



## Federal

Population: 1,008,955<sup>1</sup>

Number of K-12 Schools: 487<sup>2</sup>

Number of K-12 Students: ~108,995<sup>2</sup>

Number of K-12 E-Learning Programs: 4

Number of K-12 E-Learning Students: Unknown

<sup>1</sup>2016 Census data

<sup>2</sup>refers to those reporting a 2020-21 nominal roll directly to ISC.

## Governance and Regulation

Over the past four school years, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) engaged with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in response to Resolution No. 16/2016 passed by the Chiefs Council on Education (CCOE), which called upon the Government of Canada to engage in an Honourable Process to Develop Recommendations to support First Nations Education Reform. The Government of Canada responded to the Resolution by partnering with First Nations to design and implement an inclusive and comprehensive engagement process aimed at developing recommendations for strengthening First Nation student success (see First Nations Education Transformation: Engagement 2016-2018). On April 1, 2019, ISC implemented a new co-developed policy and funding approach for elementary and secondary education to better meet the needs of First Nations students on reserve and improve outcomes.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Program funding replaces the outdated proposal-based programs and provides First Nation students resident-on-reserve with funding allocations that are comparable to what students at provincial schools receive. The formulas are updated annually to account for student population growth and considerations such as teachers' salaries and benefits, remoteness and school size. Consistent with the policy proposal endorsed by the Assembly of First Nations, on top of this base funding ISC also provides additional funding enhancements that respond to the unique needs of First Nation students. This additional funding includes a common investment of \$1,500 per student per year for First Nations language and culture programming; new resources to support full-day kindergarten in First Nations schools for children aged four and five, regardless of how kindergarten is offered in the respective provincial education system; and ongoing investments in special education, over and above comparable funding levels in provincial education systems. Furthermore, ISC is working in partnership with First Nations to develop Treaty-based, regional and local education agreements that respond to the education goals and priorities set by First Nations. These agreements are co-developed at a regional level through discussion tables to reflect First Nations' needs and priorities.

It should be noted that the department, previously known as INAC, has now been divided into: the department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and the department of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). ISC now houses key First Nation services such as: Regional Operations; Child and Family Services Reform; Strategic Policy and Partnerships; First Nations and Inuit Health Branch; Lands and Economic Development; and, Education and Social Development, Programs and Partnerships. This structure is designed to position the

programs and services to more effectively collaborate with First Nations, developing and delivering holistic approaches to social, healthcare and infrastructure services for Indigenous partners. The two continue to be responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's legal obligations and commitments to Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), and for fulfilling the federal government's constitutional responsibilities in the North.

### **K-12 Distance and Online Learning Activity**

First Nations administered schools submit data to ISC so that their funding reflects local context with indicators such as:

- distance education;
- home schooled (online sourced); and
- virtual (Internet).

However, under the Education Transformation and to reflect the Principle of First Nation Control of First Nation Education, ISC respects that the sharing of data is a First Nation decision and, therefore, ceased providing program level data following the 2017-18 school year.

At least four K-12 distance/online learning programs designated as Indigenous programs have been identified: Keewaytinook Internet High School and Wahsa Distance Education Centre (Ontario), Wapaskwa Virtual Collegiate (Manitoba), and SCcyber E-learning Community (Alberta). However, only one of these four programs has submitted data for the 2020-21 school year through the Individual Program Survey.

Even when ISC provided nominal roll data, there was often a difference between the ISC reporting and the self-reporting from the identified programs. For example, during the 2017-18 school year, ISC reported there were 1,042 students registered for distance education, 63 students registered for home schooled (online sourced), and 26 students registered for virtual (Internet) – for a total of 1,131 students engaged in distance and/or online learning. That same year, according to the Individual Program Survey the Keewaytinook Internet High School enrolled 455 students, Wahsa Distance Education Centre enrolled between 850-1000 students, Wapaskwa Virtual Collegiate enrolled 646 students, and SCcyber E-learning Community enrolled 300 students – or collectively these four programs reported between 2,251 and 2,401 (or more than twice the figure provided by ISC). As this example illustrates, the exact level of participation has always been a poor estimate.

As such, no estimate of the approximate number of students engaged in distance and online learning during the 2020-21 school year is provided.

### **K-12 Blended Learning Activity**

For funding purposes, ISC does maintain indicators related to blended learning:

- 1) classroom and distance education; and
- 2) classroom and virtual (Internet).

However, since ISC no longer provides data on these indicators the most recent data shared was for the 2016-17 school year. At that time, there were 201 students registered for blended

classroom and distance education and 331 students registered for blended classroom and virtual (Internet) for a total of 531 students engaged in blended learning.

Again, given this limitation, no estimate of the approximate number of students engaged in blended learning during the 2020-21 school year is provided.

### **Remote Learning**

First Nations schools do not fall under provincial jurisdiction. While many schools may have followed the mandates and guidelines in the respective provinces in which the school is located, Indigenous Services Canada supported First Nations control of First Nations Education and, as such, the First Nation communities made their own choices regarding their protocols and delivery methods.

Federal guidance for K-12 school re-opening was based on the most current scientific information as outlined in *Community-based Measures to Mitigate the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Canada*. The Federal Government also outlined considerations for reducing risk through the use of cafeterias and libraries, as well as specific school activities such as music and physical education. The use of masks for risk reduction was encouraged, specifically for children over ten years of age and particularly where physical distancing could not be achieved. Extra considerations for students with disabilities included continued access to supports and services with extra accommodations made where necessary. Supports were also outlined for Indigenous communities who were “remote” or “isolated” specifically regarding health measures for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to mitigate risk.