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INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

Inuit Post-Secondary Education Strategy

Raising Education Attainment Rates

June 2020

About Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national Inuit representative organization in Canada. The majority of Inuit live in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 51 communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. Inuit Nunangat is a distinct geographic, political, and cultural region that encompasses nearly one third of Canada's landmass, its entire Arctic coastline, and significant offshore areas.

ITK Membership consists of the four Inuit land claims organizations that collectively represent Inuit Nunangat:

- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC)
- Makivik Corporation (Makivik)
- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI)
- Nunatsiavut Government (NG)

Voting members of the ITK Board of Directors are democratically elected by Inuit. ITK's Board of Directors are as follows:

- Chair and CEO, IRC
- President, Makivik
- President, NTI
- President, NG

In addition to voting directors, the following non-voting Permanent Participant Representatives also sit on the Board:

- President, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
- President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- President, National Inuit Youth Council

The ITK president is elected by voting members of the Board and their delegates every three years.

Vision

Canadian Inuit are prospering through unity and self-determination.

Mission

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national voice for protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada.

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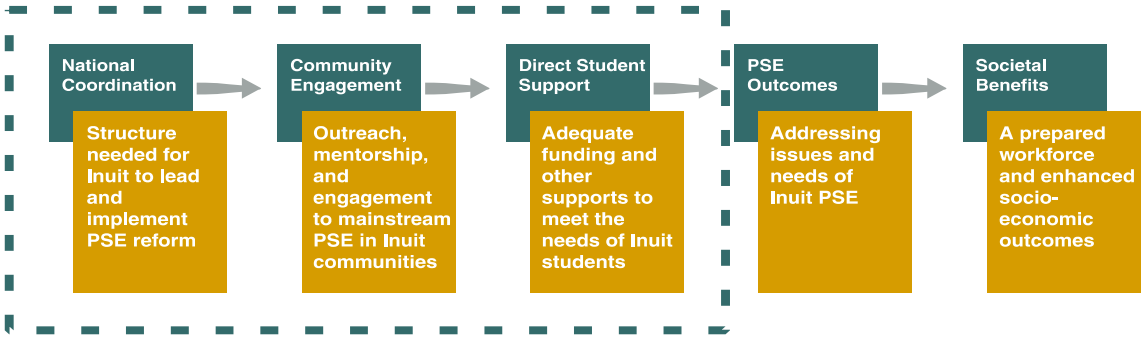
Executive Summary

Only 14% of Inuit aged 15-64, have a college diploma or university degree, which is in stark contrast to the rate of 42% among non-Indigenous Canadians. Closing this gap today would mean graduating an additional 18,200 Inuit with post-secondary certification. This Strategy takes some initial steps toward equity in post-secondary education by creating the conditions necessary to raise Inuit attainment. It sets an ambitious goal to double the number of Inuit graduates of Post-Secondary Education (PSE) programs over the next 10 years.

This strategy outlines a number of actions and objectives that contribute to enhanced Inuit PSE outcomes and improved societal benefits. This is outlined in Figure E.1.

Figure E.1. Raising Education Attainment Rates for Inuit PSE - Strategy Overview.



There are three main areas for action. The first and largest focus is to increase the direct financial support reaching Inuit students. Research and feedback have indicated that the present level of funding does not adequately meet the basic needs of most Inuit students. The average direct funding required per student needs to increase from $20,000i to $35,000 per year. This is based on:

- Feedback from Inuit students via surveys and interviews;
- Unrealistic expectations that the cost of living and travel is the same for Inuit and non-Indigenous students; and
- A greater need for other family supports, including childcare, among Inuit students. ii

Other supports are also needed for Inuit students on-campus, for Inuit PSE candidates at the community level, and for the creation of an improved foundation for student success at the high school level. A greater level of national coordination to administer, monitor, and provide Inuit leadership for this initiative is also needed. To begin to close this gap and double the number of Inuit PSE graduates over the next 10 years (compared to status quo projections), $416 million is required, $312 million of which would be direct funding for students. In addition, funding is required for:

- Indirect student supports such as academic training, counselling, health, and social supports;
- Community engagement to encourage more Inuit to enter PSE, and;
- National coordination to streamline, support, and monitor student success.

