

**Education Matters: Insights on Education, Learning and Training in Canada**

**First Nations Women and  
Postsecondary Education: Findings  
from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples  
Survey**



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|----------------|--|
| .              | not available for any reference period   |
| ..             | not available for a specific reference period  |
| ...            | not applicable   |
| 0              | true zero or a value rounded to zero   |
| 0 <sup>s</sup> | value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded |
| <sup>p</sup>   | preliminary  |
| <sup>r</sup>   | revised  |
| x              | suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i>                                   |
| <sup>E</sup>   | use with caution   |
| F              | too unreliable to be published   |
| *              | significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )   |

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## First Nations Women and Postsecondary Education: Findings from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

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This article complements the companion article in this issue of Education Matters by providing information collected by the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) on some of the characteristics of off-reserve First Nations women aged 25 to 64 who had studied towards a postsecondary credential. Specifically, this article examines the proportion of First Nations women who received financial assistance for their postsecondary studies, as well as the type of assistance received. In addition, some of the reasons for not finishing postsecondary education among First Nations women are investigated. Finally, information on the proportion of First Nations women who took some form of correspondence or distance education to pursue their postsecondary courses is presented.

#### Box 1: The Aboriginal Peoples Survey – Definitions and Methodology

Following the 2006 Census, Statistics Canada, in collaboration with national Aboriginal organizations, conducted the [2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey \(APS\)](#).<sup>1</sup> The APS is a national survey of Aboriginal peoples (First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit) living in urban, rural and northern locations throughout Canada. Because the APS is a survey of Aboriginal peoples, no data are collected from the general Canadian population.

The 2006 APS covers the off-reserve First Nations population in the ten provinces and all First Nations people in the three territories. The APS for First Nations people provides data for individuals with and without Registered Indian status.

This article focuses on the First Nations identity population and includes women who have self-identified as First Nations people<sup>2</sup> as a single response (i.e., not in combination with Inuit or Métis identity).

### Six in ten off-reserve First Nations women who had taken education towards a postsecondary degree had applied for financial assistance

Postsecondary students are faced with a range of education-related expenses. These include not only tuition costs, but may also include expenses for daycare, transportation, housing, food and family responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

The 2006 APS asked respondents who had ever taken postsecondary education if they had applied for financial assistance to carry out their studies. Six in ten off-reserve First Nations women aged 25 to 64 who had taken postsecondary education had applied for financial assistance to pursue their studies.

First Nations women were more likely than First Nations men to have applied for financial assistance (60% versus 47%, respectively).<sup>4</sup> In addition, First Nations women who were Registered Indians were more likely than their counterparts who were not Registered Indians to have applied for assistance to carry out their postsecondary studies (66% versus 48%, respectively).<sup>5</sup>

### More than nine in ten off-reserve First Nations women who had applied for financial assistance received it

According to the 2006 APS, the vast majority (92%) of off-reserve First Nations women who had applied for postsecondary financial assistance reported having received some form of funding. Three quarters (75%) of First Nations women who received funding completed their postsecondary studies.

First Nations women reported having received financial assistance from various sources, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) or Band funding;<sup>6</sup> student loans; and grants, bursaries or scholarships. Another type of financial assistance reported was 'personal bank loan' but the number of First Nations women receiving this type of funding was too small to be reported. The majority of First Nations women (79%) reported having received funding from only one source, whereas about 18% reported having received financial assistance from two or more sources.<sup>7</sup>

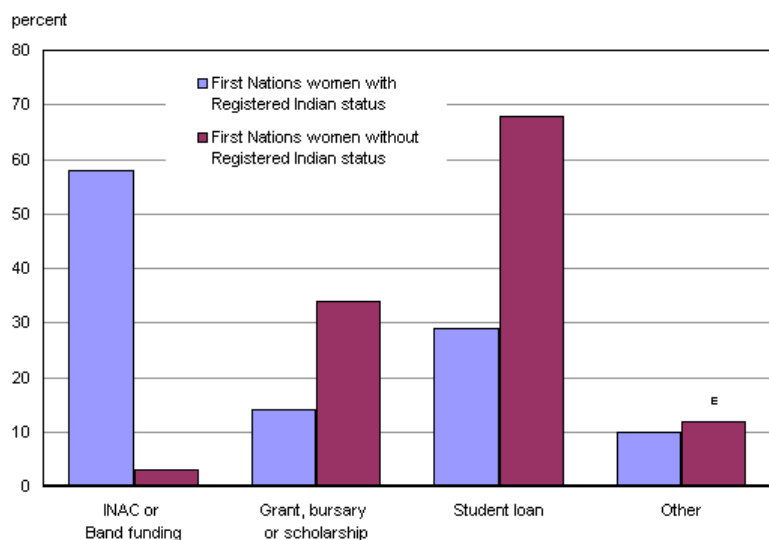
According to 2006 APS data, the main source of postsecondary education funding for off-reserve First Nations women who were Registered Indians was INAC or Band funding (58%) (see Chart 1). This was followed by student loans (29%) and grants, bursaries or scholarships (14%).

For off-reserve First Nations women who were not Registered Indians, the main source of funding was a student loan (68%). This was followed by a grant, bursary or scholarship (34%).

About one in ten First Nations women (with and without Registered Indian status) also reported having received "other" types of financial assistance (not specified) to pursue their postsecondary studies.

