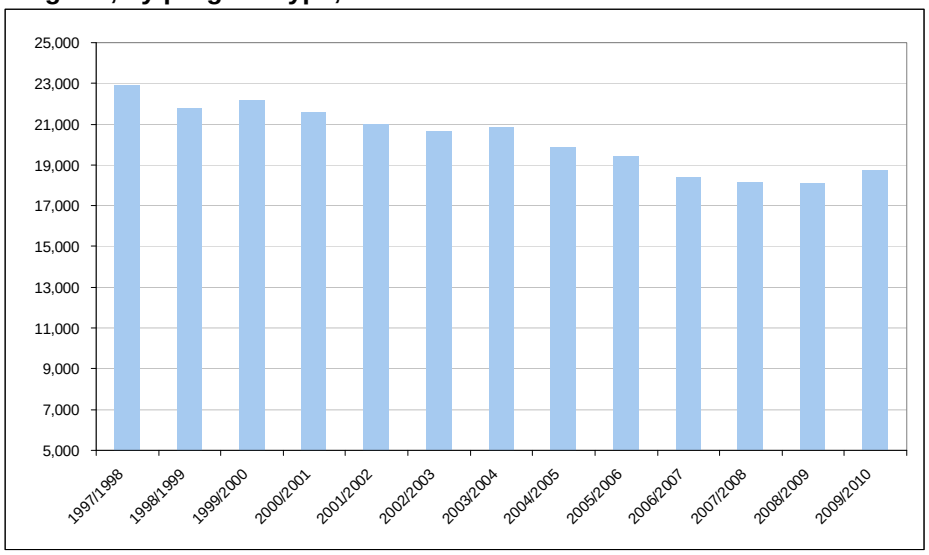


Source: First Nations Education Council, 2009

Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP)

- The number of First Nations students funded through INAC's PSE program has steadily declined from 22,938 in 1997 to 18,729 in 2009.

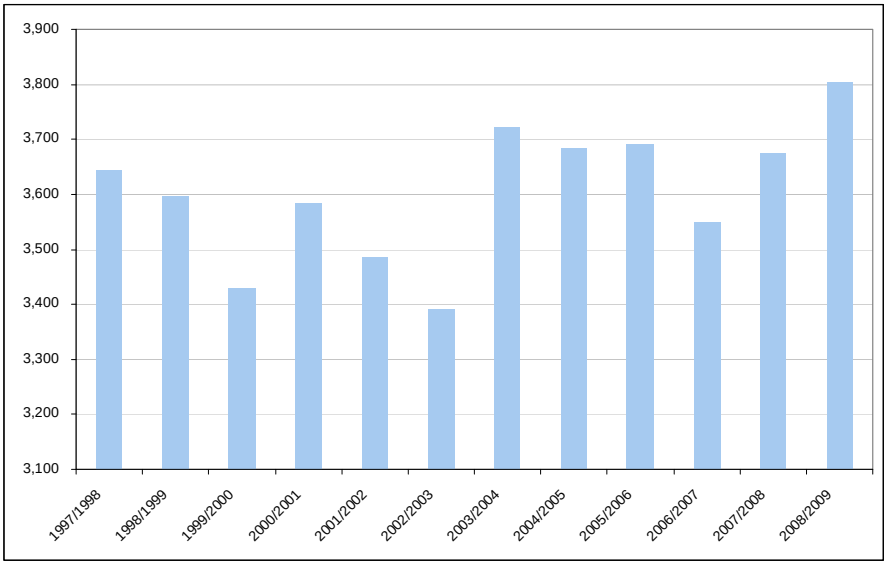
Figure 5: Enrolment funded by INAC Post-Secondary Education Program, by program type, 1997-2010



Source: INAC Post-Secondary Student Support Program (unpublished)

- Despite the historical decline in funding and enrolled First Nations students, the total graduates from the program have increased since 1997 (3,644) and is at its highest point in 2008 (3,803).

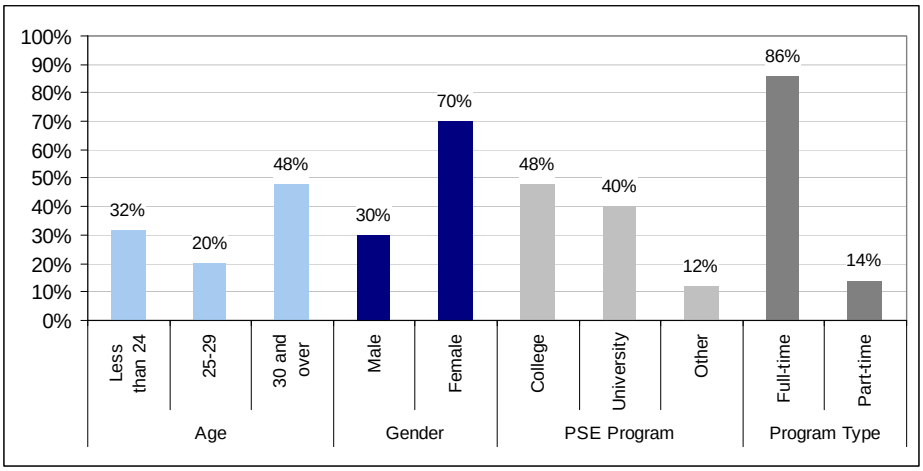
Figure 6: Graduates funded by INAC Post-Secondary Education Program, 1997-2009



Source: INAC Post-Secondary Student Support Program (unpublished)

- The characteristics of First Nations graduates have remained similar since 1997.
- First Nations graduates are:
  - Over thirty years of age (48%);
  - Female (70%);
  - College graduates (48%);
  - Full-time students (86%).