The cost, estimated at $416 million (Real $), could mean an additional $30 million in income for these Inuit students over the 10-year course of this Strategy, compared to income expected for Inuit students graduating under a status quo scenario. Over the course of their careers, the additional PSE graduates resulting from this 10-year funding Strategy have an earning potential of $3.7 billion compared with a status quo scenario.

The socio-economic benefits, including increased direct income, indirect and induced jobs, a more self-reliant Inuit economy and enhanced Inuit wellbeing are substantial and will also benefit our national economy.

Introduction

This Strategy is a result of Inuit-specific research, discussions, and input from a number of initiatives, including ITK's review of Inuit PSE and collaboration with Inuit organizations in Canada. ITK intends to continue to work with Inuit organizations as well as key stakeholders and program delivery agents to develop recommendations on a detailed business plan that will recognize regional variations to best serve a flexible implementation approach and will include a funding allocation model.

Gaps in Inuit Educational Attainment

The educational attainment gaps between Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians are significant, as shown in Figure 1. This Strategy seeks to begin to close these gaps, and demonstrate that in doing so, major socio-economic benefits can be realized almost immediately. Fewer Inuit have completed PSE, with a more pronounced gap in university than college level attainment. Closing these gaps and focusing on university level education will begin to dramatically change economic and social outcomes for these students, Inuit across Canada, and all economic sectors.

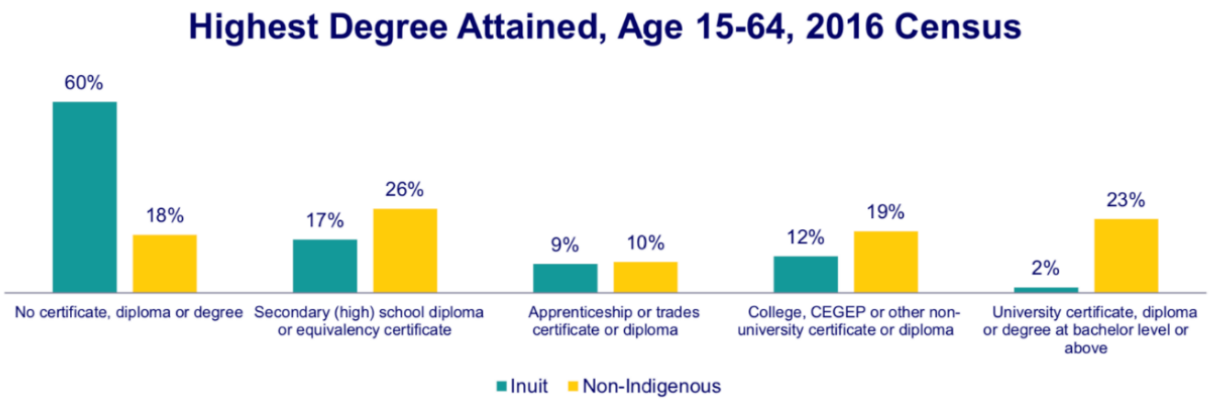


Figure 1. Gaps in Educational Attainment, Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Source: INAC Post-Secondary Education Review, 2017

As compared to non-Indigenous Canadians:

- Fewer Inuit have completed College level PSE (7% gap);
- Fewer Inuit have completed University level PSE (21% gap);
- The average Inuit employment rate is much lower (12.7% gap);
- The annual median income is $68,526 lower for Inuit than non-Indigenous workers living in Inuit Nunangat[iii]; and
- The annual median income of all Inuit in Canada is $10,102 lower than non-Indigenous workers[iv].

As more Inuit attain PSE, the gaps between Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians begin to close. Employment rates for Inuit are substantially lower (9-13%) than non-Indigenous Canadians, depending on level of education. However, rates of employment of Inuit with university degrees are almost as high as non-Indigenous Canadians, with an employment gap of only 2%.[v]

On average, PSE is a huge income differentiator:

- Inuit with any kind of PSE certification make $13,190 more per year than Inuit with a high school education vi;
- Inuit with a college level certification make $16,303 more per year than Inuit high school graduates; and;
- Inuit with a university degree make, on average, $37,526 more per year than Inuit high school graduates.

