



**SIX NATIONS**  
P O L Y T E C H N I C

Indigenous Institutes Credential Recognition  
Final Report: ONCAT Project # I1929

Six Nations Polytechnic Inc.  
[www.snpolytechnic.com](http://www.snpolytechnic.com)  
2160 Fourth Line  
Ohsweken, Ontario  
N0A 1M0

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Purpose of the Project.....	3
Background & Context.....	3
Methodology & Outputs.....	3
Deliverables & Benefits .....	4
<b>Findings .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Ontario Universities .....	5
Barriers to Student Mobility at the University Level .....	5
SNP’s University Partners .....	7
Ontario Colleges .....	8
Barriers to Student Mobility at the College Level.....	8
SNP’s College Partners.....	9
Professional Schools in Ontario .....	10
Medical Schools .....	10
Law Schools .....	11
Business Programs.....	12
Teacher Education Programs.....	13
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Recommendations to Catalyse Structural Change .....	15
Sectoral Initiatives: Multilateral Advocacy & Awareness-Raising .....	15
Inter-Organizational Initiatives: Standardizing & Verifying Information .....	16
Recommendations to Catalyse Functional Change .....	16
Inter-Institutional Initiatives: Building & Maintaining Normative Relationships.....	16
Intra-Institutional Initiatives: Augmenting Student Mobility through Programming.....	17

# Introduction

## Purpose of the Project

Responding to barriers to educational mobility experienced by Indigenous graduates, Six Nations Polytechnic proposed to assess the recognition of its Bachelor of Arts programming and identify possible parity-catalysing measures both internally and externally. The primary goals of the project were:

- understanding the transfer experiences of BAOL students by exploring and analysing the specific hurdles to mobility they face;
- documenting the lapses and lacunae in existing credit transfer pathways out of the BAOL program;
- enhanced understanding of the Indigenous Institutes sector among Ontario universities and colleges, necessary to facilitate recognition of the credentials these postsecondary bodies are empowered to grant; and
- identification of possible internal supports and external tools that could reduce disparities in the current credit transfer system (including possible changes to BAOL curriculum)

## Background & Context

In 2015, SNP became the first Indigenous-owned and controlled institution in Canada to be granted authority, by Ministerial Consent from the Province of Ontario, to deliver a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ogwehoweh Languages (Cayuga and Mohawk). In 2018, one of the first graduates of Six Nations Polytechnic was denied consideration in the application process for the medical school at a large Ontario university. With their BAOL in hand, the applicant possessed a provincially recognized baccalaureate degree – a credential that exceeded the baseline academic requirement. In 2019, another graduate was similarly denied entry into an Education program.

After five years of accredited undergraduate programming, Six Nations Polytechnic’s status as a degree-granting body has not been either identified or built into entrance requirements or transfer pathways at other, mainstream postsecondary institutions in Ontario. This presents formidable structural barriers to educational mobility. Such barriers have developed due to the historically self-referential environment of the broader educational system; an under-appreciation of the institutional bridging accomplished by Indigenous Institutes for at least the past thirty years; and the related lack of appropriate awareness of the shifting regulatory landscape in the postsecondary sector. The *Indigenous Institutes Act* (S.O. 2017, c. 34, Sched. 20) recognized Indigenous Institutes (IIs) as unique and complementary pillar of Ontario’s postsecondary education system and supported their independence and sustainability. The passing of this legislation quickly catalysed growth in, and significant aspirations for, curricular development across the sector. This project is thus of significant, wider import and potential utility, as Indigenous Institutes across Ontario begin to offer, or further develop their programme offerings; and accordingly, as their roster of graduates grows.

## Methodology & Outputs

As part of the I1929 ONCAT BAOL contract, a comprehensive review and analysis of key aspects of the admission, transfer, and credit recognition policies and procedures of Ontario’s universities, colleges, and professional programs was conducted. This was undertaken in order to identify and document possible barriers to educational mobility faced by Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP) baccalaureate students, to consider implications for Indigenous Institutes (IIs) more broadly, and to identify possible avenues for reducing disparities in credit transfer and degree recognition.

In order to assess barriers to mobility across the three “Pillars” of the postsecondary education landscape – in particular, student movement into and out of the Indigenous Institutes sector – a review of key councils, services, and policies within provincially recognized university, college and professional school was completed. A review of straightforward omission of the third of the three “Pillars” was undertaken, along with an environmental scan of the

structural and specific (language-driven) barriers to credential recognition. This comprehensive scan looked at admission requirements and credit transfer policies at all of Ontario's colleges and universities and extended from the undergraduate to the graduate and professional program level, since student mobility relevant to ONCAT must still consider the longer-term educational goals of incoming students. The analysis similarly moved between scales, detailing findings by both institutional type (universities, colleges, and professional schools) and across the sector as a whole, in order to identify specific relationships and barriers (between IIs and particular mainstream postsecondary institutions) while also leaving room for the identification of broad-based issues within and between the types of institutional actors.

## Deliverables & Benefits

The project was intended to benefit three constituencies. Students, and Indigenous learners in particular, stand to benefit from clarified transfer processes between current (and planned) Indigenous Institute programming, and mainstream postsecondary programs. Potential and actual mainstream partners stand to benefit from clarification around the credentials indigenous Institutes are legislated to grant, and an enhanced appreciation of the approval and quality assurance processes these programmes have undergone. Finally, Ontario's postsecondary sector generally stands to benefit from increased parity between Indigenous and mainstream institutions, in terms of student mobility.

