

FOSTERING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS' POSTSECONDARY PERSEVERANCE AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

RCAAQ-2020

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS WANTING TO IMPROVE PRACTICES TO BETTER SUPPORT INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

It is critical that postsecondary institutions assume responsibility for the educational perseverance and success of Indigenous students, including establishing institutionalized support strategies and appropriate service delivery. While they can contribute to the process, Indigenous students, student associations and local Indigenous organizations should not shoulder the responsibility for creating culturally relevant tools in postsecondary institutions.

ADMISSION TO POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Admission to limited-enrolment programs

- Reserve at least one spot for Indigenous students in all university and college programs with a limited enrolment quota
- Modify application assessment criteria to take into account not only the student's academic performance, but also their personal self-growth, their motivation to pursue the program of study and their post-graduation career intentions
- Modify application assessment criteria for reserved spots in limited enrolment programs to consider students' remoteness to facilitate access for Indigenous students from remote communities

Registration

- Ensure that students who self-identify on the postsecondary institution's registration forms have systematic access to information about Indigenous student services

Financial aid

- Facilitate access to existing scholarships for Indigenous students
- Modify the criteria for financial aid so that these take Indigenous students' remoteness, loss of community references and lack of support into account



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FUNCTIONING OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

To overcome the various barriers associated with Indigenous students' lack of knowledge and understanding about how postsecondary institutions function:

- » Prepare and supervise students' arrival in postsecondary educational institutions and in the city
- » Create toolkits or guides that are specific to First Nations and Inuit students and that present all information relevant to the Quebec postsecondary system and specific to the city in which the postsecondary institution is located
- » Provide a personalized and specific welcome for new Indigenous students
- » Conduct regular follow-up with Indigenous students, particularly in their first year
- » Provide more guidance for students in flexible programs to help them orient their studies and thus avoid academic discouragement
- » Ensure Indigenous students have a clear understanding of how postsecondary institutions work, right from the start of their postsecondary education. For instance, by:
 - Presenting the institution's functioning, various services, individualized pedagogical assistance or other resource people and important places on campus
 - Explaining the pace required at CEGEP or university, the R score and other relevant topics
- » Explain how the R score works, before students begin their postsecondary studies
- » Emphasize upon students the importance of getting good grades right from the beginning of their academic careers and make them understand the negative consequences of dropping a course after the deadline
- » Develop and disseminate study planning and time management strategies for Indigenous students as they enter school
- » Implement measures to support students' success and ensure follow-up for students who have a success contract



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SERVICES FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Liaison officer position

- Hire an intervener in charge of Indigenous student services (who can also provide accompaniment to other of the school's services), who must work closely with the local Native Friendship Centre (Indigenous liaison officer hired by the postsecondary institution), and
 - Ensure sustainable funding for this position
 - Quickly integrate the position into the institution's organizational structure
 - Collaborate with local community organizations, including Native Friendship Centres, to ensure that Indigenous students have access to the services they need outside school (access to housing, community services, psychosocial services, etc.)

School staff

- Train all school staff members in cultural safety so that teachers and other employees know and understand the realities of Indigenous communities and the specificities of First Nations students
- Hire Indigenous teachers and school interveners

Services

- Ensure that all services offered to Indigenous students are culturally safe and relevant, so that these allow students to take pride in and experience their culture while living in an urban setting, by:
 - Making sure that students have access to specific educational guidance and support services (notably in their choice of fields of study and career, in balancing education and family life, and in organizing their work and study time)
- Ensure that Indigenous students are aware of adequate services that would support them in their academic careers and personal develop, and ensure their access to such services, by:
 - Providing better psychological follow-up for Indigenous students who request it, particularly via a front-line counsellor
 - Implementing procedures properly identify the needs of Indigenous students from the very first meeting, so that these students are quickly referred to the right resource and have access to appropriate follow-up

Student-parents

- Set up services specific to student-parents so that these latter may reach their full potential
- Create drop-in childcare centres in each school that are equipped with study rooms for parents
- Create Indigenous early childhood centres in cities with a high proportion of Indigenous student-parents and ensure that these centres meet the specific needs of student-parents (e.g. prolonged and regular absences according to the school calendar)

Indigenous student associations and spaces

Considering that schools are responsible for their students' growth and that "reaching one's full potential doesn't just happen in the classroom or in an academic program," postsecondary institutions should:

- Ensure that they have a place where Indigenous students can gather
- Encourage the creation of an Indigenous student association
- Recognize and support Indigenous student initiatives

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CULTURALLY SAFE AND RELEVANT APPROACHES IN THE CLASSROOM

Language barriers

- » Empress upon teachers the importance of having linguistic empathy with Indigenous students who speak French or English as a second or third language
- » Prize bilingualism and maintaining one's first language
- » Ensure the implementation of appropriate language measures in all courses and evaluations, by:
 - Offering reasonable accommodations during exams (e.g. more time to write an exam, access to additional reference materials, such as dictionaries and grammar books)
 - Checking Indigenous students' linguistic comprehension so that these latter understand the course material
 - Defining complex and specialized words (considering that some words do not have equivalents in Indigenous languages)
 - Creating dictionaries or lexicons with technical words translated into various Indigenous languages in collaboration with Indigenous experts, and ensure that these are made available

Aligning reference frameworks and program content with Indigenous knowledge and values

- » Integrate Indigenous culture and history, specific to students' nations, into CEGEP and university course content
- » Train teachers to teach Indigenous issues
- » Develop intervention programs with a greater Indigenous focus
- » Offer more internship opportunities in Indigenous communities

WORK WITH THE NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

- » Recognize the expertise of Native Friendship Centres in supporting and executing services for Indigenous postsecondary students, by:
 - Recognizing Native Friendship Centres as living environments conducive to forging the connections between students that break isolation
- » Create and maintain positive, respectful and lasting relationships with Native Friendship Centres
- » Collaborate with Native Friendship Centres to ensure the complementarity of services offered to Indigenous postsecondary students
- » Create formal partnerships, including collaboration agreements, with Native Friendship Centres to clarify the responsibilities of each in the educational success of Indigenous students