Rationale

In Canada, 42% of non-Indigenous people have a college or university degree. By contrast, only 14% of Inuit have this level of education. Raising the education attainment rates among Inuit in Canada from 14% to 42% would mean having over 18,200 more Inuit with college or university degrees.

If Inuit college and university attainment levels were on par with rates in non-Indigenous populations in Canada, it would mean an additional $586 million per year in income for Inuit. The economic benefit of PSE is enormous and the gap between Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians shows that there is a significant opportunity for improvement.

ITK's review of Inuit PSE, feedback from the Inuit Advisory Group, and outcomes of the National Gathering on Inuit PSE identified a number of major issues and barriers which inhibit Inuit PSE success that have contributed to this gap between Inuit and non-Indigenous PSE attainment. Addressing these issues will be important to closing this gap. These include:

Lack of Guidance: Inuit students are not aware of all PSE funding options and streams and how to access funding. Enhanced guidance and mentorship in the application process is required for Inuit to secure funding and set up academic courses and schedules. More guidance is also needed in relation to educational requirements for careers that are available in communities.

Lack of Infrastructure (i.e. technological): Inuit need better access to information and online courses to facilitate in-community academic training and support. This refers to basic access to technology, such as computers, internet, fax machines, scanners, and printers which are in most cases necessary when applying for PSE. Not all Inuit students have access to these tools in their homes or community. Internet access in Inuit Nunangat is also unreliable and bandwidth restrictions make downloading and uploading application forms and packages difficult for most.

Lack of Inuit-specific Support: Inuit communities, families, and individuals need improved Inuit-specific guidance, support and resources to mainstream PSE as an option after high school, demonstrate the benefits of PSE, and provide effective academic tutoring and remedial support for PSE students.[vii]

Lack of Relevant PSE: Inuit-specific and relevant curriculum is needed to retain students in PSE programs. Academic programming needs to be relevant to Inuit life in communities and urban settings. More Inuit instructors at all levels of education are needed to strengthen academic outcomes.

Substandard Academic Training: Inuit need to be better prepared to meet the academic requirements of PSE. Schools in Inuit Nunangat need the resources and support to raise pre-PSE academic expectations and standards so that students are better prepared for PSE and meet the academic qualifications and expectations of PSE programs. Without this support, students from Inuit Nunangat are often at a disadvantage and under-prepared for the workload, standards and expectations of PSE. This includes increased support for mature students who need to improve their academic requirements. Inuit also need to be better prepared to transition to life in the South, which is vastly different than their home communities. Life skills needed in PSE also need to be taught in high school to prepare students for the transition to independent life in the South or in a new community. Inuit students from Inuit Nunangat face a much larger culture shock and shift from their community to Southern cities compared to non-Indigenous students moving to urban areas for PSE. These include life skills, such as financial management, paying bills, time management, driving, and navigating public transit.

Stigma of PSE and Intergenerational Trauma: More needs to be done to address the intergenerational trauma and stigma associated with Residential Schools. PSE needs to be mainstreamed, normalized, and shown as a positive means to achieving better socio-economic outcomes for Inuit communities.

Unused Inuit Alumni: Inuit PSE alumni are a mostly untapped resource that can help to improve and inform Inuit PSE programs and future students. Alumni could be better supported to effectively share their stories and mentor Inuit youth.

Inconsistent and Inadequate Funding: Funding remains a major barrier for Inuit PSE students. More funding is needed to account for increased travel costs, a higher proportion of students with children, and the rising cost of living. This funding along with the process for its distribution needs to be equitable, consistent and accessible to all Inuit, regardless of their place of residence. Funding programs should be consistent in approach, administration, and amounts for all Inuit regions, including urban Inuit. Regional restrictions on residency and time spent living out of the region can be barriers for students that are not currently living in their land claim area or have been living outside for certain periods of time. Funding needs to flow to all Inuit regardless of where they live or how long they have been out of their land claim region.[viii]

Vision

ITK's vision is to increase PSE attainment rates and move from 14% of Inuit having a college or university degree to 42%, which is consistent with the non-Indigenous population. To begin with, over the next 10 years, we are hoping to double the number Inuit graduates that would normally complete PSE under the status quo, increase PSE graduation rates from 30% to close to 50%, with a major emphasis on increasing Inuit university level education. This is an important step to improving and strengthening socio-economic outcomes and community well-being of Inuit across Canada.