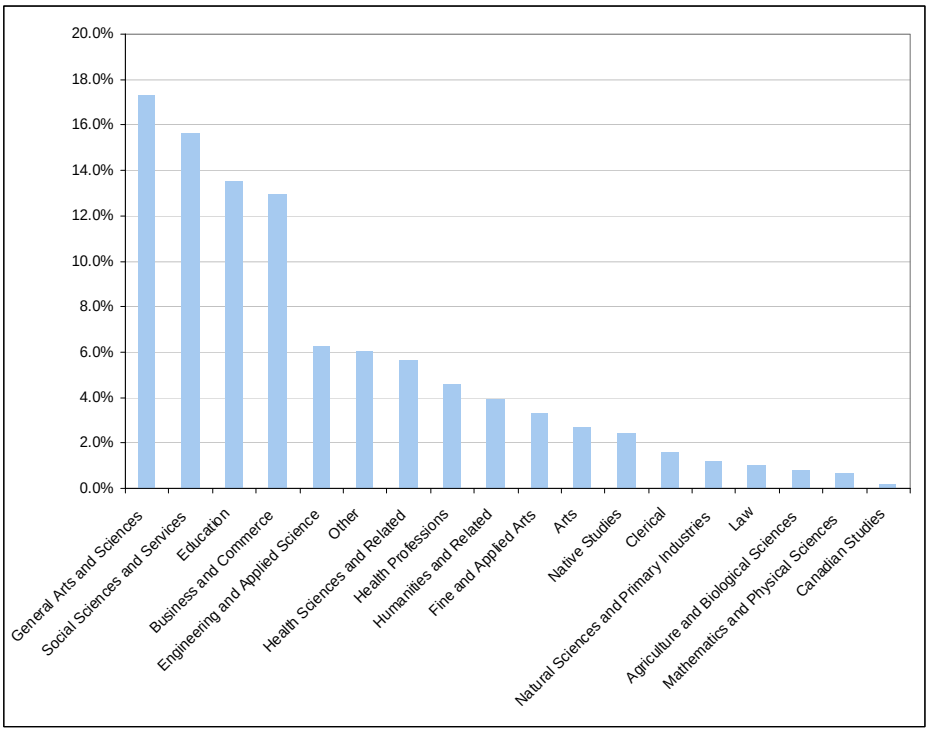
Figure 7: Characteristics of graduates funded by INAC Post-Secondary Education Program, 2008-2009



Source: INAC Post-Secondary Student Support Program (unpublished)

- PSSSP students graduate most often from the following programs of study:
  - General arts and sciences (17%);
  - Social sciences and services (15%);
  - Education (13%); and
  - Business and commerce (13%).

Figure 8: Graduates funded by INAC Post-Secondary Education Program, by program of study, 2008-09

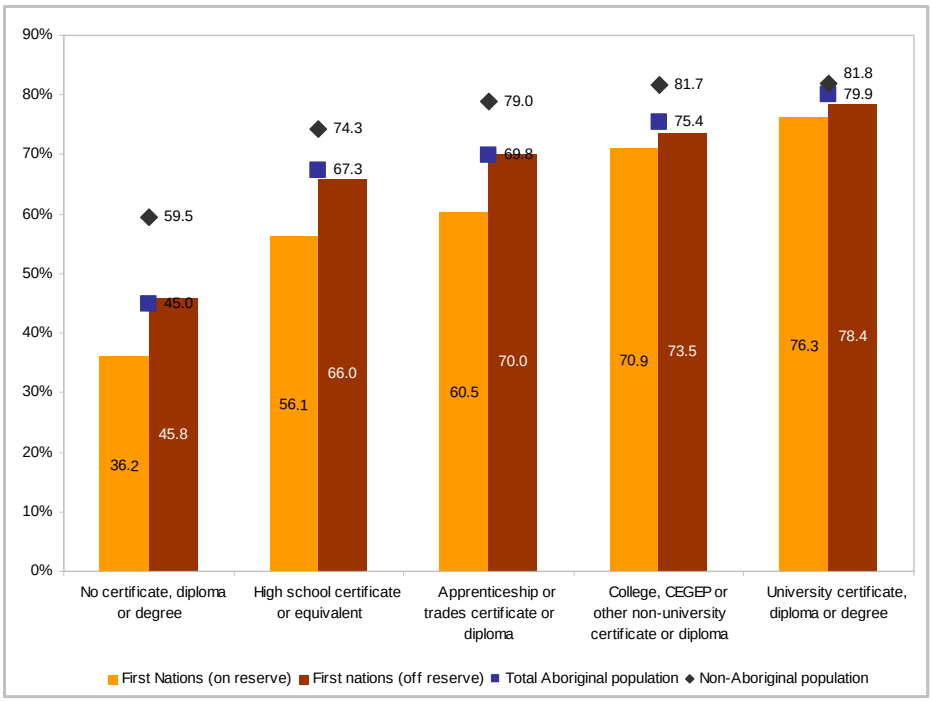


Source: INAC Post-Secondary Student Support Program (unpublished)

The importance of investing in First Nations education

- The success of First Nations people in PSE should be of vital interest to all Canadians as the country's social and economic prosperity depends on it.
- With increased education (from no education degree to a university diploma), the gap in employment rates between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people is essentially closed.

Figure 9: Employment rates by level of educational attainment, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census