



Provincial Auditor's 2023 Report–Volume 1: Saskatchewan Polytechnic's Declining Indigenous Graduation Rates Not Addressed

Indigenous Student Success Strategy lacks certain Indigenous student-specific key performance measures and targets to increase student enrolment, retention and graduation rates

REGINA—June 6, 2023: In her *2023 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 5, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett evaluated Saskatchewan Polytechnic's processes for supporting the success of Indigenous students to increase student enrolment, retention and graduation rates. She made four recommendations.

Sask Polytech uses its *2018–23 Indigenous Student Success Strategy* to improve post-secondary educational outcomes for its Indigenous students. Overall, we found Sask Polytech identified reasonable actions to address barriers (e.g., inadequate funding, family responsibilities, low awareness of training-related career paths) to Indigenous student success. It also implemented several initiatives (e.g., Indigenous Student Centre programming, application subsidies) aimed at increasing Indigenous student success, but has further areas to improve.

Sask Polytech needs to:

- Expand performance measures' targets to evaluate whether its strategies support Indigenous student success. We found there are no targets around Indigenous student enrolment and program retention rates with both measures declining since 2019.
- Conduct ongoing Indigenous community engagement and consultation to encourage enrolment and to report results on its Indigenous student successes.
- Verify Indigenous identity of staff in Indigenous-designated positions beyond using only self-identification.

- Sask Polytech has four campuses with total student enrolment in 2021–22 of 14,969, of which, 15% self-declared as Indigenous
- In 2022–23, Sask Polytech's Indigenous Strategy department had an approved budget of \$1.9 million and 16 staff of whom 81% self-declared as Indigenous
- Declining Indigenous graduates:
2018: 827 Indigenous graduates
2021: 648 Indigenous graduates
- Average income for Saskatchewan's Indigenous people was \$40,720 compared to \$55,050 for non-Indigenous people (2021 national census)

Sask Polytech has also not established thresholds for when to investigate fluctuations in key performance measures. For example, Indigenous program enrolments fell by almost 30% from 3,203 in 2019 to 2,286 in 2021. We expected Sask Polytech to document its evaluation of the reason for the decline, and establish actions to help improve enrolment. It has not done so.

"Reducing disparities in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students will support more equitable outcomes in attaining higher education," said Tara Clemett, "as well as lessen gaps in their employment earnings and overall success."

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

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