Strategy

The strategy to achieve this is built on 5 progressive tiers (Figure 2) forming the necessary building blocks to realize the desired outcomes for Inuit PSE students and subsequent benefits to society.

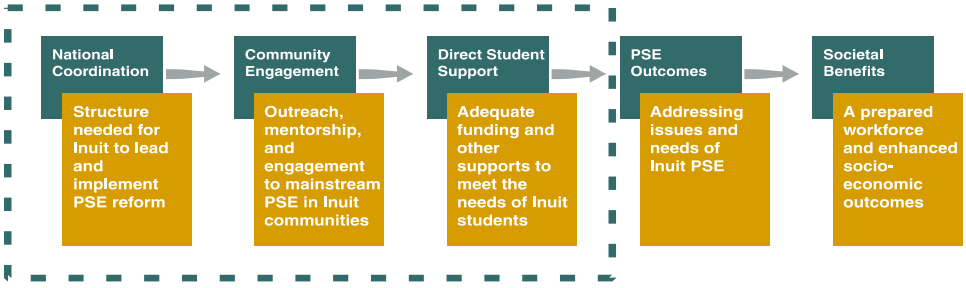


Figure 2. Raising Education Attainment Rates for Inuit PSE - Strategy Overview

It includes a number of actions and activities needed to achieve the outcomes and benefits, described in Figure 3.

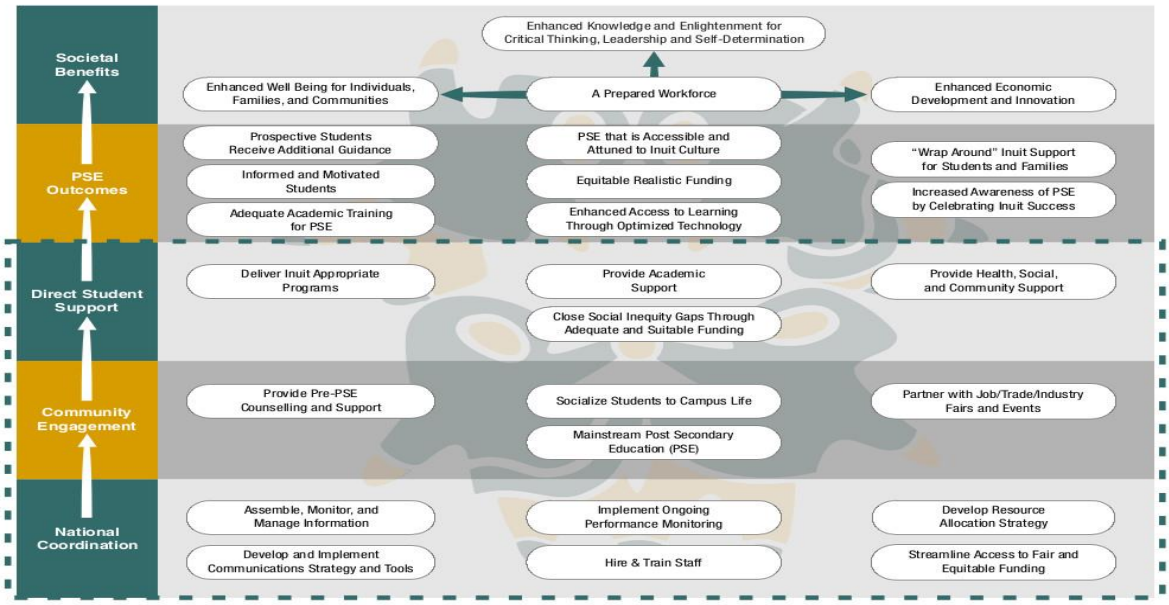


Figure 3. Raising Education Attainment Rates for Inuit PSE – Detailed Strategy Map.

General Considerations

The proposed Inuit PSE program will be accountable through the ITK governance structure. ITK works on behalf of four regional organizations that administer the comprehensive land claim agreements Inuit have negotiated with the Crown in right of Canada. The Presidents of these organizations — the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Makivik Corporation, and the Nunatsiavut Government — form the voting members of ITK's Board of Directors. Generally, ITK committees mirror and flow from Board structure.