Project deliverables were developed to align data, findings (analysis), and recommendations in order to identify the potential to catalyze actual, structural change. These deliverables are twofold (inward- and outward-facing):

- a clarified credit transfer policy and practice for the BAOL program, including data-driven recommendations for changes to curriculum that provide for maximum educational mobility between SNP and Ontario's "mainstream" postsecondary institutions. This set of deliverables will be sedimented into BAOL information materials, provided to current and prospective students; as well as delivered to the Curriculum Committee at Six Nations Polytechnic, to inform program changes scheduled for the upcoming fiscal year.
- a portfolio of research findings and recommendations, shared with (a) the indigenous Institutes Consortium, for incorporation into outreach and advocacy materials and activities; (b) Research & Development Units at Six Nations Polytechnic; and (c) ONCAT, to inform potential changes to the Ontario postsecondary educational landscape to better address/embrace the emerging Indigenous Institutes sector.

This report constitutes the second deliverable, and accordingly, has been forwarded to the stakeholders identified above. Moving forward, further interactive knowledge mobilization opportunities will be sought out, to inform and sensitize institutions in the non-indigenous postsecondary education sector about Indigenous Institutes, their status and mandates, and the value and recognition (and value of recognition) of their credentials.

Note that SNP is developing an implementation plan for the widespread mobilization of the many recommendations arising from this final report (pp. 15-17 of this document).

## Findings

The analysis begins by examining the inter-institutional and, even more specifically, the individual institutional level of the issue, where specific barriers and challenges occur that most directly impact the actual learner. Accordingly, the following section utilizes data collected through institutional websites to identify trends and exceptions in Ontario’s postsecondary admission, transfer, pathway and application policies and processes.

### Ontario Universities

Since 1962 Ontario’s universities have organized themselves into the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). Membership in the COU includes all twenty publicly funded and recognized provincial universities, alongside one associate member (the Royal Military College of Canada). The Council distills and presents a collective ‘voice’ of these institutions to broadly promote education, research and innovation. The Council also runs the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC), which functions as an information hub and processing centre for all of the province’s universities, collecting and forwarding applications for undergraduate, professional, and some graduate programs. This council plays a large role, therefore, in the function and form of university-level postsecondary studies within Ontario. The Council of Ontario Universities has a Committee dedicated to “Relations with Other Postsecondary Institutes.”

### Barriers to Student Mobility at the University Level

#### *Barriers in University Admissions & Transfer Language*

Across all 20 recognized Ontario universities identified on the COU website, institution-specific admission requirements and credit transfer policies were assessed for their use of restrictive language in recognizing prior postsecondary credentials. Various programs were examined, bringing the total number of examined entities to forty-one. In the table below (Table 1), Ontario universities are classified according to three categories of language: open, closed, and mixed. “Open” describes language referencing “accredited postsecondary” or “university-level studies.” “Closed” describes language limiting admission/transfer criteria to students holding credentials issued by “an accredited university” or “recognized university.” “Mixed” refers to inconsistencies in deploying “open” and “closed” language in admission requirements and transfer credit policies.

Table 1: Barriers in University Admissions & Transfer Language

Institution (program level)	Admission & Transfer Language	Institution (program level)	Admission & Transfer Language	Institution (program level)	Admission & Transfer Language
Algoma (U) <sup>1</sup>	Open	Nipissing (U)	Open	Trent (U)	closed
Brock (U)	Closed	Nipissing (G)	Open	Trent (G)	open
Brock (G)	Closed	OCAD (U)	Open	Waterloo (U)	open
Carleton (U)	Open	OCAD (G)	Open	Waterloo (G)	closed
Carleton (G)	Open	Ontario Tech (U)	Open	Windsor (U)	open
Guelph (U)	Closed	Ottawa (U)	Closed	Windsor (G)	open
Guelph (G)	Open	Ottawa (G)	Open	Western (U)	open
Lakehead (U)	Mixed	Queen’s (U)	Mixed	Western (G)	mixed
Lakehead (G)	Open	Queen’s (G)	Closed	Wilfred Laurier (U)	open
Laurentian (U)	Open	Ryerson (U)	Open	Wilfred Laurier (G)	closed
Laurentian (G)	Open	Ryerson (G)	Open	York (U)	closed

<sup>1</sup> “U” denotes undergraduate programs; “G” denotes graduate programs.

Institution (program level)	Admission & Transfer Language	Institution (program level)	Admission & Transfer Language	Institution (program level)	Admission & Transfer Language
McMaster (U)	Open	Toronto (U)	Mixed	York (G)	open
McMaster (G)	Open	Toronto (G)	Closed		

Fifteen out of the forty-one university programs identified had language that was either “closed” or “mixed.” This means that roughly 37% of undergraduate and graduate programs at public universities deploy restrictive language within their admission and transfer policies, which serves to create or reinforce the idea that Indigenous Institute-granted degrees are not valid postsecondary credentials.

Having said this, even “open” language use within admission and transfer policies merits scrutiny, as it actually describes a discretionary process within which admissions committees and credit transfer bodies determine the equivalency/acceptability of previous coursework. This discretionary right of university committees is present throughout most admissions and transfer policies and is therefore normative in the sector. Such discretion is meant to enable an important function: assuring that students possess the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed within a given program. The problem of discretion occurs, however, when Indigenous Institutes are incorrectly identified as less-rigorous education providers whose standards do not meet the recognition threshold automatically conferred upon “mainstream” postsecondary institutions – as already demonstrated in the two cases that catalyzed this project.

