

## **Broad public support for improved funding and outcomes for Indigenous education and training in Ontario**

(Halifax, NS) – A new study of attitudes in Ontario finds broad public support for measures to improve the funding, delivery and outcomes of education and training for Indigenous Peoples living in the Ontario. Ontarians see that failing to act on advancing reconciliation as a priority will be detrimental to achieving equality and to growing and strengthening Ontario’s economy.

These findings make the case the IIC, and our partners have been making for years: underfunding Indigenous education is not only a social issue but an economic one. The findings are being released today to coincide with the National Indigenous Education Symposium, which takes place in Halifax from October 27 to 29. The Symposium is co-hosted by the Indigenous Institutes Consortium (IIC) and Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan).

The survey of 1,408 Ontarians was conducted by the Indigenous Institutes Consortium and the non-profit Environics Institute for Survey Research. It found that:

- 84 percent say that, to advance reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people, it should be either a high or medium priority for all of Canada to ensure that Indigenous People have the same opportunities as other Canadians to access and succeed in education.
- 72 percent believe that increasing the number of Indigenous students who graduate with a college diploma or university degree would have a very or somewhat positive impact on Canada’s economy.
- Thinking about the future of the province, 85 percent say it is very or somewhat important to help Indigenous Institutes to achieve the goal of allowing Indigenous students an opportunity to learn in an environment free from discrimination.

Dr. Andrew Parkin, Executive Director of the Environics Institute, says that what stands out in the survey results is a remarkable absence of polarization of opinions. “Some Ontarians express strong support for measures to equalize educational funding and improve opportunities for Indigenous students, while others show more moderate support. But very few Ontarians are opposed to these measures or can see any downside. On the whole, this is not a controversial issue for the public. Indigenous learners should have the same opportunities for success in education as other people in Ontario.”

According to the survey, three in four Ontarians place a high or medium priority on a number of measures to improve access to education and training for Indigenous Peoples, including equitable funding for post-secondary education, in order to advance reconciliation. Specifically:

- 76% say it should be a high or medium priority to build more schools in Indigenous communities so Indigenous students can attend and graduate high school without having to leave home.
- 75% say it should be a high or medium priority to make sure post-secondary education institutions (like colleges and universities) that are run by Indigenous communities can afford to provide the same quality of education as do other post-secondary education institutions in Canada.

Most Ontarians also recognize that improvements to Indigenous education and training will have a positive impact on the Canadian economy as a whole – including measures such as providing more skills training opportunities for Indigenous workers, increasing the number of Indigenous students who graduate with a college diploma or university degree, and encouraging more Indigenous entrepreneurs to launch new businesses.

“These results suggest that the public generally sees steps to improve to Indigenous education and training as being “win-win,” benefitting not only Indigenous Peoples but the prosperity of all Canadians as well,” said Rebecca Jamieson, IIC Governance Circle Chair. “It is also notable that there is relatively strong public support, not only for improving access to education and training in general, but for measures that speak specifically of improving access within Indigenous communities and Indigenous-run post-secondary education institutions.”

The survey also found that two in three Ontarians (67%) believe that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. But many also look to governments to do more. Overall, 44 percent of Ontarians say that governments have not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous people, compared to only 18 percent who say that governments have gone too far. (About one in four (24%) think that things are about right, and 14 percent offer no opinion.) Younger adults in Ontario are more likely than they older counterparts to say that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation with Indigenous people.

“Indigenous Peoples are calling for more action to follow through on our commitment to reconciliation, but many non-Indigenous people in the province feel the same way,” noted Marsha Josephs, Executive Director of the IIC. “We take some encouragement from this expression of public support and call on the both the federal and the provincial government to take note as well. The work Indigenous Institutes do in expanding education and training opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in the province responds to the public’s interest in advancing reconciliation and laying the foundation for a more prosperous country for all.”

*The Indigenous Institutes Consortium (IIC) represents the collective and collaborative efforts of its seven Indigenous-owned and operated education and training institutions across Ontario. Since*

1994, the IIC has successfully raised the awareness and profiles of Member Indigenous Institutes, learners, and communities. For more information see: <https://iicontario.ca/>.

The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society. For more information see: <https://www.environicsinstitute.org>.

Complete survey results are available from the Environics Institute at <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects>.

- 30 -

*For more information and comment, contact:*

Marsha Josephs, Executive Director, Indigenous Institutes Consortium  
[mjosephs@iicontario.ca](mailto:mjosephs@iicontario.ca) | 519-861-7744

Dr. Andrew Parkin, Executive Director, Environics Institute for Survey Research  
[andrew.parkin@environics.ca](mailto:andrew.parkin@environics.ca) | 905-464-3853