National Coordination

Inuit need to lead the delivery of PSE support to Inuit students. Currently, PSE support is ad hoc and decentralized. A team of resources and support is required to effectively track Inuit PSE data to understand trends and issues, and to streamline the funding process and clearly communicate programs to future students. A nationally coordinated system needs to be built with a central and regional presence to administer and organize the program. There needs to be a balance between Inuit Nunangat priorities, regional differences and urban needs, as well as clear performance metrics to track success and adjust program delivery as required.

The ideal service delivery model would be directed and delivered by Inuit through established Inuit service delivery organizations whenever possible. The delivery model would also be founded on being accountable to Inuit and providing universal access for Inuit regardless of where individuals reside in Canada. It would improve coordination of related programs and strategies, minimize administrative burdens and build Inuit organizational capacity. Following the funding approval from the Federal Government, further discussion and planning will confirm the final delivery model.

Community Engagement

Actions need to be taken at the community level to provide better support to Inuit at the secondary school level, which is complementary to the current support, to prepare students for PSE life and to showcase the opportunities available to students during and after successful completion of PSE. More work needs to be done to mainstream PSE for Inuit communities. Communities, elders, and parents need to better understand the benefits of attending PSE. Negative stigma associated with present-day schools outside of the community, which are inherently linked to previous traumatic experiences with past educational institutions (e.g. residential schools), need to be reduced. A cultural shift needs to occur to encourage students to attend PSE and give them the tools they need to be successful.

Direct Student Support

The majority of resources should flow directly to individual students. And that direct funding should be universally accessible without residency restrictions. Funding levels need to be equitable and reflective of the social inequities that many Inuit students currently face. The increase in funding needs to address Inuit-specific inequities such as the rising cost of travel, child care, family support and living expenses for Inuit students, and therefore must be delivered in a distinctions-based manner. Relative to non-Indigenous students, a higher proportion of Inuit students have children and most of these students are far from home with no nearby families or relatives to help with childcare. Academic programming needs to be tailored to Inuit culture, and include increased on-campus Inuit-specific academic, health, and social supports to ensure these students are successful and complete their PSE.

Societal Benefits

The ultimate aim of increasing Inuit PSE attainment rates is to help build a prepared Inuit workforce, foster economic growth and development, and increase Inuit self-reliance.

Budget and Benefits

The budget associated with increasing and improving Inuit PSE attainment rates is significant, as are the economic and social benefits. There are several key points that lay the foundation for this budget. These include:

- A significant amount of funding is already being directed to Inuit students for PSE from the federal government. The estimated funding in this Strategy amounts to $73 million over the next 10 years, in an area that experiences a high rate of drop out and produces relatively few university graduates.
- To be successful and truly improve Inuit PSE attainment rates, significant investments need to be made to support national level coordination, outreach to communities, and other indirect supports to students on-campus.
- There will be a ramp up period of 1-2 years whereby national coordination can begin to hire, train, and deploy staff to help increase Inuit student applications and prepare students for their first year of PSE.

The socio-economic benefits of improving Inuit PSE are vast, with just one of the many indicators of success being the increase in individual employment income. There is a huge income difference that can be achieved with PSE. This is shown in Table 1.

Annual Income Difference (College vs. High school)	Annual Income Difference (University vs. High school)
$16,303	**$37,526**

Table 1. Education and Annual Income for Inuit and Non-Indigenous Canadians

Recent data from Statistics Canada[ix] show that, on average, Inuit with a college level education earn **$16,303** more per year than Inuit with a high school education. Inuit with a university degree earn even more – **$37,526** more per year, on average, than Inuit whose highest level of education is high school. The economic impact of a university or college education for Inuit is significant and is even greater than for non-Indigenous Canadians.

Increasing Enrollment and Graduation

A major focus of this Strategy is increasing the "pool" of Inuit students that might attend PSE through a greater high school graduation rate and targeted recruitment in the communities. In order to close the PSE gap, more Inuit need to attend and complete PSE. The increased community and student outreach as well as elevated profile of PSE grads within the Inuit community will, hopefully, increase the number of Inuit high school graduates.