Finally, OUAC recognizes Indigenous Institutes as valid credential-granting bodies from which a student may hold a previous degree (within the “academic background” section of their online application form). However, while IIs are enumerated within the application form, they are not recognized anywhere else on the portal or broader website and are only specified within the application as “Postsecondary/Other (home school, bible college, etc.)” The absence of and non-articulation of Indigenous Institutes *as Indigenous Institutes* levies not only structural (perceptual) but also individual (cognitive and emotional) obstacles to II learners, even where they may still enjoy de facto mobility through the online application.

*Barriers in Enumerated Lists of Recognized Postsecondary Providers*

Given the fact that all of the Ontario undergraduate programs receive applications from the Ontario University Admissions Centre, the barriers identified, above, constitute the major structural challenge. At the graduate level, however, the admissions process becomes less uniform, as some programs use OUAC while others do not. The table below (Table 2) reviews all Ontario university graduate program application processes, whether OUAC-based or standalone, to locate actual or potential structural barriers to the admission of II graduates. The consideration was whether or not SNP (as the only II currently empowered to independently grant undergraduate degrees) is identified as an institutional option under the applicant’s “academic background.”

Table 2: barriers in Enumerated Lists of Recognized Postsecondary Providers

Graduate Institution	Pathway/Portal	SNP as Enumerated Option?	Additional Considerations
Brock	OUAC	yes	
Carleton	standalone	yes	
Lakehead	standalone	no	manual entry possible
Laurentian	OUAC	yes	
McMaster	standalone	no	manual entry possible
Nipissing	OUAC	yes	
OCAD	standalone	no	“not recognized” error message when SNP entered manually
Ontario Tech	OUAC	yes	

Graduate Institution	Pathway/Portal	SNP as Enumerated Option?	Additional Considerations
Queen’s	standalone	no	manual entry possible
Ryerson	OUAC	yes	
Trent	OUAC	yes	
Guelph	OUAC	yes	
Ottawa	OUAC	yes	
Toronto	standalone	no	manual entry possible
Waterloo	OUAC	yes	
Windsor	standalone	no	manual entry possible
Western	standalone	no	manual entry possible
Wilfred Laurier	OUAC	yes	
York	standalone	no	manual entry possible

Technically, since applicants have the option of writing in the name of their prior school, there are no formal structural barriers at play at the graduate application level – other than the inability to even manually enter SNP as the granter of prior postsecondary credentials when applying to OCAD University. Nevertheless, the non-inclusion of Six Nations Polytechnic in the enumerated list of recognized postsecondary providers levies the same individual barrier described in the prior section, while supporting de facto structural inequality by perpetuating and normalizing bias against Indigenous Institutes. Almost half (42%) of the surveyed application forms did not provide SNP as an enumerated option. Perhaps most surprising is the non-enumeration of SNP by formal institutional partners, including McMaster University, with whom Six Nations Polytechnic has had an articulation agreement since 1993 (see subsequent section of this report, below). Finally, even where Indigenous Institutes are an enumerated option there still exists potential ‘downstream’ structural bias, as applications move through the discretionary stages of the admissions process.

### SNP’s University Partners

The University Consortium First Year Program at Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP), entering its 27<sup>th</sup> year of delivery,<sup>2</sup> was established to enable local students to take the inaugural year of their postsecondary studies within the community at Six Nations of the Grand River. Students completing UP are meant to be well-positioned for entry into a second year of university-level studies at any one of the given partner postsecondary institutions. Partners to the “University Program” (UP) at SNP are Brock University, the University of Guelph, McMaster University, the University of Waterloo, the University of Western Ontario, and Wilfrid Laurier University.

The program facilitates obtaining up to five full credits on a full or part-time basis, transferrable to an undergraduate degree program offered by the above-listed universities. UP has a high completion rate, both during studies at Six Nations Polytechnic and after transfer to a partner institution. It is open to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, with a curriculum core in the social sciences. Beyond this Consortium there is only one other articulation agreement, through which SNP offers a Master of Professional Education degree in partnership with the University of Western Ontario.

Mention of the Consortium Agreement is uneven across partners’ websites. McMaster, for instance, has a short blurb on the admission of “Continuing Students” from SNP within its *Academic Calendar*, under “Admission Requirements:” “McMaster University, along with four other universities, partnered with Six Nations Polytechnic to offer university courses in the community of Six Nations. The courses offered are eligible for transfer credit at any of the universities within the consortium. For more information please contact the [sic] Indigenous Student Services.”<sup>3</sup> (Note that this description is incorrect, as there are six Consortium university partners, indicating a lack

<sup>2</sup> The Native University Program, the precursor to the current UP, was initiated in 1993.

<sup>3</sup> <https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=38&navoid=8066>.

of engagement in the currency and consistency of messaging.) On the other hand, the University of Guelph, through the Office of the Registrar, has an entire webpage dedicated to outlining its articulated agreement with SNP for the upcoming admissions year. This webpage identifies the specific ONCAT pathways code, outlines the general guidelines of the agreement/program, and provides a course-by-course breakdown of how SNP's first year consortium courses transfer to the University of Guelph's first year Bachelor of Arts degree program.<sup>4</sup> Other Consortium members' websites further exemplify the inconsistency of presence and presentation.

For example, Brock does not provide any Consortium information on its website, although its "Aboriginal Student Service" page does identify SNP as one of its "Partners," with whom it "works closely with and provides support for." Alternatively, the University of Waterloo succinctly identifies the University Consortium Agreement on its "Undergraduate Programs: College to University Pathways" page; and Wilfred Laurier identifies the Consortium program under both its "Applying as an Indigenous Student" and "Joint Academic Partnerships" pages. Interestingly, while the M.PEd. agreement does occupy prominent space on Western's website, the Consortium Agreement is nowhere to be found.

