

## Chapter 3: Education—Improving Educational Outcomes for Indigenous Students

### Why It Matters

The persistent disparity in graduation rates, along with other outcome measures like reading levels, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students makes it important for the education sector to make concerted efforts to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

### Why We Did This Audit

At June 2021, 44.7% of Indigenous students (compared to 88.7% of non-Indigenous students) graduated within three years of starting Grade 10 rather than the 65% target. In provincial schools, 34,000 or 19% of K–12 students self-identified as Indigenous in 2020–21, and the population continues to grow.

### Key Facts and Figures

- Saskatchewan's Indigenous population has higher rates of unemployment than their non-Indigenous counterparts—18.6% compared to 5.6% (2016 data). Living without a high school diploma can be a significant obstacle to employment.
- Tracking and reporting on Indigenous student academic achievement outcomes before Grade 7 is key.
- 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 of Education provided \$2.18 million to schools for FTV.

### What We Found

The Ministry of Education's *Inspiring Success: First Nations and Métis PreK–12 Education Policy Framework* lacks specific measures and targets for Indigenous students to improve their educational outcomes. Indigenous student graduation rates remained relatively unchanged between 2018–21 at 45%.

We found none of the goals within the Framework indicated how or when the Ministry of Education plans to measure the Framework's success. Having measurable goals helps organizations monitor progress and decide whether changes are needed.

### Our Recommendations

The Ministry of Education needs to:

- Expand measures and targets it sets for Indigenous student academic achievement (such as numeracy, literacy, attendance, and Indigenous-student feedback and engagement assessments) beyond graduation rates to allow for broader analysis of outcome data, which can inform required change.
- Require enhanced reporting from school divisions on Indigenous student success related to expanded measures and targets.
- Determine action plans to address root causes of underperforming initiatives related to Indigenous student success. Sharing summarized reports with school divisions will also aid in identifying successful activities and barriers to implementation.