The cost to fund these students takes into account the goal of increasing the number of university and college students, the number of years of schooling, the anticipated drop-out rate, and the increase in direct funding to each student required. This does not cover any indirect costs such as academic tutoring, counselling, health, community, or national coordination. All of these are also needed to ensure the success of this Strategy and to monitor success over such a short time frame.

Indirect Student Supports such as academic training, counselling, health, and social supports;

Community Engagement to draw more Inuit into PSE and mainstream it within Inuit culture; and

National Coordination to streamline, support, and monitor student success.

Figure 4 demonstrates the annual enhanced earning potential of the cohort of Inuit students that will complete their PSE with this proposal, versus their earning potential with a High School or equivalent level of education.

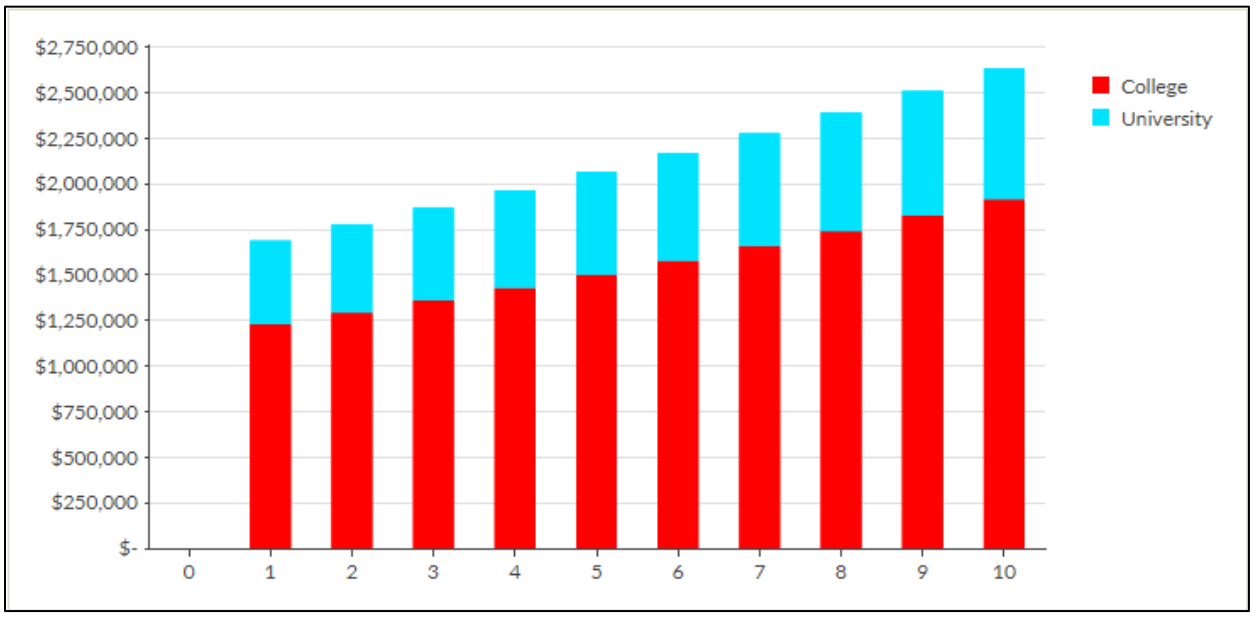


Figure 4. Annual Enhanced Earning Potential of Target Program PSE Graduates Relative to High School Graduates (Real $)

Figure 5 shows that over the course of their careers, this economic benefit is enhanced further. These 10 years of graduates have a total career income potential of $5.7B, compared to the Status Quo career income potential of $2B.