Digging deeper, other barriers arise. McMaster University's informal online transfer credit search tool, while it provides SNP as an enumerated option, yields no results when Six Nations Polytechnic is actually selected. There is little-to-no presence of SNP or the Consortium agreement readily available on the institutional website (other than the above-quoted, incorrect description on the site for the Faculty of Science). While this might be an oversight by McMaster's administration, further clarity and presence of this agreement and availability of the transfer pathways it provides to SNP graduates would only help to improve broader understandings of IIs and their educational validity within the postsecondary sector while also providing SNP-graduates with greater certainty and clarity in the pursuit of their further education.

## Ontario Colleges

Like universities, the province's colleges have a membership organization: Colleges Ontario, which positions itself as "the advocacy voice" for all such institutes. Similarly, parallel to OUAC is the Ontario Colleges Application Service (OCAS), acting as an information hub and centralized application service. In contrast to OUAC, Indigenous Institutes are not an enumerated option on OCAS' standardized online college application form, although there is the option to manually enter an institution under the applicant's "academic background." Noteworthy here is the fact that this manual entry forces applicants to identify whether the non-enumerated institution is a "university" or a "college;" there is no third option, which serves to completely eliminate the legislated provincial "Third Pillar" of Indigenous Institutes. While applicants can technically identify the II they attended as either a "university" or a "college" by reference to the credential they earned (for example, a B.A. or a Diploma), this does not reduce or equalize the effect of the false binary.

## Barriers to Student Mobility at the College Level

### *Barriers in College Admissions & Transfer Language*

Admission requirements and policies at the Ontario college level tend not to be inherently restrictive as they generally require an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent or follow MCU standards in broadly requiring a "college diploma" or other college credential for more advanced study. Where the restrictive language tends to surface is in transfer credit policies, in language suggestive of barriers to Indigenous Institute graduates. Certain colleges, for example, identify that they will only consider/recognize credits from "public colleges and universities." Again, this erases IIs as the "Third Pillar" of the provincial postsecondary landscape, as established by the *Indigenous Institutes Act*.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://admission.uoguelph.ca/articulation/sixnations>.



Across all 24 Ontario colleges identified on the OCAS website, institution-specific admission requirements and credit transfer policies were assessed for their use of restrictive language in recognizing prior postsecondary credentials. In the table below (Table 3), Ontario colleges are classified according to three categories of language: open, closed, and mixed. “Open” describes language referencing “college/university course(s)/degree(s).” “Mixed” refers to inconsistencies in deploying “open” and “closed” language in admission requirements and transfer credit policies. “Mixed-closed” refers to vagaries in language resulting in an overall prohibitive stance toward Indigenous Institutes.

Table 3: Barriers in College Admissions & Transfer Language

Institution	Admission & Transfer Language	Institution	Admission & Transfer Language
Algonquin	open	Georgian	mixed
Cambrian	mixed-closed	Humber	open
Canadore	open	Lambton	open
Centennial	open	Loyalist	open
Boréal	open	Mohawk	open
Cité Collégiale	open	Niagara	open
Conestoga	mixed	Northern	mixed-closed
Confederation	open	Sault	open
Durham	mixed-closed	Seneca	open
Fanshawe	open	Sheridan	open
Fleming	open	St. Clair	open
George Brown	open	St. Lawrence	mixed

Six out of twenty-four Ontario colleges – fully a quarter – use mixed or mixed-closed language within or between their admission requirements and credit transfer policies. In half of these cases, restrictive language tended toward closed and more clearly restrictive language. In cases where language was identified as “open,” however, there was not always a specific, institutional transfer policy. In many cases applicants on institution-specific sites are directed to refer to ONTransfer.ca for further information, suggesting that such institutions follow ONTransfer.ca guidelines for credit transfer consideration. This is a positive development since ONtransfer.ca recognizes Indigenous Institutes as valid postsecondary providers for the purposes of mapping/selecting transfer pathways to colleges and universities. Given the lack of institutional-specific approaches to transfers from these colleges, and the role of discretion within credit transfer decisions, there remains cause for concern. While open language is provided through ONTransfer.ca, actual decision-making procedures may exhibit bias against the recognition of credentials granted through Indigenous Institutes.

### *Barriers in Enumerated Lists of Recognized Postsecondary Providers*

All Ontario college applications are completed through the centralized ontariocolleges.ca website, which is itself administrated by OCAS. No Indigenous Institutes are recognized within the enumerated list of schools from which applicants can indicate an earned postsecondary credential. While applicants can manually input the name of the Indigenous Institute they attended, this option is easily missed by appearing only at the bottom of a pop-up window. This same sort of structural bias was also found within university applications, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and can be cogently linked to a perception of reduced legitimacy.

### SNP’s College Partners

Six Nations Polytechnic has a number of articulation agreements with Ontario colleges, wherein local programming earns graduates a recognized credential granted by a partner institution. This includes a variety of certificates and diplomas in a wide range of fields. While these partnership programs are not directly relevant to transfer or pathway development between SNP and other postsecondary institutions, as they fall under the partner’s purview, they do indirectly impact Six Nations Polytechnic and its learners by inflecting status and capacity – either supporting II marginalization in the sector, or supporting their full recognition and the normalization of the “Third Pillar” of

postsecondary education in Ontario. Consideration of these pathways also informs planning at SNP as we prepare to launch college-side signature programs – an accreditation pathway made rhetorically available through the *Indigenous Institutes Act*'s creation of the Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council, a dedicated accreditation body.

Six Nations Polytechnic's major college partners are Mohawk, Canadore and Niagara. A review of all three colleges' websites was conducted in order to determine how well these partnership programs were presented to potential applicants. Partnership information is not readily available on the websites of either Niagara College or Canadore college; further, the dedicated search engine on each site returns, on a query for "Six Nations Polytechnic," only a single, dated, self-published article on the creation of the partnership. For Canadore this link is active and leads directly to the 2017 article. For Niagara this link, while technically active, leads back to the homepage instead of to the article itself. By way of contrast, Mohawk College clearly and cogently presented the partnership to prospective students, including elucidating program options and the application process; however, these were not easily accessible from the homepage, but instead appears four links deep (Main Page → Indigenous Students → Programs & Services → Indigenous Programs). The SNP partnership is not integrated into the options available to all students, which would help to normalize and equalize Indigenous Institutes programming within the sectoral landscape. Further, the specific webpage identifying the SNP partnership, programs, and registration information was only found through inputting "Six Nations Polytechnic" into the website's dedicated search engine.

## Professional Schools in Ontario

### Medical Schools

Medical school applications are centrally organized through the Ontario Medical School Application Service (OMSAS), available through OUAC. Noteworthy is the fact that OMSAS identifies specific admissions information for Indigenous applicants, indicative of a recognition of the need to support Indigenous students as students per se, and further, as representatives of Indigenous communities (as Indigenous applicants overwhelmingly indicate a goal of returning to service their communities of origin or affiliation). At the provincial level this recognition takes the form of a declaratory statement of collective intent; at the institutional level it takes the shape of so-called 'positive discrimination' (or 'affirmative action') type policies geared toward increasing Indigenous representation in the student body and roster of credentialled graduates. Importantly, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), in registering doctors, does not place limitations of the institutional source of a domestic applicant's undergraduate degree. The following takes stock of Ontario's medical school admission requirements, language, and Indigenous-applicant policies to determine what real and potential barriers exist for Indigenous Institutes students, graduands, and alumni.

#### *Entry (Credential) Requirements & Restrictive Language in Ontario Medical School Applications*

Beyond the generally elite orientation of law and medical school entry (i.e., the need for very high grades in previous studies, high scores on standardized tests like the LSAT and MCAT, etc.), institution-specific admissions requirements and language do not appear particularly restrictive – in other words, they do not seem to present further barriers for applicants.

Table 4: Entry (Credential) Requirements & Restrictive Language in Ontario Medical School Applications

School	Prior Degree/Credits Required	Restrictive Language Use?
DeGroote (McMaster)	15 full undergraduate credits	no
Northern	4-year undergraduate degree	no
Ottawa	3 years of full-time undergraduate studies	no
Queen's	15 full undergraduate credits	no
Toronto	15 full undergraduate credits	no

School	Prior Degree/Credits Required	Restrictive Language Use?
Schulich (Western)	4-year degree or equivalent	no

There are six provincial medical schools. Within this set, Northern and Schulich (Western) appear to have the most restrictive admissions criteria in that they require completion of a 4-year (honours) undergraduate degree; as this credential is not currently offered at any Indigenous Institute, it effectively shuts their students out of the applicant pool completely. In determining the implications of institution-level admissions policies, a key finding is that these do not use closed/restrictive language in describing postsecondary educational providers per se. There is no admission requirement, for instance, that earned credits or degrees come from a “recognized university.”

Each Ontario medical school has a specific policy geared toward supporting Indigenous student enrolment. As McMaster University’s DeGroot School of Medicine states, for instance, their “Facilitated Indigenous Admissions Program (FIAP)” is “intended to provide equitable access to Indigenous applicants [in recognition that Indigenous learners] face specific barriers or challenges when pursuing higher education.” Two-thirds of the province’s medical schools set aside a certain number of seats within their incoming cohort for self-identified Indigenous applicants. Note, however that as just shy of 5% of the Canadian population is Indigenous, and Indigenous communities are seriously underserved in terms of medical facilities and practitioners, these quotas not only fail to offset structural inequalities, with the exception of Northern Ontario Medical School, they do not even match the demographics of the country. The use of additional documents (usually in the form of personal statements and community-based reference letters) is a uniform feature of the sector, meant to unlock affirmative/discretionary considerations in the admissions process.

Table 5: Indigenous Applicant Specifications in Medical School Applications

Institution	Specifications for Indigenous Applicants
DeGroot (McMaster)	additional documents required; no quota
Northern	additional documents required; quota of 4/64 seats (6.2%)
Ottawa	additional documents required; quota of 7/169 seats (4.1%)
Queen’s	additional documents required; quota of 4/100 seats (4.0%)
Toronto	additional documents required; no quota
Schulich (Western)	additional documents required; quota of 5/171 seats (2.9%)

While there is no formal closed/restrictive application language in use at Ontario’s medical schools, the discretionary power of admissions committees within the professional school sector is exceptionally strong and highly opaque. The inspiration for this project was, after all, the refusal of the DeGroot School of Medicine to recognize the validity of an Indigenous Institute-granted baccalaureate – a counterintuitive and concerning outcome considering McMaster’s long history of partnership with Six Nations Polytechnic and current membership in the University Consortium.

## Law Schools

Law school applications are centrally organized through the Ontario Law School Application Service (OLSAS) which, as with OMSAS, are available through OUAC. Other factors also parallel medical school: each law school is responsible for making its own admission decisions, and OLSAS identifies specific admissions information for Indigenous applicants. and “positive discrimination” are in place in recognition of the need to ameliorate Indigenous underrepresentation. The requirements for being called to the Ontario bar, as identified by the Law Society of Ontario, neither speak to nor place limitations upon the source of undergraduate degree requirements, mirroring the position of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO).

## Entry (Credential) Requirements & Restrictive Language in Ontario Law School Applications

As with medical school, the competitiveness of law school admissions has produced an elite and restrictive character to the process, requiring high grades and scores across multiple requirements. The following considers the specific admission requirements and language use of the eight, OLSAS-identified law schools in the province, to determine if there are any real or potential challenges specific to students, graduands, and alumni of Indigenous Institutes. In the table below, language use within admission requirement policies is identified as either “open,” and so non-restrictive in that broad and inclusive terms like “postsecondary institution” are used; or “closed,” and restrictive in that narrowly defined and exclusive terms like “recognized university” are used to describe degree requirements.

Table 6: Entry (Credential) Requirements & Restrictive Language in Ontario Law School Applications

Institution	Prior Degree/Credit Required	Admissions Language
Bora Laskin (Lakehead)	3 years of undergraduate study	closed
Osgoode Hall (York)	3 years of undergraduate study	closed
Ottawa	unspecified – some undergraduate study required	open
Queen’s	3 years of undergraduate study	open
Ryerson	3 years of undergraduate study (some exceptions)	open
Toronto	3 full-time years of undergraduate study	closed
Western	3 full-time years of undergraduate study	open
Windsor	unspecified – some undergraduate study required	open

While not a unanimous requirement, three years of undergraduate study is relatively standardized across law school applications. Three out of the eight, or 38% of Ontario law schools did show restrictive language use, suggesting their admission committees would be unwilling to recognize the validity of Indigenous Institutes’ credentials and programs of study. “Recognized universities” is typically used to refer to OUC member institutions and their equivalents in other Canadian provinces, as well as international universities. Indigenous Institutes are neither enumerated within this category nor afforded their own category. As with medical schools, Ontario law schools also tend to have specific considerations for Indigenous applicants; yet no Ontario-based law schools have publicly set aside a specific number or percentage of cohort seats. Generally, applications for self-identified Indigenous candidates require documented proof of Indigenous ancestry and personal statements of intent that speak to their community engagement and experiences. Most law schools also clearly identify that conditional offers of acceptance may be provided, under which applicants are required to complete a summer intensive program, the *Wiyasiwewin Mikiwahp Native Law Centre Summer Program*, offered annually by the University of Saskatchewan. While these are positive and productive measures there is still a structural disservice to applicants whose intended, in-progress, or completed degree studies involve attending an Indigenous Institute.

## Business Programs

Unlike law and medical schools, business schools in Ontario are not organized through any membership organization, nor are their applications centrally processed. Instead, policies for applications, admissions, and credit transfer are the sole responsibility of individual school administrations. There are also no broad-based efforts to, or recognition of a need for, supports for Indigenous applicants within admission processes. Surveying the fourteen Canadian Marketing Association-recognized Ontario business schools offer MBA programs, the table below (Table 7) categorizes MBA admissions language as being either “open,” using language inclusive of all postsecondary institutions, or “closed,” referencing only “recognized universities” and/or “recognized colleges.”

Table 7: Restrictive Language Use in Ontario Business School Admissions Policies

Institution	Admissions Language	Institution	Admissions Language
Goodman School (Brock)	open	Gordon S. Lang School (Guelph)	closed
Eric Sprott School (Carleton)	open	Telfer School (Ottawa)	open
Lakehead	open	Rotman School (Toronto)	closed
Laurentian	closed	Richard Ivey School (Western)	open
Michael G. DeGroot School (McMaster)	open	Lazaridis School (Wilfred Laurier)	closed
Smith School (Queen's)	closed	Shulich School (York)	open
Ted Rogers School (Ryerson)	open	Odetta School (Windsor)	open

With six of the fourteen surveyed schools using restrictive admissions language, roughly thirty-six percent of MBA programs feature admissions language that poses at least a potential barrier to Indigenous Institute graduates. These findings are strikingly similar to those on undergraduate admissions and transfer policies, suggesting that restrictive requisite credential/course language is an issue across many university and professional programs in Ontario.

## Teacher Education Programs

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) regulates the entire provincial primary and secondary teaching profession, setting standards and accrediting teacher education programs. Admissions to teacher education programs are administered through the Teacher Education Application Service (TEAS) through the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC), in association with "recognized" faculties of education (that is, faculties recognized through OCT). While TEAS and OUAC are separate from the Ontario College of Teachers, OCT's broad reach in professional oversight means that their standards and policies have an important impact on admissions considerations of individual schools, as well as on the development and delivery of programs. Under the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) *Registration Guide: Requirements for Becoming a Teacher of General Education in Ontario Including Multi-Session Programs*, one of the academic requirements for certification, separate from the completion of a teacher education program, is the completion of a prior postsecondary degree from "an accredited institution acceptable to the College." The Ontario College of Teachers has historically been unwilling to recognize Indigenous Institutes as legitimate, accredited institutions, and has interpreted the *Indigenous Institutes Act* as not applying to the OCT's operations or to teacher education in the province – this despite the need for, growth in, and aspirations of a significant number of Indigenous students to earn teaching credentials in order to bring those specific skills and endorsements back to their home communities. This has directly affected Six Nations Polytechnic graduates and SNP programming. Notably, unlike the law and medical school applications services, within TEAS there are no apparent special considerations afforded applicants who self-identify as Indigenous.

