



Provincial Auditor's 2023 Report–Volume 1: The Ministry of Education's Strategic Plans Lack Specific Measures and Targets for Indigenous Students

Less than 50% of Indigenous students graduate Grade 12 within three years of beginning Grade 10

REGINA—June 6, 2023: In her *2023 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 3, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett assessed the Ministry of Education's processes to implement the *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK–12 Education Policy Framework* to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students. She made five recommendations.

Although the Ministry implemented several initiatives since the Framework's release in 2018 targeting Indigenous student graduation rates, these rates remained relatively unchanged between 2018–21 at 44.7% of Indigenous students (compared to 88.7% of non-Indigenous students) graduating within three years of beginning Grade 10. The persistent disparity in graduation rates, and other outcome measures like reading levels, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students makes it important for the Ministry to make concerted efforts to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

"A strong start to education develops skills needed to be successful in school and life," said Tara Clemett. "Providing Indigenous students with opportunities to cultivate a solid understanding and foundation in reading, math, and science gives students the skills and knowledge to graduate."

The Ministry needs to:

- Expand measures and targets it sets for Indigenous student academic achievement beyond graduation rates. We noted the Ministry did not report on how it plans to address the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student graduation rates in its 2021–22 annual report.
- Require enhanced reporting from school divisions on Indigenous student success related to expanded measures and targets. For example, 37% of Indigenous students in the Regina Public School Division were reading at or above Grade 3 reading levels in 2020–21 compared to the entire Grade 3 student population at 58%.
- Determine action plans to address root causes of underperforming initiatives related to Indigenous student success. For example, the Ministry gives over \$2 million a year to the Invitational Shared Services Initiative (ISSI) partnerships of which the number of partnerships remains unchanged over the four-year period at only 16 partnerships.

We found none of the goals within the Framework indicated how or when the Ministry plans to measure the Framework's success. Having measurable goals helps organizations monitor progress and decide whether changes are needed. Setting additional measures and targets that focus on improving Indigenous student achievement (such as numeracy, literacy, attendance, and Indigenous-student feedback and engagement assessments) would allow the Ministry to analyze relevant data and identify improvements to share with school divisions.

The full Provincial Auditor's *2023 Report – Volume 1* available online at auditor.sk.ca.

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- 34,000 or 19% of K–12 students self-identified as Indigenous (in 2020–21) in provincial schools.
- Tracking and reporting on Indigenous student academic achievement outcomes before Grade 7 is key.
- Saskatchewan's Indigenous population has higher rates of unemployment than their non-Indigenous counterparts—18.6% compared to 5.6% (2016 data). No high school diploma can be a significant obstacle to employment.
- The Following Their Voices (FTV) initiative impacts about 25% of Indigenous students in provincial schools, but it is not implemented sector-wide. In 2020–21, the Ministry provided \$2.18 million to schools for FTV.