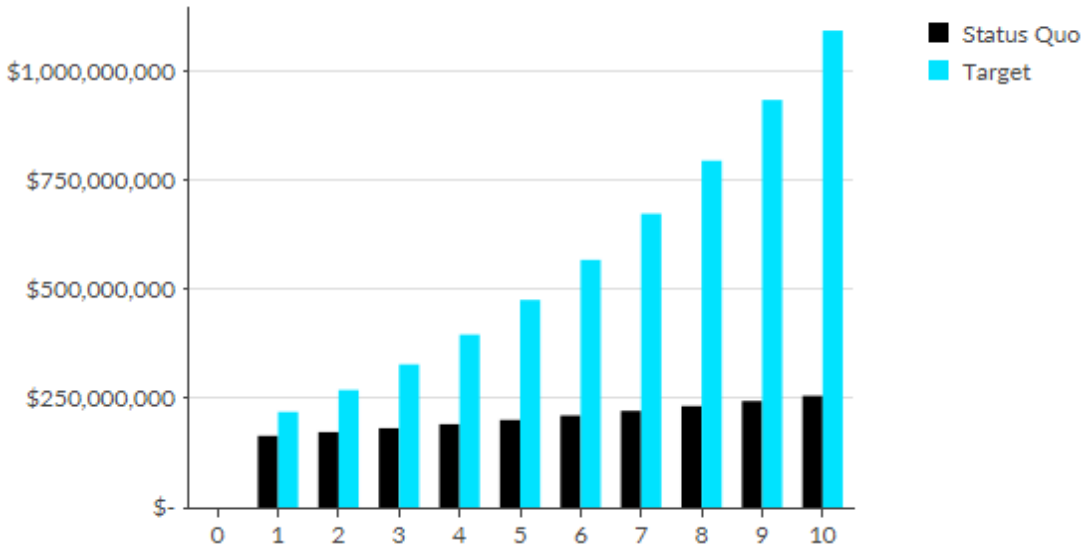


Figure 5. Career Income Potential of PSE Grads (Real $).

The economic benefits of this Strategy are immense and will endure over each of these students' careers providing indirect and induced economic effects for the communities they live in and for Inuit across Canada. This will also begin to build the foundation for improved socio-economic outcomes for all Inuit and Canadians.

Phased Implementation

This Strategy is ambitious, and seeks to vastly improve Inuit PSE rates, which will in turn result in major socio-economic benefits including, but not limited to, direct economic benefits from increased income. However, these improvements will take time and will be phased in over time. The first fiscal year will consist of hiring, organization, finer scale budgeting, and outreach. It is estimated that this first year (Year 0) will require an investment of $2 million. During this first year, as the program is communicated to Inuit students, it is anticipated that not all of the funding in the early years of the program will be utilized. This Strategy assumes that any unused funding in one year may be carried over to the next. Furthermore, with regards to existing PSE funding, it is assumed that existing funding identified for Inuit will be transferred to Inuit control and any shortfall from our projections will be funded by Canada.

Summary and Recommendation

The socio-economic benefits such as increased direct income, indirect and induced jobs, a more self-reliant Inuit economy and enhanced Inuit well-being are vast. This investment in the future of Inuit will also benefit all of Canada and our national economy.

Note

[i] $20,000 is an average estimate of direct student funding per single student per year. This amount does not reflect other types of students (i.e. students with children, mature students, students with disabilities, international students etc.). $20,000 is an average amount provided by regional funding agencies based on the number of Inuit students requesting equitable funding to cover basic needs for Inuit students to attend PSE. This amount does not currently cover basic needs such as residency for first year students, child care, safe adequate accommodations, meal plans, transportation, books and tuition.

[ii] Distinctions-based funding.

[iii] https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=01&Data=Count&SearchText=Canada&SearchType=Begins&B1=Income&C1=All&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RESGEO_ID=1

[iv] https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=01&Data=Count&SearchText=Canada&SearchType=Begins&B1=Income&C1=All&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RESGEO_ID=1

[v] INAC Post-Secondary Education Review, 2017

vi Statistics Canada, 2010. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-645-x/2015001/income-revenu-eng.htm

[vii] Inadequate jobs and careers available in communities for PSE graduates and summer students in some regions. If students can't envision a future career or job in their communities that require PSE, then some may not attend. If there are no jobs available for educated Inuit in their home communities, they have no choice but to find work outside of Inuit Nunangat.

viii In Nunavik, funding is taxed, so adding a financial burden to students receiving funding. In Nunatsiavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, funding is determined by priorities. Students living outside their region have lower priority than those that currently live in the region. Some funding agencies will not provide funding if the student has an overpayment on their account, others have leniency policies. Some funding agencies cap the years/weeks that you are entitled to funding. If you need to upgrade your secondary education to enter PSE, then you might not be able to be funded for all 4 years of your degree.

[ix] Source: Statistics Canada. 2018. Custom tabulation, based on 2016 Census of Population.

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