This apparently blanket non-recognition should not preclude an examination of the language used in establishing entry requirements for teacher education programs, in order to render the scale/scope of the current project as universal as possible. The following table (Table 8) identifies admission requirement language as either "open," acceptable credentials being identified as "accredited postsecondary" or "university level studies;" "closed," referencing required credentials as from a "recognized university" or "granted by Universities of Canada members;" or "mixed," where the language employed vacillates between "open" and "closed" descriptors.

Table 8: Barriers in Ontario Teacher Education Programs Admissions & Transfer Language

Faculty	Core Phrase	Admissions Language
Brock	"an acceptable university or other postsecondary institution"	open
Lakehead	"recognized undergraduate degree"	open
Laurentian	"an undergraduate degree"	open
Nipissing	"recognized undergraduate degree"	open

Faculty	Core Phrase	Admissions Language
Ontario Tech	“undergraduate degree from a recognized university”	closed
Ottawa	“Universities Canada members & institutions accredited by provincial ministries”	mixed
Queen’s	“a 4-year Honours undergraduate degree”	open
Trent	“degree [...] completed at an accredited degree-granting institution”	open
Western	“acceptable undergraduate degree program at an accredited university”	closed
Laurier	x number of credits in “undergraduate university courses”	open
Windsor	“from a recognized university”	closed
York	“acceptable postsecondary degree” <sup>5</sup>	closed

While seven out of twelve faculties were seen to use admissions language that tended to be more inclusive, even this “open” language merits further scrutiny. Use of the terms “acceptable” and “recognized,” found in many if not most of these cases, confers considerable discretionary power upon admissions committees and may very well refer to what is deemed “acceptable” by the Ontario College of Teachers itself. When these instances are removed from the “open” results, only two faculties emerge as using truly inclusive admissions language (Laurentian and Queen’s).

---

<sup>5</sup> As defined by the Ontario College of Teachers (Ontario Regulation 184/97). “In this Regulation, ‘acceptable post-secondary degree’ means a degree, including a baccalaureate degree in an applied area of study, for which a person is required to complete at least 90 post-secondary credits or their equivalent and that is, (a) granted by a post-secondary educational institution authorized to grant the degree under an Act of the Assembly, including a person that is authorized to grant the degree under the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, (b) granted by a post-secondary educational institution in a Canadian province or territory other than Ontario and that is considered by the College to be equivalent to a degree described in clause (a).”

# Recommendations

Substantive and wide-scope research into and analysis of student mobility between Six Nations Polytechnic and provincial universities, colleges, and key professional programs motivates a number of recommendations. These seek to not only mobilize the knowledge gained through this project, but to meet the specific deliverables designed to concretely benefit stakeholders.

## Recommendations to Catalyse Structural Change

### Sectoral Initiatives: Multilateral Advocacy & Awareness-Raising

A more expansive approach to “student mobility” would be helpful in speaking to the multifaceted, scaled, evolving, and deeply personal nature of planning one’s educational journey. For example, this report engages with graduate and professional programming, as our students’ shorter-term plans are obviously informed by their longer-term ambitions, which directly impact the transfer and pathways choices that they (and we) make at the undergraduate/diploma level.

Across the postsecondary sector, there is a need to engage with the spirit as well as the substance of reconciliation by thinking about Indigenous learners as not merely underserved individuals or part of an underrepresented demographic. This reinforces a “deficit-based” analysis, however inadvertently. A more robust approach would involve seeing Indigenous learners as embedded persons, and Indigenous postsecondary education as a valid choice for them as members of their communities – members whose educational choices typically involve reference to goals not just for themselves, but for those communities. This could meaningfully inform admissions and transfer pathways and produce stronger results in the longer term. Specifically, this is a call for research into new discretionary measures beyond mere admissions quotas, and for mainstream institutions and organizations to “do their homework” on the province’s nine Indigenous Institutes (and by extension the Indigenous Institutes Consortium, *Indigenous Institutes Act*, and Indigenous Advanced Education and Skills Council). Such proactive engagement from all parties is necessary for the realization of a postsecondary education sector in which three equal “Pillars” positively and respectfully interact.

Both the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) and Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) could meaningfully support parity of educational outcomes and increased awareness of the status, validity, and even the very existence of the Indigenous Institutes by recognizing the IIs on their websites and in the standardized application. This means including them as valid, enumerated choices on the list of major/recognized educational providers, rather than under a vague catch-all category of “Postsecondary/Other” (which reinforces their marginalization and perpetuates structural biases against the validity and rigour of their programming).<sup>6</sup> Instead, all three “Pillars” – universities, colleges, and IIs – should be presented as equal, per the *Indigenous Institutes Act*. This has the further potential to reduce structural barriers for indigenous Institute students, graduands, and graduates, in their application or transfer to programs in the mainstream. For II students to enjoy fair and legitimate consideration and avoid or shed an inaccurate bias against their educational choices, this informal, yet very real structural prejudice and systemic barrier needs to be removed. In other words: The *Indigenous Institutes Act*, a binding piece of provincial legislation that confers clear responsibilities upon all sectoral actors, must be enacted across the whole of the postsecondary educational landscape. This recommendation extends equally to the OLSAS and OMSAS application portals; and further, to the application portals at individual graduate and professional schools.

---

<sup>6</sup> A standalone category makes some sense in that it reduces confusion around II programming, which typically spans both of the traditional “silos” of university and college credentials.