**Chart 1**

**Proportions of off-reserve First Nations women aged 25 to 64, by type of postsecondary financial assistance received and by Registered Indian status, 2006**



**Notes:** These data are for First Nations women who applied for and received financial assistance. As respondents could provide more than one response, percentages do not add to 100%.

E use with caution

**Source:** Statistics Canada, [Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006](#).

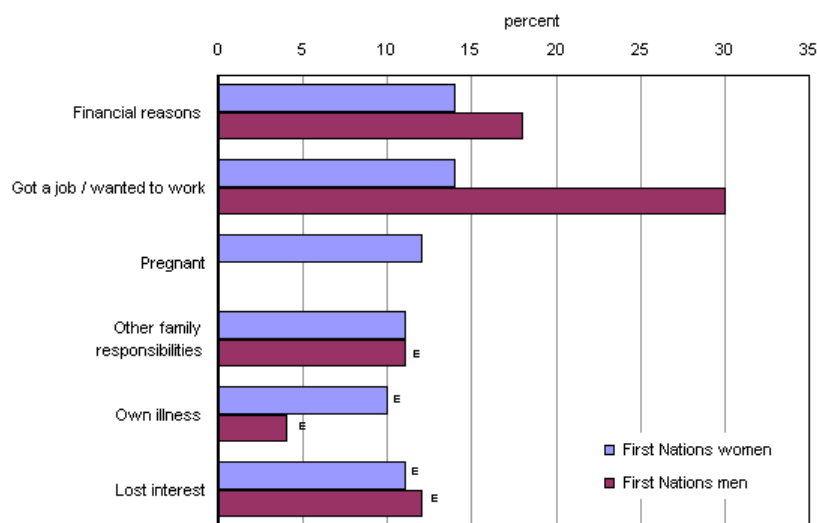
## Potential barriers to completing postsecondary education

The APS asked respondents who had taken some education, but who were not currently pursuing postsecondary studies, about the reasons why they had not finished their studies. The main reasons First Nations women reported for not finishing their postsecondary studies were: financial (14%) and obtaining a job or wanting to work (14%) (Chart 2). Family-related reasons were also noted among First Nations women, specifically, pregnancy (12%) and other family responsibilities (11%).

As for First Nations men, the main reason identified for not completing a postsecondary education was obtaining a job or wanting to work (30%).

**Chart 2**

**Reasons for not finishing their postsecondary studies, off-reserve First Nations women and First Nations men aged 25 to 64, 2006**



**Note:** As respondents could provide more than one response, percentages do not add to 100%.

E use with caution

**Source:** Statistics Canada, [Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2006](#).

**About one in five of off-reserve First Nations women who took some postsecondary courses did so through some form of distance education**

Distance education has the potential to help encourage lifelong learning and to reduce obstacles to learning, such as cost and distance. Distance education can also offer more flexibility for those seeking to balance learning with other responsibilities.

The 2006 APS asked respondents who had ever taken postsecondary education, if they had taken any of their courses by correspondence or through some other form of distance education (i.e., education received via mail or electronic media such as television, CD-ROM or the Internet).

About one fifth (19%) of First Nations women living off reserve who had ever taken postsecondary education did so through correspondence or distance education. Moreover, First Nations women were more likely than First Nations men (19% versus 13%, respectively) to have studied through correspondence or distance education for their postsecondary studies.

## Conclusion

The 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey highlights some characteristics of off-reserve First Nations women aged 25 to 64 who had studied toward a postsecondary credential. According to these data, about one fifth of First Nations women who had ever taken courses toward a postsecondary education did so through some form of distance education; in addition, six in ten had applied for financial assistance.

The main source of postsecondary education funding for First Nations women with Registered Indian status was INAC or Band funding, whereas for First Nations women without Registered Indian status, it was a student loan.

Postsecondary education has become increasingly important in Canada's knowledge-based economy. Future research could usefully investigate in more detail the factors and circumstances that increase the rate of completion of a postsecondary education among First Nations women.

## Notes

1. The survey was developed by Statistics Canada in partnership with the following national Aboriginal organizations: Congress of Aboriginal Peoples; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; Métis National Council; National Association of Friendship Centres; and the Native Women's Association of Canada. The following federal departments sponsored the 2006 APS: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Canadian Heritage. More detailed information about the survey is available in the [APS Concepts and Methods Guide](#). Statistics Canada Catalogue number 89-637-X.
2. In the APS, respondents self-identified as 'North American Indian;' however, the term 'First Nations people' is used throughout this article.
3. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. 2004. Aboriginal Peoples and Post-secondary Education: What Educators Have Learned. Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. ISSN 1704-8435 Millennium Research Series (Online). Vermaeten, A., M.J. Norris and M. Buchmeier. 2004. "Educational outcomes of students funded by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: Illustration of a longitudinal assessment with potential application to policy research" in White, Jerry P., Paul Maxim and Dan Beavon (eds). Aboriginal Policy Research: Setting the Agenda for Change. Volume I. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.
4. This difference was statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .
5. This difference was statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .
6. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides financial support for post-secondary education to eligible Status Indian students who reside on or off reserve, under broad authorities of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act. Funding for individual students is available through two programs as follows: Post-Secondary Student Support Program and University College Entrance Preparation Program. For more information, please visit INAC's website.
7. The remaining 3% consist of those who did not indicate a source of financing.
8. This difference was statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .