

Ontario Breaking Ground in Indigenous Postsecondary Education

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Historic Legislation Supports Indigenous Institutes and Reconciliation

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[Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development](#)

Ontario is taking a historic step in recognizing the unique role Indigenous Institutes have in the province's postsecondary education system with the introduction of new legislation that, if passed, would transfer key functions and oversight to Indigenous people.

Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and David Zimmer, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, were joined by the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, chiefs, leaders of Indigenous Institutes and students from across the province in Toronto today to mark this important step on the path to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

The legislation, if passed, would recognize Indigenous Institutes as unique and complementary pillar of Ontario's postsecondary education system and support the independence and sustainability of the institutes in Ontario's system. It is also another important step on the path to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

The changes would create a framework for ongoing collaboration between Ontario and Indigenous Institutes and would support a strong, independent Indigenous Institutes sector, overseen by an Indigenous controlled and governed council. The council would, among other functions, provide quality assurance for postsecondary diplomas, certificates and degree programs offered by Indigenous Institutes.

The proposed legislation is the result of joint policy co-creation between the Indigenous Institutes, represented by the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, and the government. Indigenous Institutes and Ontario are committed to continue working in the spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect to enhance educational opportunities for Indigenous students, and to support their success in Ontario's highly skilled workforce.

Working together with Indigenous partners, and recognizing Indigenous Institutes as a part of the postsecondary education system, is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

Quick Facts

- The [legislation](#) was introduced on November 14, 2017.
- Indigenous Institutes play a unique role in Ontario's postsecondary education system by providing accessible postsecondary education and training to Indigenous students in culturally responsive learning environments.
- There are currently nine Indigenous Institutes throughout the province. They are Indigenous governed and operated institutions, which receive their mandate from Indigenous communities, and provide postsecondary education and training to Indigenous students. Indigenous Institutes currently partner with colleges and universities to offer degree, certificate, and diploma programs.

- Indigenous Institutes were created in the 1980s by political territorial organizations or by individual First Nation communities to meet the education and training demands of their communities in the absence of local and culturally appropriate alternatives.
- The Aboriginal Institutes Consortium is the industry association for the nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario.
- Approximately 1,000 learners attended Indigenous Institutes in 2016-17.
- Over the next three years, the government is investing \$56 million for Indigenous Institutes to expand their capacity and strengthen their role as an important and unique pillar in Ontario’s postsecondary education system.

Additional Resources

Quotes

“Working in partnership with Indigenous Institutes to promote Indigenous language, culture, identity and community well-being is a key step towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Ontario. This legislation goes a long way to create greater access to lifelong learning opportunities for Indigenous people so that they have the skills, training and education to succeed in Ontario’s highly skilled workforce.”

[Deb Matthews](#)

Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development



“Through this legislation, Ontario is building stronger relationships, which is an important step toward reconciliation and greater Indigenous control over the design, delivery, and governance of education programs and services. Greater awareness and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives is essential. Reconciliation begins with education.”

[David Zimmer](#)

Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation



“Today, Ontario’s historic announcement on the Indigenous Institute Act will empower more Indigenous learners to reach for their dreams and to learn in culturally and linguistically responsive First Nation environments. The proposed legislation will create an indigenous pillar in the Ontario postsecondary education system, a result of a unique policy co-creation process between our nine institutes and the Government of Ontario. In engaging in this process, together, we have set out on a meaningful and sustainable path toward reconciliation and to close the education achievement gap for our people.”

Rosie Mosquito

Chair, Aboriginal Institute Consortium, and Executive Director, Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Education and Training Institute