The Council of Ontario Universities' "Committee on Relationships with Other Postsecondary Institutions" should include formal representation from, or some other concrete conduit to, the Indigenous Institutes. Membership could have wide-reaching effects within the postsecondary sector, providing a stable avenue through which Indigenous Institutes could directly inform and build/strengthen relationships with universities, and co-create positive structural change. Membership itself could be construed as recognition of II legitimacy, normalizing the presence and building appreciation for the uniqueness of Indigenous Institutes. At present, this committee is peopled solely through recognized university representatives, and to the best of our knowledge has not involved outreach to Six Nations Polytechnic or any other Indigenous Institute, or member organization of Indigenous Institutes.

Relatedly, there should be targeted and sustained advocacy/outreach to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), aiming for the recognition of Indigenous Institutes as legitimate accreditation bodies. There is a clear need, especially given widespread Indigenous community interest in teacher education pathways, for Indigenous Institutes to be able to (a) offer standalone teaching credentials and (b) be affirmed as a recognized provider of prior credentials that led into formal teachers education.

## Inter-Organizational Initiatives: Standardizing & Verifying Information

Mainstream educational institutions need to raise awareness, among their internal constituencies, of the ways that degree-granting authority is conferred in the province of Ontario. On university websites, there is currently widespread equivocation between irreconcilable expressions, indicating a dearth of underlying processual knowledge; for example, using "degree from a recognized university" and "a recognized undergraduate degree" interchangeably in detailing admissions criteria. Relatedly, there is a pervasive misunderstanding the accreditation process for undergraduate programs offered by non-Charter educational providers. Instead of less stringent, the process is actually more rigorous, entailing a sustained examination, by a team of experts, of every standard and benchmark in the regulatory guidelines. At a minimum, university admissions staff should understand, and the language on admissions portals should convey, that legitimate undergraduate credentials may be conferred by educational institutions other than Charter universities or university "partners."

Annual consultations should be convened, bringing Indigenous Institute and ONCAT staff together to collaboratively review and update pathway and transfer information on the ontransfer.ca website, ensuring that it reflects the rapidly changing landscape of II-university and II-college partnerships/articulation agreements. Alongside this initiative, it would prove highly beneficial to perform an annual reconciliation of information on ontransfer.ca and mainstream institutional websites, in order to identify and eliminate discrepancies. Most of the time such discrepancies denote an omission, or multiple omissions, on the individual institutional website vis-à-vis the pathways and transfers available to Indigenous Institute (and other) graduates, where consistency would provide greater stability and clarity for educational planning. Similarly, an annual review/reconciliation of data could include establishing the relevance of free-standing provincial pathway agreements, as recognized through ontransfer.ca, to Indigenous Institutes, their current and in-development programming, and established postsecondary partnerships.

## Recommendations to Catalyse Functional Change

### Inter-Institutional Initiatives: Building & Maintaining Normative Relationships

Six Nations Polytechnic should convene meetings with parties to its current articulation agreements, specifically to increase the quantity and improve the quality of information of partnership information on their websites. The proactive identification of and provision of clear access to partner programs is beneficial to all parties, and specifically supports Indigenous learners and the demonstrated success they experience in Indigenous learning environments. On the college "side" of SNP: while Mohawk College provides considerable and actionable information for prospective students, this data could be more readily accessible from their homepage, as is the case with their in-house programming; alternatively, both Canadore and Niagara could provide basic, actionable, information pertaining to partnership programs, along with an easily discernible and navigable application portal for



prospective students. On the university “side” of SNP: improved positioning of the Consortium Agreement on partner websites, ensuring that all relevant information (i.e., application process, prerequisites, specific curriculum, first-year and breadth requirements for seamless transfer into second-year studies, etc.) is clearly explained and easily located, promises myriad benefits, from the individual to the institutional, to the structural/sectoral.

While ONCAT does map Six Nations Polytechnic onto a number of potential/general pathways between college and university studies, it is not clear that individual universities would actually recognize or support specific instances of student mobility along these conduits. Further research and analysis could consider the practical application of these “Pathway Options;” investigate their use to previous II graduates; and explore potential means through which Indigenous Institutes could/should utilize them within their current or planned programming.

## Intra-Institutional Initiatives: Augmenting Student Mobility through Programming

The Six Nations Polytechnic should establish a Working Group to develop a process for (a) collecting and compiling data on actual student transfer into and out of SNP; (b) gathering and analysing data on mobility aspirations of incoming and current students (i.e., if and where they intend to transfer); and (c) channelling those findings, on an annual basis, into a Curriculum Committee review of internal course offerings. This would inform changes to curriculum that support increased student mobility. If possible, that review should tie into outreach to graduates known to have transferred – for example, former students of the University Consortium Year 1 Program – to ascertain the actual curriculum challenges they faced in transitioning from one program to another.

The relevant findings of this project should be extracted and included in dialogue preceding the renewal of all existing articulation agreements between Six Nations Polytechnic and its university and college partners. The raw data, analysis, and recommendations included all contribute to the revisioning of partnerships along normative lines, so that this common (formerly necessity-based) relationship evolves as the sector itself changes. Indigenous Institutes in general, and SNP in particular, have moved from private- to public-sector entities through a regulatory paradigm shift – at present, partnership agreements are not keeping pace with these fundamental changes. As a dedicated accreditation pathway for Indigenous Institutes opens up, the very mandate of articulation agreements will need to shift. Relationships between specific, mainstream institutions and SNP have a great potential to not only pace with, but creatively explore the new potential of interaction between the “Three Pillars” of Ontario’s postsecondary landscape.